Making Practice Visible: Our path to the starmap

Exploring insights and wisdom illuminated by four collaborative New
Zealand practitioners in their work across communities and institutions

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Introduction

How do we traverse the complex problems looming over the future of our society? How do we elevate our capacity to decide together for a future where we, and this place we call home, may flourish? We are witnessing, and acting on, an opportunity for *collaboration* to bring us to an emergent capacity to hold complexity and meaningfully connect across environmental, cultural, social, and spiritual fields. Through a (re)generative practice of citizenship and equity — bridging the treaty partnership, the indigenous, and tau iwi (the rest of us) – we are illustrating constellations of practice that invite new stories to be told.

> **In order to find your way, you must get lost[1]. There is a vast territory between what we're trying to leave behind and where we want to go, and we don't have any maps for that territory.**
>
> —Charles Eisenstein

Glen Lauder and Phillip Barker invited 16 collaborative New Zealand practitioners to participate in a collaborative[2]. These practitioners were chosen for their work across community and institutions at the intersection of environment and society at national, regional, and local scales. Glen and Phillip observed these practitioners successfully navigating the challenges and complexity inherent in place-based efforts to shift natural and social systems towards well-being in the long-term as well as the short-term. Questions arose. Do these practitioners have certain capabilities that explain their success? Would these practices be effective for others? ...outside of their specific contexts'?

These questions hold too much possibility to not be given attention; Glen and Phillip initiated the collaborative—part fellowship and part social innovation research lab[3]—to explore these questions and others... How can communities and institutions work together to decide for the future?... sparked by the inspiring patterns of action they witnessed in the new institutions and new practices they saw emerging from these 16 practitioners and their efforts. What can we learn by making visible their practice, its nuance, and what brings it alive?

By and large the research community, in describing collaborations, usually reach some judgement, negative in nature, such as*, "Why collaboration doesn't fulfill democracy",* or *"Problems with the National Water Forum"*... none of the literature has really grasped this essence… that *collaboration* will not be transformative if it is instrumentalising—putting the same old command-and-control managerialism in new package… We don't know how to turn around these water management challenges, this is why we need to do something beyond business as usual.

We believe there is a common insight emerging among our communities that embodies a turning away

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[1] African proverb
[2] Made possible, in part, by the National Science Challenges' Our Land and Water programme
[3] The fellowship continues today, and is now generally called Kōaro

from *business as usual* towards *patterns of action* that carry immense possibility for our cooperation and sustainability. This document details how we made a tool, a starmap, in service of bringing that belief to fruition...

- to make visible that possibility that lies between us
- to reveal the patterns of action that bring that possibility to life
- to post signs that help us *find the others* and unfold our potential
- to support reflection and the development of practitioners in the field
- to renew our commitment, elevating our capacity to take the next most elegant step

If you are participating, you are a practitioner.
This is for you and for your communities*.*
We hope it starts or deepens a dialogue.

Excerpt from our introductory presentation to the starmap

What is a starmap used for?

The starmap invites us to collaboratively discern a north star, a guide. The north star appears differently, depending on where you stand; nonetheless, the truth-value lies in how it relates to other stars. By relating stories and practices, the starmap may become a rigorous way for practitioners and groups to:

- elevate their capacity
- see their own, or another's, practice more deeply or clearly
- connect with others who are on similar journeys

- be inspired by—and join us in revealing—an exponentially growing web of collaboration

The starmap in its current condition is, ***however*, most useful to you or your group if you…**

- have heard of any of the 16 practitioners, especially the four the starmap features
- have heard of any of their projects or groups, especially the 13 that we've featured

    … and are interested to get a better sense of what makes them flourish.

It also is **likely to be useful to you or your group if you…**

- share similarities with these practitioners, *e.g.,*
  - your work crosses *community and institutions*
  - your practice is *place-based*
  - you participate/contribute, in some way, in *land, soil or water conservation*
  - **most significantly:** you're in New Zealand
- *Or: you may be familiar with practices or ideas related to social process/technologies, phenomenology, Theory U, or any of the other thought-leaders whose contributions are part of the lineage of this work*

Reflection in action/ interaction

You can use the starmap as a mirror to reflect on the practices of your community, group, or self and whether the phenomena being described mirror your own experiences or language. Explore it with a friend or even reach out to the practitioners themselves to continue the conversation. We hope this may **start or deepen a dialogue**.

This starmap particularly supports the national, regional and local conversations from which it emerged. With your participation, we believe it can be a north star for many communities beyond, and perhaps even support the global dialogue.

The road to the starmap (may it propagate!)

We offer the following documentation—the process, thoughts, and heartfelt intuitions by which the starmap was formed—in hopes that it is a meaningful contribution to the field and further efforts to unfold the possibility and value of collaboration. The starmap was developed through, and on behalf of, our social innovation research lab (social lab). Our purpose, in a social lab way, was and is to bring our

selves as objects of inquiry, as well as *ourself* collectively as [an object] of inquiry. Here we present before you a curation of our subjective-objective noticings, observations we recorded as field notes from the beginning of this endeavor. We're happy to share them here[4].

Background

Beyond the details laid out in the introduction, there are a couple of useful pieces of context that speak to the Theory of Change[5] underlying our efforts:

1. Each practitioner will have a collaborative project they'll have been working on (or several).
2. Each will have been part of a field of practitioners.
3. Each probably know another 16 people.
4. Those collaborations, those fields, sit in a broader ecosystem of collaboration to which they belong, some of which there are linkages between the people.
5. There will be both national, regional, and local elements in that ecosystem.
6. If you add the whole fellowship together, [you may notice] a structure to the national collaboration field (national, regional, through to the local) where **many of the connections* haven't been made visible**

   * horizontally and vertically

An author's note: As a research assistant and technology lead, john gieryn, joined Glen and Phil in the work shortly before we collaboratively spark the process that would become the starmap. The fellowship/lab was several month's in when john joined the team.

Intentions, Principles, and Context

The following text box, *and all subsequent text boxes*, presents raw field notes; they were only minorly edited for clarity or legibility.

Naming themes

"Themes" represent any topic or question that were present for the majority of Kōaro participants over the majority of the fellowship/lab's arc. The field notes in this section are in chronological order, so you may see their evolution over time as you read on.

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[4] Please share this only as far as those just outside of the community from which it grew, Kōaro. If you're particularly inspired by anything, do please reach out through the person who shared this with you! This began with collaboration, and we hope that its ripples result in generative interactions.

[5] A friend, Chelsea Robinson, introduced us to this definition, that "a Theory of Change is your theory for how change happens and your contribution to that (reference). She has also written that it is the mechanism of reasoning between one's vision and their mission, i.e., their way of enacting that vision

The earliest action:

- practice, or patterns of action, or building capacity…

Naming patterns/ themes:

- National - Regional - Subregional - Local[6]
- Learning Journeys
- Grow capacity
- Social infrastructure in locale
    - how it has enabled action that surpasses expectation(s)

- New pattern of action → of democracy → of living

- Melding of wisdoms, leveraging collective intelligence

relating it back to the fellowship/lab core questions

1. what is your practice or citizenship
2. in work you have been involved in, what is an untold story?
3. what are the patterns you've gathered in—and the practice that you've brought to—your practice of citizenship that enabled [collaboration] to bring aliveness to the people you were with
4. how do we develop and unfold the capacity and capability at scale (though not really at scale, and not just exclusive to practitioners; it's for everyone and the whole field)…

Naming intentions

Our intentions range from *why* to *how*. This reflects a central intention driving this work:

- prioritising process over outcomes

One aspect of the starmap's Theory of Change is a belief that any possible outcomes will be significantly impacted by the "inner-world"[7] of this prototype's participants, especially those that contributed from

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[6] See "Place-based Collaboration" in the next section for more details on this theme.

[7] A naming (and overarching observation) that became explicit on a call between Glen Lauder, Phillip Barker and Angela Hugh & Zaid Hassan of the Roller Strategies team, likely grounded in lineage that can be accessed through the work of Otto Scharmer, who in turn cites Henri Bortoft

the start or had roles in design or facilitation. Our emphasis on process belies "*ends justify the means*" reasoning. We center our inquiries around the means, the process. We rigorously observe and reflect, on our inner experience and what we sense externally, on a regular basis. We do this so that we may adaptively iterate, choosing towards better outcomes as they emerge, but not miring ourselves in too much analysis to the detriment of our higher aims—to spark developmental interactions between people; what we pay attention to grows. This raises two other higher-order intentions:

- we are elevating…
  - the gifts of practitioners (i.e., anyone who participates) and the value that lies between them (i.e., within relationships and collaboratives) and
  - the joy, utility and social value of dialogue ("the art of thinking together"[8]);

- throughout the whole process, if we're missing a sense of "aliveness"[9], we're missing the point

The field notes in the following text-boxes are ordered non-chronologically; they proceed from the *why* to the *how*. If you wish to get a stronger sense for the development of the ideas presented here (below, and above) over time, you can see them chronologically ordered in this *"path to the starmap" document (Google Docs link)*; *though note that this document still displays rough construction notes, and not everything in it shows up here (only the highlighted segments).*

> By revealing the practice of participants, we aim to build conditions that are necessary to convene a [social innovation research lab (social lab) more effectively]. Often, a social lab becomes a whole lot of doing rather than a field of consciousness emerging. It is worthwhile revealing practice in its own right, and both of these rationales support us in one of our central inquiries, "**how do you grow capability for people to do work that reveals practice?**"
> - decolonisation
> - We don't know how to turn around these water management challenges, this is why we need to do something outside of business as usual (BAU)
>
> Phill and I [Glen] landed a lot of clarity today; we mapped out our harvested resources of [recorded video interviews on Zoom,] other audio from workshops and interviews, and a roadmap forward… here's some thinking towards *why* and *how* you [john] might collaborate with us:
> - The multiple and extraordinary themes [for which] we have the energy and commitment of this Fellowship at this time, and their deep relevance to what could be turning points in this country that [could] resonate across the world.

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[8] William Isaacs, *Dialogue: The Art of Thinking Together* (1999)
[9] Aliveness, as "the expression of consciousness", may be experienced as a "still breathlessness of the moment". See Christopher Alexander's work for a deeper understanding of "aliveness".

- Deepen people's experience of the fellowship: support individuals and the group to "bend the beam of attention back on their self/selves"[10]
- The need to curate all we can reveal and harvest.
- The need to have triple loop learning cycles so we know what to ask next and enable integration across themes, people, dimensions of the whole/ the soul .
- The need to be able to reveal in ways that raise curiosity and "what next" questions.
- help make sense of "what to ask next and enable integration across themes, people, dimensions of the whole/the soul"
  - *Support triple loop learning for the individuals and the group as a whole*
    - 1/ *recording perceptions and observations*
    - 2/ *making meaning of them*
    - 3/ *applying that meaning to each individuals' practice*
    - (4/ *creating infrastructure, a library of starmaps, for exploring the above*)

Kawa and Kaupapa: Principled and disciplined practice

Four dimensions of collaboration

...ability of the individual to hold it, because the individual holds a moral compass, and in a group, you can hold a collective moral compass, but if you ever lose your individual compass you're lost

1/ practice that mediates with integrity and utility between nature and society

2/ and with equity and mutual respect between peoples

3/ located in a moment or context which [is mindful of distance and scope, of a] long past and a long future… an awareness that we are embedded in this, which gives a provisional quality to everything (*see "Place-based collaboration" just below*)… versus [the] hegemony of thinking that where we are and how we are—that a modern way is the only way of being

4/ consciousness

...hence collaboration is the convening power of consciousness

- which, ultimately, we discern all of the previous dimensions are enriched and made irrelevant by the fourth dimension, consciousness; once consciousness intervened, everything that seemed fixed and constraining is transformed… [we] could use the word 'spirit', in a deeply distinct, theological sense… experience at pentecost when the holy ghost settled upon them… it's the universal dawning through all time of the [awe-struck], "*I am* lieing down on the meadow" moment
- fourth dimensional starmaps… when people see it all they need is to be re-awakened, we just need to remember… capability development might be no more than "do you remember? ah yes…"

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[10] You can strengthen your understanding of Otto Scharmer's phrase/concept by viewing the corresponding element, with experiential audio/video, in the starmap (click here).

Place-based collaboration
- in context [to a *why*, a purposeful inquiry, that centers] the well-being of all society and all nature in a way that's profoundly socially just and practical [even as it elevates and integrates] environmental justice...
- that's embedded in time so that it's always provisional, respectfully holding its "treaty-nation dimension",

- [to] uncover a new model of practice...

- How to grow enough people who have the consciousness and the art and dance of practice to lead us to the next level, as we convene people around 'what's next'... we're also developing their capacity to inhabit this new world they're imagining
- How do we build our field propagation work?
    - How do we build pattern projects?

- *noticing* the movement is what enables the movement to come alive
    - humble
    - empirical, rigorous, diligent, attentive *and* totally subjective
        - inside and outside at the same time[11]

- How do we balance structure and emergence, as facilitators?

- Curate moments of awe, turning points, & patterns at levels of the individual *and* group, interior *and* exterior [12]

- [any tool] ought to be inviting for any Fellow to explore on their own, and
    - [any tool,] to extent possible, should be self-organising for iterative improvement

- Don't want to take attention off of each individual and their unfoldment [viz., their development]

- Look for connections via {emotional, spiritual, non-logical but contextual} resonance

- Incorporating heart models alongside mental models

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[11] The concepts of interiority and exteriority have a long lineage; more recently, Otto Scharmer cites Goethe, Bortoft, Rosche and others as he describes how to leverage these concepts in his book *Presencing* (excerpt). William Isaacs, from whom we also heavily draw, similarly relies on this concept.

- supporting and expanding the intimacy, and the attention to ourselves and the conversation we're having

- Prioritising co-creation of new knowledge over documentation or archiving of tacit or explicit knowledge (respectively)[12]

- [any tool, story or language ought to be] **as simple as a children's story**, able to be fit in the palm of the hand
    - Ahua - *Māori word meaning* your sense of something, but could also be the essence of the characteristics
    - Naho - *Māori word meaning* to get to the heart of things
    - Ngako - *Māori word meaning* the nub/ heart of something, what's "at the lively center"

- [... should evoke] an everyday sense of practice, e.g., cooking in the kitchen together

- [our work should support folks to]
    - innovate meta-models
    - (re)connect to nature
        - engaging with nature ⇔ what can you teach me, what can you guide me

- [let's spark conversations and/or produce materials that explore the idea of]
    - source
    - convening consciousness
        - all without getting into 19th century or 1970's "new age" or pagan aphorisms/ ontologies

- latency of capability, [that capacity and capability already exist within each and every person, and that capacity development (etc.) might best be viewed as the work that supports one to bring attention, awareness, to their capacity, and in so doing, one could imagine it as an unfolding of the potential that was always there. This is important as it decolonialises, deinstrumentalises, and emboldens the person to take agency in their own development]

- [let's communicate in a way that]

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[12] "[Help Employees Create Knowledge Not Just Share It](#)", article in the Harvard Business Review. We collated this and other [Knowledge Management (in Social Labs) research here](#).

- [goes beyond individualism and beyond] collectivism - rather a "human being" as a compound idea rather than a collective idea… [metaphor of how] we are all one jewel, but we're each a unique facet… we don't have to collectivize ourselves
- speak to capability and capacity as pre-existing in a person, or latent, just waiting to be given the attention and energy that they may unfold

Process

The following describes the elements of the social lab process—that took place *after* the practitioners were already participating in a social lab or developmental fellowship—that feel important for a generative production of, and interaction around, a starmap. *Note: The sequence that took place was ultimately nonlinear, however, we believe the following "linear translation" is authentic and has enough truth-value to warrant the loss of nuance.*

1. Glen and Phillip convened recorded check-in calls between them and each practitioner; *we used the tool zoom.us for this and the majority of the audio/video recordings*

2. As we looked for and found untold stories, situations where collaboration and citizenship were embodied; moments of awe, sudden clarity, and epiphany; and inflection points or significant change, we began to name the aspects of the person's practice that we saw as driving the story (or dialogue or situation) we were observing. We asked ourselves what were the key gestures, ways of seeing, or techniques and tools that—if not present—would be highly likely to change the outcome of the story. *The discrete aspects of practice are hereafter referred to as "distinctions"*

3. We started to categorize these distinctions, in part by iteratively mapping them to several different ontological frameworks from which we heavily drew throughout the project[13]. In this way, we began to a coherent language to use throughout the starmap, a set of useful distinction-categories (i.e., "the five strands", see next section, below) and story types (see the "starmap style guide" section, below) which would guide our attention as we sought to create a detailed illustration of each of the four practice profiles *and* look for patterns across them.

    a. The distinction categories were tested to see if they could hold any and all possible insights—those we were then seeing or thinking we might come across

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[13] This includes William Isaacs book, *Dialogue: The Art of Thinking Together*, and his model, "the flame"; the work of Otto Scharmer, particularly Theory U; Peter Block and his book *Community: The Structure of Belonging* and its six conversations; Ken Weber's four quadrants and 'cube', from Integral Theory; and the "figure eight", a remix—by Glen and Phillip—of the six conversations that incorporates Weber's work.

b. At this stage we began to document any strong relationships between aspects of practice or between the practitioners themselves; these would later be referenced in drawing the connections between elements of the starmap

4. invitation to the practitioner: "*would you like to collaborate with us on a "practice profile" that could support you to see your practice?*"

5. "practitioner profile" interviews[14], audio- and (when possible) video-recorded, as permissioned by the practitioner

a. four practitioners, in this case, elected—and were available—to fully participate in the above two steps and the subsequent ones

6. During the process of these interviews, we again tried mapping them to several different ontological frameworks in order to increase our understanding of the relationships between the four practitioner profiles, and discern ways to communicate those insights

7. Parallel to the previous step *and* our individual inquiry with each practitioner—using their language and way of seeing as much as possible to distinguish aspects of their practice—Glen and Phillip made a list, qualitatively, of the commonalities they saw across the four practitioners

8. Transcripts were created of all of the interviews, and we highlighted sections of dialogue that illuminated practice distinctions

9. Through this process of curation, we drafted "practitioner profile" documents for each of the four participants. Some of the practice distinctions became "themes", which were used to draw several segments of dialogue, with one or more associated practice distinctions, together.

10. A table of the distinctions was created, with the following specifications and associated details:

a. each must be supported by direct quotes from at least one participant that are likely to give an outside observer confidence that this participant's practice can indeed be described, in part, by the distinction

b. each distinction would be associated with:

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[14] The interviewing process/ practice—as well as the invitation and the work to co-create the possibility, ownership, and commitment from the participants—are all nuanced practices that each could merit their own report; they have been developed over the years by Glen and Phillip through Cultivate Partners.

> > i. the practitioners that significantly demonstrated the distinction as part of their practice

> > ii. the other distinctions to which it is related (e.g., causally, reciprocally, synergistically or (inter)dependently, etc.…), particularly the tangible case in which it might be most easily witnessed

> c. if the distinction naming, or the text used to help our audience understand the distinction, came from the body of work of another—especially those whose work we heavily rely upon and seek to build upon—then we added that author's name under a column called "lineage"

> d. if a distinction included a story—or any longer segment of dialogue—or a audio/video recording, then the distinction was tagged with "story" so that it could be highlighted on the map to draw the audience's attention

11. This table was placed in a [Google Sheets](#) spreadsheet-document, and the spreadsheet was then linked (uploaded) to [kumu.io](#), the mapping program, in order to populate the starmap with the data

12. In addition to the drop-down menus that support people to interact with the map by filtering the distinctions by distinction-category (strand of the river) or by individual practitioner, we also built a view that just shows the distinctions that are shared in common between two practitioners for us to use as a developmental tool with the practitioners themselves

13. We then developed questions for each practitioner that would invite them to modify or validate the map; these questions especially focused on asking about distinctions that were named using words other than those the practitioner explicitly used, themselves. We also focused on distinctions for which we had less (recorded) dialogic evidence

14. We did follow-up interviews, recorded, in which we presented them the starmap itself, their constellation of distinctions in particular, telling them that, "this is yours", and that they were free to change it to fit their view of the world and themselves. In these calls, we used the questions as a light agenda, taking notes through the survey we had created, and then additionally sent them the survey after the call so they could add to the notes and recording we had taken during the follow-up interview

15. We then incorporated any changes—namings of distinctions, additional connections between distinctions, and any changes to the description of the distinctions to match how they'd talk about it—back into the starmap, and sent them the starmap to get approval of how they show up in it

Starmap design criteria

These are guiding statements and heuristics we agreed upon to support us to make design decisions with a level of rigor and intentionality, as well as coherence across the various work streams. The below field notes are largely chronologically ordered.

- *audience* is the fellowship and those who are only a small philosophical distance away, the next concentric circle out from the fellows and their closet allies, but also with the wider field of practice in mind as a secondary audience
- able to represent any qualitative patterns that could be noticed in the fellowship or profiles… the starmap should be able to visually support any insight drawn
  - using the 5 braided strands of the river*
    - including patterns evidencing an inflection point, as framed in the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology[15]
- is interactive in way that reflects (helps the audience learn/understand) the way in which the starmap was crafted, which in turn reflects a "delicate activism"[16] and the tensions of:
  - generalisation ↔ nuance,
  - taking action while uncertain ↔ understanding enough (and when and how) to act,
  - how what we pay attention to grows ↔ grounded, non-judgemental observation of what is
- any engagement with the starmap should work to spark further human interactions beyond or within the starmap; it should be optimized towards the co-creation of *new* knowledge
- bring language to things that people know about themselves; highlight how capacity and capabilities are implicate to our being
- awe, vast, novel, ancient, *and* emergent, and moment by moment, and quite simple
- helps stabilize our individual view and our shared view so we can settle and examine something together
  - work towards a common grammar or way of understanding (including a common language) for the audience, especially in regards to the audiences' environmental and community work and livelihoods; the starmap should support one to:
    - witness experiences,
    - understand patterns illustrated by the starmap and discover new, less visible ones
    - take steps towards articulating, enacting and/or embodying that which the starmap reveals

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[15] MSC was a method used by the researchers (auxiliary to this part of the project) Graeme Nicholas and Jeff Foote on a subset of our data; you can read more about it at https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/most_significant_change.

[16] "A Delicate Activism", by Susan Davidoff and Alan Kaplan, was one of the most central readings of the social lab and fellowship programme. You can get a sense for the reading through this blog.

- cultivate an experience where one might more simply see how "who a participant is", or "their unique contribution" to a situation. Witnessing the experiential stories depicted in the starmap should:
  - bring life to strands one through four [*see just below*],
  - create the conditions that may reveal how the fifth strand, source, shows up in these dimensions, *and*
  - honors the expanse of the life of the participants and respectfully expands their lives
- create processes by which connections can be made through listening for emotional or spiritual ways of identifying relationships between distinctions, uplifting these ways of knowing alongside scientific, logical and rational ones
- [the tool/ language/ stories should be] as simple as a children's story, able to be fit in the palm of the hand

The five strands of the river[17]
1. *tangible case* - projects, groups, activities, or events that one can point to
2. *concrete practices* - the instantiations of practice: the concrete gestures or the use of one or more tools or techniques within a given situation
3. *relational experience* - a quality experienced in a group or relationship; the cultural characteristics or tone of the relational field
4. *personal lens* - a point of view or way of seeing, where and how attention is brought to bear
5. *source* - the deepest naming of where one's practice comes from

For a sense of how we worked to identify priorities within the above over time, I've included a field note—from within the final month of producing the initial starmap prototype—which reinforces some of the above:

- it is more about practicing [capacity development] *while using the starmap as a mirror*, than it is about the content; however, I [should] be keenly watching to make sure we get the content to the level of quality necessary for it to be a potentially useful tool
  - in order to make that a fully generative (and full of aliveness) use of our time, it is important that we really focus in on the upcoming follow-up interview conversations with [the four practitioners], as well as our conversations with the at least one of each of our other audience personas—one of the other [lab/ fellowship participants], and one of the programme admin and auxiliary researchers and contractors (one with and one without familiarity to phenomenology)... i.e., developmental interactions *using* the starmap should take more weight than the ontological validity or consistency of the starmap itself

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[17] These strands were used to support clearer distinctions and connections as we sought to make visible the uniqueness that these practitioners bring. The strands are braided and their edges are fuzzy, but they elevate commonalities and *patterns of action* that may support people in their developmental journeys.

Starmap style guide

The following construction/field notes are even more granularly detailed. "Style guide" protocols were documented as they were developed, and are intended to support coherence, clarity, and accessibility of the materials herein. The style guide and design criteria were both informed by iterative changes that were documented in the starmap's **change log**.

The below list (of field notes) is not comprehensive, however, as there are likely production norms—of a "best practice" variety—that were used but either did not feel like they warranted documentation or went unnoticed—*especially likely with those that were more implicit in nature*.

- narrative voice ("we/our" unless "you/your" is more accurate and precise, or more powerful, poignant or clear)
- preserve sayings and colloquialisms
- Concrete Practices that are a summation of quite a few other Concrete Practices should be double-checked to see if they can be re-designated as either strand three, Relational Experience, or strand four, Personal Lens, as appropriate
- every distinction, in its description, should contain explanatory media generated by at least one of the practitioners
  - if the distinction appears in a practitioners' constellation, then it either must be supported by a direct quote from that practitioner, *or—one exception—if the distinction is supported by one or more other practitioners, and it is strongly supported qualitatively, by the experience of Glen and Phillip with this practitioner, then it may remain associated with that practitioner*

- **Possible Story Categories:**
  - Tell me a time when things went well (despite the worst of times)
  - What feelings (expressed)
  - What did someone bring to a situation
  - What sticking points, ruts someone had to be pushed out of
  - Stories of unflinching honesty, equity/fairness, survival/sustainability…
  - "Turning to one another"
  - "Can't solve it alone"
  - "We're in this together"

These evolved into...

- **Story Tags:**

- o Awe
- o Aha
- o Untold
- o When Things Went Well (WTWW)
- o Most Significant Change (MSC)
- o Technique or Technology (Tech.)
- o Sharing-potential

Results

Through participating in the follow-up interviews, the feedback/validation process of the starmap, all four practitioners spoke to how the process of interacting with the starmap during the interview helped them see their practice more deeply and clearly. Additionally, we, as conveners and facilitators, also grew our capacity to see the participants' practice more fully, and learned about commonalities between their practices that we did not know existed before the follow-up interviews. This is a pre-release report, so the results are few as of yet, but they are notable. As well, many possibilities are arising as we consider the future of the starmap; many practical visions of its utility and social value have emerged, through dialogue, as we interacted with people around the concept and early mock-ups. These possibilities are noted in the "next steps" section. The results we have to share, for now, are primarily paraphrased testimonial of the four practitioners whose practice is illustrated in this starmap prototype.

- There was enthusiasm from all four practitioners to look at the starmap as a developmental tool
- Three of the practitioners have intentions to share it with the some of the other 16 participants of the original lab/fellowship, and especially with the four who've done practice profiles
- Two of the practitioners have intentions to interact with one of the other practitioners around one another's constellation of practice—to get/give feedback
- One of the practitioners is eager to use the collaborative back-end, the spreadsheet in the cloud, to continue interacting with the starmap
- One of the practitioners is excited to share it beyond the initial 16 participants
- One of the practitioners expressed feeling a lot of ownership of/in the process, that it was a "co-developed, co-owned", and how they appreciated the peerful nature of the interviews and that it felt like a "partnered journey" the whole way

- One of the auxiliary researchers said that it had good potential of being/ becoming "a boundary object that becomes a learning platform"

Lastly, through the starmap process, we came to recognize a number of commonly, deeply held mental models, heart models, beliefs, ways of looking at the world (personal lenses) and distinctions of an even

deeper nature (sources), that may be invaluable to make visible. While these may not be totally replicable outside of their specific contexts and their pertinence or relationship to these particular practitioners—they may, however, unveil a common insight that perhaps many of us in the collaborative field are becoming aware of, but have not yet found the common language, or found the way in which to see that we are all looking at a same thing.

One of these commonalities, as an example (there are many we could name, but the starmap displays them best), is how we came to realise, unexpectedly, that "a restorative commitment" was a common source. Glen and Phillip had conjectured that the third strand distinction of "restorative not retributive" was common to all four of the practitioners; not only was this found to be true in the follow-up interviews, but it was discovered that this was highly fundamental to several of them. Language around "restorative" practice had appeared in several of the workbooks and in-person gatherings before, but we had not had an indication that anyone had resonated with the concept or the language. By making our hunch visible, naming "restorative not retributive", and then reflecting this back to the practitioners, we were able to deeply explore something very near to the core of who they are in terms of their practice.

We are preliminarily finding the starmap to be a useful social technology for dialogical, developmental work. The high levels (per capita) of interaction and the practitioners' intentions to spark further interactions using this tool are matching the hopeful outcomes outlined in our intentions. That commonalities of practice—that were previously unknown—have been revealed also signifies that we may be supporting the collaborative field by creating sign-posts for common language and understanding, and may also signal to others that there is value in the approach embodied by these practitioners. This gives us some confidence that the starmap approach may be a worthwhile investment for better moving through the complexity that lies between communities and institutions working to navigate environmental and social challenges.

Discussion

Two observations we were careful to note, as we considered the expositional nature of the starmap, are captured in the following field notes:

- capturing intimate moments on zoom (video chat) recordings as an experiment
  - "ours til we say we'll use it" makes this feel less risky
  - at same time, [while I might be] uncomfortable/ edgy about what pressing the record button will do to the intimacy and capacity for vulnerability within these calls; the cost is, when I don't [hit record], it's impossible to replicate these moments when I'm harvesting
  - couple of us talking, but thousands could be watching, [there's potential there, in terms of the ripple effect… but also potential cost in terms of] intimacy… in one way

> [you might feel] naked as you're recorded, and in another way it's a new way of being in consciously in relationship to…
>
> - being a treaty nation, you never get to pretend you're alone… everything has a provisional quality… have to check with my spouse…

Recommendations: Moving it forward

This starmap is a prototype; its potential far outweighs its value, though we do think its valuable and that it has already has provided value, as we mentioned in the results. How much value will depend much on its reception, and—particularly—on how its interacted with in the near future.

The following list articulates a couple of places where a little elbow grease could make the starmap and its associated participatory processes shine even brighter. Some of the points are learnings that, hindsight being 20/20, we would certainly apply if we were to start from scratch. Some of these are places where we just didn't have the resources to fully invest into incorporating or exploring what it would mean to elegantly execute on them. Ultimately, they're fertile places for continued exploration and practice around the starmap or developmental projects that are similar to it.

- For someone to interact generatively with the starmap, it's currently best that they've either heard of (or know one of) the people or one of their projects/ tangible cases
  - The infrastructure has been built through which people could query the map by certain kinds of contexts (e.g. water collaboratives in NZ, rural, urban), and particularly by place (e.g., Christchurch, Wanaka), but this has not been implemented.

- In the future, it may be useful to create a layer (view) of the #starmap that compresses similarly coded items, as a sort of "adaptor" layer; this would enable more commonalities to be easily seen by more people, as currently—because we have biased the distinction-namings towards the practitioners' own words—there are distinctions that have high overlap but appear separately (*e.g., "trying to build the love", and "love", appear as separate sources, but they likely have much more in common than not*)

- We had an intention for the starmap participants "to be able to post comments, as [the comments] themselves might prove useful bridges as we move", and that the starmap, "...to the extent possible, should be self-organising for iterative improvement"
  - Our collaborative back-end spreadsheet, hosted in the cloud as a Google Sheet, does give users the capacity to leave comments, however—the user interface (UI) and user experience (UX) leave much to be desired
    - additionally, unless other users navigate, or are led, to the back-end spreadsheet, they will not see other users comments until the core design team acts upon those comments to edit the map

- We could have done better at uplifting "an everyday sense of practice, e.g., cooking in the kitchen together", and we are certainly still a ways off from achieving "children's story" simplicity

- Starmapping more practitioners (beyond the four) will increase its value exponentially, both in its value towards exposing patterns across the field, as well as its value in personal development—the more distinctions that are made the more possibilities for someone to see themself reflected in it

- There's a lot of room for improvement on the feedback and validation processes; primarily, it would have been great to do a second iteration of the follow-up interview, using additional questions that came out of the first one
    - We would like to do three-way video call between two of the practitioners from the fellowship/lab, one of them being a person whose practice is illustrated by the starmap, with an additional call participant facilitating/ witnessing, the dialogue prompt being the starmap and its contents
    - We would like to do some small group workshops and exercises using physically interactive mapping practices (e.g., thread and pins on a board), potentially adding audio/video recording and post-event harvesting of material for the starmap
        - the latter three bullets could all produce material that could be threaded back into the starmap's content in an iterative way, and furthermore we could then spiral back to the *follow-up interview* step of our current process, and continue evolving the visual dialogue in a variety of ways

"Maybe all we're really doing is walking each other home" — Ram Das

Sharing and caring

Please share this only as far as those just outside of the community from which it grew[18]. If you're particularly inspired by anything or anyone, do **please reach out through the person who shared this with you!** Thanks. This began with collaboration, and we hope that its ripples result in generative interactions.

Be welcome, jump in and [explore the starmap (click here)](#). We look forward to your read, as this map tells many stories, many still to be discovered! Let us know if you find any inspiration (or questions,

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[18] Again, this is growing from a community of practitioners we're calling [Kōaro](#); a former formation of which was the Collaboration Lab/ Practitioner Fellowship, made possible in part by the Our Land and Water National Science Challenge.

critiques, thoughts or feelings…) in the starmap or in this report.

There's so many stars, there's no way we can map them all... especially not on our own. So, do please join us on this journey if you feel called to it. There are *so* many stars, in fact, that we're not only certain that *your* community is also full of stars, but we also have faith that your practice could light the way and support others, while also aiding your navigation of the complexities and mysteries of our world and our societies. We'd love to explore starmapping with you or your people; don't hesitate to reach out— **contact us through [Cultivate Partners](#)**.