

**Vol. XIV**

**Wendy Earles  
Robyn Lynn**

**Third Sector  
Organisations and Organising  
Maps and Short Stories**

Wendy Earles | Robyn Lynn

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Studies in Comparative Social Pedagogies and International Social Work  
and Social Policy, Vol. XIV



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Earles, Wendy; Lynn, Robyn

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and Social Policy, Vol. XIV

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## Acknowledgements

This book came about because of our shared interest in *experiences of change* across an array of policy domains, fields of practice and contexts. The idea for this book first arose in 2010, when Professor Dr Peter Herrmann, a visiting scholar at the Cairns Institute, James Cook University, was listening to us bemoan the sometimes narrowly defined interests of certain policy and practice journals, and our collection of reviewers' comments that often suggested we take only one aspect from a complex change experience scenario and focus on it in more depth in an article. Such specific empirical results from the studies covered in this book have been published in journals and presented at conferences, but we always felt we were only giving snippets of a wider map and story. Peter wondered what we might see if we looked at our collected work as a whole. We saw this book! The chance to move beyond an article format and to link a series of projects into a sequence experientially, methodologically and theoretically was exciting. The endeavour that was needed in order to shape this body of work as a whole, we felt, would create fertile ground for new endeavours, other things we might want to know about and research, both ourselves and with others – and it has.

We have positioned this book in the multi-disciplinary and sometimes trans-disciplinary scholarly field of third-sector research. The intellectual home provided by the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) and Australia and New Zealand Third Sector Research (ANZTSR) has excited, fostered, challenged, welcomely disrupted and ultimately sustained our interest in organisations and organising over the past two decades.

There are many people to thank for their part in our research endeavours. The early part of Wendy's inquiry journey (1995–1999) was supported by a doctoral scholarship and supervisor, Jim Ife, who shares with her a fascination for maps and mapping. Our co-inquiry journey (2000–2011) was supported by numerous university-based and industry grants, not least those from James Cook University and the Queensland Department of Families. Irregular university special study leave enabled fieldwork and writing. For a time, Jill Knell, a local practitioner, enthusiastically joined us as co-researcher (2002–2004). Throughout the entire journey, practitioners and communities in two states have willingly entrusted us with their insightful practice wisdom. For this we are truly grateful.

## Introduction

Our goal in this book is to share our collection of maps and stories of *experiences of change*. We are interested in these maps and stories because they are our windows into new ways of theorising organisations and organising.

As individual researchers, we were pursuing quite different research practice prior to 2000. I (Wendy), as a geographer and a third-sector scholar, was interested in the changing geography of the post-welfare state, particularly that of the third sector. My work over the previous decade had focused on organisational change. Much of this change was a consequence of hegemonic managerial and economic-rationalist reforms across a range of public-policy implementation systems. In my work as an organisational-development researcher, I was mapping practitioners' experiences of, and reflections on, change. I was seeking to respond to practitioners' needs for new maps of the welfare terrain and compasses with which to navigate the changing organisational landscape. I was also responding to my own need to highlight what I felt was displacement from localist and collectivist ideals. I (Robyn), as a community-development practitioner, was interested in the generation of change in communities and social-welfare education. My work had focused on women as agents of change, the recognition and integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges into social welfare, and the place of urban and local food systems in ecologically sustainable communities. This focus was generated by the exclusion of other ways of being and doing within the modernist paradigm. In my work as a feminist, anti-racist and ecological researcher, I recorded women's marginalised stories and experiences of activism, and the processes of the marginalised knowledges of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social-welfare practitioners. My interest was in the spaces of possibility that these stories afforded, to enable embodied transition from one place of meaning and action to another so that new possibilities could emerge in communities and in the field of social welfare.

While the roots of our analyses of *experiences of change* were different, our interests were remarkably complementary. So, as new colleagues in 2000, we slowly found synergies across our units of analysis, ways of knowing and lines of inquiry.

## **The origins of our approaches and views**

Our individual interests in experiences of change in third-sector organising evolved through different but, as we discovered, connected paths. By sharing some of our earlier experiences, we hope to highlight our individual orientations and their influences on our exploration of the landscape of experiences of change in organisations and organising. By providing accounts of experiences that contributed to our own appreciation and understanding of these changes, we hope to give you, the reader, a sense of our individual perspectives and biases.

### *Wendy*

As a mathematics undergraduate in the 1970s, I was captivated by the mystique of ideas about shape and the intrigues of morphological analysis in the one geography elective subject I was able to undertake in my first year. Many more geography subjects were added to my course as I hungrily consumed concepts from rural geography, cultural geography, cartography and urban and regional planning ideas. Geography finally displaced mathematics in my honours year. Pattern-seeking, association, differentiation and mapping distribution were now deeply ingrained as methodological guides.

In 1979 I joined the workforce as a newly trained social statistician and an academically educated human geographer. I immediately experienced work-life from two different angles: top-down, area-based social planning and bottom-up, local community development. These experiences took place in a variety of work-life settings and organisations. Common to each experience was that they involved shared projects with significant senior officers, all of whom were past employees of the Australian Department of Urban and Regional Development (DURD). This department existed briefly (from 1972 to 1975) at the vanguard of the institutions charged with designing and implementing the collectivist and localist visions of the federal Labor government of Gough Whitlam.

After years of selective and residualist social policy, the 1972 federal election of a Labor government in Australia saw the emphasis shift to universalist principles and social-democratic philosophy. The main strategies were area-based social planning and local community development. With the demise of the DURD at the Commonwealth level, 'DURD-ees' (as repositories of shared vision, and as opposed to 'ex-DURDs', which implied a loss of vision) scattered, only to reappear in

departments of local government at the state level, or in alternate collectivist projects in other countries. It was in these places that I encountered these ex-departmental officers and learnt from them. My values and, hence, my approach to my work developed in these places through my experiences of many collectivist and localist projects. My experience in government in Papua New Guinea (although it involved social-development activities) was to this point directed at facilitating local community development. This involved establishing resourcing opportunities for local initiatives and establishing (or sustaining) joint government and non-government participatory structures. Thus, I would describe myself as a 'daughter of the DURD'.

After a considerable break from Australia (1981–1987) and from the paid workforce (1988–1992), I returned to paid work in the Australian human services, initially as a manager of a multi-function and multi-funded non-profit human-services organisation in the remote West Pilbara region of Western Australia, and later as a government funding officer in the same region. My return coincided with the turbulent marriage of managerial and economic-rationalist reforms in the human services in Western Australia. The anti-collectivists were in ascendancy, and I experienced work-life under a different vision.

The juxtaposition of my non-profit and government experiences, and the contrast between my earlier collectivist and localist experiences and the current anti-collectivist experience, were sources of stress and intrigue. All 'adolescences' have their stresses and discoveries. For me, due to my long absence, the changes appeared revolutionary (not evolutionary). However, people around me (in similar non-profit management and governance positions, and in government funding positions) also appeared to be under stress. Facing almost daily challenges to my integrity, I decided to take timeout from practice to engage in research on ideological change and its impact on third-sector organisations (TSOs) that contract with the state. I sought an environment where I could reflect on my experiences and on the experiences of others. I found this in a social work and social administration department of a university, and in the form of doctorate studies.

As my latent academic discipline was geography, and my (mostly unconscious) way of working in whatever position I hold was as a geographer, my most natural means of reflection was to attempt to map the experiences of change. My reflections were from two perspectives: one from my position as a practitioner, and the other from my position as a re-emerging geographer. I undertook to research practitioners'

experiences of change and construct maps of the changing landscapes of practice, in order to respond to Beilharz's lament:

"Several complex . . . strategies have been identified in . . . the contemporary organisation of the Australian welfare state. Each attends to a different problem; yet each appears to impinge on other territories and other values . . . Clearly no set of . . . arrangements comes cost-free . . . So by what map and compass are practitioners, observers and activists to transverse and negotiate this . . . maze?" (Beilharz/Considine/Watts, 1992: 140–141).

The purpose of my research was to generate new maps with practitioners as they sought to navigate this uncertainty.

I read material connected to reform strategies of managerialism and economic rationalism (particularly devolution, contracting, marketisation and privatisation). While there was certainly no shortage of written critiques of these managerialist and economic-rationalist reform strategies, there was limited empirical work to support them. Critiques focused on whether assumed benefits, such as greater efficiency or effectiveness, would eventuate, and on the possible impacts on factors such as quality, equity and justice. I realised that the reforms were diverse, contradictory in many cases, and profuse. I did not want to focus on the nature of the reforms or on a limited range of reforms, or look at whether they had caused particular changes in organisations. I was more interested in the cumulative impact of reforms as they manifested in experiences of organisational change. I wanted to engage in systematic comparison of changes across organisations, in order to look for policy implementation outcomes, to understand how organisations dealt with reforms, and to understand the growing links between organisations.

My growing interest in organisations – particularly non-profit organisations – merged very quickly with the newly emerging field of empirical third-sector research in the 1990s (noticeably the release of Salamon and Anheier's work in 1997). Engagement with third-sector scholars nationally and internationally fed, and continues to feed, my interest in organisations as both artefacts and ideas. Notions of organisational shape and reshaping allowed me to begin to combine geographical thought with organisational thinking. My research sites were located in Western Australia, and my first research project mapped reshaping from 1984 to 1997 in third-sector and governmental organisations engaged in community services and health provision. I returned to my research sites in 2005, and was able to map ongoing



change from 1997 to 2005, providing a rare twenty-year window into third-sector organisational change.

### ***Robyn***

From a young age, I was aware of other ways of being and doing that were different to my own. These were primarily cultural and gender differences that existed between myself and others in the small Australian rural, multicultural community in which I lived. My critical understanding of the meaning of these differences, and of the need for and generation of change within communities, developed further during my undergraduate studies in the 1970s, when I was introduced to feminism. This afforded me the opportunity to make connections between my own experience as a rural white woman and the devaluation of women and their knowledge in that context. It became clear to me that the exclusion of this knowledge from community organisation and educational contexts – or its relegation to women’s spaces – was contributing to women’s devaluation.

Moving into practice in the community sector, and then teaching community work, I became more aware that while women contributed significantly to the community organisation and action needed to challenge difference and generate change, their efforts were largely invisible in the wider community and literature. At the same time, as an ordinary feminist, influenced by cultural and radical feminist theory, I was struggling to understand how I was contributing to this change in the community. I asked myself how, in my teaching, I was contributing to the discouragement or encouragement of women to become more politically active in their practice. How were my classes in community work contributing to female students being comfortable with words like ‘power’ and ‘leadership’? Who were their local role models, and what did we know about them and their approach to community organising? How was it different to the models of activism that were available?

These questions led me to research and publish, along with the participants, *‘Living with Yourself’ Portraits of Female Activism in North Queensland* (1996). This research identified local female activist role models and used feminist oral ‘her-story’ as a form of biography to record the lived experiences of these women, including attention to their selves, their thoughts, feelings, attitudes and reflections, and the meaning of events for them in the context of their lives, to develop their personal narratives. These narratives taught me that the activism of these

organisers was multifaceted and fluid in its nature. They were women who were constantly engaged in 'practice', conforming to and yet resisting the norms and discourses that limit women's lives, while at the same time being active social agents capable of instituting change.

While I was working in a support role with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in a university, it became more evident to me that communities and institutions operated through a preferred set of rules that privileged one set of knowledge and experience and marginalised or excluded others. It was in this context that a feminist ideology and analysis of power, difference and change no longer seemed sufficient, and I began to incorporate an anti-racist analysis into my understanding. At this time, I was constantly being challenged by the knowledge needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the inability of a tertiary institution to meet and address those needs. There was clearly a need for change that recognised and integrated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and ways of being and doing in social-welfare education, beyond that of 'the other'.

With encouragement and cooperation from students, members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and colleagues, we set out to document the 'Murri Way' of helping in social welfare in our region. The recording of their marginalised knowledges and experiences of helping their own people was intertwined with a more specific interest in knowledge production in social work and the re-visioning of the social-welfare curriculum with new inclusive stories and practices. The 'how' of incorporation of a 'Murri Way' was influenced by Somerville's (1999) application of Turner's work about performance and liminal space. In such a space, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges were no longer the knowledge of 'the other' but spaces of possibility that would enable embodied transition for all participants from one place of meaning and action to another – a place where the established order could be turned upside down so that new possibilities could emerge (Turner, 1982, in Somerville, 1999). As an in-between space, it is not about resolution but about movement and difference.

The use of both feminist and anti-racist ideologies in my analyses had become a tension, which created the search for an analysis that could hold both perspectives. At the same time, my connection with my rural roots, affiliations with the natural environment and recognition of the importance of land to the spiritual identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders began an exploration of ecological theories and, more specifically, eco-feminism and permaculture. My concern had broadened

to the question of how to create more liveable futures in the globalised world and the processes needed for this to occur, and, more specifically, the function and form of local food systems and community gardens as forms of change from below.

At the same time, globalisation and managerialism, which I analysed as being driven by the same forces as those that marginalised women, Indigenous peoples and the natural world, were creating significant changes in communities and the human-services sector. The policy response to these changes advocated collaboration across sectors and organisations, and the development of ‘new’ ways of working. I was interested in what these ‘new’ ways might look like and how they could come into being, and, more specifically, the form of these spaces.

These experiences encouraged me to reassess my basic assumptions about difference and change. I began to understand that the basic rules of change were far more complex than I first thought, and that effective change was able to hold the movement and difference that exists between different ways of ‘being’ and ‘doing’ in community.

## **Our book**

Our book contains ten chapters, representing distinct yet connected maps and stories. They are presented in the sequence that our empirical endeavours occurred and ideas emerged. As such, they each remain time-entangled; we have not endeavoured to untangle them by falsely updating each individual piece with more recent literature and ideas. Our preference is to maintain their individual trustworthiness and authenticity, and to allow you to encounter their sequential (dis)logic as this is part of the overall map and story. They are also situated in specific places and in distinct policy fields, and are efforts at understanding the multiple natures of distinct parts of the third sector. We hope that our emergent theorising may transcend both time and place, but only you as the reader can determine that. The chapters individually and collectively address how organisations and organising have changed, and what those experiences of change might tell us about our positioning for future change – a priority for any research on sustainable social change and the third sector.

Chapter 1, ‘New Geographies’, includes maps of ‘experienced’ geographies of organisational change, which are contrasted with theorised global geographies of change. These experienced micro-geographies of community and health services organisations were

constructed from a comparative synthesis of the experiences of change within and between third-sector and governmental organisations during the period 1984–1997. These organisations, already shaped by pre-existing localist and collectivist paradigms, were reshaped in this period around new paradigms based on economic-rationalist and managerialist ideologies. Theorised geographies of global change were explored for a macro-perspective. These macro-geographies were deduced from an eclectic survey of theories and empirical studies, which were generally derived from analyses of other production sectors and organisational types, particularly for-profit organisations. This early work was heavily influenced by the theorist Manuel Castells and his arguments that places and organisations are the sites where local impacts of global change manifest and are experienced, and that the geographies of institutional reshaping in particular places can provide insights into broader directions for political and social change. The idea of juxtaposing macro- and micro-geographies emerged from reflection on Feeney's analysis of the methodological guide for mapping offered by neo-institutionalism of 'multiple facets of interpretation – thus the prism – an interplay between the internal and the external, the organisation and the system' (Feeney, 1997: 493).

Chapter 2, 'Change Scenarios', extends the empirical mapping of third-sector organisational change to cover the extended period 1984–2005, as existing ideological influences were embedded and new ones emerged. Experiences were synthesised across seven different scenarios of organisational change in a process of matrix analysis. This second round of mapping sought to contribute new empirical findings for ongoing discussion on the implications of themes in experiences of change for the third sector. Unpacking change unearthed differences within third-sector responses related to context of practice and the nature of organisations, particularly organisational size. This ongoing mapping process embraced the notion of empirical geography as 'chorology', the systematic mapping of distributions, and involved the development of mapping tools in the course of mapping. This approach was influenced by Jan Fook's (1996) work on reflective practice. A reflective-practice approach was used to examine practice, following a naturalistic orientation (with all its unpredictability and paradoxes), and sought to develop useful tools and theory that were responsive to that uncertainty. The self-reflections of the researcher, intuition and the multiple perspective of players were considered essential in linking seemingly unrelated experiences and identifying significant themes. The approach was holistic (taking into account the entire practice and context) and the research design was

emergent, rather than predetermined. The process was: to identify and describe the experience and context of organisational reshaping in a particular period of intense and extensive restructuring; to reflect on the account, in relation to main themes and patterns, interpretations, gaps and biases, constructs used and developed, categories and typologies, exemplars and contradictions; and, through these two processes, to develop practice tools and theory.

Chapter 3, 'Place–Organisation Nexus', represents a shift to grounded theorising based on these earlier reflective-practice studies. It provides an integrated map of the place–function dynamic that underlies experiences of change, and provides one compass for the assessment of change directions and the development of change strategies. Dimensions and ideal types are proposed for a typology of TSOs, with the aim of generating propositions on ongoing themes about change at the place–organisation nexus. Such moments of insight often occur well beyond the field, and when empirical work is blending or curdling with other strands of thinking. This work was influenced by globalisation theorists, who have proposed place-free or placeless activity, particularly further encounters with the work of Manuel Castells (1998) on placeless powers and powerless places, and other literature on locational and organisational substitutability and delocalisation. Such literature, however, does not present displacement themes as unidirectional change. Within these processes, organisations are created, transformed or discontinued, and these events are invested with new meanings. The place–organisation nexus in the third sector was not immune from these changes.

Chapter 4, 'Provider Paradigms', continues grounded theorising by incorporating multiple organisational parameters in order to articulate emerging paradigms of practice. The paradigms were articulated through interrogation of the organisational changes described by third-sector practitioners. This 'provider' sector – the part of the third sector that is involved in contracted state service-delivery – has faced many challenges in recent decades, arising from changing state–third sector relations. The paradigms identify new parameters of distinctiveness within the sector, contribute to ongoing debates on the heterogeneity of the sector, introduce organisational concern and organisational movement to discussions, prompt the critical question of which paradigms are stalled and which are dynamic, and act as both an integrative and an interrogative device. Such grounded theorising from earlier work was influenced by Morgan's perspective of institutions as ideas – that is,

organisations are not just inert structures but also mediums for the embodiment of ideas (and ideals). Morgan (2006: 365) argues that 'despite its roots in mechanistic thinking, organization is really a creative process of imaginization'. Organisational members hold and evolve guiding principles for their practice and in doing so enact particular logics of organisation. Organisational change in part represents a response to shifts in personal, professional and cumulative organisational ideology, and in cultural norms and values.

In our independent research practice, the importance of change or changing relationships surfaced. Wendy had been engaged in a collaborative research project in the late 1990s that considered change in the relationship between the state and TSOs, the *Contracting for Care Project* (Earles, 1997). This project was the first collaborative multi-researcher project focusing on the Australian third sector that looked at state-third sector relationships (Lyons, 1997). These relationships were largely unmapped and were assumed to be quite diverse. The project investigated how these relationships were constructed and conducted, and how they had changed in different contexts. This collaborative experience prompted Wendy to reflect on the coherence, stability and capacity of sectors as a prelude to the growing dialogue on new and different forms of third sector-state relations. The reflection is included in the book (Chapter 5, 'Relational Capacity'), as a bridge from analyses of change in organisations and sectors to analysis of change in inter-organisational relations and systems, the 'space in between'. This synthesis of the 'state of affairs' of each sector was achieved through theme development around two key factors: coherence and stability.

Reflection was considered important in challenging myths and misconceptions about the capacity within each sector, and in existing intra-sectoral relations, to sustain stable and coherent inter-sectoral relations. This inclusion of changing relations in ongoing mapping and storying was influenced by the recognition of the importance of the 'space in between' organisations in the collaborative, integrative and partnership rhetoric and in mechanisms of new governance paradigms. The realities of changed relations are best heard directly from those navigating them. Chapter 6, 'Relational Realities', picks up the voices of practitioners, from the empirical work on the *Contracting for Care* project and the empirical study presented in Chapter 1, which, while not silenced in expositions of structural and discursive change, might not have been readily amplified. Structural and discursive changes under managerialist and economic-rationalist reforms had impacted planning,

funding, provision, accountability and regulatory relations. Amidst these multifarious yet diffuse changes, there were three types of experiences of change: the experience of a 'double movement', the experience of 'multiple (and diffuse) centres', and the experience of 'changing networks'.

From 2000, we began to work together on a series of studies of collaborative practices in the third sector. There was a strong influence on this work from Leonard's (1997) analysis of post-modern welfare. In his exploration, Leonard (1997: 86) calls for a distinction to be made between organisation as structure and organisation as process, and in doing so he alerts us to the need to engage in analysis of both the structure of organisations and the processes of organising. Thus, we sought to remain open in our mapping and storying to the diversity and multiplicity of conceptualisations of 'organisation', preferring to remain experiential and emergent, rather than overtly theoretical and *a priori*. This allowed for analysis of and connection between diverse environments, constituencies, behaviours, cultures, structures and processes and their synthesis. Quite paradoxically, these syntheses far too often mapped and storied the loss of diversity, uniqueness and multiplicity that arose through both restructuring and re-ideation.

Our first study, in 2001, was a response to an approach from practitioners who were grappling with a way to organise in order to respond to rural restructuring (Lynn/Earles, 2002). Working alongside the members of a community action group, we engaged in an action-learning process to explore how communities that were experiencing restructuring were organising, and how that might inform reflection on their own ways of organising. From the empirical work, we began grounded theory-building on multi-party collaboration. We realised that, for each place-time context, global and local dynamics would play out differently, but we felt that guiding principles and logics for local ways of organising might emerge. Our theoretical musings are included in the book (Chapter 7, 'Nets-working') as our first foray into shared thinking on 'ways of organising'. Using elements of actor-network theory (Latour, 1993, 1994) and Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) concept of the rhizome, we teased out some of the analytical spaces that opened up from this dialogue to show that these ways of organising are spaces of information flows that are always in the making.

A second study, in 2002, was conducted in response to the needs of a different group of practitioners: human-services providers from non-profit organisations that were experiencing increasingly mandated forms

of collaboration and partnership (Chapter 8, 'Escaping Parochialism'). Again, working alongside practitioners and influenced by cooperative inquiry principles, we engaged in an action-learning process to generate a conceptual framework for collaboration. Dialogues emerged through inquiry processes, where participants walked through and spoke of what they were learning about how to manoeuvre and navigate new organisational and organising landscapes. We shared this part of our journey with Jill Knell, as co-researcher, and the Queensland Department of Families, as sponsor.

We were able to further our grounded theorising across these two action-learning studies to generate principles and logics for transformational collaboration. We recognised that there was an increasing emphasis on transformative collaborative ways that define, differentiate, distinguish and re-member the culture of place – ways that are grounded in the particular soil of the local context. These ways of organising rely on norms, structures and processes that are associated with the third sector, though not always experienced. These were considered 'new' ways of organising because of the vastly different funding regimes and policy environs of the new global and local (dis)orders, not necessarily because they were new models of organising. Our further theoretical musings are included in Chapter 9, 'Transformational Collaboration', as part of our own ongoing collaborative transformation. Our thinking on transformation was influenced by integral theory (Caccioppe, 2000), spiral dynamics (Beck/Cowan, 1996) and spiritual capital (Zohar/Marshall, 2004), and it interacted with Himmelman's ideas on 'collaboration change practice' at the ideological level beyond the instrumental level (Huxham, 1996). Our own theorising took on an integral form and essence, at first unconsciously and then more explicitly. Some of the emerging principles and logics connected with Robyn's earlier use of concepts such as liminality (Turner, 1982) and with ideas from permaculture relating to edge space (Mollison, 1991) and change from below.

At this point, we stepped bravely into a wider reflection on third-sector organisations and organising, and ways of knowing. As authors, we gave ourselves permission to 'think about' rhizomes as a meditative tool to produce the unconscious, and with it new statements and desires for the third sector. This meditative musing is included as the final chapter in this book (Chapter 10, 'Thinking About Rhizomes'). Dichotomous thinking – 'one becomes two' or 'one within or without another' – is a weary kind of material thought that we and others often apply to our



analyses of the third sector. We dissect the sector and its entities into dimensions, factors, elements, characteristics and demographics. We locate the sector within other sectors, and struggle to locate entities within sectors. So we end up with a lot of line-‘trees’ and circle-‘shapes’. These do help us describe the third sector and understand its material workings, but can we know it in other ways too? Law (2004) argues for a methodology that takes us through an experience of a higher order that exists within everything. Rhizomic thinking may be one way we can immerse ourselves in a spiritual method of thought about the third sector. What constitutes a rhizome – what makes something rhizomic – is not form but behaviour. A rhizome (Deleuze/Guattari, 1988) is like a bulb; it is tuber-ish, as opposed to a tuber. A rhizome ‘contains’ – it is not ‘substance’. A rhizome is ‘expression’ – it is not ‘structure’. A rhizome is ‘performance’ – it is not ‘outcome’. Rhizomic thinking focuses us on the ‘between’, the lines of rupture perpendicular to the lines of structure between points – those aspects of the sector that are not ordered but fuzzy, disjunctive, multiple, asymmetrical and transformational. It also focuses us on ‘movement’ – speed and slowness, unformed elements and intensive effects – those aspects of the sector that are not fixed but infinite, non-unifying and non-totalising as mediums of transformation. It makes us meditate on less material meanings – not what the sector is, but what is changing, what is happening, what connections are being made, and what people want it to be.

And then we paused to look back tentatively over the terrain we had traversed. We could see our flow of thought/inquiry change from a focus on form/behaviour through process/culture to ‘being’/consciousness, at all times holding a systemic lens/space. We also glimpsed our focus move from the transactional to the transformative, and our shared action orientation manifest itself in our growing interest in appreciative and learning methodologies. We saw the rupture at which we shifted from potentially becoming enslaved in chronicling ‘disaster’ (from our ideological perspectives) and wallowing in critique, to instead seeking a positive way forward. Not least for our own wellbeing, we recognised the need to change our discourses. We sensed a retrospective coherence and connectivity between empirically distinct yet theoretically evolving pieces of work. We wondered how someone might read this book, whether they would dive into separate studies and embrace their separateness or come along for the journey. So we now invite your unique engagement with this fuzzy, disjunctive, multiple, asymmetrical and transformational assemblage.