Emerging Ecologies of Organisation

Renewing Governance in the Anthropocene

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Author's Statement

Declaration

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Abstract

Organisational governance influences how societies can respond to change and survive. While hierarchical governance is a normative form in industrial-capitalist societies, a growing body of scholarship has argued that the lack of reflexivity inherent in hierarchical relations inhibits the evolution of institutional governance to meet the challenges of the Anthropocene. Hierarchical relations influence individual subjectivities, often limiting the participation and wellbeing of individuals in organisations.

This thesis contributes to an emerging posthumanist imaginary of organisational governance, offering an account of what the shift to non-hierarchical governance sets in motion and what it might make possible in organisations. The movement from 'one voice' of hierarchical ecologies of organisation to 'many voices' distinguish non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation as a site of difference. This short-term, multi-sited ethnography combines multimedia and multisensory data with an interventional ethnographic presence. The four not-for-profit case study organisations are located in wealthy, settler societies: Friends of the Earth Melbourne (Australia), Pachamama Alliance (United States), Enspiral Foundation (Aotearoa-New Zealand) and Sustainable Economies Law Center (United States).

Demonstrating that non-hierarchical governance fosters participants' capacity to engage with more-than-human concerns by developing ecological reflexivity and engendering mutual respect, this thesis extends Joyce Rothschild's theorisation of collectivist-democratic organisations. However, as a paradigmatic movement, becoming-a-non-hierarchical co-leader can be disorientating. Performing governance informed by principles of equality, diversity and inclusion disrupts the familiar binary engrained in leader/follower identities, opening participants to the possibility of peer-to-peer relations. Conditions that nurture a relational culture include restorative practices that enable direct engagement with the emergence of power while reflexively generating self-knowing and collective trust. This thesis demonstrates that becoming self-authorising in a non-hierarchical organisation alters the qualitative experience of work and provides an opportunity to reconceive the potential of working cooperatively in support of human and planetary wellbeing in the Anthropocene.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the Wurundjeri Peoples of the Kulin Nation as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters where I work and live. I pay my respects to the culture of the Wurundjeri Peoples and their Elders past and present. Wurundjeri land has held me in this writing project, both soothing and grounding me when the conceptual challenges of this thesis felt overwhelming. One of my everyday writing and thinking companions has been the magnificent and solitary *casuarina torulosa* in view from my desk. Watching the casuarina's drooping branches move with the wind often brought me into calmness. When my clarity got lost in the enormity of thesis production, being-with the casuarina reminded me to move with external forces rather than to resisting them.

This thesis has been provoked by a persistent yearning to develop my researcher voice and contribute scholarly/practitioner conversations that open possibilities of a more creative and responsive human 'being' in organisational governance. It was embarked upon as a continuation of what I now appreciate has been a lifetime patterning: The praxis between academic learning and work has profoundly altered my purpose, thinking and actions. The imaginary of the non-hierarchical organisation continues to inspire me as an intriguing human potential of vital importance.

Somewhat in parallel with the members of the four case study organisations who have revealed themselves to my inquiry, becoming-a-PhD candidate/academic has been an unfolding journey taking me into territory that has been rewarding, uncomfortable, uncertain and joyful. Thinking about recognising others who have been part of *my* becoming-with a non-hierarchical research project, I want to acknowledge the many different voices that have contributed to my candidature. In a chronological sense, my journey began with many conversations of possibility with my academic friends who gave me the confidence to begin: Thank you Chris Lloyd, Ian Thomas, Jan Allen, Ann Hone, and Colin Hocking, among others.

There are many different types of intensities that emerge and diminish through the process of research and thesis writing. My relationship with my university community, at La Trobe and beyond, and with my supervisors has been critical to the ongoingness of this project and my sense of wellbeing in it. I am deeply grateful for the ongoing intellectual wisdom and emotional holding

A NEW DREAM OF POLITICS

They say there is only one way for politics:

That it looks with cold eyes at the hard world

And shapes it with a ruler's edge.

Measuring what is possible against

Acclaim, support, and votes.

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We are dreaming of a new politics

That will renew the world

Under their weary and suspicious gaze.

There's always a new way,

A better way that's not been tried before.

A way that becomes a fable.

Ben Okri (2021)[1]

This thesis is dedicated to present and emerging organisation participants who, in the spirit of collective renewal, respond to their yearning to work towards the mutual flourishing of human and non-human worlds.

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[1] The first and last stanzas from *A New Dream of Politics*

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Prologue - Discomfort and Awe: A self-reflexive account of shifting identity and voice

This thesis is about non-hierarchical organisational governance. I came to the topic from professional and personal experience in organisations that led me to question the nature of hierarchy and power in organisational governance. This prologue offers insight into that contextual experience, and how it shaped the study and my own ethnographic voice in this thesis, presenting a self-reflexive account of the various ways my identity and experience as a middle-aged, white, upper middle-class settler-Australian woman has influenced this research. An imaginative piece, this prologue provides a more detailed explanation of the multiple contexts informing my researcher's voice by situating myself in the research and exploring some of the ways undertaking this research has both confronted and altered me (Haynes 2012).

I will begin by exploring the various contributions to my voice, its strengths and motivations, including some familial influences, professional and personal experiences that drew me to undertake an organisational ethnography of non-hierarchical governance. Then I reflect how my fieldwork with the case study organisations has disrupted and transformed my identity as an organisational practitioner. The prologue brings attention to a blurring of boundaries between myself as the embedded and interpretive practitioner-consultant and as opposed to the more neutral observer-researcher. It reveals where my personal experience of the non-hierarchical relational dynamic was at times discomforting and where I was moved to awe by the transformative experience of being a participant in a non-hierarchically governed organisation.

Habits of entitlement as a white, upper-middle class Australian settler

My family of origin was infused with the confident certainty of belonging to the dominant culture. And while not self-identified as a 'rich' family, I have come to appreciate that I grew up with considerable material security and the confidence that our place of privilege and comfort was deserved. This sense of entitlement has given my voice strength and blinded me to assumptions of superiority embedded in the atmosphere of my life as a white-skinned, upper-middle class Australian settler.

My father was English born and his economic and social capital generated by the advantages of 19th century British global colonialism. One side lived in India as part of the British Raj, the other were once rich from owning sugar plantations, likely worked by slave labour in the Caribbean. By contrast, my mother's forebears have a lineage that can be traced back to the second convict ship to arrive in Australia. In my mother's family, following one's talent was encouraged. This family retold stories of individual entrepreneurial triumphs highlighting their ability to transform their circumstances with a mix of hard work, passion and talent. Many women in my family have run successful small businesses, such as my great-aunt's hat shop in the prestigious Collins Street in Melbourne from the 1930s-1970s.

The family business of most influence to my identity as an organisational leader was a manufacturing company run by my maternal grandfather and my father from 1947 till its sale in 2003. The company employed up to 150 people supplying the plumbing and building sectors in Australia, New Zealand, North America, Asia and the UK. The journal entry below imaginatively recalls my feelings of entering the alien world of the rubber manufacturing factory as a young girl. This vignette illustrates how my identity as a member of the 'owning' family generated a comforting sense of being both empowered and protected by my lineage:

> As a child I felt the Factory was somehow mine: I was an extension of my parents and all of this was theirs. Our ownership was unspoken, but in fact we lived and behaved with the underlying assumption of authority and power: I could use the material resources as though they were mine. I could walk through the male domain of the factory protected by my name and its relationship with the Bosses - my grandfather Mr George, and my father, Mr David (Houseman 2001, p. 2).

As a normative aspect of my life, it has been easy for me to take for granted the ontological influence of my family's self-confident authority. I belonged to a familial community who, from my perspective, inhabited life being self-assured in their 'right' to assert their voice into the world. Feminist scholar, Sara Ahmed's (2007, p. 156) conceptualisation of whiteness as a "habitual form of inheritance" has helped me understand how as a woman from an upper middle-class Anglo-European settler family, my being in the world is infused with a high degree of confidence.

A member of many NFP organisation boards and having performed in roles of General Manager, Director and Executive Officer, my career reflects how the inherited habits of knowing, being and doing have made becoming an employer, owner, and leader at the apex of an organisational hierarchy a 'natural' step for me. I joined the family business in 1995 as a consultant and as an employee from 2001 to 2007 when I resigned. In 2006 I was described in a corporate performance appraisal as appearing to be 'Six foot tall and bulletproof', I have embodied many of the expected habits of doing/being leadership such as self-assured knowing, poise and decisiveness.

This assertive voice assisted me as an outsider entering organisations in the capacity of practitioner-researcher-consultant undertaking an intense, short-term ethnographic study (Pink & Morgan 2013). It also enabled the assessments employed to create the Reflective Group Conversation with the Sustainable Economies Law Centre (SELC) only a few days after completing the site-based field work as I trusted my interpretation of data from meeting and group observation and interviews. I drew on this assuredness as an organisational leader to identify the emergent key themes from the raw data (Knoblauch 2005).

Why then, considering my confidence as a hierarchical organisational practitioner, would I choose to explore non-hierarchical governance?

The promise of equality and inclusion from the perspective of a white, upper-class feminist woman

Another part of me speaks as a fiery feminist. Feminism transformed my life. It taught me how to theorise my experience of being othered as a woman by illuminating the invisibility of gender-based systems of inequality that exclude women, render our voices less-audible and our experience as less-important than others (Beauvoir 1989; Grieve & Grimshaw 1981). The tension between my identity as a woman and my sense of belonging to an upper-middle 'owning' class was confronted when I worked in the family manufacturing business. To my surprise, I experienced being diminished *because of* my gender. In that moment the male/female binary hierarchy 'trumped' my identification as a family member in the business, and with it the sense of agency and autonomy that I had taken for granted was shaken.

To unpack 'what had happened' I wrote an essay examining gender and power in Australian family businesses (Houseman 2001). In this excerpt called *Jobs for the boys*, I recall the bitterness of powerlessness when my gender was leveraged by my competitor, the 'new Buck', in a way that reduced and separated me as 'other' from my male co-workers:

> The new Buck and I size each other up. Circling. Friend or enemy? I am courted, tested, seduced without physical touch. I hold back, hold out. I know it is not safe to trust him. I negotiate. I thought I was offering, but he was actually taking.

> When at the end of a difficult customer meeting with senior men with whom I have been building relationships for 12 months, the Buck exposes my feminine vulnerability and difference in a joke. My smile is frozen. I flounder. I am shocked by the absolute powerlessness of my femaleness in this moment. I realise how thin the veneer of my 'mateship' is with these men. I am drained by this show of muscle. In this moment, I know I do not have the power or resources to single-handedly combat the Buck's sexist diminishment of me (Houseman 2001, p. 10).

This narrative illustrates the effect of the limiting stereotypes embedded in organisational culture defining women in leadership (Sinclair 2007). My experience in the family business sharpened my sensitivity to the effect of group dynamics in organisation and particularly in the formal context of governance decision-making. Communication patterns of exclusion and denial can feel virtually impossible to challenge without being further diminished through being judged, for example, as 'inappropriately' loud or angry. My thesis can be seen as a theoretical exploration that explores the tension between my inherited comfort with authority and power *and* my inquiry into the possibility of more just, equitable and inclusive governance processes.

Habits of an applied organisational practitioner confronting discomfort and awe

As an organisational practitioner, my insight into assumed authority inherited as an upper-middle class, white Australian, has helped me question the accepted leadership theory that leadership should be undertaken by specialists (Diefenbach 2019). My experience as a woman in

organisational leadership motivates my interest in deconstructing the power of the persistent belief that a 'real' leader is a male and a superior transcendent god-like being (Haraway 1988). This part of me interprets leadership theory and mythology as useful cultural fabrications that serve to maintain the power of existing elites.

However, the habitual certainty of my voice has potentially blurred boundaries between myself as researcher and contradicted my intention to bring an open, participatory stance in my relationships with research participants. Doing this research and engaging with the words of my participants humbled me and revealed some of my blind spots. I was alerted to my lack of awareness by my growing embodied discomfort. From the pit of my gut I realised the anguish of participants who had experienced being silenced in the embedded culture of whiteness which is normative to me and within which they experience being other. With a mix of regret and guilt, I realise that my colour and class related blindness as a researcher and as a practitioner has perpetuated the systemic oppression of others.

As an educator and community activist I have come to this research believing that there *are* energising ways of working together that contribute to the vitality of human and non-human communities on Earth. And I recognise that *my* inherited ways of being, as a comfortable settler-Australian, is part of the problem this thesis is addressing through an empirically validated examination of non-hierarchical organisational governance. As an observer/participant ethnographer in governance meetings my case study organisations I was frequently deeply moved as I witnessed the warmth and care in the interactions between people. In those moments I experienced social relations in organisational life *becoming* infused by the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion in ways that were inviting and pleasurable. It was heart-opening.

Witnessing these organisational communities in their active inquiry to become a non-hierarchically structured community has profoundly altered my organisational imaginary.

Chapter One - Emerging Forms of Collectivist Governance in the Anthropocene

This thesis has been written in response to two persistent problems associated with the accepted logic of organisational governance. Firstly, three decades of organisational research in industrial-capitalist societies has identified low levels of emotional and spiritual health and physical wellbeing among employees (Kahn 1990; McKinnon et al. 2020). "Disengaged" participants (May, Gilson, & Harter 2004) influence the wellbeing of an organisational community (Atkinson et al. 2020), and normative modes of interpersonal organisational engagement have been attributed with generating systemic employee disengagement (Rastogi et al. 2018) and chronic stress and illness (Pfeffer 2018).[2] This feedback suggests that such enduring patterns of disengagement may be produced through the hierarchy of objectives in industrial-capitalist organisational systems where efficiency and profit-maximisation are prioritised over care and wellbeing in society and organisation (Hughes & Barlo 2021).

The second problem emerges from the cumulative effects of a decision-making logic that has designated the "work" of the biosphere as an "externality" to human economies (Costanza et al. 2020; Robèrt, Broman, & Waldron 2004). The hierarchical subordination of nature over humans has brought about the Anthropocene, a new, human-dominated, geological epoch on Earth (Steffen et al. 2011). Marked by increasingly disruptive climate instability, living *with* the Anthropocene confronts human-centred organisational thinking (Chakrabarty 2018). And while the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2022) confirms that human industry is rapidly making the Earth unsustainable, authors note that vested political and economic interests continue to hinder the increasingly urgent transformation of social and economic systems. The Anthropocene then has become an epistemological problem and its geophysical and temporal scales makes governance in the Anthropocene complex and challenging. So much so that historian

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[2] Over time Gallup polls have reported approximately 70% of American employees were either 'not engaged' or 'actively disengaged' at work (Mann & Harter 2016). The results in Australia and Aotearoa-New Zealand are similar (Busby 2018; Human Resources Director 2005).

Dipesh Chakrabarty has asked whether humanity is capable of responding to the Anthropocene by learning to look at the world from non-human points of view (2016, p. 391).

Doubt about human resilience problematises the accepted ways of knowing in organisation which has relied on a linear "cause and effect" methodology to reduce the complexity of Earth's systems from organisational decision-making (Capra & Luisi 2014). Evolving governance to be inclusive of environmental feedback confronts the *exclusion* of the Earth's biosphere from normative governance methods. However, epistemological weakness only partially explains why organisational governance has been unresponsive to the many risks emerging in this epoch. It is not the environmental risks of the Anthropocene *per se* that are the concern of this thesis, but rather the ontology of reason and the mean-ends rationality of industrial-capitalist society that underpins the crisis of the Anthropocene and is problematised as no longer fit for purpose (Plumwood 2013). Thus, the Anthropocene is viewed as a catalyst, exposing the failings of normative organisational ontology as it is reproduced in the everyday work of hierarchically structured organisations.

This thesis engages with the Anthropocene as more-than a physical event, following Gerard Delanty and Aurea Mota (2017, p. 10) who classify the Anthropocene as an "interpretive framework" and a "societal condition" with significant ontological (being) and epistemological (knowing) implications for the "instrumental rationality of modern society". The material and existential complexity of the Anthropocene has prompted a whole system crisis leading scholars (alongside activists, policymakers and others) to re-think accepted methods of governance (Burke et al. 2016; Eckersley 2020; Nightingale et al. 2020; Steffen et al. 2015). To actively acknowledge the interdependence of human systems with the Earth's system, it becomes necessary to integrate consideration of the biosphere's health as an emerging obligation of organisational governance (Birrell & Matthews 2020a). In the examination of the problem of human governance and its contribution to the condition of the Anthropocene, the skill of reflexivity has been identified as a way of thinking together that has the potential to transform society (Allen, Cunliffe, & Easterby-Smith 2019; Dryzek 2016; Dryzek & Pickering 2018; Hammond, Dryzek, & Pickering 2020; Pickering 2019).

Reflexively thinking organisations offer the promise of facilitating a collective transformation by developing the capacity of the group to recognise and respond to the urgencies and uncertainties of Anthropocene. Governance scholar John Dryzek contends that an ecologically oriented reflexivity is an essential virtue for governance in the Anthropocene because it "entails the capacity to *be* something different rather than just *do* something different" (Dryzek 2016, p. 942). The practice of reflexivity is characterised by an organisational culture that is open to questioning, dialogue and critical reflection (Alvesson & Spicer 2012). Yet, Jonathan Pickering (2019) cautions that the promising concept of reflexivity will remain an elusive virtue unless it is supported by practical methods informing how governance is done in organisations.

Governing in the Anthropocene then calls for new cultural 'imaginaries' which might open up possibilities of a different human engagement with the Earth (Purdy 2015); ways of being that are more responsive to the relational and ethical challenges of this moment (Birrell & Matthews 2020b; Haraway 2016; Zylinska 2014). David Wright and colleagues (2013) believe social imaginaries might assist a collective process of cultural readjustment from the dominant imaginary of unlimited economic growth and consumption in industrial-capitalist societies. Victor and Katherine Chen (2021) argue for organisational imaginaries that inspire people to experiment with the many possible configurations of organisation that create meaningful work and have goals beyond economic profit. While Wright and colleagues are clear about the deficiencies of the current social imaginaries, they observe that future imaginaries of organisation have not yet become widely evident.

By exploring different configurations of non-hierarchical governance, this thesis seeks to re-imagine organisational governance *with* the Earth and in so doing, responds to the two distinctly scaled problems of wellbeing in organisation framing this inquiry. As part of the scholarly obligation to expand the organisational system to include Earth's system and to resist the abstract conceptualisation of governance that separates the category of wellbeing from the category of governance, this thesis engages with organisational governance within "social-ecological systems" (Dryzek 2016, p. 943). The expanded scope of organisation in this thesis incorporates consideration of the macro context of the biosphere and the micro perspectives of the individual

and is illustrated in Figure 1. It shows how my investigation of NFP organisation in industrial-capitalist society is conceptualised as a nested system (Koestler 1970), whereby NFP organisations contain the subjective field of individual participants, and exist within the 'invisible' field of the biosphere. Having explained my rationale of including the field of the biosphere I will briefly discuss my rationale for engaging with individual subjectivity in a study of organisational governance.

If wellbeing is imagined as an effect of relationship and practice it can become an indicator towards making healthy and effective organisational governance (Atkinson 2013). The prologue explored how my first-hand experience of governance is informed by interpersonal dynamics that are known subjectively, but constituted systemically through culture, in normative practice and behaviour. Organisational relations affect the formal process of decision-making by limiting and enabling participants. Critical scholars have observed, when the concept of wellbeing is individualised, the occurrence of 'problems' are most likely to be addressed through individual strategies rather than the kind of systemic analysis that this thesis is investigating (see Atkinson 2013).

The field of the biosphere in the Anthropocene epoch

NFP non-hierarchical organisation field in industrial-capitalist society

Subjective field of NFP participant
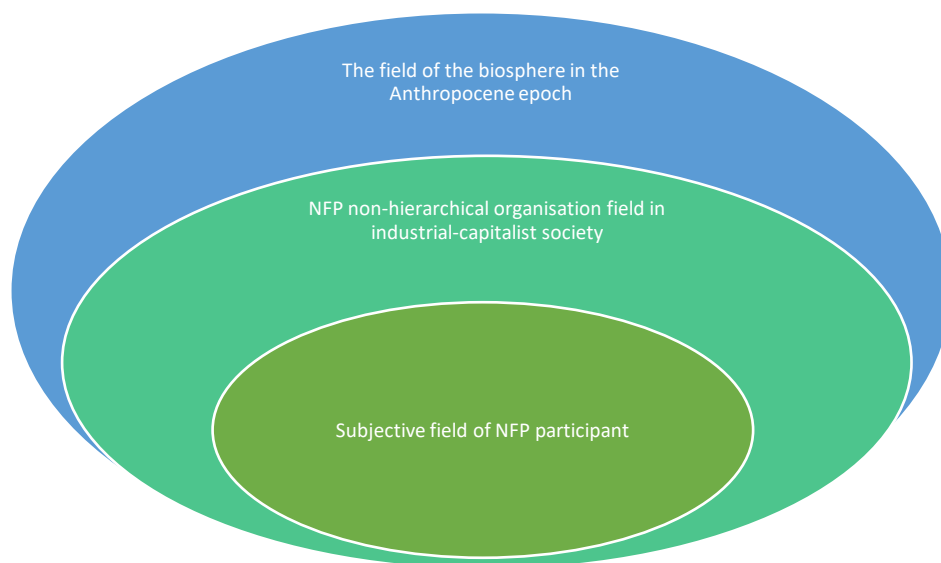
Figure 1: The social-ecological system under investigation

The concept of wellness is intertwined in the literature with an individual's identity, expressed through perception of meaning, satisfaction and purpose; it is seen to encompass the experience of flourishing and an individual's sense that they are meeting their potential through their work (New Economics Foundation 2009; Ruggeri et al. 2020). Therefore, in this study, to investigate participant sense of wellbeing, consideration is given to participants' feelings about themselves, their relationships with co-workers, their relationship with place, their motivations and their sense of purpose as "the modes through which social and ecological life are perceived and rendered meaningful" (Birrell & Matthews 2020b, p. 235). I employed methods involving linguistic and symbolic devices of narrative, metaphor and image in this thesis to amplify participants' embodied feeling response to organisational life (Boje, Oswick, & Ford 2004). My intention is to probe the nature of the relationships between individual sense of meaning, satisfaction and purpose, and forms of community wellbeing in non-hierarchical organisational life (Atkinson et al. 2020).

Engaging with participants' subjective response to organisational governance also contributes to my goal of articulating a different imaginary of organisation. I have drawn on the insights of cultural scholar, Dilip Gaonkar (2002) who explains that imaginaries are known as first-person subjectivities and experienced with creative and symbolic force. Therefore, the discussion chapters (four to seven) explore rich ethnographic data collected through interviews, observation and elicitation techniques of symbolic devices and drawing exercises. Participant's stories and embodied reflection are invited to explore yearnings, feelings of belonging, frustrations and desires that might illuminate the distinctive characteristics of non-hierarchical organisational imaginaries.

Investigating the possibilities of non-hierarchical governance in the Anthropocene

In the context where much Organisational Management and Theory (OMT) literature assumes organisations operate *within* the structural configuration of hierarchy (Parker 2012), this thesis explores what the *absence* of formal structural hierarchy sets in motion and what the practice of non-hierarchical governance might make possible for participants and decision-making in organisation. The organising premise of this thesis is as follows: researching participatory non-profit governance can provide valuable insights into renewing organisational governance by facilitating the development of reflexivity in response to the challenge of social-ecological

wellbeing in the Anthropocene. By exploring the movement from 'one voice' to 'many voices' in governance, this thesis brings greater understanding to the subjective and collective shifts that *might* occur when participants learn to bring their voice into democratic forms of governance (Burns 1994).

This thesis extends the framework of cooperative democratic governance developed by Joyce Rothschild (2016; Rothschild & Whitt 1986a; Rothschild-Whitt 1979),[3] investigating how the prioritisation of relationship and a commitment to the principle of a culture *without* hierarchy might transform the experience and potential of organisational governance. Consistent with Rothschild and Sobering (2021a) I interchange between using 'cooperative', 'collectivist' 'collectivist-democratic' and 'participatory' as descriptors for the non-hierarchical case organisations studied in this thesis. This inquiry explores how the relationally focused practice of non-hierarchical governance changes participants and opens participants to the effects of normative hierarchical systems of governance.

The core aim of this thesis is to collect ethnographic accounts of non-hierarchical governance practice within not-for-profit (NFP) organisation operating in wealthy settler societies in order to: A) inform reflexivity in governance decision-making; B) to theorise NFP governance in the Anthropocene Epoch; and C) to make an intellectual contribution to the field of Organisation and Management Theory (OMT) by offering an empirical institution-based exemplar of research in organisations that have been infrequently considered to date.

Through a focused, short-term, multi-sited ethnographic investigation (Pink & Morgan 2013) of the governance of NFP organisations I explore the lived experience of participants working in non-hierarchically structured organisations. NFP organisations were identified as the most fruitful type of enterprise with which to undertake an exploration of non-hierarchical governance because their more peripheral relationship with bureaucracy and corporate organisation has historically allowed NFP greater freedom to explore more decentralised modes of governance (Rothschild & Whitt

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[3] These dimensions were first described by Joyce Rothschild-Whitt in her 1979 paper and then expanded in her book co-authored with J. Allen Whitt (1986). All further publications are authored as Joyce Rothschild.

1986b). The four organisations which provide the evidentiary basis of this study have consciously adopted a decentralised decision-making structure. They are Friends of the Earth Melbourne in Australia, the Pachamama Alliance and the Sustainable Economies Law Centre in the United States and the Enspiral Foundation in Aotearoa-New Zealand, each organisation will be fully introduced in Chapter Two.[4]

This thesis theorises those four orientations of *ecological thinking*, *relationality*, *reflexivity* and *critical engagement with relations of power* can contribute to transforming ways of knowing/being and doing governance. These orientations will be explored through Rothchild's (1979) eight dimensions of organisation: authority, rules, social control, social relations, recruitment, and advancement, incentive structure, social stratification and differentiation. Further, onboarding is theorised as a ninth dimension of organisation. It is my hope that my thesis will not only contribute to scholarship on non-hierarchically structured organisations, but that it will also energise NFP organisation members to critically reflect upon the possibilities open to them through their governance work in the Anthropocene.

The remainder of this chapter will expand further on the purpose of this thesis, situating myself and my research within contemporary discussions about organisational governance. I begin by offering definitions of key concepts and explaining the questions guiding this inquiry, and then complete the chapter by a survey of existing non-hierarchical NFP organisational literature.

Hierarchy, power and governance in organisation

Framing a study of non-hierarchical governance are overlapping concepts of hierarchy and power in organisational governance. Power is a complex and contested concept which will be examined in detail in Chapter Three, my purpose here is to introduce governance, power, and hierarchy to contextualise the emergence of NFP non-hierarchical organisation being explored in this thesis. The study of governance conceptualises approaches to social coordination and patterns of rule through theory and practice (Bevir 2011). However, the ubiquity of hierarchical systems of

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[4] The organisations gave their consent to be named in this study and individuals gave permission for photos to be published of their drawings, of their participation in the interview and reflective group conversation. Individual contributions are protected by pseudonyms. For more information on ethical considerations see Chapter Two.

authority means that the effects of hierarchy, including the symbolic and practice effects of a hierarchical configuration on organisational governance, are rarely questioned in OMT texts (Parker 2009)

In classical OMT, organisations are conceived as rational and impersonal systems, and the power-to-lead is enhanced by efficient hierarchical lines of authority (Fleming & Spicer 2014). The vertically structured hierarchical design is accepted as the default model of organisation (Hoverstadt 2008). In this context organisational governance is defined as "the framework of roles, relationships, systems and processes within and by which authority is exercised and controlled" to meet organisational objectives (TEQSA 2017). This definition directs the corporate governing body to decide long and short-term strategic directions necessary to achieve institutional goals. The automatic replication of this form appears to confirm the functionalist assumption that hierarchies are *necessary* for organisational success (Anderson & Brown 2010). The universality of the hierarchically structured organisation is sustained through legal systems that require, for example, an association or company to have a hierarchically structured system of governance whereby the board and executive team are responsible for legal oversight (see Australian Government n/d).

The triangular shape of the ideal hierarchical form is represented in a generic organisation chart (see Figure 2). The single structure of hierarchical levels is created through specialisation where 'one person = one task' (Herbst 1976, p. 67).[5] The linear top down direction in Figure 2 marks the ideal flow of authorised power in organisational life (Iannello 1992). Located at the apex of the hierarchy, the authority of the executive leader and board have been likened to an 'engine room' providing the generative force underlying the system's functionality (Draman 2016). The principles of 'command and control' authorise management and leadership who make rules that enforce their authority and uphold boundaries between social levels (Diefenbach 2020).

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[5] Reference modernised from "one man - one task".
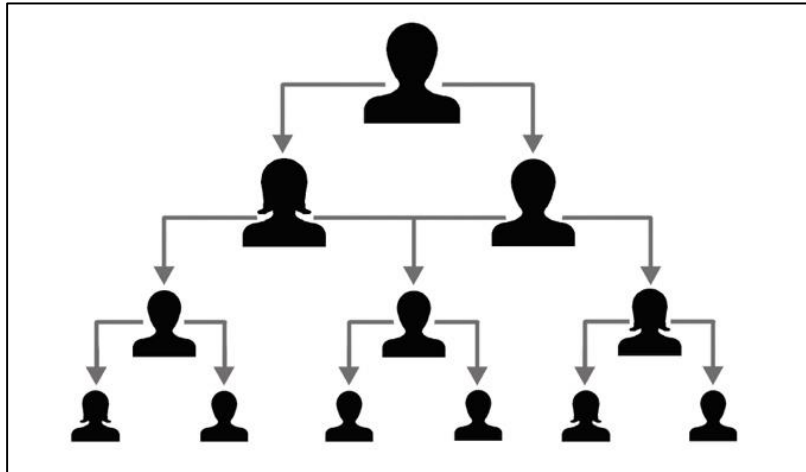
Figure 2: Hierarchical form of organisation (Source: Houseman)

An advantage of hierarchical structured governance is that it enables strong organisations (Hanusch & Biermann 2020). However, the moral and ethical environmental implications of a hierarchical system that dislocates *means-ends* from *substantive-ends* been criticised by sociologist Rogers Brubaker (2013, pp. 39–42) who observes that "formal rationality, by no means guarantees substantive rationality" and furthermore, "the modern capitalist order maximizes the values of calculability, efficiency and impersonality but is deeply inhospitable to egalitarian, fraternal and caritative values". As discussed, the Anthropocene epoch has amplified the dangerous consequences of a rationality that disregards the substantive outcomes of human actions upon the biosphere (Folke et al. 2021).

By bringing focus onto the substantive outcomes of normative hierarchical governance, critical social theorists have politicised the universality of hierarchy and traditional characterisation of hierarchical power relations as neutral and objective (Acker 1990; Bookchin 1991; Diefenbach 2013). Feminist economist and sociologist, Claudia von Werlhof (2013), locates hierarchically patterned relations at the centre of the capitalist patriarchal onto-epistemic formation, whereby women, people in the global south, and other marginalised groups, including nature, are dominated by an ethos of social division, material transformation and destruction. Organisational scholar, Thomas Diefenbach (2013, p. 4) explains that hierarchy relies on social stratification to maintain hierarchical relations based on difference;

(Hierarchy) *primarily* means the creation and maintenance of unequal social relationships between people at dyadic, group, organisational, and societal levels. Hierarchy *systematically* enables and guarantees unequal distribution of and access to institutions and resources, power differentials and opportunities, privileges and prerogatives, and tasks and duties.

A consequence of institutionalised power differentials is a system where inequality between people and things is normalised in daily routines. The hierarchies set in place in formal power relations, such as the entrenched leader-follower binary (Gronn 2011), are replicated in a myriad of informal rules, cultural symbols, beliefs, and normative expectations. The habits and identities associated with leaders and followers have helped the ideological justification of the dominance of a power elite that has proven to be resistant to challenge and critique (Diefenbach 2019). A pattern arguably supported through the disciplinary-based dislocation of governance from cultural critiques of unequal power differentials in hierarchical relations.

Governance is a word that has almost become ubiquitous in circumstances where better processes of social control and management are desired. A survey of governance literature reflects a fluid and varied understanding of the concept, depending on application and circumstance and encompassing nation states, networks, markets and international institutions (Ruhanen et al. 2010). In a post-modern decentring of power (Ansell & Torfing 2016), a process of "hybridising" governance has been interpreted as occurring when the horizontal forms, characteristic of networks and markets, are incorporated with the vertically structured hierarchical nation states (Bevir 2011).

Distributed structures of teams and hybrid forms of organisation were initially thought capable of transforming hierarchical relational power dynamics and enabling more employee participation and motivation (Casey 1999). However, rather than being evidence of a weakening of the hold of hierarchy as the dominant organisational imaginary, hybrids have been discerned as evidence of the renewal, or evolution of hierarchical rule (Lynn 2011). Empirical research suggests that *if*

hierarchical social relations associated with gender, class and race remain intact, existing top down power relations will persist (Hales 2002; Ollilainen & Rothschild 2001).

The focus of this thesis, NFP non-hierarchical governance, is far removed from the literature theorising institutional forms of governance, and yet the *ubiquity* of hierarchical models of authority demonstrates its conceptual resilience and its embeddedness in industrial-capitalist systems of rule. This interpretation is arguably supported by Patricia Nickel (2007) who notes that the ontology of the industrial-capitalist state is characterised by a close relationship between the hierarchical form and concepts of power, ideology and capitalism. Human geographers, Gerda Roelvink and colleagues (2015) have observed that the establishment of more diverse economies, such as collectivist forms of organisational governance, is more challenging because the hierarchical form of organisation is the standard. Earth Systems Governance scholars Frederic Hanusch and Frank Biermann (2020, p. 20), connect normative governance epistemologies *with* the destabilisation of Earth's systems and identify hierarchical forms of authority as a component of this destructive epistemology:

> Strict hierarchy […] is incompatible with a world where planetary health and democracy need to reinforce each other […] decision-making procedures in hierarchic organizations of great longevity are guided by timeless, often inhuman and undemocratic, standards of behaviour (Hanusch & Biermann 2020, pp. 31–32).

Alternatives to a hierarchically structured organisation and society focus on principles of diversity and egalitarianism and freedom from domination (see Escobar 2018; Heckert 2013; von Werlhof 2013). Hanusch and Biermann (2020) advocate developing more democratic forms of governance towards renewing the practice of governance with a stance of planetary stewardship. Imagining a society beyond hierarchy Purser and colleagues (1995) describe a movement from a 'linear anthropocentric' to an 'ecocentric' perspectives; Krippner (1991) and others (Capra & Luisi 2014; Sterling 2003; Wheatley 2006), explore the shift from a mechanistic to a holistic worldview. Challenging the orthodoxy of hierarchy, some cultural theorists have located hierarchy within a developmental schema (see Gebser 1986; Laloux 2014). Otto Scharmer (2009), for example,

provides descriptions of the system conditions that will characterise organisations that are evolving away from the rigidity of hierarchy towards more decentralised networks and co-created ecosystems.

The persistence of hierarchically structured relations across organisational forms in society explains the breadth of the conceptual challenge of transforming governance in the Anthropocene. And yet it is the potential created by the *absence* of hierarchy that is central to the non-hierarchical impulse being explored through collectivist-democratic patterns of leadership and social coordination.

Posthumanist conception of organisation as dynamic and relational

A difference between the approach to governance taken in this thesis and other organisational studies is my use of a posthumanist framework. Posthumanism acknowledges *complexity* of human systems (such as governance) and highlights *relationships* between social, economic, ecological and political systems (Cudworth & Hobden 2011a), and it *decentres* the human by acknowledging human interdependence with the non-human world, bringing attention to the specificities of embodied life (Roelvink, St. Martin, & Gibson-Graham 2015). Described as a "mobile term" posthumanism enables a "constellation of theories" (Taylor & Hughes 2016, p. 6) which, in this thesis includes feminist and critical organisational theory and complexity theory that will be used in Chapter Three to delineate my approach to non-hierarchical governance practice and decentre normative conceptions of organisation. The intent to interrupt organisational norms is supported by my research design, where, following posthuman ethnographer Lindsay Hamilton (2017, p. 198), I have selected methods intended to disrupt the primacy of "hierarchy and binary definitions", and "open" knowledge making to ontologies beyond rational, self-conscious Cartesian subject.

Organisation is imagined as a vital force that iteratively shapes the lives of the participants and their community, and is shaped by the action and intention of both participants and the human/non-human community wherein they are situated (Marshall & Connor 2016). Following Chen (2018), I engage with each case study organisation as an active force that affects what is possible for the

participants, and myself as researcher. Organisations are imagined as *living* within, and contributing to, an ever-changing human/non-human web of known and unimagined relationships (Haraway 2016). Drawing on systems thinker Gregory Bateson's (1972, p. 489) framing of the ecology of human systems as "the study of the interaction and survival of ideas and programs […] in circuits", this thesis uses ecology as a central metaphor to distinguish the continuum between on one end, *emerging non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation* and on the other, *dominant hierarchical ecologies of organisation*. Ecologies are complex because they are alive and they are always in motion (Capra 2005). I will examine the relationship *between* ideas informing non-hierarchical governance and their connection with participants' embodied and "felt sense" (Gendlin 1997) of doing governance.

Governance is envisaged as a dynamic, relationally directed, decision-making process, encapsulated in this adapted definition by Jan Kooiman and colleagues (2005, p. 17):

> The whole of interactions taken to solve [organisational] problems and to create [organisational] opportunities, including the formulation and application of principles guiding those interactions and care for [people, organisations, things and environments] that enable and control them.

A posthumanist approach brings greater attention to the interdependencies between the parts of the complex system within which each NFP organisation exists (Cudworth & Hobden 2011b). A short-term ethnographic methodology (Pink & Morgan 2013) supports this exploration of what non-hierarchical governance 'is', what it 'does' and how it is 'known' when constituted in organisation.

Two overarching questions have guided the investigation:
1. What do emergent non-hierarchical systems set in motion?
2. What does the practice of non-hierarchical governance make possible in organisations?

These two questions focus on the dynamic aspects of 'making' governance in the four non-hierarchical organisational communities. These questions signal my interest in the potential 'what is emerging', 'what is happening' and 'what is possible' in organisational governance. Drawing

inspiration from the scholarship of J. K. Gibson-Graham (2014, 2006) and Donna Haraway (2016), this research is offered to enhance non-hierarchical governance as a site of difference. To frame the key theoretical assumptions informing this study, I will share how my professional and personal experience have influenced this research.

A personal account: On power, leadership, gender, and a shifting researchers' voice

My ability to conduct an intense, short-term ethnographic (STE) study over four sites in three countries has been influenced by my life-experience as feminist who is a middle-aged, white, upper middle-class settler-Australian woman. The Prologue provides a self-reflexive account of my own messy relationship with hierarchical power relations and authority in organisational governance. As a self-reflexive ethnographer I have sought to become aware of my voice and its effect. Engaging reflexively with my sense-making and my relationships with the participants in each organisation brings another layer of emotional work (Langmead 2017a).

My approach has been informed over two decades of work in organisational governance as board member, executive director, employee, and consultant and this influenced my interest in collectivist governance, as well as the chosen research design and my interpretation of data (Haynes 2012). Most of my previous work took place within the accepted practice paradigms of dominant ecologies of organisation (e.g., a hierarchically structured organisation governed by an executive team and board) located in settler societies. I have been part of small to medium enterprises (SME) including an Aotearoa-New Zealand based publicly listed corporation, an Australian privately-owned family business, a cooperative, departmental bureaucracies and charitable non-profit associations and companies.

The Prologue brought attention to a blurring of boundaries between myself as the interpretive practitioner-consultant, and as the more neutral observer-researcher: My navigation of this dynamic is explored further in Chapter Two. Growing up in a culture of a successful family business contributed to my comfort with the identity of owner and my taken for granted sense of personal power and autonomy. I have drawn on Ahmed's (2007, p. 156) conceptualisation of whiteness as a "habitual form of inheritance" to help understand how as a woman from an upper middle-class Anglo-European settler family, my being is infused with a high degree of hereditary

confidence. My career reflects how the inherited habits of knowing, being and doing have made becoming an employer, owner and leader at the apex of an organisational hierarchy a 'natural' step.

Working in the family business gave me experience as a leader which, for women in corporate or bureaucratic contexts of my generation in Australia, is harder to achieve (Sinclair 1998). My 'directive' voice assisted me as an outsider entering organisations in the capacity of practitioner-researcher undertaking a data-intense STE study, where unlike conventional long-term ethnographies, the ethnographer seeks to "implicate herself at the centre of the action, right from the start" (Pink & Morgan 2013, p. 355). It also enabled the assessments employed to create the Reflective Group Conversation with the Sustainable Economies Law Centre (SELC) only a few days after completing the site-based fieldwork as I trusted my intuitive interpretation of data from meeting and group observation and one on one interviews. I drew on this innate sense of assuredness to identify the emergent key themes from the raw data.

I have been motivated to write this thesis because each organisation I have worked in, has been limited by normative practices of governance. For example, I found that in a commercial context changing processes to improve environmental health was difficult when environmental initiatives were often positioned as trade-offs against the primary goal of profit maximisation. As a woman leader I experienced being disempowered and isolated knowing that the gendered stereotypes defining leadership created a double bind whereby speaking out is likely to be interpreted as a 'complaint' which would only prove my unsuitability to be a leader (Sinclair 2007).

My sensitivity to the influence of group dynamics on the wellbeing of organisational participants has motivated my investigation into the more subtle effects of social interaction that perpetuate systemic inequalities based on gender, class and race through, for example patterns of exclusion, silence and denial. Embedded in the organisational culture, these injustices are virtually impossible to challenge without being further excluded. Following feminist organisational scholars (Acker 2006; Fletcher 2004; Haynes 2008; Hearn & Collinson 2018), in this thesis I have sought to disrupt the excluding effects of the abstract technical-legal language shrouding much governance

discourse and observe whether the absence of formal leader/follower relationships in non-hierarchies exposes an internalisation of the superior/inferior pattern in an individual subjectivity.

This research can be seen as an expression of the tension between my inherited comfort with authority and power *and* my commitment to practice being that might generate a more just, equitable and inclusive collective mode of being together. As an organisational practitioner, my insight into assumed authority inherited as an upper-middle class, white Australian, has helped me question the accepted leadership theory that leadership must be undertaken by (trained) specialists (Diefenbach 2019).

Distinguishing emerging non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation as a site of difference

This thesis is not a comparative study of hierarchical and non-hierarchical governance. However, to enhance non-hierarchies as a site of difference, the culture and participant experience of the emerging non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation will be differentiated from accepted values and norms associated with dominant or normative ecologies of organisation. I understand normative to be the "deeply embedded" ideals and values that have been naturalised and are embedded in the behavioural expectations, rewards and rules associated with organisational governance, leaders and followers (Randles & Laasch 2016, p. 55).

The power of normative values is evident in their frequent repetition in literature and repetition in daily practice as that which is "normal", as the accepted "standard", or "the right way" and the "universal model" (Nayar 2014). In organisations, normative ideals are evident in models, methods and metrics used in organisational management. Normative ideals are often reflected in the profiles of people selected, or not selected, for governance and leadership roles. Normative standards are not fixed: they evolve and adapt to reflect changed societal conditions, such as changing normative standards informing social relations related to gender, class and race for example.

The subtle but authoritative effect of normative imaginaries of hierarchical organisational governance and leadership has been attributed to their embeddedness within hegemonic systems of ideas. Queer theorist Jack Halberstam (2011, p. 17), explains the power of hegemony in the

"interlocking system of ideas which persuades people of the apparent 'rightness' of any given set of often contradictory ideas and perspectives". Feminist theorists, among others, have sought to unsettle the rightness of normative ideals, for example by critiquing the "false universality" of liberal democratic systems and masculine norms (Braidotti 2011, p. 276). Instead of abstracting the particular to a general principle, feminist and queer theorists offer more concrete, situated and embodied explanations that validate particular situated subjectivities, rather than substantiating a stronger generalised theory (Halberstam 2011). Therefore, to ground normative expressions of governance as an abstract and generalised theory, this thesis will juxtapose the accepted concepts and practices associated with dominant hierarchical organisation *with* particular and situated instances in the daily work of the case study organisations (Haraway 1988).

The not-for-profit collectivist organisation

Having delineated the scope of this thesis, I will contextualise collectivist-democratic organisations in NFP literature. NFP organisations are legally formed to deliver public benefit. NFP organisational theorist, Helmut Anheier (2014), uses the term 'non-profit' to describe private, non-profit distributing, self-governing, voluntary organisations with a rich history of social policy and practice development. With their orientation towards 'improving' society, NFP have been linked with movements of protest, grassroots activism, political and social change (Anshelm & Hultman 2014; Chen 2016; Dupuits 2016; Pateman 1989; Sosa-Nunez & Atkins 2016). Participatory forms of organisation are a particular category of research within the NFP field. However, because these organisations have been positioned as experimental and idealist (Parker 2014), research of NFP participatory governance remains a relatively isolated area of investigation (Cornwell 2012; Leach 2013; Polletta 2014a; Rothschild & Stephenson 2009).

Understanding how collectivist-democratic organisations fit into the broader cultural field is one valuable dimension of research; alternative forms of organisation have been theorised as emergent responses to the frustrations associated with low levels of employee control and lack of voice in bureaucratic-hierarchical systems (Rothschild & Russell 1986). Historically, collective experiments with governance have emerged in waves, often in response to social change movements. Each period of situated non-hierarchically governed organisation has had different

enabling conditions (Rothschild & Whitt 1986a). The Occupy movement and the World Social Forum (WSF) provided a new generation of activists with opportunities to prefigure non-hierarchical governance guided by the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion (Maeckelbergh 2014). Darcy Leach (2013) reflects that until Occupy, prefigurative social change had not been focused on governance as a method of distributive justice.

Within the NFP organisational scholarship an emerging body of research has investigated NFP as sites of potentially radical forms of organisational democracy (Haedicke 2012; Shah et al. 2018). In their recent book, Chen and Chen (2021) observe that while a wide range of alternative economic models of organisation continue to emerge, relatively few scholarly studies outside the small niche of NFP scholarship discuss these valuable alternatives. The desire for democratic self-determination is proposed as a human "yearning" by Rothschild and Max Stephenson (2009) who argue that the emergent imaginary of collectivist organisation creates new possibilities for organisations committed to the common good.

However, rejecting hierarchy and developing governance with "an ethic of voice and dignity for all" (Rothschild 2021, p. 297) by embracing the non-hierarchical ideal of a participatory culture is recognised as a challenging and ongoing task (Leach 2013). To review this field I will begin by reviewing research arguing to legitimise non-hierarchical systems of governance, before outlining their founding values, distinguishing practices and emergent challenges.

Theorising non-hierarchical organisations as exemplars of a substantive-rational ideal typology

When Rothschild (1979) began her research on the emerging category of collectivist-democratic organisations, she could not have anticipated the extent to which these organisations would have proliferated and diversified in the following decades (Rothschild 2016). In the absence of an appropriate typology to theorise participatory forms of organisation such as churches in sociological theory, Roberta Lynn Satow (1975) proposed a fourth ideal type of legitimate authority. Rothschild (1979) followed this impetus by aligning participatory-democratic organisations with Weber's (1968) *substantive-rational* ideal-typology, which she renamed, more descriptively as "collectivist-democratic" and more recently as a "cooperative-democratic" and "participatory-democratic" type of organisation (Rothschild 2016). Rothschild pointed to the

theoretical weakness whereby sociological frameworks were unable to conceptualise organisations beyond hierarchical models, stating that "collectivist organisations should not be assessed as failures to achieve bureaucratic standards they do not share, but as efforts to realise wholly different values" (1979, p. 525).

The substantive-rational ideal-type of authority is expressed through NFP or charitable organisations where decision-making rationality is motivated by, and connected with, a particular substantive end, belief, or value. Rothschild distinguished these collectively governed organisations by their refusal to use "centralised authority or standardised rules to achieve social control" (Rothschild-Whitt 1979, p. 514). In a recent interview, Rothschild (2021) reflected on the challenge of even *imagining* organisational governance outside the normative Weberian typology of a rule-bound hierarchy in the 1970s. In the excerpt below, Rothschild recalls that it was inconceivable that collective organisations could "work" without a hierarchical system of authority:

> I knew these new "collectives" were important insofar as they were seeking to do what Max Weber had said was impossible in a modern society: build organizational realities that were not hierarchical and not rule-bound. But how could they make that work? I had to observe for a long time in order to learn what organizational practices they would develop to replace bureaucratic controls, and what organizational conditions supported or undermined their democratic and egalitarian yearnings (Rothschild 2021, p. 295).

Rothschild's typology established participatory NFP organisations as a viable alternative to "bureaucratic-hierarchical" forms of organisation. To illuminate what she described as "rare and extreme" forms of organisation designed to operate "without domination", Rothschild (1979, p. 512) compared collectivist organisations with normative bureaucratic-hierarchical organisations along the eight dimensions of authority, rules, social control, social relations, recruitment and advancement, incentive structure, social stratification and differentiation. Within a collectivist-democratic logic the legitimacy of a decision is determined by the combination of equal participation and the inclusion of the diversity of participants in decision-making (Rothschild

2016). The key elements of a democratic organisation have been described (Diefenbach 2019, p. 553; Melman 2001, p. 272; Rothschild-Whitt 1979, p. 512) as being collectively owned, managed and controlled; using democratic decision-making where all members have equal rights and opportunities to participate; and being framed by a non-hierarchical system of relationships i.e., there are no formal hierarchical superior-subordinate relationships.

After forty years of research there is significantly more academic understanding about the distinctive rationales, practices and structural arrangements that support non-hierarchical organisations and there is greater appreciation of the different enabling conditions, and the strengths and vulnerabilities of collectivist forms of organisation (Rothschild 2016). The distinctive values and practices generated by collectivist-democratic organisations have been documented through a growing field of research investigating non-hierarchical forms of NFP organisation, as these recent volumes attest (Barrett Cox 2021; Blasi, Freeman, & Kruse 2017; Chen 2016, 2012; Cnaan & Milofsky 2018; Cornwell 2012; Hoffmann 2016; Leach 2016; Meyers & Vallas 2016; Polletta 2021; Scoones et al. 2015; Smith 2008; Sobering 2019a).

Reconceptualising collective ability to participate in governance

The NFP collectivist scholarship has illuminated some of the persistent conceptual barriers to recognising non-hierarchical structures as valid systems of authority. In her critique of classical democratic theory, Carole Pateman (1970) argues *against* the separation of the ideal of democracy from the principles of participation and freedom, suggesting that the 'ordinary' person is intellectually and emotionally capable of greater involvement in democratic processes. Pateman's (1970, p. 105) observation that "we learn to participate by participating" challenges OMT theorising of leaders as a superior category of person (Bass 1985; Yukl 2002). Thus, the possibility of viable, cooperative organisations/persons confronts the individualist narrative of humans as self-interested and competitive.

The non-hierarchical ideals of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) 'troubles' the hierarchical imaginary in the sense that it disrupts it's patterning (Kumashiro 2001). In a hierarchically structured industrial-capitalist culture, collective-democratic organisations stand out because they are guided by a mindset that trusts in the collective intelligence: "let members discover the "best",

the wisest, or the right decision" (Rothschild 2016, p. 57). In practice this has been observed as a "focus on learning-through-doing, and the importance of day-to-day interaction and in-depth engagement to decision-making processes" (Langmead 2017a, p. 208). Demonstrating that participants of collectively governed organisations are recompensed by being personally empowered through work that is emotionally rewarding, Pateman (1970) and others have shown that non-hierarchical organisations can develop the capacity of the whole organisation (Beeman et al. 2009).

However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, imaginaries of organisational governance have normalised hierarchical social relations and evidence that structures other than hierarchy are effective have been systemically discounted. Rothschild and Leach (2008, pp. 348–9) bemoan the effect of influential organisational theorists such as Weber (1968) and Robert Michels (1962) who have "set in motion a source of fundamental intellectual despair" by justifying bureaucratic-hierarchical logic as the default model of organisational governance.

The fear of the disruptive power of egalitarianism and the degeneration thesis have been proposed as two contradictory, but persistent conceptual barriers to the legitimisation of participatory models of organisation. The work of political scientist Joseph Schumpeter (1943) theorised the instability of capitalism through the domination of the intellectual class interested in egalitarian social values (Caeldries 1993). Schumpeter's hypothesis that egalitarian forms of participation would lead to the destruction of the capitalist system is recognised by Rothschild (2016; Rothschild & Whitt 1986a) and Pateman (1970), as setting up a misleading, but influential conflation of participatory democratic governance with socialism.

The concept of an 'iron law of oligarchy' (1962), asserts that democratic models of organisation will eventually yield to an oligarchy of self-interested elite. The 'degeneration thesis' has been applied to cooperative models of organisation to predict their inevitable dissolution into the control of an oligarchy of self-interested elites (Cornforth 1995; Webb & Webb 1920). The degeneration thesis is being contested by several NFP researchers. Ethnographer, Kiri Langmead (2017b) argues that ongoing individual-collective alignment with democratic principles, becomes an important regenerative process in worker cooperatives. In their longitudinal study of the industrial scale

Mondragon cooperative, Ignacio Bretos and colleagues (2020) contextualise episodes of degeneration within cycles that include new growth and the renewal of democratic processes.

Rejecting the inevitability of the decline into oligarchy, Diefenbach (2019) cautions against hierarchical specialisation that differentiates between equals creating stratification, an observation that invites consideration of the interaction between everyday governance practices and policy in collectivist organisations.

Sustaining non-hierarchical social relations of equality, diversity, and inclusion

The practice of non-hierarchical governance provides scholars with different ethnographic contexts within which they can examine how social relations reproduce systemic inequalities (see Borkman 2006; Meyers & Vallas 2016; Rothschild & Leach 2008; Sobering 2019a). Pay inequality has been clearly linked with social stratification (Avent-Holt & Tomaskovic-Devey 2019) and the reproduction of intersectional social inequalities in hierarchically structured organisations (Kelley & Evans 1993; Meyers & Vallas 2016; Oseen 2016). Anthropologist and anarchist activist David Graeber (2002, p. 72) expounds the performative value of prefigurative politics commenting that "It's one thing to say, 'Another world is possible'. It's another to experience it, however momentarily".

To sustain equality between participants, co-operative organisations have developed a myriad of relational processes. Removing the controls created by hierarchical systems of rule requires collectively run organisations to engage with power between members in an overt manner, noted as an iterative process of learning by doing (Maeckelbergh 2011). Langmead describes the development of "democratic subjectivities" through the collaborative acts involved in non-hierarchical governance (2017b, p. 91). Investigating the different ways participants develop their capacity to engage in self-governance, Rothschild and Leach (2008) provide empirical examples showing how processes of collective dialogue can develop the interpersonal skills required in non-hierarchical governance.

Three ideal-types of organisational culture are proposed by Rothschild and Leach (2008) to explain the diversity of engagement with conflict in participatory organisations. On one end of the spectrum are the "fight cultures" where participants actively address the emergence of power. Fight cultures are direct in the manner in which they 'call out' perceived imbalances of power. Participants might experience fight cultures as both combative and energising. By contrast, "avoidance cultures" have a low tolerance for conflict. When conflict is avoided, direct confrontation is shunned, and concentrations of informal power may emerge. The ideal middle, ground Rothschild and Leach (2008) identify, is an aspirational "culture of candour" which could be seen as an active and calm approach to engaging with conflict:

> Informal power hierarchies and domineering behaviour are challenged as soon as they are detected (which because of their heightened vigilance will be almost immediately); and conflict is handled in a way that it does not lead to hurt feelings or demolished people and participants do not experience the discussion atmosphere as unpleasant (Rothschild & Leach 2008, p. 355).

Chen (2016) suggests that opening collectively governed organisations to greater diversity requires participants to discern how to be radically inclusive and to give feedback that is respectful of the collective and the individual. The cultural homogeneity that has been required to cohere collective organisations has been seen as a limitation that reduces the potential of building non-hierarchies to industrial scale organisations (Rothschild & Whitt 1986a).

The expectation of personal commitment, and the high level of emotional intensity and moral engagement required of participants has also been identified as a barrier to the proliferation of non-hierarchically structured organisations (Hoffmann 2016; Polletta 2021; Sobering 2021a). Empirical studies demonstrate an almost alchemic relationship between the experience of speaking, and of being valued and heard in non-hierarchical governance (Beeman et al. 2009). Participants joining collectivist organisations learn how to work in an environment, which Rothschild (2016) discerned is characterised by a movement towards collective *discovery*, rather than the normative organisational goal of stability.

Investigating emotion and loyalty in organisational life, Elizabeth Hoffman (2016, 2006), demonstrated that participants in non-hierarchical organisations had a greater sense of allegiance and were more personally invested in the wellbeing of the organisation and its community than hierarchical equivalents were. Members of participatory organisations have been shown to voluntarily take responsibility for "collective emotional labour" (Hochschild 2012) through acts of care and stewardship, such as routinely 'checking in' on each other. In her study of emotional dynamics in collectivist workplaces, Katherine Sobering (2021a) suggests that subjective experiences of work were positively transformed through participants' increased sense of personal ownership and satisfaction.

These studies illuminate the distinct aspects of emerging ecologies of organisation whereby the focus on relational quality in non-hierarchical cultures is supported by an epistemology that embraces diversity of perspectives and is invested in sustaining openness to the principle of participation. Rather than a focus on rules and order familiar in hierarchical organisations, the commitment to inclusive participation necessitates ongoing processes that will maintain horizontally organised relations of 'power-with' as distinct from a hierarchical 'power-over' relationship (Perrow 1986). Leach (2013) describes this as the work of sustaining a "tyrannyless" organisation. The focus on process can generate greater inclusivity and facilitate highly efficient project implementation (Polletta 2021; Rothschild & Leach 2008).

Building an evidence base of viable alternatives to the bureaucratic-hierarchical organisation through ethnographic studies of participatory organisation continues to be an important task (Chen & Chen 2021). Prefiguring includes reconceptualising the language of governance to reflect values of inclusion and non-hierarchy, for example, meetings were no longer 'chaired' and were facilitated instead. Applying the principle of equality can change organisations. Equal pay policies have enabled a greater diversity of participants into governance roles, including women, people of colour and people with no formal education or experience in leadership (Walker 2004). The practice of consensus decision-making is viewed as an enactment of the ideal of equality in governance (Iannello 1992).

Thesis outline

Having introduced the key thematic focus, the influence of my ethnographic voice and broad theoretical stance at the core of my study, I now wish to zoom out to give an outline of the remainder of the chapters contained in this thesis. Chapter Two, *Intense Focus: A Short-term, multi-sited Ethnographic Study,* is divided into two distinct parts. The first explains my rationale for using short-term ethnography (STE) as a methodology. The second part introduces the four case study organisations and discusses the methods used in the multi-sited fieldwork. This chapter examines why extending organisational ethnography beyond the confines of logical discursive modes of propositional knowing is an important contribution to theorising non-hierarchical governance as a site of difference. I illustrate how individual methods were designed to stretch common methodological boundaries by integrating experiential, multimodal, and collaborative research methods. The ethical considerations are explored to give a clear explanation of the ethnographic methodology used in this thesis.

In Chapter Three, *Distinguishing Non-hierarchical Ecologies of Organisation,* inventive theoretical connections are made between critical, analytical, and mythical perspectives. To disrupt the bias of the normative organisation beyond the limits of bureaucratic-hierarchical thinking I explore the efficacy of different combinations of theoretical tools capable of understanding change in organisational practice and addressing the persistence of dualisms influencing organisational culture. I distinguish different levels or orders of change in organisational governance to examine the potential of learning and change in governance, noting that the processes of second and third-order governance enable collective reflexivity and ecological thinking.

In Chapter Four, *Authority and Rules: Authorising Many Voices to Govern,* I investigate non-hierarchical epistemology via the practices of consensus in FoEM, consent-based decision-making in SELC and the advice process in Pachamama Alliance. I demonstrate how goals of equality and respect for diversity can disrupt the positional authority from 'one voice' in normative hierarchically structured organisation to be inclusive of 'many voices'. Becoming a self-authorising member in SELC, FoEM and Pachamama Alliance with legitimate 'power-to' participate in governance is shown to be both empowering and disorientating. I show that this

paradigmatic movement sets in motion a subjective transformation as participants adjust to the mix of responsibility and autonomy and learn to be self-directed.

In Chapter Five, *Advancement, Incentives, Recruitment and Onboarding: Becoming-a-non-hierarchical Co-leader,* I explore what becomes possible for organisational culture when there is no ladder to climb. The effect of FoEM and SELC's equal pay policy is explored to understand how it reframes the concept of incentives at work and transforms social relations. The wide range of social, emotional, and spiritual incentives reported by participants in FoEM, SELC, Pachamama Alliance and Enspiral is examined. Recruitment is investigated as a mutual assessment of a participant's readiness to engage with the challenging and often transformative experience of 'power-with' through becoming-a-non-hierarchical co-leader in a hierarchical society. As a paradigmatic movement, onboarding is seen to set in motion processes of self-discovery and relationship building.

In Chapter Six, *Reconfiguring Social Relations and Social Control: The Power of Circles and Belonging,* explores how the ontology of a non-hierarchical organisation is generated. An authentic self-expression and experience of vital reliance on others in the case study organisations is shown to strengthen the organisation's relational fabric. The importance of belonging in the uncertainty of the Anthropocene is revealed in the archetypal imagery selected by participants. SELC's informal 'culture of kindness' is examined as a replacement of formal systems of managerial control. The influence of the shape of the circle on participatory governance is examined variously as a configuration for practice, a model for process, a metaphor for equality and inclusion and an archetype that evokes wholeness and unity. I explore how within the configuration of a circle, decision-makers nurtured an inclusive culture where diverse ways of being were able to be welcomed and respected.

In Chapter Seven, *Social Stratification and Differentiation: Recognising Difference and Renewing Governance,* the cultural conditions that nurture a non-hierarchy are explored through examination of discourses of conflict and power. Participants in SELC, Enspiral and Pachamama Alliance reflect on the 'difference' created by the unique role of founder in a non-hierarchical organisation

of equals. I draw on the concept of "reciprocal restoration" (Kimmerer 2011) to examine the ways non-hierarchical governance might renew governance practice by shifting away from the divisive effects of hierarchical stratification. I begin by examining the cultural contribution made by discursive group work methodologies used in the governance process. Then, I explore the restorative effects of striving to manifest non-hierarchical principles of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in an organisation.

Finally in my concluding reflections in Chapter Eight, *Non-hierarchical Organisational Imaginaries,* I review the contribution each chapter has made to the overall argument of the thesis, and I draw out the implications of these. In this final chapter I propose that while the non-hierarchical principle makes collectivist-democratic organisations inherently changeable, the dynamic responsive environment generated within emerging ecologies of organisation is well suited to governance in an unstable Anthropocene Earth. The practice of non-hierarchical governance generates relational cultures where participants support each other as they grapple with the challenge of manifesting relations that are equal and inclusive of diversity.

Chapter Two - Intense focus: A short-term, multi-sited organisational ethnography

Chapter One discussed governance as a relationally constructed and dynamic process that engages participants being, knowing and doing for the purpose of decision-making to further organisational objectives. Chapters Two and Three will clarify the relationship between my epistemological frameworks and my methodological tools which, as Elizabeth St. Pierre (2016) suggests, reflect the ontological stance of the researcher. This current chapter is divided into two parts, the first part details my intellectual justifications for selecting a short-term ethnographic (STE) approach and the second part introduces Friends of the Earth Melbourne in Australia, the Pachamama Alliance and the Sustainable Economies Law Centre in the United States and the Enspiral Foundation in Aotearoa-New Zealand, and then details the practical steps of the fieldwork as it was undertaken over these sites.

Part One '*Research methodology and orientation'* begins by distinguishing the qualities of a short-term, multi-sited organisational ethnography as theorised by Sarah Pink and Jennie Morgan (2013). To justify this focused, short-duration ethnography, I begin by introducing the distinctive methodological qualities of a short-term ethnography (STE) in the context of organisational ethnography more generally. I explain my rationale for engaging with participants' pre-verbal knowing through elicitation techniques of symbolic devices and drawing exercises intended to stimulate participant's perceptive, intuitive and imaginative understandings of non-hierarchical governance, before a description of the two pilot studies that helped refine my STE approach. I explore the ethical considerations of this research, problematising my social relations as a researcher from a methodological and ethical standpoint (Miller & Birch 2012). Then I reflect on the ways my shifting roles as observer-researcher-practitioner-consultant have influenced the research process and outcomes (Haynes 2012).

Part Two *'Following non-hierarchical governance: An overview of intensive, multi-sited fieldwork'* introduces the four case study organisations with a snapshot of their origin story, their size and income sources and each organisations' mission, vision and purpose. Then, I breakdown

the components of the fieldwork engaging with over 60 participants over extended periods between 2017 and 2018 onsite in Melbourne, Te Whanganui-a-Tara-Wellington, San Francisco and Oakland California, and continuing online into 2021.

Part One: Research methodology and orientation

The core aim of this thesis is to collect ethnographic accounts of non-hierarchical governance practice within NFP organisations to inform reflexivity in governance decision-making. From the outset I did not identify as 'an ethnographer'; therefore, I was relieved to read veteran ethnographer John Van Maanen's (2011, p. 219) pragmatic guidance that "One becomes an ethnographer by doing it". However, bearing in mind that the fieldwork for this thesis was undertaken in approximately 50 days, albeit spread over an 18-month period; the relatively short duration of my immersion in the life of each case study organisation did not resemble a traditional ethnography denoted by continued observation in the field. According to Van Maanen, ethnographic work:

> … demands the full-time involvement of a researcher over a lengthy period of time (typically unspecified) and consists mostly of ongoing interactions with the human targets of study on their home ground (1988, p. 2).

The rationale of long-duration immersive ethnographic fieldwork is its contribution to the production of grounded accounts of nuanced interactions of people and place in time, to show how the world of specific communities work (Cunliffe 2010). Ethnography is traditionally characterised by the combination of focused empirical observation and written accounts with "thick description" (Geertz 1973) towards revealing the vitality of organisational life and giving voice to a "plurality of subjectivities" (Collinson 1992, p. 44). This immersion in the field over time brings to life the experience of "being there" (Bate 1997).

Ethnographic methodology has traditionally sought to capture the "connectedness" of things in order to "render the actual" of everyday life (Van Maanen 2011, p. 232). To do this, researchers adopt a non-directive, peripheral position, whether through taking the role of observing participant-insider or observer-outsider (Bate 1997). Further, "good ethnography" is argued to be dependent on the quality of the researcher's cultural interpretation (Wolcott 1990) and their

understanding of the broader cultural context (Watson 2012). Thus the 'sensibility' of the ethnographer is thought to be able to bring the detail of social interaction to the foreground by illuminating the effect of unseen, but strongly felt dimensions social relations (Yanow, Ybema, & van Hulst 2012).

The promise of uncovering the hidden dimensions of non-hierarchical governance through observation of participants' lived experience attracted me to the ethnographic approach. However, as an exploration into "what non-hierarchy makes possible", my research is interested in diverse expressions and experiences of governance across several NFP organisations to provide the evidentiary basis of this study. This thesis *follows* the concept of collectivist-democratic governance as it is expressed in organisational life in the different settler-cultures of Te Whanganui-a-Tara-Wellington, Melbourne, San Francisco and Oakland, California. Although the four case study organisations are *connected* by the continuity of the practice of non-hierarchical governance, the nature of their work, their ways of organising and their communities of practice are significantly different. For example, FoEM are frontline social/environmental volunteer activists working with local communities in Victoria, Australia; Enspiral are a global network of entrepreneurs who collaborate to explore better ways of working together; SELC are an organisation of attorneys working to change the Californian legal profession and transform barriers to generating a thriving sharing economy; and Pachamama Alliance catalyse change through supporting volunteer community educators in communities around the world. From this appraisal, this research does not fit the conventional requirements of an ethnographic study.

However, ethnographic approaches have evolved in response to the challenge of investigating an increasingly complex, dynamic, and fragmented world. Questioning the feasibility of the solitary ethnographer immersed in the field for years, Michael Smets and his colleagues (2014, p. 11) ask, "Where do ethnographers have to be, when, for how long, and with whom to "be there"?" Ethnography has moved beyond the confines of a single-sited bounded community. Theorising multi-sited ethnography, George E. Marcus (1995, p. 96), argues that "cultural formation can be traced across and within multiple sites". Rethinking ethnography to "follow" connections and associations between people over time and space, the object under examination opens up, so that

an ethnography might also follow "a plot or a narrative, metaphor or circulation of an idea" (Marcus 2012, p. 22).

A range of cultural contexts demand more flexible and adaptive methods of observation and engagement with participants and data collection. There are research sites where access may be restricted, disconnected over time, or of short duration such as hours or weeks. In response to these contexts ethnographers have adapted their methodology to undertake fieldwork differently. For example, in "rapid ethnographic assessment" teams of researchers are able to document fast moving public health events (Cifuentes et al. 2006; Scrimshaw & Hurtado 1987). In examining the potential of ethnographic studies of computer systems design, John Hughes and colleagues (1994, p. 4), distinguish between "concurrent" 12-14 month ethnographies and "quick and dirty" investigations conducted over a 2-3 week duration. Shorter duration ethnographies have been recognised as helpful explorations to provide a general, but informed sense of a setting. Hubert Knoblauch (2005) articulated the "focused ethnography" characterised by short-term field visits and supported by data and time intensity.

However, criticism of short-term duration ethnographies suggests the reduction of time in the field will put the craft of ethnography at risk by making scholarship 'superficial'. Knoblauch's (2005) exposition of the focused ethnography catalysed a passionate debate on whether such research could even be termed "ethnography" and rapid field based assessments have been dismissed as "jet-plane ethnography" (Bate 1997, p. 1150) where ethnographers are "flying in and out for a brief, tourist-like visit" (Yanow, Ybema, & van Hulst 2012, p. 352). Yet, recent scholarship indicates that short-term duration ethnographies over multiple sites can be effectively used to: Follow migrating communities over time/space (Tileagă, Popoviciu, & Aldridge 2022); isolate specific occupational work-practices in organisations (Pinder et al. 2016), document the more transitory cultures of the construction industry (Brett, Thomson, & Dainty 2022; Pink et al. 2010), and sport (Sugden et al. 2019).

Short-term ethnography (STE) as theorised by Pink and Morgan (2013, p. 353), proposes using different "methodological, practical and analytical entry points into the lives of others" these

include a multimedia and multisensory emphasis in data collection and an intervention-orientated ethnographic presence. STE recognise that organisations and their participants are increasingly mobile, and social relations transitory and fluid. Further, when communication between people is via a technological interface, the methods of ethnographic data collection must change. STE reimagines the "ethnographic place" (Pink 2009) as an abstraction which can be re-engaged with over time by researchers through online involvement and video (Pink & Morgan 2013). STE ethnographers push conventional boundaries of the discipline by gathering different media as data, by shifting the clarity of the distinction between researcher and researched and by giving the ethnographer a directive role (see Fors, Bäckström, & Pink 2013; Pink & Leder Mackley 2013; Smets et al. 2014; Tutt & Pink 2019). I draw closely on STE to theorise this ethnography which follows non-hierarchical governance over multiple sites and combines short-term duration observations with more interventional methods and a directive ethnographic voice.

The distinctive qualities of STE are explained by Pink and Morgan (2013) as follows: Firstly, while the intensive relationship between researcher and researched is valued, the ethnographer intentionally repositions herself away from the conventional ethnographic stance of peripheral-observer. In STE the ethnographer implicates herself "at the centre of the action, right from the start" (2013, p. 355) to become the active-director of the research "encounter". STE research interventions are perceived as active collaborations with participants as the ethnographer uses multimedia to investigate participants' practice. Secondly, with personal connection and empathy, the ethnographer seeks to create sensory memory *bridges* between themselves and their participant's embodied experience. Thirdly, the intensity of STE meaning-making is supported by a dynamic "ethnographic-theoretical dialog" (Pink & Morgan 2013). Finally, methods involving visual media and images are employed to engage with participants multisensory embodied knowing (Pink 2015) bringing a quality of temporality to the fieldwork.

The STE research design used in this thesis is summarised in Table 1. It Includes a range of conventional methods of ethnographic observation undertaken in short-term duration, and the more interventional methods included in the semi-structured interview where drawing exercises and engagement with symbolic devices actively elicited participant storytelling, and where active

dialogue was generated in the Reflective Group Conversation (RGC). Places for self-reflection and conversation with critical research companions stimulated my ongoing, self-reflexive, sense-making processes.

Table 1: Short-term ethnographic methods, data collection and analytic tools

Overview of ethnographic investigative methods, data collection and analytic tools			
Method	Purpose	Documentation	Analytic tool
Observation of governance meetings and organisational life more generally.	Close observation of governance practices; Understand social relations related to inclusion, diversity and equality.	Schematic drawings and written notes. Photographs and audio recording with permission.	Developed coding to map speaker flow and speaker role in the group. Photo archive.
Participation in organisational life and social events.	Intensive involvement with members in formal and informal contexts.	Photographs with permission. Written notes.	Photo archive
Semi-structured interviews with experiential techniques.	Integrate multimodal methods; explore multiple ways of knowing governance; Include participants sensory and unseen reactions to social relations and organisation governance.	Tarot card selection and drawings photographed and shared with interviewees on request. Photographs of interviewee and audio recording with permission. Written notes.	Audio transcribed and coded in Nvivo. Photo archive. Excel analysis of selected Tarot cards by organisation and all organisations.
Open Reflective Group Conversation	Collaborative sense-making with organisation members.	Photographs taken by participants and audio recording with permission. Group discussion documented on Butcher's paper by participants.	Audio transcribed and coded in Nvivo. Photo archive
Participation online in a range of organisational platforms (Slack, Loomio, google doc etc)	Ongoing involvement with members in formal contexts.	Links archived and key discussions recorded via screen shots.	Photo archive
Review published governance documents e.g. annual report,	Understanding of governance policy and non-hierarchical principles	Documents and links archived.	Coded in Nvivo and Zotero

policy, constitution, newsletters.			
PhD Thesis diary	Self-reflexive engagement with ethnographic process.	Digital document and photos.	N/A
Ethnographic-analytic-dialog with research companion.	Dialogue with ethnographic process.	PhD Thesis diary, video recording.	N/A

This data and time intensive study was documented with audio recording, written notes and photographs of people, place, participant drawings and Tarot card selections. Nvivo was used to code the large amount of data generated from over 60 individual interviews, and over 30 hours of formal meeting observations including the RGC. Tarot card selections were analysed with Excel to determine patterns such as frequently selected cards. Observed governance meetings were documented by my schematic drawings are coded to analyse roles and map the movements and focus of governance conversations.

To explore the nine dimensions of organisation, my analysis of data moved iteratively between interview data, archival documents, theory, and visual media/audio, and RGC conversation transcripts. The detail of the fieldwork with each organisation will be discussed in Part Two. To illustrate STE, I will discuss how it's qualities have been employed in my research beginning with the process of sample selection, leading into a discussion of my rationale for a multisensory research design.

Selecting organisations: Networks, knowledge and purposive sampling

As a PhD researcher based in Melbourne Australia, geography, time, and budget were real limitations. A purposive sampling approach was used whereby case study organisations were chosen based on my theoretical understanding of their suitability (Jervis 2019). My prior experience in organisational governance furnished me with an intimate knowledge of the language of NFP organisational life, without which, the intense engagement onsite for short durations (Knoblauch 2005) and my intervention may not have been successful.

Review of NFP, collectivist-democratic organisational literature (discussed in Chapter One), identified three important inclusion criteria to guide the selection of suitable case study organisations:

- Firstly, each case study was a legally structured NFP organisation with a mission for social, environmental or political change. I was interested in the relationship and congruence, if any, between organisational mission and the choice of governance structure.

- Secondly, that the organisation was relatively mature and confident in their decentralised governance processes, ideally I sought organisations that had been operating over five years. This criterion was created to ensure that the organisation had matured beyond the formative start-up stage and that they would have developed and practiced important tests of collective governance including conflict resolution, strategic development and staff turnover. I proceeded on the assumption that NFPs that were more established in their decentralised governance processes would have completed several project delivery and fundraising cycles.

- The final selection criterion was related to the size of the organisation and its relationship with social networks and movements. I sought mid to large NFP organisations with a minimum of twelve full-time team members. Additionally, I was interested in organisations that were participating as an active member of an international network, or movement for social, environmental or political change. The minimum team criterion was adhered to in order to ensure each organisation was dealing with some human diversity and complexity, with the assumption that this may be reflected in their decision-making and strategic thinking processes.

Locating non-hierarchical organisations that met these criteria proved to be a challenging task. I had some organisations in mind at the outset of my thesis but, to broaden my scope I undertook an 'expert search' process by inviting recommendations from my global networks that included teachers and alumni from institutions engaging with thinking around the new economy, including Schumacher College (MA Economics for Transition, UK), Blekinge Institute (Masters in Strategic Leadership Towards Sustainability, Sweden), OASES Graduate School (Masters in Integrative

and Transformative Studies, Australia), and the environmental education, the international permaculture and transition networks that I am a part of. This process led to a dozen discerning conversations with prospective case study organisations and the final selection of four case study organisations.

In contrast to many organisational research projects where potential case study organisations were approached via a 'cold-call' email to potential organisations (see for example, Jervis 2019), I came to each of the four NFP organisations with a network of existing relationships. These social networks provided me and my project with endorsement and acknowledged pathways of recommendation via geographic relationships. The expert search and the case study selection process whereby four NFP organisations agreed to open their organisational lives as case studies for this thesis revealed that:

- Few confident non-hierarchical NFPs surfaced through the expert search.
- The selection of potential organisations was limited by my existing networks, my research funding and capacity to travel, and my requirement of an English-speaking organisation to conduct my research effectively.
- The case study organisations were located in wealthy, settler societies characterised by a post-industrial capitalist context.

Multisensory ethnographic data: Integrating creative and experiential methods

The Prologue examined the origins of my personal interest in exploring the unspoken, unsaid and unseen aspects of organisational governance, which Pink and Morgan (2013, p. 353) describe as "the nonrepresentational" and which encompass the sensory, tacit and known elements of everyday organisational life. The inclusion of creative and experiential methods addresses distinctive epistemological and ontological considerations informing this thesis. The epistemological value of creative, experiential and participatory methods have been advocated for by a number of organisational scholars (Burns et al. 2014; Cassell & Johnson 2006; Raelin & Coghlan 2006). The inclusion of symbolic devices (such as Tarot cards), collaborative processes (reflective conversations with organisational members) and creative exercises (participant-

generated drawing) in an organisational ethnography are aspects of the "ontological openness" this thesis is exploring (Emmanouil 2017).

Ethnographer, Samantha Warren (2012, p. 109) argues that the traditional ethnographic tools of observation and interview should be expanded to include "sensual methodologies" of touch, smell, movement, taste and sight. Embodied and visual ways into investigating organisational life can communicate something of the complex, contradictory and messy realities of the embodied human being, constrained by space and time. Chapter One discussed how normative governance discourses are limited by being disembodied and abstracted from situated experience obscuring the effects of power in social relations.

In her creative organisational narratives, Amanda Sinclair (2014) confronts the fiction of disembodied governance by foregrounding the subjective embodied experience of the physical (sweaty, uncertain, bulging) in the doing of leadership. Sinclair brings attention to embodied sensual feeling such as confusion, desire and uncertainty that are 'realities' for many participants in day-to-day organisational interactions. Warren's (2012, p. 115) evocative metaphor of "power" as "deodorised" highlights the effect created by *excluding* sensory feedback in governance and leadership accounts. By including the more sensuous direction of feeling this thesis seeks to disrupt accepted construction of governance whereby the experience of institutional knowledge is disassociated from our embodied, experiential knowing.

To integrate the *movement* between participants' knowing and being I have woven diverse methods into my participant engagement/data collection. The different modes of learning I have drawn upon (see Table 2) is informed by the work of psychologist John Heron (1999, 1992; Heron & Lahood 2008) and philosopher Suzanne Langer (1951), who conceptualise how epistemology might be extended *beyond* the dominant propositional mode of understanding (Heron & Reason 2008). Heron (1992) articulated four distinct and interrelated stages whereby human knowing is formed and known: *experiential, presentational, propositional,* and *practical* ways of knowing. I will briefly explain how these stages of knowing helped determine the most appropriate mix of methods for the research encounters I have carried out in my doctoral research.

Table 2: An extended epistemology integrating four modes of learning: Following John Heron

Mode of Learning	Acquiring knowledge through …
Experiential	Affective mode: intrapersonal, pre-cognitive, inchoate, felt sense, felt participation, sensuality, texture, senses. Empathic and emotional resonance.
Presentational	Imaginal learning: discerning patterns of perception, intuition and imagination conveyed in words, images, symbol, myth, allegory, storytelling and aesthetics.
Propositional	Reflective, discriminatory intelligence. Explicit conceptual and numerical form, logical and structured thinking. Knowledge 'about', Essence
Practical	Applied kinaesthetic mode: Intentional action. Knowing 'that', knowing 'how'

Most of my discovery concentrated upon the first and second stages of this process: Experiential ways of knowing and performative expressions of presentational knowing. Heron (1992) explains the four elements are produced through continual co-arising cycles whereby human *feeling* inspires and generates images, and *intuitive* concepts lead into conceptual *thinking* which is demonstrated as *application* through physical action. The observable and conscious stages of the cycle occur with propositional knowing 'about' and 'that'. This is where concepts are formed and demonstrated through consistent and coherent statements and verbal communication.

Practical knowing 'how' occurs when ideas are demonstrated in action (Heron 1992, pp. 164–72). The propositional and practical stages of the knowledge cycle are the focus of much organisational research. Familiar in qualitative research, these observable expressions of knowing are evident in the methods of observation and structured interviews that I utilise. Because two of the four stages of this cycle, experiential and presentational knowing, generally operate *below* conscious awareness they are perceived as harder and less reliable to engage within a positivist qualitative research frame. For this reason, subjective interpretations have tended to be avoided in qualitative research (Broussine 2008).

This thesis builds on the growing evidence base of qualitative research projects by combining the emergent creative method of participant-generated drawing (Abegglen, Burns, & Sinfield 2018), and it develops Inna Semetsky's (2011) use of Tarot as an interpretive, symbolic device. These

two distinctive experiential/creative methods are integrated into the individual interviews conducted through this study. In OMT, creative methods have rarely been utilised (Molina-Azorin & Cameron 2010), although Warren (2012) observes this is changing in respect to organisational ethnographies exploring 'lived experience'. The exception to this pattern of excluding experiential and presentational knowledge are fields recognised as either creative or therapeutic (Gauntlett & Holzwart 2006; Lett 2011). Yet, if Heron (1992), Pink (2015) and the other experimental organisational researchers I have referred to are correct, extending epistemology by engaging with participants' pre-verbal knowing through their perception, intuition and imagination contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of human sensemaking/knowledge making.

Literature advocating for the inclusion of creative methods in organisational contexts echoes Langer's thesis regarding the 'opening' created for participants and researchers using visual and creative methods (Broussine 2008; Kara 2015; Kearney & Hyle 2004). I explore in this thesis how Heron's cycle of knowledge-making can be integrated effectively into an interview design. I used the pilot studies to test a number of visual tools that might engage participants experiential and presentational stages of knowing (shown in Figure 3), including postcards (Allen & Rumbold 2004), Tarot cards, generic image kits, and in a riff from Jungian sand play (Kalff 2003) participants selected objects to tell stories about their organisational experience.

The visual tool identified as having the greatest symbolic diversity, interpretive freedom, and situated flexibility for my thesis was the Motherpeace Tarot deck (Noble & Vogel 1981).[6] I first became aware of the Motherpeace Tarot in 1984 and I have continued to play with the symbolic dimensions of this deck since that time. Other Tarot decks I experimented with were either inaccessible in their symbolic abstraction, or politically conventional in their representation of hierarchical and patriarchal social relations, to be suitable for my audience of non-hierarchical organisation. This inclusion does however, introduce a whole other symbol system through which participants' experiences are refracted.

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[6] For copyright permission see Appendix 1

Championing the Tarot as a serious cultural artefact and a sophisticated sign-system, Semetsky (2015, 2011, 2009) argues that the rich and ambiguous symbolic nature of the cards makes them powerful interpretive devices that can be used in a similar manner to postcards. Scholarly revaluation has contributed to rehabilitating the Tarot from its association with a pejoratively stereotyped artefact of the fortune teller to envisaging the cards as devices that might "bridge" communication between conscious and unconscious spheres (Romanyshyn 2010).

The Motherpeace Tarot (Noble & Vogel 1981) is not a neutral research tool. In the Motherpeace cards, its creators, Vicki Noble and Karen Vogel, sought to prefigure a society where global peace, respect and harmony with the natural world was possible. The deck was designed with the political intention of offering an alternative worldview to 20th century mainstream, patriarchal society. The images and symbols in the Motherpeace cards are influenced by the work of Carl Jung who understood the power of myth as transformative. Noble (1983) envisaged the Motherpeace Tarot as the "lost parent to humankind" whereby dialogue with symbolic images might disrupt the foundational assumptions validating institutional and hierarchical governance. I selected this deck for its capacity to work *with* the values of the non-hierarchical organisations in this study. I was appreciative that these participants would not have agreed to engage in a research project if it were hostile to foundational non-hierarchical values of equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Pilot studies: Refining the research design through ethnographic-theoretical dialogue

Pilot studies offer organisational researchers the opportunity to refine their design and research approach (Kezar 2000). I was aware of the need to maximise my flexibility and adaptability onsite, therefore my research design focussed on short-term duration observations of general organisational activity and specific governance meetings, in between conducting semi-structured interviews with participants. Further, my intention to complete fieldwork with a collaborative whole organisation dialogue - the Reflective Group Conversation (RGC) - included an unpredictably emergent process into the research design.

Pilot studies, with two NFP organisations who were potential case study organisations based in Melbourne, gave me the opportunity to trial these experimental aspects of the methodology. It also

allowed a theoretical sampling through the provisional collection and analysis of data that refined final case study selection choices (Campbell et al. 2020). A further, unexpected outcome of the pilot studies was finding a critical-research friend who, following the intent of an "ethnographic-analytic-theoretical dialog" (Pink & Morgan 2013), has companioned me in my iterative sense-making process through thesis writing and analysis (Lett 2011).

Ethnographic-theoretical dialog is a form of dialogue designed to enable researchers to integrate fieldwork questions with theoretical goals while still gathering data. This dialogue is very much a practical strategy used to bring "theoretical questions in dialogue with the ethnography" via, for example, presenting preliminary work to peers (Pink & Morgan 2013, p. 357). In this research, my dialogue companion emerged through my engagement with my first pilot organisation, the OASES Graduate School, who was well known to me. OASES was an independent NFP higher education institution, where the teaching community had developed an alternative economy supported by a decentralized governance system.[7] In 2016-2017, I trialled the interview 'flow' and composition of questions with nine participants, and then I initiated a reflective dialog with one informant. The second pilot organisation, Org A. with whom I undertook a long-term consultancy, provided me with the opportunity to pilot the full combination of methods I had developed for the case study organisations. The pilot studies provided valuable feedback which helped consolidate the final approach taken with the case study organisations.

The conversation with my OASES 'research-companion' helped me refine the interview questions and the arrangement of creative processes in the interview. Our conversation explored the participatory method of Appreciative Inquiry as the most appropriate for an organisational inquiry where 'what is working well' was the starting point, as distinct from traditional deficit or problem-focused approaches which seek to identify 'what is wrong' in a given organisation (Cooperrider 2008; Johnson & Leavitt 2001; Johnson 2013). Being appreciative did not mean I took an uncritical stance, nor did I close off discussion about difficult issues such as dissatisfactions experienced by organisation members. The areas where collectivist-democratic organisations struggle to live out

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[7] OASES Graduate School closed in 2017.

their ideals were of interest to me as a researcher/practitioner and they are explored in the discussion chapters.

Figure 3: Experimentation with creative storytelling tools (Source: Houseman)

The first important contribution from the pilot studies was the opportunity to trial the mix and order of methods, and to understand the nature of the data that might come from each method. As a result, I redesigned the interview questions with the intention of 'taking' interviewees from the known chronological recollections to a more complex felt-experience of non-hierarchical

governance where we might explore reflective questions about leadership, power, and group dynamics. Approaching organisational ethnography as a dynamically relational form (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012) helped me to engage with each organisation/participant as an ongoing and evolving relationship, refining my research ontology so that I was more responsive to the flow directed by the participants in each interview. This learning gave me the opportunity to understand:

- How the materials gathered through the individual interviews could be effectively synthesised and communicated in the RGC.
- How participant drawing and play with symbolic devices could be integrated to complement the more familiar mode of formal questions in the semi-structured individual interview.

Secondly, as a result of feedback from Org A. I altered the way I communicated the Tarot cards as findings in the RGC. Specifically, I significantly reduced the connection between participant feedback and a selected card, as respondents in Org A. gave the feedback that they felt combining image with the informant's description threatened the confidentiality of the process. The pilot studies increased my awareness of the ethical risks working with an intimate group, where I was 'managing' the potentially conflicting needs of an ongoing relationship with participants and producing research (Gosovic 2019).

Practicing with the pilot organisations increased my confidence in undertaking the fieldwork and prepared me for the pressure of working intensely with a low level of environmental control. The pilot studies ensured that my interview 'kit' was portable and flexible, and suited to both situated and online interview processes. The overall feedback from the pilot studies was that the participants were highly responsive to the interview process.

Ethical considerations: Navigating social relations as an ethnographer

The relational character of fieldwork and the ethical and methodological implications are increasingly being appreciated and investigated (Yanow, Ybema, & van Hulst 2012). The potential of ongoing allegiances and projects with my case study organisations required me to reconsider the entanglement of reciprocity in my relations with each organisation, and its influence on my

meaning making in this thesis (Gosovic 2019). Reflecting on the ethics of ethnography in participatory organisations, Langmead asks "How do you get ethical approval from a group of as-yet-undefined people who make up a non-hierarchical organisation?" (2017a, p. 199).

The research undertaken during fieldwork for this thesis was approved by La Trobe University's Human Ethics Committee. This involved a process of demonstrating methods to ensure that participants would be fully informed about the nature of their engagement and their rights to refuse or withdraw. A multi-layered level of consent involved first gaining consent from the organisation and then directly inviting individuals for their voluntary participation. The Reflective Group Conversation (RGC) was a third layer of consent, whereby I shared my findings and thinking transparently in an open organisational environment and invited their feedback and their dissent. With agreement from the group, each conversation and the reflective group conversations were recorded by audio and sporadic contextual photography taken with permission.

All four organisations agreed to their organisation being named in this research. This decision reflected the distinctive non-hierarchical value of transparency of process discussed in Chapter One. The identity of individual contributors is protected by pseudonym and participation in the interview and RGC were voluntary. Linda Bell and Tina Miller (2012) reflect that it is difficult to gain 'informed' consent when it is difficult to understand what participants are consenting to in an uncontrolled fieldwork environment (Michailova et al. 2014). Further, a group process such as the RGC makes it potentially difficult for an individual to 'reveal' their discomfort by withdrawing their consent to participate in a process that everyone else is agreeing to participate in. Although consent was invited of all participants through the RGC, it might have been a conversation that was intrusive for some participants, especially when it probed topics that participants reflected had been difficult to embark on. Even though the topics were de-identified, my presentation in the RGC (discussed in Part 2 of this current chapter), potentially exposed personal and private perspectives to the collective.

Naming the non-hierarchical organisations reflects their commitment to radical transparency. In qualitative research, naming organisations has precedence, see by example (Bretos, Errasti, &

Marcuello 2020; Sobering 2021a; Young 2021), and in FoE International (Moeran 2013) and Enspiral (Irving 2016), however there are aspects of the agreement to name the case study organisations that were not considered at the time. Social researcher Janet Holland (2007, p. 202), problematises the ethics of the empathic interview where participants expose more than is comfortable, and which then becomes research data. There is a risk that this thesis might reveal intimate experiences and raw emotions that the either participant, or the organisation as a collective, may not yet have acknowledged to themselves. When I was cognisant of a participants' vulnerability I chose not to explore that particular research thread. I accept that while I did not *want* to reveal any sensitive information or expose vulnerabilities in the process of this research or its publication, the agreement between the organisation and I to name each organisation may have unintended effects.

To some extent I was able to mitigate this ethical risk with FoEM by presenting a written report of my findings to organisation members in March 2019 (a year after the fieldwork was complete), and a FoEM member reviewed the FoEM related discussion chapters. However, with SELC, Pachamama Alliance and Enspiral our geographical distance made the collaborative review of material and my ongoing personal connection with respondents more difficult. Considering this complexity, I agree with Bell and Miller (2012), that consent in unfolding organisational ethnographic contexts is ideally ongoing and negotiated between researcher and participant.

My methodology revealed the delicacy of knowledge-making in a participatory context where, for example, a participant-generated drawing becomes 'evidence' of a narrative I have created as the researcher and interpreter. Who is the author of this story? A participatory methodology exposes the ethical complexity of relationship. I can be simultaneously a friend, a colleague, and a researcher, who seeks an ongoing relationship with each organisation. I had not reflected on the ethics related to the intellectual property of participant produced drawing, while the issue was not raised by any of the participants, further permissions would be required for publications beyond this thesis (Guillemin & Drew 2010). Nor had I anticipated that the level of familiarity in organisations meant that there was a potential that drawings, especially if handwriting or body parts are included, might unintentionally 'reveal' the identity of the author to the group.

Building on Gibson-Graham's (2006) "glass half full approach", my intent was that the participating organisations would be strengthened rather than depleted by the research process. Seeking a collaborative relationship with case study organisations guided the communication and knowledge-creation process. Early in my correspondence with SELC, concern was raised about my "critical reflections on our work" identifies a major ethical issue in undertaking an empirical study involving real participants: "The main questions/concerns were around any critical reflections on our work, and I explained in brief about the appreciative and collaborative methodology that you will employ".[8] Throughout this research I sought to engage with organisational members in a respectful and self-reflexive manner, enabling dialogue and reflective moments. I approached each onsite visits with an appreciative stance, seeking to be reflective, curious and informed (Cooperrider 2008).

Ultimately, it was my conduct on site that led many participants to offer themselves to be interviewed once I was in the space. For example, some meetings in SELC and Enspiral were initially closed to my observation. After conducting several interviews and participating in the daily life of the organisation, I was invited to observe more governance meetings. I am deeply appreciative of the privilege of entry. Workplaces are contracted formal environments, they are also safe and familiar and, at times, intimate places for the people who work there. Onsite, I was given access to some shared daily rituals, participants' knowledge and feelings about each other, and I was aware that as an outsider, who was also an observer and witness, that my presence inevitably influenced the engagement of the group (Gergen 2015).

Another "entanglement" familiar to organisational ethnographers where the "gift" of access to an organisation can stimulate the urge to reciprocate with another gift (Gosovic 2019). In negotiating my participation with each organisation I became aware of the complexity of the broader ethical question of reciprocity, which considers what participants and organisation will get out of their participation in the research (Flick 2018; Jervis 2019; Marshall & Rossman 1989); and what I, as the researcher, might offer in return in recognition of this favour. When first negotiating with

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[8] SELC email correspondence with researcher, 2017

SELC and FoEM about becoming case studies I became aware of the potential gift of a 'consultant-like' assessment: "There was genuine interest in seeing the fruits of your research and, actually, in how your action research within our organization might help us identify ways of improving our governance".[9] The request to "help us identify" illustrates some of the negotiation and reciprocity that had to be clarified before agreement was formalised, and as I discuss in the next part of this chapter, this request was a helpful factor in the design of the Reflective Group Conversation with SELC and FoEM.

Figure 4: SELC office art September 2017 (Artwork: Orsi)

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[9] SELC email correspondence with researcher, 2017

Part Two: Following non-hierarchical governance: An overview of intensive, multi-sited fieldwork

The fieldwork was formally conducted over an 18-month period in three countries and online. My relationship with each organisation has continued via online conversation and observation. I approached the fieldwork phase of the research with the awareness that my time frames and the level of engagement would vary with each case study. As a researcher of non-hierarchical organisations, I may not have been perceived as I wished or intended to: I am a middle-aged, white, middle-class Australian woman and I did not mirror the dominant demographic of 20-40-year-olds in SELC, Enspiral and FoEM, for example. Following the advice of experienced practitioners (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012), I approached fieldwork willing to improvise in response to situated organisational priorities. Balancing my research design with 'what was possible' while I was onsite brought some of the real-world messiness into this research project (Yanow 2012).

The considerable variability between the number of meeting observations in each organisation, reflected the diversity of interpretations of what constitutes a 'governance meeting' in a non-hierarchical organisation. Table 3 summarises the fieldwork activity, including days spent onsite, the number of individual interviews, governance meetings observed, number of participants in the Reflective Group Conversation (RGC). It also details my further participation and the pilot phase of the research. In principle, I took an immersive approach and observed as much as I was invited into, in order to better comprehend the complexity of each organisation's governance and to develop my relationship with the participants (Watson 2012).

Introducing four case study organisations

In 2016 when I began my search for collaborators, intentional non-hierarchical governance structures were relatively rare, and only three organisations that were amenable to collaborating in this thesis project met all my selection criteria: Sustainable Economies Law Centre (SELC), Friends of the Earth Melbourne (FOEM), Enspiral Foundation (Enspiral).

Table 3: Summary of fieldwork engagement with organisations

Summary of fieldwork engagement with case study and pilot organisations						
Pilot study overview						
Organisation fieldwork dates	Days onsite	No. interview	Meeting observed	Reflective Group Conversation (RGC)	No. in RGC	Further participation
OASES: 2016-2017	20	9	N/A	No	-	N/A
Org A: July 2017 -March 2018	25	21	5	Yes	18	N/A
Case study field work overview						
Organisation fieldwork dates	Days onsite	No. interview	Meeting observed	Reflective Group Conversation (RGC)	No. in RGC	Further participation 2017-2021
SELC September-October 2017	12	17	8	Yes	12	Worker Self-directed Non-profit Conference Sept. 2017, Legal Café, Non-profit Democracy Network 2019-
FoEM March 2017 - November 2019	25	19	10	Yes	12	FoE Australia AGM 3-day residential retreat 2018, Member Act on Climate Collective 2017-21, Participated in Rhizomic training & provided feedback 2018. Presented *Report on FoEM governance* March 2019. I am a member and monthly donor
Enspiral December 2017 and February 2018	11	20	5	Yes	14	4-day residential Summer Fest 2018, 3-day residential Art of Hosting Training 2018, Participation: Stewardship Pod 2019-20, Ventures Working Group 2018, contributed to *Better Work Together* 'Power and Privilege' section discussion 2018. Online participation as 'Contributor' since 2018
Pachamama September-October 2017	2	9	2	No	-	Online observation of governance meeting 2018

In the process of sifting and selecting, I discovered that although many NFP organisations are hierarchically structured, there are a number of organisations which are interested in transitioning to a decentralised governance structure, or had already begun the process of doing so. One of these organisations, the Pachamama Alliance was included in this study as they were three years into the transition from being a traditional hierarchically structured NFP to being collectively governed.

Each of the four-case study organisations engage with non-hierarchical governance as an expression of the social change they are working to achieve and they identified themselves as belonging to several global networks working for change. I will introduce each organisation with an overview of their origin story, their vision and mission statement, and key aspects of their non-hierarchical expression of governance, including visual documentation of each site and the specifics of my fieldwork engagement.

The Sustainable Economies Law Center (SELC)

Origin story: Two attorneys, Janelle Orsi and Jenny Kassan were working in the state of California in private practice. Over a cup of coffee, they shared their frustration at not being able to affect deep, structural change for a better, fairer society. Together they imagined an organisation that could work *on* the system, reducing the legal barriers to generating systemic social, environmental and political change (Orsi 2012).

This vision inspired the formation of the Sustainable Economies Law Centre (SELC) as a non-profit 501c (3) organisation in Oakland, California in 2009. Their mission is to change Californian law to facilitate and empower marginalised communities. SELC's programs intend to remove institutional barriers that undermine the transition to a more just and resilient community through the development of legal tools, community-based skill development and legal training programs. Programs are created with the intention to strengthen cooperatives, develop alternative models for housing, finance, renewable energy, food and land with a goal of empowering more vulnerable communities to develop their own sustainable sources of food, housing, energy, and work (see office artwork in Figure 4).
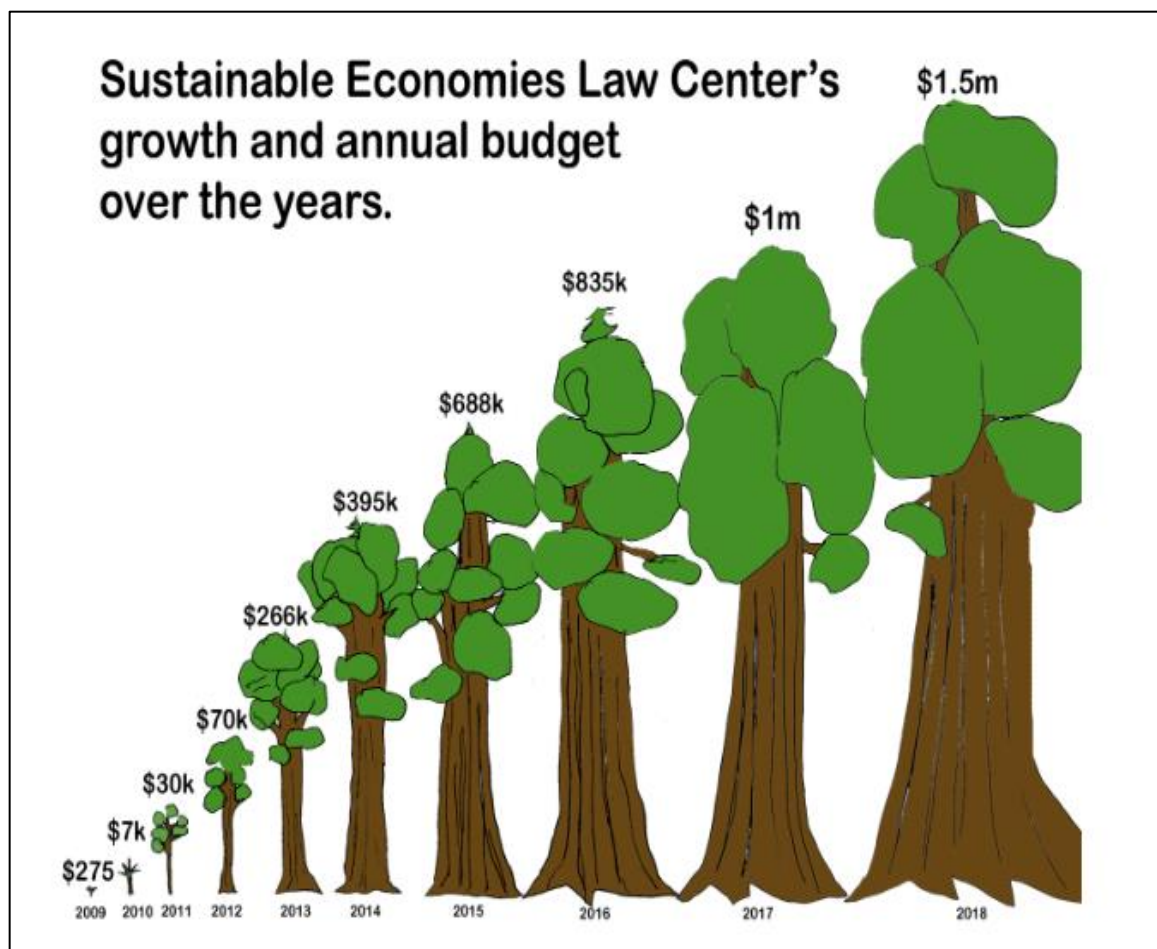
Figure 5: SELCs budget and growth 2009-18 (Source: SELC website)

Since its inception SELC has grown vigorously (shown in Figure 5). In 2017 their primary funding sources were grants (85%), followed by donations (10%) and earnings from book sales and events (5%). The growth in income has been reflected in staff levels which increased from a team of six in 2015, to 18, including interns, in 2017. According to SELC's website, by 2021 there were 28 staff and interns and 36 legal fellows. SELC's values are expressed internally through their equal pay policy. All staff are compensated equally whether an attorney or not, using the living wage calculator to establish the rate, which in 2017 was US$60,137 per annum.[10]

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[10] The calculator is adjusted for specific cities.

SELC is purpose-designed as a decentralised, collectively governed organisation. The governance model is presented in organisational documents as a living prototype for a new world "that is thriving, self-determined, resilient and free from oppression" (shown in Figure 5). With a foundation of Holacracy (Robertson 2015), SELCs governance model uses consent-based decision-making. SELC positions itself as critical of industrial-capitalist frameworks and goals. The website states that "Neither our communities nor our ecosystems are well served by an economic system that incentivizes perpetual growth, wealth concentration, and the exploitation of land and people" (Sustainable Economies Law Center 2016).

Figure 6: Programs Circle meeting (Source: Houseman)

As an expression of their commitment to transparency, SELC Organisational Policies are publicly available online. SELC is an active in a number of global communities for social and economic justice, encompassing cooperatives and solidarity economy (New Economy Coalition 2015; Solidarity Research Center; UNSEN), racial and ecological justice (Climate Justice Alliance;

Movement Generation), as well as commons, land and housing (Bollier 2016; Dunbar-Ortiz 2018; P2PFoundation 2019).

Figure 7: Participants at Worker Directed Non-profit Conference September 2017 (Source: Houseman/SELC)

Overview of ethnographic engagement: In September 2017 I undertook a three-week visit to San Francisco to conduct fieldwork with both SELC and Pachamama Alliance. In SELC I conducted 17 interviews over three weeks with 13 staff, two board members and two advisory board members. I was able to observe the *General Governance Circle*, *Programs Circle* (shown in Figure 6*)*, *Compost Circle*, *Internal Resilience Circle*, Resilient Communities Legal Café, *Worker Self Directed Non-profit Circle*, *Collective Inquiry Circle* and *Finance Circle*. I participated in the inaugural three-day Worker Self-directed Non-profit Conference and am shown with the group in Figure 7.

Origin story: Founded in 2010 the Enspiral Foundation is a charitable company based in Te Whanganui-a-Tara-Wellington NZ. Enspiral's theory of change is simple but profound: "To see more people work on the stuff that matters" (enspiral-dev n.d). Enspiral is a network of groups and people, at the time I researched Enspiral in 2017-18 it was structured with a core of 30-60 paying members and ventures and around 100-150 paying contributors. However, the structure of the foundation has continued to evolve as, for example, the emerging European Hub grows. Enspiral describe themselves as "a DIY collective of social enterprises, ventures and individuals working collaboratively across the world" (enspiral-dev n.d), the company is co-owned by members.

Figure 8: Decision-making using Loomio (Source: Enspiral website)

Collective and asynchronous decision-making is supported by the Enspiral Handbook. Legal oversight is undertaken by the board, renamed the *Minimal Viable Board,* a self-selecting group of members that changes from time to time. Online tools *Loomio* and *Slack*, are central to managing governance (Figure 8). These digital platforms are the virtual organisational spaces, holding conversation and decision-making history. They help keep member engagement alive over time and space, enabling flexible collective participation.

The organisation has been imagined by its members as the central node in a network, supporting a culture to leverage innovating collaborative work practices. Enspiral has nurtured several ventures whose customers may be internal or external to Enspiral. Ventures included *Loomio* an online decision-making tool; *Dev Academy* a web development training programme with campuses in Te Whanganui-a-Tara-Wellington and Tāmaki Makaurau-Auckland; *Optimi Ltd* provides administrative and financial services; *Bamboo Creative* UX/UI software development; *Greaterthan* consulting to organisations undertaking decentralisation; and *Fairground Ltd* an

accounting firm, committed to social impact. The governance decisions of Enspiral ventures are independent of the Enspiral board.

Overview of ethnographic engagement: Two trips were taken to Te Whanganui-a-Tara-Wellington, Aotearoa-New Zealand between December 2017 and February 2018. The first trip focused on conducting interviews, participating in social events, observing governance meetings where possible and just being a part of organisational life. The second visit was to attend the Summer Fest retreat (shown Figure 9) and conduct the Reflective Group Conversation at Summer Fest. I also attended the Art of Hosting training, which was a satellite Summer Fest event. I interviewed 20 members and I was nominated as an Enspiral Contributor after the December 2017 visit. This enabled my broader participation in the ongoing online life of Enspiral via *Loomio* for decision-making and *Slack* for conversation. I participated in a 'Stewardship Pod' 2019-20, contributed to the Ventures Working Group and to *Better Work Together* (Cabraal & Basterfield 2018) 'Power and Privilege' section discussion, and I observed an online board meeting in 2018. I have continued to participate in Enspiral as a Contributor-observer.

Figure 9: Enspiral Summer Fest 2018 (Source: Enspiral website)

Origin story: Friends of the Earth (FoE) emerged in Australia in 1974 as a grass-roots community-based response to change society. They seek to 'resist' environmental and social injustices, 'mobilise' the community and 'transform' social foundations. An important part of this vision is a holistic commitment to developing other ways of engaging together – the personal is political within the FoE culture. The Friends of the Earth (FoE) network is thought to be the largest environmental federation in the world with 5,000 local branches in over 77 member countries.

An intentional employee self-directed organisation, FoEM uses consensus decision-making to govern its collectives. Each collective is self-organising and day-to-day governance is undertaken by the *Strategy Collective* and *Operations Collective*. Legal oversight is undertaken by the committee of management which is called the *Policy Advisory Committee* (PAC). Members are elected annually at the AGM. As a member based activist organisation, FoEM works with a small core of paid staff and a large number of volunteers (see Figure 10). Common to all incorporated Victorian associations, governance is supported by a constitution.

Figure 10: A campaign in Melbourne (Source: FoE website)

In 2016, FoEM developed their *Anti-hierarchical Rhizome Training* to educate their network of more than 500 volunteers in the qualities of decentralised governance. FoEM has an equal pay policy, and a positive discrimination policy which was implemented in the 1980s, ensuring that women make up at least 60% of staff (see Figure 11). Acknowledging that culture and community changes quotas the language of the positive discrimination policy was expanded at the 2018 AGM to include "non-cis men, trans and non-binary people". This update "recognised the normative status of heterosexuality and that struggle and oppressions are interlinked" (AGM notes Houseman 2018).
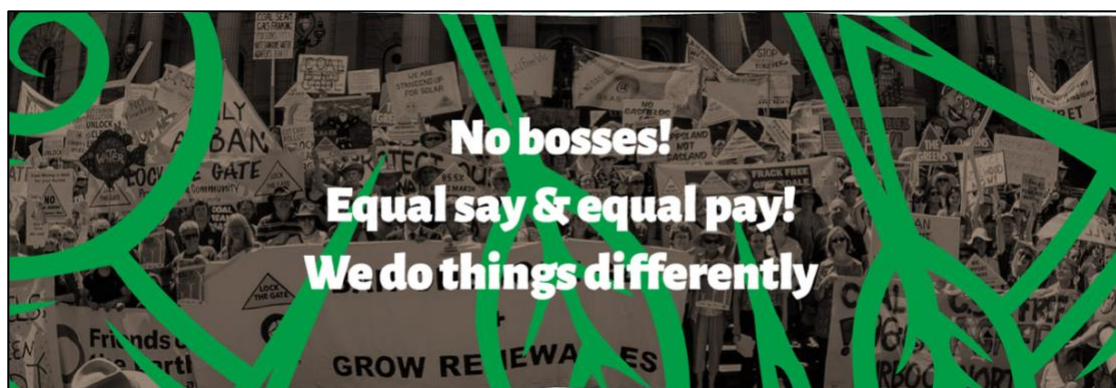
Figure 11: FoEM statement of values (Source: FoE website)

No staff member is paid for more than 30 hours a week, although 20 hours a week would be the average. There is a significant amount of consistent unpaid work. Each collective is self-organising and day to day governance was undertaken by the Strategy Collective and Operations Collective. Legal oversight is undertaken by the Committee of Management, called the *Policy Advisory Committee* (PAC). Each campaign Collective, or the Strategy Collective may decide to fundraise for one or two part-time paid roles, such as a co-ordinator and campaigner. The external members of PAC are elected annually at the AGM, and two or three staff members self-nominate to join this Committee. All Collectives operate using consensus decision-making. At the time of my site-based research, there were approximately fifteen paid staff and over one hundred active volunteer Collective members.

FoE Australia is the only non-hierarchically structured member of FoE International. FoEM sees governance is a central method of building capacity for the society they are working towards creating (Friends of the Earth n.d). FoEM funds their activities through sales (50%), donations (35%) and grants (15%). At the time of writing, FoEM had 13 self-managing and self-funding collectives with campaigns working to change law and activate government policy action on: River health, climate, renewables, anti-nuclear, food, public transport, healthy cities, and forest protection. Operating from a street fronted building in inner city Melbourne, the public face is downstairs with a Food-Co-op and grocery and upstairs houses the campaigners, operations, and meeting rooms.

Figure 12: PAC meeting observation (Source: Houseman)

Overview of ethnographic engagement: Being in Melbourne enabled me to be a frequent through sporadic visitor in the life of FoEM between March 2017 and March 2018, I interviewed 19 people:

eleven operations and campaign paid staff, two collective volunteers, one affiliate, three of the external *Policy Advisory Committee* (PAC) Board members, two food co-op workers. I observed two PAC meetings (shown Figure 12), *Strategy Collective*, *Operations Collective*, and a number of *Act on Climate Campaign Collective* meetings as well as a number of public events. I attended the FOE Australia AGM and the FoE Melbourne AGM in 2019. Since completing the onsite state of the research, I have continued to nurture active and ongoing relationships with each organisation as an individual beyond the formal field work period. I joined the Act on Climate Collective 2017-18, participated in the Rhizomic leadership training & provided feedback. In response to a request by PAC (FoEM Board) I produced an independent report on FoEM governance (March 2019) which was presented in November 2019 as part of a strategic planning day. I am a member of FoEM and a monthly financial donor.

The Pachamama Alliance

Origin story: Established in 1995 San Francisco, US, by philanthropists Bill and Lynne Twist, the Pachamama Alliance has been guided by their relationship with the indigenous Achuar people in the Amazon. Their vision is to catalyse a 'New Dream' for humanity and create a society that works for all human and non-human communities. Their programs seek to "integrate Indigenous wisdom with modern knowledge to support personal, and collective, transformation that is the catalyst to bringing forth an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, socially just human presence on this planet" (Pachamama Alliance.org n.d). Pachamama Alliance have developed a range of community-based programs that have engaged the community with the possibility of being part of this new dream by changing their behaviour and the motivating unconscious assumptions informing human wants and needs.

This transformative vision has inspired 6,000 volunteers from 100 countries to be trained to conduct the *Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream* community-based education program. This flagship course was taken by more than 10,000 participants in 2018 alone. It has been translated into at least 16 languages. Other programs include *Game Changer*, *Drawdown* and *It's Up to Us*. Pachamama Alliance's financial model relies on the donations of the philanthropic community and small donations from participants globally. Their income has ranged between $4-

5 million US per annum. Pachamama Alliance are committed to empowering the indigenous people of the Amazon rainforest to preserve their lands and culture. In 1997, they supported the establishment of the NGO *Fundación Pachamama Alliance,* based in Ecuador to advocate for the rights of indigenous peoples and the rights of nature in the Amazon. Their work has strengthened indigenous collective action and litigation in Ecuador and at the United Nations human Right Council's Universal Periodic Review regarding the state of the rights of indigenous peoples and environmental defenders in Ecuador. The *Sacred Headwaters Initiative* began in 2017 with the goal of placing 60 million acres of the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Amazon into permanent protection (Pachamama Alliance).
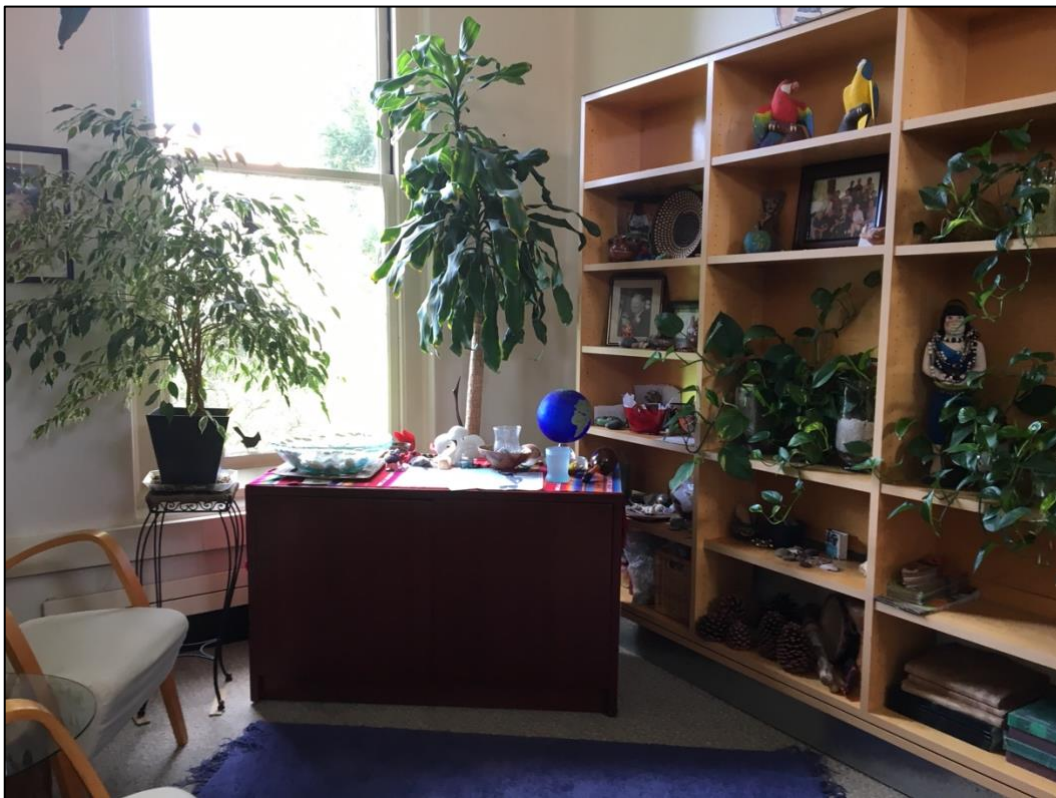
Figure 13: Evoking the Amazon rainforest in Pachamama office, San Francisco (Source: Houseman)

After nearly 20 years as a conventional American charitable 501c (3) organisation, Pachamama Alliance decided to move towards a decentralised structure. Inspired by the work of Laloux (2014), 'Teal' consultants were recruited to support the staff team in their transition. Pachamama Alliance

were three years into their transition as a non-hierarchy when I began discussions about them becoming a case study.

Overview of ethnographic engagement: I was very familiar with the Pachamama Alliance community: as a trained volunteer I had participated in the work of the Pachamama Alliance in Australia, Sweden and San Francisco between 2007-2012. Initially Pachamama Alliance's management group, *All-Team* declined to participate because they were experiencing a sense of collective exhaustion and an unwillingness to have more outsiders in the organisation. To begin their journey to non-hierarchy Pachamama Alliance had been supported by consultants, however at time of my initial conversation they were working on their own. Six months later, when I knew I would be in San Francisco I approached Pachamama Alliance a second time and was given approval to undertake the research.

However, despite collective agreement, my access to the Pachamama Alliance team was limited: only a few *All-Team* members were available for an interview and, as a consequence, a full research engagement was not possible. Acknowledging the general reticence to participate in my research, one respondent alluded to the "grief" underneath the group's "low energy" reflecting that: "I think people suffered. And you know we don't really want to talk about suffering, we try to move past - you know so it's like maybe there's a grief aspect".[11] This feedback led me to interpret Pachamama Alliance's movement to a non-hierarchical structure was affecting the confidence and energy of the group. This participant's candid reflection illustrated that the shift from hierarchy to non-hierarchy can be experienced on an ontological level as disrupting organisational relationships and individual subjectivities. Individual responses to the transition to non-hierarchy will be explored further in Chapters Four to Seven.

My observations and interviews with Pachamama Alliance in their San Francisco office were limited, and the RGC was not able to be held. I conducted nine interviews with staff and board members. I observed two team gatherings, one of which was online. Nevertheless, this case gives valuable, though limited insight into the transition process from hierarchy to non-hierarchy.

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[11] Pachamama Alliance interview with Ana, September 2017

Pachamama Alliance's case provides this study with a point of contrast as the other case study organisations, who were designed as non-hierarchies from their inception.

Overview of ethnographic engagement

The first section of this chapter explained the rationale informing this short-term, multi-sited ethnographic study. To complete this explanation of my methodology I will discuss my ethnographic research process. I begin by detailing the semi-structured interview, to illustrate how less conventional elicitation techniques of symbolic devices and drawing exercises were integrated with structured questions. To do this I draw on relevant literature, my photographic documentation and reflections from participants.

This detailed examination of my research process is also intended to illuminate the effects created by my active ethnographic stance in the research encounter with participants. The chapter concludes with examination of the process I undertook to design the Reflective Group Conversation (RGC), and a reflection of the RGC's contribution to this study as both a collaboration, and strongly directed intervention.

Participant Interviews

Emotional connection between participant and researcher in interviews can generate a positive experience of rapport (Holland 2007). This was clear to me when I reflected on my 'pleasure' at being invited to participate more fully in organisational events, giving rise to feelings of belonging that enriched my engagement as a researcher. When undertaking fieldwork in the United States and Aotearoa-New Zealand away from my support networks, at times I felt lonely, vulnerable and awkward and, at other times connected with a sense of being engaged as part of the group. In large group situations I drew on my organisational experience to find areas of mutual understanding and ameliorate my sense of vulnerability.

The participant interviews offered a first point of contact with team members and a space for individual reflection about their organisational experience. I had a goal of undertaking a minimum of ten interviews in each NFP case study, and I sought to include a range of governance

stakeholders: at least one board member, founder/s, paid staff, and volunteers. The personal connections developed through the interviews were vital to my acceptance in each organisation. Interviews gave me insight into each organisation's style of language, values, behavioural norms and office design principles (Freeman 2014). In the intimacy of the interview, perspectives not easily shared in a group context surfaced. The interview questions were designed to be exploratory and took a starting point of appreciatively valuing what was working well (see Appendix 2 for interview questions). To explain the integrated flow of the elicitation techniques of symbolic devices and participant-generated drawing exercises, with structured interview questions I will detail the focus and intent of each of the five sections.

Interview section 1: The first section of the interview began with questions that drew on concrete facts and memories. The first group of questions sought to identify the range of ways of knowing and being together in governance. Starting with, "When did you join the organisation?" then moving into "What were your expectations, anticipations and fantasies or imaginings for this group and how did it unfold for you?" The third question moved participants into a more reflective, experiential and feeling response and association. It asked for keywords that might "characterise the quality of engagement within the group". This question was valuable, providing me with participants' felt sense of the organisational atmosphere. Asking for key words also had the effect of eliciting a relatively spontaneous response and helped transition into the more interpretive activity of drawing in Section 2.

Interview section 2: This section of the interview was designed to stimulate more critical, meta-level reflections about the way governance processes influenced the aesthetics and the dynamic flow of governance between the different parts of the organisation. Placed mid-way through the interview, the participant-generated drawing exercise was designed to contribute to my broader qualitative approach (Ward & Shortt 2018). One participant gave the feedback that "Drawing (was) a good break in the flow". Question four invited participants to draw their organisational structure illustrating the 'flow of energy' between people in the processes of governance and decision making (Brown 2017). Participants were provided with a blank A4 sheet of paper and a

range of coloured pencils (shown Figure 14).[12] A few participants asked clarifying questions about the exercise, specifically whether this drawing should reflect the official organisational chart. Some expressed nervousness about drawing or being seen doing a drawing which has been documented as a common response to drawing exercises (Ward & Shortt 2018). Only one participant declined to participate.

Figure 14: How are your governance decisions made? What does this look like? (Source: Houseman)

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[12] Prompt: Please draw your organisation's structure: Think about how governance decisions are made, what does this look like? Give me an overview of how the energy flows between parts of the organisation. The drawing can be marks on paper, or it can be shapes, or colours - I'm really interested in how you perceive the parts of your organisation interacting in its governance, what it looks like, or feels like in its operation.

Participant preparation for their drawing often resulted in several minutes of silence. Many participants spent moments considering their pencil choice - revealing this as an embodiment of the 'thinking' process. A few spontaneously explained what they were drawing as they drew. During this exercise I sat in silence. Sometimes I averted my eyes from the drawing process; nevertheless, I was present to the participant (Guillemin & Drew 2010). Once the drawing was complete, I invited the participant to offer a verbal explanation. I asked clarifying questions, but I did not interpret the drawing or challenge participants' interpretations. The drawing exercise functioned to 'ground' discussion about the practice of governance. Some participants labelled parts of the drawing; overall the use of words was minimal. A couple of people made two drawings because a second train of thought emerged which they wanted to follow. A number of participants used their drawing throughout the interview as a reference point and even built upon the ideas in the drawing when responding to other questions (Abegglen, Burns, & Sinfield 2018).

As I conducted more interviews, I became intrigued by the intensity of the physical relationship between the participant, paper, hands, and pencils. Figure 15 shows some of the embodied expressions that accompanied participants' explanations of their drawings. The tactile communication in the often sensuous movements of the pencils being lined up, rolled, held, selected and put away (Warren 2012) revealed the intensity of participant feeling. These embodied movements also conveyed to me how participants were affected by their decision making, for example, feelings of frustration, pleasure, confidence and also a sense of power and freedom (Gherardi 2017). For these reasons, I began to request permission to photograph participants' drawing as a process with a focus on paper, hands, and pencils, even though this had not been a planned part of the data collection process. Reviewing these images (Figure 15) helped me recall the visceral quality of each interview and extended my experience of participants situated and personal relationships with governance.

Interview section 3: The purpose of this section of the interview was for participants to have an opportunity to appreciate the ways they have brought consciousness into their governance and to articulate the "magic" of their governance. The questions asked about their "unique decision-making processes and language". The reference to magic was intended to allow the inexplicable,

irrational, and personal elements of organisation to be drawn out. Magic as the association with the unexpected and the miraculous, it is also a gift. This was where 'what works' in organisational governance could be articulated, remembered and enjoyed. These questions related to specific policies and processes as they reflected organisational values. My prompts in this section included: Recruitment, aspects of day-to-day management, feedback and disciplinary processes, decision-making and termination. I allowed for an open response with the question about leadership by asking: "What, or who motivates, provides leadership and vision here?" This question revealed the influence of particular people in the organisation and allowed for a conversation about difference, and the role of elders and founders as a form of leadership in a non-hierarchical context.

Figure 15: The expressive and embodied communication evoked through the drawing process (Source: Houseman)

Interview section 4: This section opened the conversation to the more difficult aspects of organisational life, including conflicts and challenges encountered by the interviewee in the practice of governance. The concept of "organisational shadow" was introduced as a metaphor to explore ways of being or elements that were annexed or repressed qualities of the "ego-personality" the organisation (Denhardt 1989; Fitzgerald, Oliver, & Hoxsey 2010; Kolodziejski 2004). While only a few respondents were aware of this concept, there was recognition that there were collective topics that were routinely ridiculed, ignored or judged harshly within the organisation and behaviours or beliefs that might be "disowned" by being "projected" onto outsiders.

My explanation of the concept of shadow derived from Jungian theory where it is described as "shadowed' only because it exists outside the "light" of conscious awareness. However, as shadow is sometimes unhelpfully associated with "negative" I was explicit that the idea did not reflect a light (good) / dark (evil) hierarchical binary (Mindell 1995). This section was created with cognisance of the literature that reflects on a weakness identified by Appreciative Inquiry practitioners and that the focus on "what works" may unwittingly strengthen organisational shadow by privileging the positive and effectively censoring the words that are perceived as negative or critical (Johnson 2013).

Interview section 5: The purpose of the final section of the interview was to explore the Tarot hermeneutic (Semetsky 2011) and provide participants with an opportunity for a final reflection. The set of 78 Motherpeace Tarot (V Noble & Vogel 1981) were laid face up, either before the interview or, if space was limited, while I was explaining the process of the card selection and the rationale for using the Tarot in my research.

Participants were invited to select three cards:
- one card for themselves in relation to the organisation,
- one card to represent the heart or essence of the organisation – that which would continue beyond this moment,

- one card that represented the threats and challenges they perceived. These might be internal or external to the organisation.

Figure 16: Participants reviewing and selecting Motherpeace Tarot cards (Source: Houseman)

Participants took time to review the cards: as Figure 16 shows, this was a focused process. During the card selection I sat in silence and often moved away from the area to give respondents space to move around the table (or floor) as they examined the images. A range of selection strategies were observed - from certain and quick to a refined short list of a dozen cards. A few people wanted to select a couple of cards in each category which was permitted. When the selection was

complete, I invited the participant's verbal interpretation of each of the cards. I asked clarifying questions where necessary. When we had completed the conversation about the cards, I took a photo of the group of cards selected for my records and I offered to send the image to the participant, an offer many accepted. Completing the hour-long interview in this way ended with an uplift of energy.

The final part of the interview elicited participants' dialogue as they interacted with visual devices. The goal of enabling this interaction was to use the devices as stimulus, opening other ways of 'seeing' connections and answers to the questions I was posing. This symbolic stimulus aided in providing conceptual connections. In some interviews these intuitions provided me and the participants with a depth of perception that had not occurred in response to the more cognitively focused questions (Pearson & Wilson 2000). The question about the 'self' in relation to the organisation proved to be illuminating for some participants, especially if they were grappling with a decision or frustration related to their work. Thus, for several people, the card selection became 'therapeutic' as insights 'came together' in the conversation; however, this was not an intended focus pursued in this thesis. Being able to collate these selections provided me and the group with vivid and accessible visual images that were generative in the RGC (Guillemin & Drew 2010; Semetsky 2016).

Reflections on the interview as an engagement process

Interviews were primarily conducted in private organisational spaces. However, a private room was not always possible in flexible, fully occupied non-hierarchical work environments. For this reason, FoEM, SELC and Enspiral interviews were at times held in partner organisations, in cafes, backyards and public libraries. In many cases cards were also spread over the floor, between tables and on a pool table (examples shown in Figure 17). Interviews for Enspiral, Pachamama Alliance and SELC were also conducted online via videoconferencing, a digital Tarot card booklet and the prompts were provided in advance for these participants.

The interview was designed to assist participants to move beyond standard or surface level responses (Inayatullah 2014), and to support an integrative flow between participants knowing and being states. The effectiveness of this intent was reflected in some participant feedback received

at the end of the interview. For example, an Enspiral participant foregrounded the "not so invisible work" occurring in interview conversations that were experienced by participants as "cathartic" and "really helpful":

> Just to really appreciate you for this not so invisible work that I think you have done in the conversations you have had with the people who have spent time with you - about them - their experience of this being cathartic on the extreme side to really helpful.[13]
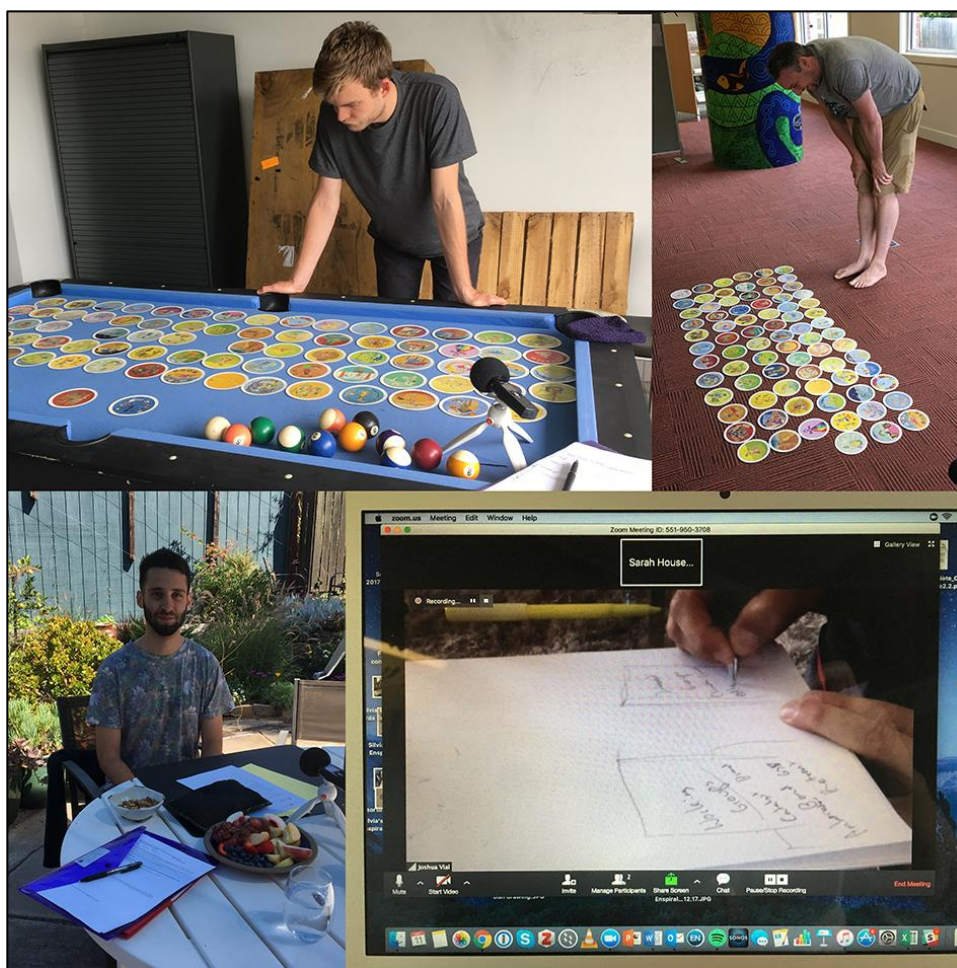
Figure 17: A range of interview venues (Source: Houseman)

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[13] Enspiral interviews with Cali, Jade, Nadia and Paul

Another comment from a SELC participant foregrounds the situated and relational aspects of an organisational ethnography: "I think you've come at a really good time. I think you've been really present and made space for people".[14] While this participant evaluated that I had arrived at SELC "at a good time", it was not a good time for Pachamama Alliance, and eight months before visiting Enspiral they too had declined to participate because at that time it was not a good time for the group to open themselves to the external gaze of a researcher. These interactions reflect the complexity of organisational ethnographies where developing a cooperative relational dynamic is essential for a productive research relationship (Gosovic 2019).

The interview prompts invited participants to think critically about areas where they censored themselves, and 'taboo' topics that were hard to discuss collectively such as those related to issues of leadership and power in the context of non-hierarchical governance. Participant feedback on the interview reflected that the cards and drawing contributed a lightness and unpredictability to the process and altered the rhythm of the interview. A number of respondents reflected on the depth of the process, in this case described as "unconscious factors": "I felt very comfortable to discuss sensitive issues. I was grateful to get to think about some unconscious factors, I felt very safe".[15] Overall, the visual material provided by selected participant drawings and Tarot cards helped me understand the particular aesthetic of each organisation, deepening my engagement with the group. The interviews illuminated some key themes in each organisation; these contributed the final element to the fieldwork, the Reflective Group Conversation (RGC).

Reflective Group Conversation

The final method was a collaborative process in the form of an integrating, reflective conversation with a group from each organisation (Bradbury et al. 2008; McIntosh 2010; Torbert & Taylor 2007). The RGC was designed to be a 1 to 2-hour facilitated workshop created in response to the fieldwork inputs. It was an opportunity for a collective dialogue between the members of the organisation and I, opening space for a discussion of organising possibilities and perceived trade-offs which are often only discovered through dialogue about expectations or process. Attendance

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[14] SELC interview with Ian
[15] FoEM interview (pseudonym withheld)

to the conversation was open to any members of the governance group and at the discretion of the organisation. I presented the RGC as an open conversational space, where my interpretations might be supported, strengthened and augmented and also resisted or negated (Reason & Bradbury 2007). The RGC was designed to function partially as a research report back and as a space for collective reflection and feedback to me. The tone of the RGC was inspired by the Melbourne based OASES Graduate School's *Integrative Conversation* (OASES 2012) and the approach informed by practices I refer to through this thesis as dialogic and discursive group work methodologies (Oswick 2013).

Figure 18: Reflective Group Conversation at the 2018 Enspiral Summer Fest (Source: Houseman)

The visual elements of the interview data contributed to the collective engagement in the RGC (Guillemin & Drew 2010). For participants who undertook the interview *and* the RGC, we were able to build upon themes that emerged in the interview. As a first rough synthesis of the patterns and themes emerging from my study, the RGC was an opportunity for my initial 'meaning-making' to be known and explored in a public manner by the organisation as a group. The presentation drew upon interview notes, an initial synthesis of the themes and interpretations in response to Tarot card images, participant drawings and my observations of organisational life. A few strong

participant-generated drawings and the visual story of the frequently selected Tarot cards were used to create prompts focusing on topics that were persistent across the organisation. The stories that I selected to share were ones that might stimulate different interpretations in the group (Gherardi & Poggio 2007). For example, with SELC we explored the role of the founder (this topic will be discussed in detail in Chapter Seven). Experiential learning in my storytelling and participant listening generated a combination of small discussion and conversation with the whole group.

Situated variables made each RGC a very different research experience. There was an intention that RGC would provide a loose form of external benchmarking in the form of anecdotal feedback related to other non-hierarchical NFP governance practice. However, I was not at the stage where I was ready to present that level of comparative synthesis. With hindsight, this aspect of the RGC presented me with more complexity and was a good example of an ethnographic ethical entanglement (Gosovic 2019). Providing any kind of evaluation would have blurred the boundaries between my role as researcher and that of a consultant (Gilmore & Kenny 2015).

Reflections on timing and structure of the Reflective Group Conversation: In response to organisational agendas, FoEM's RGC was scheduled four months after the field work. The Enspiral RGC was offered as part of their 2018 Enspiral Summer Fest programme, two months after my site visit (Figure 18). The 'open' invitation to the RGC meant that in some of the organisations many participants had not undertaken the interview process and were unfamiliar with the concepts explored through my methodology or the less traditional research methods (generating verbal data from discussion of Tarot images and analysing participant-generated drawing). The connection with the audience affected the atmosphere and the depth of the collective inquiry. My conclusion was that the mixed audience in the Enspiral and FoEM significantly reduced my sense of collective coherence and intimacy. It also limited engagement *in* the conversation, making it more of a 'report about' than an 'exploration with' which was my experience in SELC's RGC.

SELC's RGC was dynamically connected with my participation in SELC's organisational life. It occurred at the end of two weeks of intensive field work and only interview participants were in attendance. Their familiarity with the methodology and their personal connection with the cards and drawings engendered a collective dialogue that significantly developed many of the questions that had emerged for me through the site-based phase of the research. The reflection (below) from one of the attendees conveys the exploratory and co-creative style of the RGC which contributed to "opportunities for more understanding" and the awareness that this research intervention had "elicited" discussion about topics that had been difficult to explore directly. Therefore, the "testing" that emerged in the RGC was positioned by this respondent as "healthy and important":

> My sense is that we go in cycles […] like when we are testing the boundaries of the organisational structure and that is one of those moments now. […] It is so amazing to me that this process you [*Sarah Houseman*] have introduced has elicited so much that we haven't been able to talk about directly. I appreciate that (SELC RGC).

I was unable to undertake the RGC with Pachamama Alliance because of the lack of collective engagement while I was in San Francisco. As discussed earlier, I appreciated the reported sense of feeling overwhelmed and unwillingness to engage in another externally directed process about governance. Further, my geographic and financial constraints meant I was unable to work with Pachamama Alliance more flexibly and gently overtime as I had done with FoEM. Because of this complexity and sensitivity surrounding Pachamama Alliance's governance during that period, I was unwilling to experiment with the RGC as an online experience, or to attempt to undertake further interviews online.

Conclusion

This chapter has detailed my justification for this intense short-term, multi-sited ethnographic study. I have shown a research design that stretched common methodological boundaries by integrating sensory, multimedia, and collaborative methods and by implicating myself in the centre of ethnographic data collection and sense-making with participants. Ethical implications of a

focused STE to be intrusive is examined and risks mitigated through self-reflexive engagement with the unfolding ethnographic process.

Engaging with over 60 participants in four NFP non-hierarchically structured organisations in three wealthy settler societies, STE methodology enables exploration of the ways affective, embodied, and intuitive dimensions of organisational life are entangled with cognitive-propositional ways of knowing. These inclusions are demonstrated as opening the researcher (and the researched) to participants emotional responses and ways of knowing governance experientially.

Chapter Three - Distinguishing Non-hierarchical Ecologies of Organisation

This chapter discusses the key organisational theories which have influenced this thesis and expands the emerging ecologies of organisation approach which underpins my engagement with non-hierarchical organisational governance as a concept and practice. My goal in this chapter is to explain my methods that explore four distinctive orientations that I theorise have the potential to transform governance: Thinking ecologically and reflexively, being a relational community, and engaging with relations of power. In Chapter One, the practices of thinking ecologically and reflexively were identified as epistemologies that might support decision-making in organisations to, as Haraway (2016) says, "stay with the trouble" of the Anthropocene. This chapter expands how I theorise the concepts of relationality, and collective engagement with relations of power in this exploration of NFP participatory non-hierarchical governance.

This thesis is framed within an understanding of the need for new organisational 'imaginaries' able to bring the intensity of the present to the fore, by integrating knowing/being and doing in governance. With a posthuman intent to ferment thinking about organising and governance in the Anthropocene, the three sections in this current chapter make inventive theoretical connections between critical, analytical, and mythical perspectives and explore different combinations of theoretical tools capable of understanding change in organisational practice and addressing the persistence of dualisms influencing organisational culture and its participants.

The first section entitled *Orders of intent: Reflexive learning as governance work,* details my approach to analysing the governance work of the case study organisations. I draw on the work of Kooiman (1999; Kooiman et al. 2008, 2005) and systems thinker, Stephen Sterling (2011, 2001) to distinguish different levels or orders of change in organisational governance. By melding these models, I examine the potential of learning and change in governance; my analysis is appreciative of the different intentions of governance work as it moves between maintaining practices, reforming processes and transforming guiding principles and values underpinning the case study organisations. Processes of second and third-order governance are highlighted as enabling

collective reflexivity. I develop the ecologies of organisation approach introduced in Chapter One and to anchor my inquiry in the real world of organisation I examine the practical applications of reflexivity in organisational decision-making.

In their exploration of organisational futures beyond capitalism and bureaucracy, Chen and Chen (2021) observe that organisational studies and business school curricula continue to focus on case studies featuring more conventional hierarchical forms of organisation, ignoring the body of collectivist-democratic organisational research. If, as these scholars argue, the hegemonic position of normative ecologies of organisation has frozen bureaucratic-hierarchical logic this creates a formidable barrier to the evolution of organisational structure/practice in the Anthropocene. Therefore, the contemporary theoretical challenge for NFP theorists is not only to extend Weberian typology as Rothschild (2016) has advocated, but also to disrupt the bias of the normative organisation beyond the limits of bureaucratic-hierarchical thinking by the *inclusion* of different ways of engaging in organisational life.

The second section entitled *Deconstructing normative values - opening space for collectivist organisations,* explores how abstract analyses of dualist systems of thought might be used to support organisations to diminish barriers that inhibit the integration of more diverse ways of being together in governance. To investigate non-hierarchical governance as a site of difference I interrogate the hierarchical form in dualist systems of thought and explore the possibility of governance that is more attentive to different dimensions of knowing, including those which have typically been cast aside as less-than rational.

Extending the critical analysis of normative organisation, the subsection *Power and the construction of leadership,* examines conceptions of leadership, observing that although more inclusive, culturally diverse, and collective approaches to leadership promise reform, in practice, traditional leader-like forms of masculine culture often continue to be perpetuated. Through the refusal to construct hierarchical systems of authority, collectivist cultures are better positioned to develop social relations capable of critically engaging with relations of power. Then, to investigate what Sohail Inayatullah (2009, p. 10) describes as the "the deep stories" and the "civilisational

layer of identity" informing normative expectations of leaders, followers and the role of hierarchical systems of governance, I examine archetypes as generative, although largely unconscious forces in organisational life. I explain my rationale for engaging with archetypal image, as a tool to access deeper cultural yearnings and reveal the imaginary of non-hierarchical forms of leadership in organisation. Insights from mythologist and writer, Joseph Campbell (1988a), and Indigenous scholar Mary Graham (1999) assist my exploration of the deleterious effect of individualism upon organisational social relations and collective engagement and the contribution of tools such as the Motherpeace Tarot cards (V Noble & Vogel 1981) to explore the possibility of new archetypal images of non-hierarchical governance.

The final, very short section of this chapter is entitled, *Towards becoming a participatory, non-hierarchical organisation,* and it serves to complete this theoretical discussion by framing the participants' engagement with the principles of non-hierarchy as an ongoing process of becoming-a-non-hierarchical participant/organisation.

Orders of intent: Reflexive learning as governance work

I use the concept of levels, or orders of governance to differentiate the qualities of learning and change in my non-hierarchical case study organisations, and to renew how a study of organisational governance might be approached. To distinguish between the effects of different governance interactions, Kooiman (1999, p. 78) articulates three distinct modes as "first-order, second-order and meta or third-order governance". In this discussion I have melded the insights of Sterling's (2011) more critical model to integrate understanding about levels of social learning and change with Kooiman's thesis. Conceptualising the work of governance as orders of learning and change helps reveal the distinctive qualities of non-hierarchical governance because these models recognise that intent to change and/or maintain practice is embedded in the work of governance. I will examine each of the levels to explain how these models are used in this thesis.

First-order governance concentrates on the day-to-day work of problem solving in governance. First-order responses bring attention to adherence to the rules and the effectiveness of visible artefacts of governance, such as policy documents, the constitution (rules), also plans, reports,

budgets, organisation charts, delegations of authority, agreements, and performance targets among others. First-order governance is the focus of Chapter Four which examines systems of authority and rules in the case study organisations. As objects that can be measured, observed, and evaluated, these vital elements of organisation are the subjects of much organisational literature as these examples illustrate (Anheier 2014; Hatch 2011; Hinna, Gnan, & Monteduro 2016; World Bank 2007). A value of first-order learning and change is that it creates stability, security and consistency for group members responding to surface level issues that keep organisations going (Alvesson & Spicer 2012).

Arguably, the concentration upon first-order governance in OMT literature has been strongly influenced by classical management ideals developed by Weber (1864-1924) and F. W. Taylor (1857-1915), and reflected in the functionalist principles of management interested in efficient and rational structures (Fein 2015). This thesis agrees with critics of research focused on first-order governance who have observed that when the focus is mainly conceptual, for example, *knowing* through abstract theory and generalised models, the grounded material *reality*, such as the often messy and imperfect *doing* of change processes cannot be articulated (Allen, Cunliffe, & Easterby-Smith 2019). Thus, solely theorising governance as an ideal epistemology has the effect of *accepting* the ontological assumptions framing day-to-day activity of organisational life and limiting analyses to first-order concerns thereby avoiding engagement with complex issues such as enacting systemic change or engaging in collective dialogues exploring power relations in organisational life (Haus 2018).

A limitation of first-order governance is that by concentrating on maintaining the status quo, it is likely that foundational principles and values might be perpetuated without critical examination. Sterling (2011, pp. 22–23) captures the intent of first-order thinking as being *conformative* by doing "more of the same" and "doing things better" through improved efficiency and more effective processes. The first-order focus engages with governance as an abstract epistemology which, by omission, is devoid of consideration of the embodied affectivity of governance that this thesis is exploring. With reference to a lineage of scholars who have investigated systemic learning and organisational change (see Argyris & Schön 1996; Bateson 1972), Sterling (2011, p. 22) problematises first-order learning discourses as "information transfer" that maintain the system.

In first-order thinking the fundamental assumptions underlying a project or practice remain unexamined and "knowledge parameters structuring meaning" are not interrogated (Bateson 1972, p. 476). First-order thinking is not suited to transforming practice as it is less likely to facilitate the collective state of 'not knowing', which is necessary for genuine learning, or for systemic change (Sterling 2003). By problematising the risk of the Anthropocene, this thesis is critical of the effects of normative governance dominated by first-order thinking; where evidence of risk has *not* prompted organisations to move into the modes of second or third-order thinking more likely to enable them to meet the changed economic and environmental conditions of the Anthropocene.

Second-order governance concentrates on the normative institutional arrangements such as agreements, roles, rules, values and principles within which first-order governance takes place (Kooiman et al. 2008). The intention of second-order governance is to influence the conditions under which the daily problem solving of first-order governance takes place (Kooiman 1999, p. 79). In NFP non-hierarchical organisation, second-order governance might consider the collective *capacity* to undertake a project or assess organisational *needs* in respect to recruitment and onboarding policy. Sterling (2011, p. 23) summarises the intent of second-order change *reforming* the system by "doing better things" indicates a subtle shift whereby in second order learning and change an organisation is able to reflect on their practice with a more dispassionate, critical lens. This level of governance thinking might engage critically with questions of purpose and values, in SELC and FoEM I observed governance conversation that explored, 'to what end would we take on this project that will stretch community resources?' and led to an inquiry about economic goals and substantive results on collective human wellbeing in the organisation.

Third-order or meta-governance questions the rationality of the operation including reflection on the facts, measures and strategic instruments, and actions that are accepted as normative (Kooiman et al. 2005). Sterling (2011, pp. 24–25) describes third-order learning and change as the *transformative* experience of "seeing things differently". Meta-governance allows open consideration of governance practice and principles, and is interested in an organisation's capacity to learn and change together. This thesis draws connections between reflexive thinking and a culture that is more open to diversity, dissent, and the inclusion of other ways of being in the work of governing. In Chapter One I contextualised the impulse toward non-hierarchical organisations

as an indicator of a transformation in organisational paradigm (Chen & Chen 2021). Instances of third-order learning will be examined in Chapter's Five, Six and Seven through the distinctive images informing non-hierarchical social relations, onboarding strategies and conflict resolution processes.

I interpret organisational work as a dynamic flow between these three orders of governance; in response to organisational needs the parameters of first-order matters are altered by second-order agreements, and the paradigm of the whole system is transformed through third-order decisions. Introducing the *Handbook of Participatory Governance*, Hubert Heinelt (2018, p. 5) explains that second-order governing is "embedded in the processes" of meta-governing. This understanding clarifies why the dominance of linear thinking in the strategic work of governance, such as the assumptions about time and economic frameworks embedded in annual plans and budgets, makes the adoption of the more complex and less definitive ecological thinking a significant cultural reorientation (Biermann 2014; Dryzek 2016; Eckersley 2020; Hanusch & Biermann 2020). The transformation to more ecologically responsive governance is imagined in this thesis as requiring ongoing meta-learning dialogues. Heinelt (2018) suggests awareness of processes of meta-governance helps clarify the barriers to systemic change influencing normative expectations of, by example, greater levels of participation in governance.

As a central focus in this thesis, the next section will examine my understanding of the concept of reflexivity, which Sterling (2011, p. 25) links with second level learning where assumptions and values are critically examined, and third level learning which catalyses a transformative shift in an organisation's epistemology.

Reflexivity: Willing to become something different

Reflexivity is recognised in organisational life where open-ended questioning, dialogue and reflection occur in and between individuals and groups. The potential this thesis is examining is that the *space* created by a group of reflexive thinkers may allow the layers of systemic domination embedded in habit, language and identity to begin to be unravelled, examined and re-formed; as Dryzek (2016) argues, reflexive thinkers are willing to become something different. Chapter One discussed non-hierarchical governance as a context where participants are encouraged to ask

questions, where there is evidence of grappling with accepted beliefs and assumptions, and where participants are encouraged to identify and challenge values: all practices that Scotney Evans and Natalie Kivell (2015) recognise as being reflexive.

The skill of reflexive thinking is accepted as facilitating an organisation's responsiveness. Reflexivity is an orientation that may be revealed through practices such as 'blue sky thinking', indicating an organisation's ability to 'play' within the reflexive space where 'knowing' can be suspended and where participants feel both free and safe to share experimental ideas. Reflecting on systemic resistance to change Inayatullah (2009, p. 7) observes, overtime systems tend towards becoming "reified, congealed, closed to interpretation - hegemonic". Reflexivity is valued in this thesis as a transformative process. Applying Halberstam's (2011) thinking about reflexivity to organisations, being 'open' will be demonstrated in an organisation's willingness to be adaptable and its ability to tolerate states of uncertainty, thus having flexibility that is not-fixed by a linear logic.

I have demonstrated a research stance committed to self-reflection and self-confronting reflexivity aligning me with the post-human ethnographic intention of self-reflexivity (Alvesson, Hardy, & Harley 2008). The meta-level of critical-reflexivity is a collective practice for organisations and practitioners seeking to work more dynamically within a systems-learning perspective (Hibbert & Cunliffe 2015). Gherardi and Barbara Poggio (2007) describe reflexivity as a relational "order-producing" activity. My reflexive process, discussed in Chapter Two, begins with introspection, and continues through reflexive, exploratory theoretical-analytic dialogues where I make sense of my actions and interpretations and re-align this research towards my goals.

Two clear barriers to hierarchically structured organisations becoming more reflexive have been identified in the literature. Firstly, the absence of reflexivity in hierarchical organisation has been associated with power relations that can manifest in a collective resistance to critical feedback about the leader's "prized ideas" (Beer, Eisentat, & Spector 1990). In his study of organisations, Chris Argyris (1986) examined the psychology of "defensive routines" which inhibits learning in organisations and creates what he describes as "skilled incompetence". The conceptual bonds that

bind hierarchical authority and leadership *reduce* the likelihood of reflexive thinking. When the act of 'questioning' is perceived as a challenge to authority, then the stability of that organisation is potentially undermined by open dialogue characterising reflexivity. The need to maintain the authority of leadership creates an organisational culture that will habitually *refuse* to challenge the leader's ideas/authority in order to preserve what is perceived as the organisation's structural integrity (Alvesson & Spicer 2012). When behaviours, such as a critical orientation, openness and even creativity, are experienced as disruptive, it may indicate that authority figures embedded in hierarchical relations perceive reflexive thinking as dissent (Feindt & Weiland 2018).

Secondly, the 'openness' required for reflexive thinking confronts a binary hierarchy as the liminal space of not-knowing is constituted as the 'inferior' to the certainty associated with the elevated attribute of reason. I will discuss the power of embedded binary structured thought later in this chapter. Because one of the effects of a binary pair is the denial of dependency between superior and inferior parts, in the context of reflexive learning, the superior value of certainty will dominate. Therefore, when reasoned 'knowing' is conceptually divorced from intuitive 'not-knowing' in governance, expression of feelings of uncertainty and a 'gut' sense that 'this is not quite right' may be met with collective discomfort and be routinely discredited and repressed.

To summarise, when organisational cultures are *unable* to tolerate states of not-knowing, they reduce their opportunities for collective learning. Bringing an ecological perspective to organisational learning however can transform 'mistakes' and 'failure' from being shunned as evidence of weakness to being openly examined as opportunities for growth and innovation. The cultural movement involved in thinking reflexively also implies individual self-consciousness and a willingness to self-evaluate one's actions and motivations (Davies 1999). Indirectly, the perceptive stance adopted by reflexive thinkers supports decision-making suited to complex organisational systems where participants work with the awareness that the systems they are part of will continue to evolve (Bai et al. 2016).

To ensure that this study of non-hierarchical organisations does not slip into constructing a binary between 'superior' collectivist organisations and inferior hierarchical organisations the next section expands on my approach of ecologies of organisation introduced in Chapter One.

Ecologies of organisation: Tracing difference and continuity across organisational types

This thesis uses ecology as a central metaphor to distinguish a continuum between on one end, emerging non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation and on the other, dominant hierarchical ecologies of organisation. Following Bateson's (1972, p. 489) proposal that "a difference is an idea", hierarchical and non-hierarchical organisations are envisaged as modes of existence with unique and interconnected characteristics and attributes. Ecologies of organisation are connected through the interdependencies of mind and, as Jonathan Marshall and Linda Connor (2016) observe, because all ecologies are connected, the emergence of different ecologies does not cancel out surrounding ecologies, but rather diversity contributes to the potential creation of more diverse ecologies.

Whether self-aware or not, like all living systems, human ecologies of mind are learning systems; therefore, ecologies of organisation are imagined as continually evolving as they regulate their system and adjust to 'climatic' conditions and destabilising events. In an organisational context, changing climatic conditions might be viewed in the intersubjective adjustments between people, language, and behaviour, and in external transformations in cultural values, changed technological, health or political regimes, for example.

Aligned with a biological understanding, Bateson's (1972) ecology of mind is concerned with discerning patterns of relatedness, of interactions that follow the 'survival', 'evolution' and 'extinction' of ideas as expressions of organisational governance and policy. Therefore, in this thesis, attention will be given to determine the less predictable patterns made by the non-linear and horizontal movements of systems of thought percolating through organisational life. Learning to 'see' an organisational ecology also means removing the research focus from a linear orientation that values 'one' leading/dominating voice as a representation of the whole, towards seeing how the ideas spoken by that voice *influence* the relationship and *dynamics* with and of the organisation. This shift makes the 'one voice' of the leader *less* interesting than following the *trajectories* of participants' voices, their reception and transmutation through the organisation.

Thinking ecologically then, will be used to transpose attention away from first-order governance questions of best practice and technique, towards curiosity about the inter-relationship *between* elements of the assemblage when those 'approved' ideas are expressed through the organisation. This cognitive movement signifies a reflexive reorientation whereby there is potential to develop awareness of the *interplay* of ideas, interests and the assumptions underpinning the strategy itself (Clarke 2014). Thus, organisations as an ecology of minds brings attention to the way concepts morph, transmuting in their movement around an organisation's ecosystem; for example, 'transparency' will be expressed differently in the constitution via policy documents, position descriptions and contractual details, than when the idea of transparency is articulated by participants words and actions. As a 'surviving' idea transparency will be identifiable through the organisation's ecology.

It is my understanding that applying an ecological perspective enables a researcher to look for connection and relationship, while being committed to enriching appreciation of the potential of non-hierarchical organisation. Therefore, this thesis seeks to avoid reversing the traditional oppositional binary by attempting to reposition non-hierarchy as a superior form to hierarchy; instead, what I aim to do is acknowledge the continuities and the differences between ecologies of organisation, to allow the possibility for a 'both/and' approach, where ideally the best/most suitable of each way organising might be selected.

Advocates for an ecological way of thinking believe that increased connectivity between people and place will help humans become responsive to the conditions created by the Anthropocene epoch (Rose 2017). Ecological thinking moves awareness to the quality of relationship, removing the focus from the individual towards the effects generated in the whole psychological field of organisation (Bailey & DiGangi 2017). My interest in the relationships between subjective and organisational fields, discussed in Chapter One, draws attention to the liminal spaces, the thresholds *between* communication that is intended and that which is received. These might be described as *patterns* of feeling, felt as sensations, forces and intensities (Massumi 2015), contributing to the intellectual and emotional "climate" of a working environment (Massumi 2011;

Sedgwick 2003). The qualitative *felt* transitions created in the process of governing are subtle dimensions of subjective experience of interpersonal life.

This thesis is interested in evidence of the ecological process of emergence to conceptualise how seemingly disconnected ideas, practices, feelings, and experiences might produce a cohesive sense of non-hierarchical organisational difference. Capra (2002, p. 21) explains emergence in nonlinear systems where "small changes may have dramatic feedback because they may be amplified by repeated feedback". The patterning of an organisational ecology is created by the myriad of interactions, such as habitual orders of speaking, the ways conversation is enabled or silenced, whose who are included/ not included in agenda creation, the layout of the room in which decisions are made, processes of greeting, seating, breaks, the way decisions are recorded, and when and how agreements are communicated and changed.

Another level of perception is the bodily response that is felt, but possibly not noticed, as affecting the tone of the individual and collective. This level of subjective, subtle perception has been described as "microperception" (Massumi 2011, p. 39). In Chapter's Six and Seven this level of insight is used to illuminate participant's sensing processes which they employ to discern individual and collective wellbeing, comfort, and safety. While participants' might not consciously register the effect produced by these seemingly insignificant elements of organisational life but, through the creative and visual methods described in Chapter Two, I bring attention to participants' microperceptions as qualitative indicators of their lived experience and their sense of being connected and equally disengaged through participating in non-hierarchical governance.

Deconstructing normative values: Opening space for collectivist organisations

To decentre the primacy of hierarchy and binary definitions and to bring attention to the complexity relationships between elements in organisational life my theoretical ensemble seeks to illuminate the specificities of embodied life using archetype and image, while also critically interrogating the hierarchical form in dualist systems of thought. I expand on the insight that "worldviews affect organisational forms" (Rothschild & Leach 2008, p. 355) by deconstructing normative images of governance and interrogating ingrained systems of dualist thought thereby

demonstrating that the structures supporting organisational discourse not only limit the possibility of structures-other-than-hierarchy thriving, but also normalises the exclusion of a majority of people from participating in the work of governance.

Critical feminist and queer scholars have located a barrier to the transformation of society and institutions in the mutually reinforcing systems of dualist thought (Braidotti 2011; Butler 1992; Haraway 1988; Sedgwick 2003). I have found feminist theorists of organisation helpful to think with in interrogating the nuances of dualistic thinking. Philosopher Val Plumwood (2012) suggests that it is not hierarchies *per se* that are the problem, but the dualist relationships within industrial-capitalist culture that produce systemised expressions of power and domination in organisational life:

> A dualism is an intense, established and developed cultural expression of […] a hierarchical relationship, constructing central cultural concepts and identities so as to make equality and mutuality literally unthinkable (2012, p. 47).

Plumwood articulates the hazards of transformative endeavours that do *not* attend to the complexity of dualist systems of thought, which entangle the separations of, for example, reason from nature/emotion, male from female, mind from body, public from private and self from other.[16] The naturalisation of dualist systems of thought influences individual subjectivities and interpersonal relationships as well as organisational forms.

Binary relationships have been woven into the normative epistemology of organisation so that the ideas privileged by dualist systems of thought are positioned in *opposition* to other ways of knowing, doing and being. Therefore, non-hierarchical values and attributes are often constructed as 'inferior' to the so-called superior qualities claimed by hierarchy. For example, the subtle operation of dualist thought has inferiorised the category of 'women's work', so that when work

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[16] Plumwood (2012, p.43) offers seventeen sets of contrasting pairs as the key elements of the dualist structure in western-European thought.

roles reinforce intersectional regimes of inequality, gendered hierarchies in collectivist organisations are strengthened (Meyers & Vallas 2016; Sobering 2021b).

Dualist systems of thought influence organisational culture and its participants so that managers in dominant hierarchical ecologies of organisation may feel compelled to mask their emotional expression and their uncertainty with protective behaviours to maintain their (superior) authority or objective neutrality (Sinclair 2014). The use of protective behaviours to mask difference, diversity and uncertainty have been discussed as one of the key barriers to reflexive thinking. These barriers are often difficult to articulate without challengers being cast as 'emotional' or 'irrational'. As any 'othered' category learns, it is difficult to make claims of authority if one has been theorised 'out' of the accepted narrative through having one's distinguishing values and qualities diminished and excluded (Halberstam 2011).

The ideological strength of hierarchical relations creates an irreconcilable tension between strategies designed to develop more equity and equality *and* organisational environments where hierarchies of social stratification dominate (Ahmed 2012). Working *within* this philosophical contradiction limits the ability of programs that increase equality with the substantive goal of human wellbeing and environmental sustainability. From a realist perspective, self-interest will perpetuate regimes of power because it is not in the interests of those in positions of power to 'share' their rewards (Wendt 1992). Competition is accepted as the dominant organising behaviour in a stratified society and feelings of fear and insecurity are accepted motivators in a capitalist society (Moreland-Capuia 2021). These conceptual constraints provide a compromised context for systemic change towards a more just and equitable world.

Therefore, it is not surprising that after decades of work in organisational studies Jeff Hearn and David Collinson (2018) demonstrate that critical analyses that problematise gender in organizational power relations are still in the minority. They observe that "the vast majority of mainstream, or malestream, work on organizations, leadership, and management has either no gender analysis whatsoever or is informed by a very simple and crude understanding of gender dynamics" (Hearn & Collinson 2018, p. 3). This evaluation suggests that critical analyses have *not* been able to significantly reform or transform a governance paradigm that systemically reproduces

inequality. This resistance to change strengthens Plumwood's (2012, p. 190) assessment that industrial-capitalist societies are in bondage to "the logic of the master".

When the patterning of ignoring critical perspectives is extended to an organisational level a double bind is created (Bateson 1972). No matter what advocates of non-hierarchical organisations provide as evidence of their legitimacy, if the non-hierarchical form of organisation is defined as an inferior to a hierarchy, the successes of collectivist organisations will continue to be inaudible in OMT. When defined as the lesser part of a dualism, *reversal* or *denial* will not loosen the dualist bond (Plumwood 2012). Plumwood (2012, p. 60) suggests that a more thorough process of "reconstruction" is required to enable a "non-hierarchical concept of difference" where the values and qualities that have been annexed as inferior are *reclaimed* and *valued* for their contribution to organisational life. This reclamation may involve extending concepts of "autonomy, agency and creativity" (Plumwood 2012, p. 124) to, for example, all organisational members. Some of the collectivist values and qualities that have been identified in this chapter as requiring reclamation in an organisational context include flexibility, autonomy, leading, participation, following, equality, freedom, inclusion, and cooperation, among others.

It is impossible to re-imagine organisational governance and realise the potential dilemmas for collective leadership without consideration of the role of leadership in an organisational ecology. The next section will interrogate normative beliefs and archetypal images surrounding leadership and power.

Power and the normative construction of leadership

Leadership is an important part of any ecology of organisation. There is an array of normative concepts and images surrounding leadership which I explore as sustaining the dominance of hierarchically structured models of authority. These include that leadership is a social fact, that leader-like qualities are embedded in an individual and gendered in certain ways. To distinguish the practices of non-hierarchical organisation and to discern what happens when the act of leading is re-conceptualised, this section will 'trouble' normative imaginaries of leadership and power. Then I will examine the persistent belief that other formations of leadership, such as distributed

leadership and democratic methods of leading, are less effective than hierarchical systems of authority and decision-making (Denhardt 1989; Gronn 2008).

Power in organisations and society is a complex and well-examined topic (Alvesson & Spicer 2012; Anderson & Brion 2014; Betta 2016; Collinson 2005; Connell 1991; Denhardt 1987; Fleming & Spicer 2014; Gaventa & Cornwall 2008; Gibson-Graham 2006; Madhok et al. 2013; Maina & Haines 2008; Sinclair 1998; Townley 1994). Embedded in discussions about hierarchy, and the possibility of non-hierarchy is the operation of power as *influence* which shapes the way resources, people and strategy are imagined and directed in organisation. Within organisational theory, there is often an assumption that contests of power are a result of a failure of hierarchical leadership to keep order and control (Anderson & Brion 2014). Peter Fleming and André Spicer (2014) identify the Weberian notion of power as something *held* by individuals. This idea of power conceives it as something that might be contested and therefore as something which must be protected by leaders. This adversarial interpretation of power is logical in a hierarchical context and arguably strengthens conventional imagery of leaders and leading.

In *The Subject and Power* (1982), Michel Foucault proposed that hierarchical structures *formalise* the distribution and maintenance of power relations. By suggesting that power "exists" when it is put into action through social interaction, Foucault brought more attention to power as a relationship. A relational view of power brings attention to the relations *between* people and how power is enacted through the relationships is more relevant to my task of examining the lived experience of non-hierarchical participants. Foucault (1982, p. 779) called for a "new economy of power relations" to address the "diseases of power". The possible "catalyst" for the new economy that I am exploring is the idea of equal participation through a non-hierarchical structure. The refusal to adopt a hierarchical system of authority creates the potential to bring "light to power relations [and] locate their position" (Foucault 1982, p. 780). Critical engagement with relations of power in non-hierarchical organisations was explored in Chapter One as a condition of sustaining democratic culture (Leach 2013). The specific processes designed by the case study organisations to interact with the emergence of hierarchical power relations distinguish between

power-to, power-with and power-over (Abizadeh 2021). This will be explored in greater depth in Chapters Six and Seven.

However, in a hierarchy, it is legitimate authority figures in the executive leadership team and the board, who are awarded the most power to develop policy, steer, regulate and guide the organisation. People selected for leadership roles tend to have followed a career path that prepares them for the distinctive subject position of the leader (Carroll 2016). The dominant understanding of leadership, originating from the western European intellectual tradition, is associated with the convention of one leader ruling over and directing the acts and affairs of others (Collinson 2005; Eisler 2013). Ideal presentations of leadership and governance are powerful imaginaries influencing the normative organisational field and equally, myself and the participants in the case study organisations. For example, individual identification as leader or follower entails a complex subjective positioning where the elevation of the (external) leader is accompanied by the follower's silent 'giving away' of their self-authorising rights. I have reflected on my comfort and familiarity in the subject position of leader and, in Chapters Four and Seven, the resonance of normative imaginaries of governance and leadership will be brought into relief as participants in non-hierarchical organisations engage with the unfamiliar subjectivity of being a co-leader among co-leaders.

OMT researchers have given significant attention to the topic of leadership (Collinson 2019); however, attempts to determine the 'components' of a good leader using scientific methods have been largely unsuccessful (Yukl 2002). Unlike abstracted and disembodied conceptualisation of governance, the idea of leadership has often been embodied in the *person* of the leader and related to a real object and stable 'social fact' (Hurlow 2008). Chapter Seven explores the founders' cultural affect and collective processes of grappling with projections onto specific individual's as 'better' leaders in a non-hierarchical system. Leadership is a complex and emotionally charged terrain, leadership is embedded with desire and fantasy, igniting imaginations in literature and media (Chen & Meindl 1991; Gronn 2010).

Feminist and critical scholars have observed that more inclusive approaches to leadership promise reform but, in practice the paradigmatic imagery of traditional leader-like forms of masculine culture are more frequently perpetuated (Acker 2006; Carli & Eagly 2011; Hearn & Collinson 2018; Sinclair 1998). These scholars have foregrounded and contested the unspoken, but assumed heterosexuality, whiteness and masculinity of 'great' leaders (Acker 1990; Acker et al. 2000; Harding et al. 2011), among other positions of social difference. Feminist organisational researchers have contested the gender binary implicit in traditional leadership metaphor whereby 'hard' leaders are portrayed as strong, active, masculine and essential and 'soft' leaders are flexible, caring and feminine – and the latter are qualities that have been observed to be 'useful' but not 'essential' (Sinclair 1998).

There has been a growing awareness of leadership as a system of relationships. This development has increased interest in the concept of relational leaders capable of the 'soft' leadership skills that enhance organisational social relations, and expanded organisational discourses and expectations of leaders (see Cunliffe & Eriksen 2011; Irving 2019; Lloyd-Walker 2011; McLean 2013). More relational leaders have increases communication between leaders and followers and broadened the range of behaviours associated with leadership, producing a 'need' for accepted leadership skills to be complemented by interpersonally sensitive communication techniques such as empathy and emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey 1993; Pearson 2012).

In his study of decentralised forms of organisation, Peter Gronn (2008, p. 154) suggests that distributed forms of leadership lay the ground for the idea of "voice", by increasing "voices of influence on organisations beyond just one" distributed leadership, thereby widening the scope of participation in leadership. Through the metaphor of voice, I examine participant's experience of 'finding' their voice with awareness of the experience of women and people of colour as they learn how to bring their voice in the enactment of non-hierarchical co-leadership. However, Gronn (2008) observes that while earlier organisational theorists have *seen* the possibility of decentralised and democratic forms of leadership, they have not *wanted* to make the move from theory into practice by advocating "collectively determined democratic leadership".

Governance scholar Robyn Eckersley (2020, p. 219) cautions that the inclusivity of ecological and democratic models of governance is disruptive: she observes that "Ecological democracy is clearly a major provocation to liberal democracy insofar as it directly challenges liberal humanist norms as well as the conventional coordinates and boundaries of time, space, agency and community". The best-case scenario of participatory democracy *within* a liberal humanist concept of person is that the self-interested individual *might* negotiate cooperation between other self-interested individuals - *if* goodwill or mutual interest can be located (Daly & Farley 2011; Ostrom 2015). These reflections suggest that *imagining* less hierarchical forms of organisation is possible but *acting* on an idea which is disruptive to hierarchical relations, is often cast as taboo peculiar to the western European intellectual tradition.

Indigenous imaginaries of leadership are sources of creative potential, modelling language, symbol and practice of an ecologically connected way of doing governance which is part of a complex system of reciprocal relationships with land and people (Barlo et al. 2021). Their profound understanding of relationality challenges the relatively superficial and pragmatic framing of relationality as simply another attribute of leadership. Australian Indigenous scholar Mary Graham is a Kombumerri person (Gold Coast) through her father's heritage and affiliated with Wakka Wakka (South Burnett) through her mother's people. Graham's (1999) explanation of her Aboriginal relational ontology demonstrates a spiritual connection with the land that is very far from the normative ecology of organisation based on the radical separation of human from nature:

> The two most important kinds of relationship in life are, firstly, those between land and people and, secondly, those amongst people themselves, the second being always contingent upon the first. The land, and how we treat it, is what determines our human-ness. Because land is sacred and must be looked after, the relation between people and land becomes the template for society and social relations. Therefore all meaning comes from land (Graham 1999, p. 182).

Graham (1999, p. 186) diagnoses the foundational disconnection between "the human spirit and the natural life force" in the industrial-capitalist ontology as the source of 21st century existential crisis in meaning and purpose. The doctoral thesis of Stuart Barlo (2016), a Yuin man from the far

south coast of New South Wales Australia, describes a relational research methodology based on the protocols and principles informing the traditional Indigenous practice of Yarning which is a communication methodology in itself. Barlo and colleagues (Barlo et al. 2021, 2020; Hughes & Barlo 2021) explain the importance of the principles of reciprocity, responsibility, relationship, dignity, equality, integrity and self-determination embedded in the widespread Australian Aboriginal practice of Yarning.

The relational paradigm informing the Aboriginal processes of governance I have briefly touched upon here, is enabled by a culturally based disregard for individualism which by contrast is central to social relations in industrial-capitalist societies. Over time, the foundations of relationality in Australian Aboriginal communities is sustained by the collective actions that maintain harmonious community relations with people in connection with and guided by relations to land (Bawaka Country et al. 2015). More culturally diverse and collective approaches to leadership have been offered by First Nations people in each of the countries where the exemplar organisations are situated (Sveiby & Skuthorpe 2006; Yunkaporta 2019) and at the time of my research each of the case study organisations was actively engaged in deepening their bi-cultural understanding through forming relationships with Indigenous allies.

In this chapter, I suggest that if binary hierarchies continue to frame the constitution of the practice of leading in non-indigenous organisations in settler-societies of Australia, the United States of America and Aotearoa-New Zealand, it is likely that although 'other' ways of leading are available, they will continue to be excluded and diminished (Plumwood 2012). This chapter has considered the influence of the meta-level of paradigmatic images on an organisation's sense of what is 'possible' for them to do, be and know in their governance work. Probing the deeper cultural foundations of hierarchical structured leadership, the next section investigates the affective value of archetypal images in organisational life.

The generative power of archetypal images

This thesis investigates the possibility that the non-hierarchical paradigm is a potent indicator of the cultural movement beyond the primacy of hierarchy. To inquire more tangentially into this

possibility, the mythic level of analysis is included in this thesis to illuminate insights that might be communicated through archetypal images, symbol, and metaphor. With the less conventional hermeneutic device of the Tarot (Semetsky 2016), this ethnographic study explores what are imagined as participants' less conscious, but intuitively felt dimensions of organisational life (Inayatullah 2004). I will begin by introducing the concept of archetype, and then extend the discussion about archetype and leadership in organisation. Then, I explore the potency of archetypal images as new expressions of the collective, that might illuminate the deeper cultural yearnings sustaining participants' engagement in non-hierarchically governed organisation.

An archetypal image is described by Carl Jung (1968) as one that holds great meaning and cultural power. Imagining archetypes as "the river-beds along which the currents of psychic life has always flowed", Jung (1969, p. 227) illustrates their subterranean and dynamic relationship with individuals and their world. Expressed in metaphor, symbol and image, archetypes have been thought to be instinctively recognised across human cultures and are believed to form the basis of cultural myths (Campbell 1972). Archetypes can be collective in their orientation such as those related to the spirit, cycles of life, birth, death and rebirth and the relationship between the individual and their community (Kostera 2012).

Leadership archetypes operate beneath the rational, conscious and logical spheres of awareness and have a profound effect upon collective belief systems and the success of systemic change projects (Waddock 2015). Archetypes are not the same as explicit theories of leadership, although they might *inform* the acceptance or rejection of theories (Day & Zaccaro 2014). The 'stickiness' of leadership (Brunning & Perini 2018) can be more comprehensively appreciated via the concept of archetype (Kostera 2012; Mitroff 1983; Neville & Dalmau 2008). The strength of leadership archetypes is reflected in what Gary Yukl (2002) describes as the bias towards heroic conceptions of leadership, where metaphor and analogy characterise leaders as saviours and rescuers. According to Denhardt (2011), the repetition of these stories in organisational metaphor validate a pattern of domination in leadership discourse, thereby explaining the bias toward the behavioural expectation of submission to the master that underlies the relational dynamic in many hierarchically structured organisations (Denhardt 1987). However, archetypes are not fixed;

therefore, movements challenging dominant imaginaries in the 'collective consciousness' of an organisation and in the inter-organisational field are likely to be reflected in the emergence of new and different archetypes (Bowles 1993).

Immersion in the myths of many cultures gave Campbell (1988a, 1988b, 1972) insight into the place of myth and archetype as mirrors of culture. Campbell was appreciative of the cultural role of the hero's journey; not as an act of domination and individual success, but as a transformative human rite of passage marking becoming-responsible as an adult in service of community (1988b). Over 75 years ago, Campbell recognised the damaging effect of the individualist imaginary modern industrial-capitalist society whereby people live as though they are independent from each other, separated in a community that is no longer guided by the sacred mysteries of life that had sustained the health of the pre-modern human psyche. There are many resemblances between Campbell's concern about destructive effects of individualism and Graham's (1999) recognition (discussed above), that the dislocation of people from the guidance of Earth's life force is very harmful to the collective psyche of industrial-capitalist society.

Further, Campbell perceived a crisis of meaning in dominant epistemologies of modern society so that the normative cultural ontology of industrial-capitalist society can no longer be looked to as a source of guidance: "The modern hero [or heroine] … cannot wait for the community to cast off its slough of pride, fear, rationalised avarice and sanctified misunderstanding" (1988a, p. 391). In a parallel intellectual universe, feminist philosopher and physicist, Karen Barad (2003, p. 829) indirectly echoes Campbell's concern in her concept of "onto-epistem-ology" which recognises that because everything is connected we need to connect human practices of knowing in/with our being.

The perception of a profound crisis of meaning and purpose in the western European intellectual tradition is interpreted by Campbell as an indicator of the need of a new mythic form beyond individualism. This concern reflects the impetus behind Noble's development of the Motherpeace Tarot (V Noble & Vogel 1981) which she intended as a contribution to a non-hierarchical imaginary of society. The Motherpeace 'world' conveyed through the images on the cards, can be

engaged with as a posthuman universe characterised by responsibility, respect for community and nature relations, where explicit conversations about power, justice, equality, and the necessary inclusion of diversity is part of everyday life. The explicitly feminist reversal of patriarchal imagery in these Tarot cards rejects the male view of the world and challenges the gendered hierarchy embedded in Jungian archetypes (Noble 1983).

The emergence of new archetypal images has been connected with developments in the human psyche (Mitroff 1983). According to James Hillman (1990) and Robert Romanyshyn (2007), intentional engagement with archetypal images can be generative, potentially instigating healing processes and extending an individual's way of knowing and expanding the possibilities for the individual and collective. Chapter Two detailed my justification for using the visual and poetic images in Motherpeace Tarot (V Noble & Vogel 1981) as a symbolic device that resonated with participants' non-hierarchical values. My approach to engaging with archetype and symbolic aspects of the Motherpeace Tarot (V Noble & Vogel 1981) follows Hillman's (1990) idea of an archetype as a metaphor whose strength is revealed in the process of engagement *with* the image. The meaningfulness and value of the images communicate the fullness of the engagement experience, which Hillman (1990, p. 26) describes as "letting the image speak". Inspired by Hillman, I have sought to "discover the necessity within the image" by discerning patterns that emerge in participants' embodied-feeling responses through their immersion with the images in participant-generated drawings and the Tarot cards.

Archetypal images are analysed as data in this ethnographic study and related to as symbols capable of illuminating the emotion and dramatic structure in the psychic life of the exemplar organisations. An effect of enhancing non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation as a site of difference is to question some of the paradigmatic images embedded in the expectations, values and assumed truths of normative ecologies of organisation. For example, just as Jonathan Marshall (2015, p. 48) recognises that "myths of order and harmony" influence normative organisational aesthetics determining expectations and standards within the western European intellectual tradition, in this study I document the emerging meta-narratives that influence non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation. Therefore, the images selected and produced by the participants are drawn upon to contribute to understanding what set in motion through the practice of collectivist-

democratic leadership. This approach brings to the fore an examination of some of the more intangible aspects of the non-hierarchical organisational assemblage. For example, the influence of the shape of the circle on participatory governance is examined in Chapter Six variously as a configuration for practice, a model for process, as a metaphor for equality and inclusion and an archetype that evokes wholeness and unity.

Towards becoming a participatory, non-hierarchical organisation

I have demonstrated in this chapter that renewing approaches to governance when conventional epistemologies are founded on dualist systems of thought and first-order governance requires intentional, self-reflexive engagement between organisational participants. Towards this goal, the final section of this chapter will explore 'becoming-non-hierarchical' as an ongoing reflexive process.

In the hundred years since Weber's death, human participation in the global capitalist economy has created a planet where the ecological consequences of anthropocentrism have upset the certainty and order intended by Weber's typologies. Earth Systems Governance (ESG) scholars have articulated the disjunction between the ecological outcomes generated by hierarchical governance *and* the urgent need to stimulate a proactive and systemic response to the ecological 'ends' materialising in the Anthropocene (Biermann 2014; Dryzek 2016; Hanusch & Biermann 2020). Yet, I have surrounded the reconstructive movement beyond hierarchy with caution.

Learning how to value difference and reclaim behaviours and ways of knowing that have previously been belittled as contrary to proper governance ontology means that such a project requires a courageous and exploratory series of re-orientations. I have suggested that one aspect of this transformation is recognising conceptual traps that reconstitute dualisms; another is a radical process of reconceptualisation that re-languages, re-imagines and recreates relations based on cooperation and mutuality (Plumwood 2012). Roland Bogue (below) suggests that undoing dualist hierarchies can be supported by a gentle but persistent inducement, to discern pathways between apparently opposing positions:

The only means of fashioning a new people and a new earth is to engage in 'becomings' or processes of 'becoming-other' - becoming-woman, becoming-child, becoming-animal, becoming-molecular. Such processes undo hierarchical binaries that privilege male over female, adult over child, human over non-human, and the macro over the micro, not by simply inverting them, but by inducing a passage between boundaries such that both poles of a binary opposition dissolve in zones of indiscernibility as something new and unchartered emerges (2009, p. 54).

Further, the entanglement of knowing, being and doing in governance means that conceptual transformations must be practised, performed and reflected upon individually and with the collective committed to this sometimes frustrating, often messy and disappointing, pathfinding process. With intention and practice, movements that decentre binary relations *may* induce participants and organisations trained in hierarchical habits of mind to discover new ways of 'becoming-non-hierarchical'.

A relational intent combined with ecological reasoning and reflexivity are ways of thinking that may transform organisations by bringing awareness to the ecological constraints that have been obscured by global industrial-capitalist supply systems. Combining ecological thinking with reflexivity, Dryzek (2016, p. 945) assigns ecological reflexivity with the potency of a "meta-capability", capable of enabling "an inquiring society that is not the prisoner of historical forces, whose members are autonomous, capable of critical questioning and jointly able to chart a developmental path". Addressing the problem of instigating societal transformation, Dryzek (2016) suggests that being *willing* to scrutinise core values such as economic growth and the domination of non-human nature is an essential step. As such, reflexive thinkers can renew epistemological frameworks, such as the conceptual reductionism and linear thinking implicit in bureaucratic-hierarchical logic, identified in Chapter One as preventing an adequate response to the Anthropocene (Eckersley 2020; Hammond, Dryzek, & Pickering 2020; Hanusch & Biermann 2020; Pickering 2019).

Finally, if, as Biermann and Hanusch (2020, p. 31) suggest, "strict hierarchy" is now "incompatible with a world where planetary health and democracy need to reinforce each other", organisations structured as more participatory forms of democratic governance might model governance thinking as planetary stewards and in so doing begin to reconceptualise our relationship with the biosphere.

Conclusion

To ferment thinking about organising and governance in the Anthropocene this chapter has proposed different combinations of theoretical tools capable of addressing the persistence of dualisms influencing organisational culture and its participants. Conceptualising different orders of governance helps distinguish the potential of learning and change in non-hierarchical governance discourse. Third-order governance provides insight into the different collective patterns that become possible when *maintaining* non-hierarchical relations is a paradigmatic goal of the organisational system.

I have shown that the process of unravelling one's entanglement with the ideas and habitual subject positions of hierarchy is an ongoing process with the potential to transform normative imaginaries of power and authority. Embedded in systemic hierarchies of difference, the archetypal leader as hero-saviour, normalises the superiority of one *type* of voice and excludes many different voices from participating in governance. Archetypal images are examined to reveal changing cultural yearnings surrounding alternative ecologies of organisation. I have theorised the possibility that the primacy of hierarchy and binary definitions can be decentred by participants 'becoming-non-hierarchical'. Further, I propose that the dynamic combination of non-hierarchical structure and practice can strengthen the transformative orientations of ecological thinking and reflexivity in organisational governance.

Chapter Four - Authority and Rules: Authorising Many Voices to Govern

This chapter examines what is set in motion when authority is transposed from the 'one voice' of the leader and Board to authorising 'many voices' (Burns 1994) in participatory governance. In Chapter One, the alignment between governance and authority was discussed as a pivotal component of a successful hierarchical organisation where legitimate authority is commonly associated with "the power or right to enforce obedience" and "influence the actions of others" (Little, Fowler, & Coulson 1964). However, within a non-hierarchical organisation the expectations surrounding authority are altered through the participatory ethos that seeks to strengthen *all* voices and reduce layers of social stratification by eliminating formal hierarchies related to authority and positional status (Rothschild & Whitt 1986a).

In this chapter, I will explore how the principle of consent underpins non-hierarchical collective engagement, supporting 'many voices' to experience themselves as 'co-leaders'. I will show that the practice of non-hierarchy makes it possible for participants to reconceptualise their identity outside the 'leader as superior to follower' paradigm. The movement to include 'many voices' in governance will be examined through a review of organisational practice and unique structural configurations as well as through interview transcripts and images contributed by case study participants to convey the qualities of their participatory governance. The practice of consent-based decision making at Sustainable Economies Law Center (SELC), and consensus-based decision-making at Friends of the Earth Melbourne (FoEM) will be examined in detail as distinct applications of non-hierarchical governance processes. The advice process used by Pachamama Alliance will be discussed in the context of their organisational transition from hierarchical NFP to becoming-non-hierarchical. Finally, I will examine how the practice of non-hierarchy has influenced individual subjectivities in SELC and FoEM.

The distinct patterning of ecological thinking, described in Chapter Three, will be observed in this discussion of SELC, FoEM, and Pachamama Alliance's governance. The effects of reflexive practices such as questioning, dialogue and reflection on decision-making will be shown to facilitate non-hierarchical governance. Having discussed the conceptual barriers created by dualist

patterns of thought, this chapter will explore patterns of difference and continuity between emerging and dominant ecologies of organisation. I will begin by differentiating the form of non-hierarchical models of decision-making and then move into a detailed examination of SELC's governance.

Consent and Consensus: Models of decision-making using a circular form

The non-hierarchical organisations in this study have purposefully redesigned their conceptual and physical organisational form to accurately represent a system of relationships where authority and accountability are distributed between all organisational members. There are two main models of governance decision-making used by non-hierarchical organisations: consent-based decision-making with roots in Holacracy (van de Kamp 2014) and sociocracy (Christian 2014), and the ancient democratic power-sharing process of consensus-based decision-making (Sveiby & Skuthorpe 2006). The distinctive geometric organising form used by SELC, Enspiral, Pachamama Alliance and FoEM is the circle. The archetypal form of the circle is recognised as an important aspect of non-hierarchical practice as it supports the principle of having a co-leader in every chair (Baldwin & Linnea 2010). The symbolic and archetypal resonances of the circle will be explored in Chapter Six.

The non-hierarchical case study organisations examined in this thesis have consciously abandoned the imaginaries associated with the triangular formation of hierarchy. The prioritisation of efficiency with the image of a well-tuned machine is discarded for images of living systems, characterised by their complexity, and the interdependence and connection between each of the parts that make the whole (Capra 2005; Sterling 2003). For example, Figure 19 shows SELCs horizontally orientated organisation chart characterised by overlapping circles and connected by the *General Governance and Strategy Circle* that all staff belong to. Later in this chapter, a FoEM member describes their experience of consensus as a "jazz improvisation"[17] and in Chapter Five, Enspiral members imagine their organisational governance using living metaphors such as a

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[17] FoEM interview with Al

rainforest, a flower in the garden and a village.[18] The elements contributing to these imaginaries of non-hierarchical governance will be explored through this and the next three chapters.
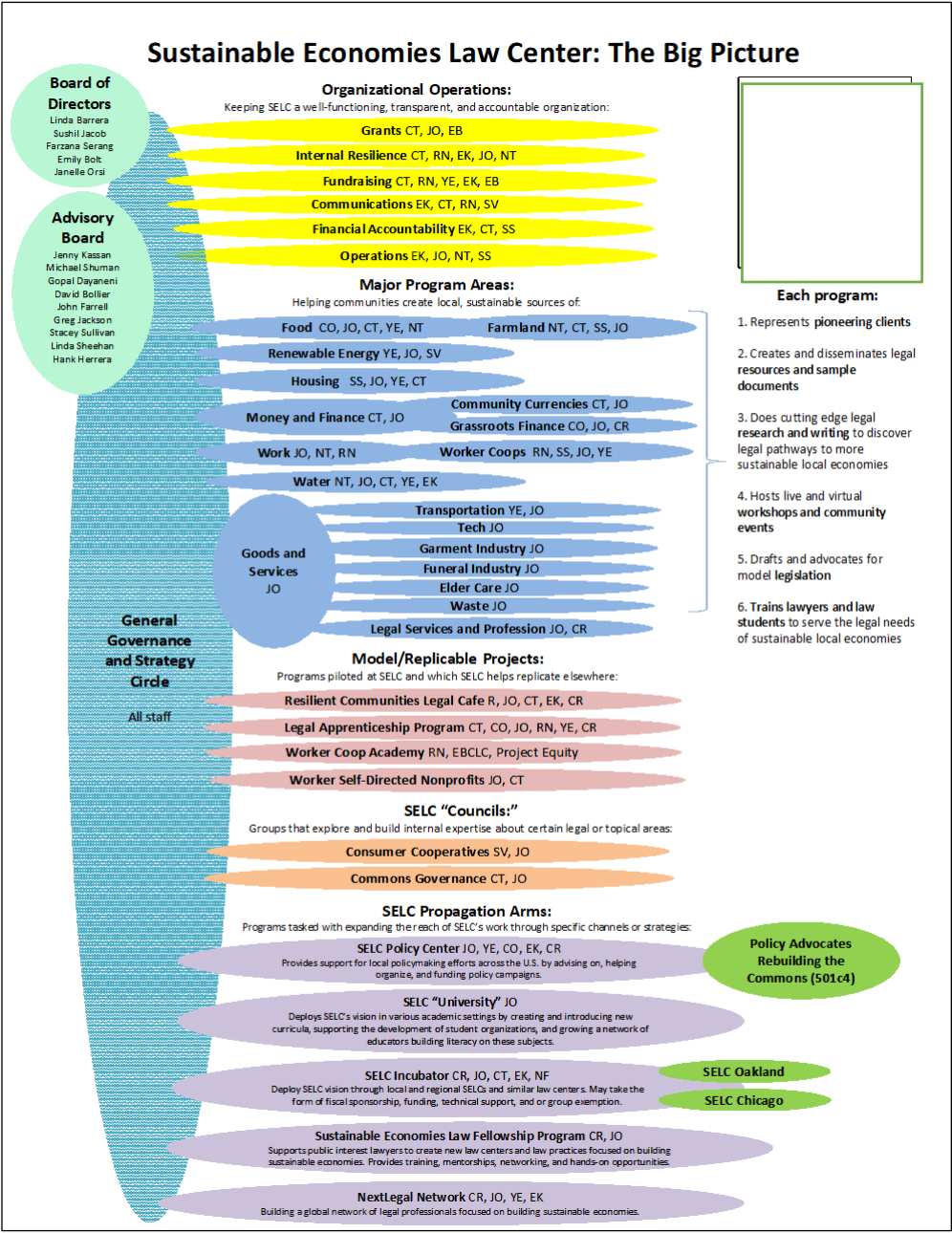
Figure 19: SELC 2016 - an organisational chart of intersecting circles (Source: SELC website)

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[18] Enspiral interviews with Liam, Gerald, and Otto

An ecology of contained generativity: The Sustainable Economies Law Center

In over eight years as a participatory, democratic workplace, SELC has developed a decentralised network of interconnected units. SELC is an organisation of attorneys, and they approach the legal system strategically, conceiving of the law as a tool that can enable an equitable sharing economy. SELC values the transactional power of the law to redesign relationships, create new agreements, organisations, and infrastructure (Orsi 2012). SELC ground their practice with a high-level reflexive question that situates their work within the biosphere: How can our governance be an illustration of 'the change we want to see' in society? (Sustainable Economies Law Center 2019).

SELC founding members explained that when they designed their governance structure, they were aware that a principled commitment to equality would not prevent the reproduction of hierarchical patterns of domination. One founding member, Hailey reflected that "many organisations blow apart in conflict a lot of times because of hierarchies they weren't acknowledging". Research has confirmed SELC's assessment that unconscious patterning perpetuates gender, class and racial inequalities, undermining ideals of equality and inclusion (Meyers & Vallas 2016; Sobering 2016). Therefore, a condition of non-hierarchical cultures that will be explored through this thesis, is the development of specific organisational practices that attempt to interrupt the unconscious replication of binary hierarchies with the aim of allowing the group to create new practices that strengthen equality and inclusivity (Leach 2013). When SELC were introduced to a new decentralised decision-making method, they had the sense that it would support their aims of non-hierarchy, Hailey remembered thinking; "Holacracy could really, really help people, this could change everything".

A commercial product,[19] Holacracy has been described as a 'process' designed to support decentralised decision-making. Its founder, Brian Robertson (2015) distinguishes Holacracy from an ideology or idea. However, the possibility motivating Holacracy is the *idea* of transcending the limitations of the triangular organisational form which concentrates authority in the form of the leader. Holacracy has many similarities to sociocracy, an earlier iteration of non-hierarchical

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[19] Holacracy is a registered trademark of Holacracy One, L.L.C. of Spring City, PA, USA.

decision-making that will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.[20] The intelligence of consent-based models is that they provide a process to support the group to decentre an individual 'leader as the authority' by transferring authority to the collectively created document of the constitution.

Conceptually, an organisation practising consent-based decision-making has re-centred legitimate authority away from the person into a purpose-centred document. Robertson (2015) explained that removing authority from an individual is designed to distribute power through the organisation. In 2012, the small team at SELC began experimenting with Holacracy "circles" and the "iterative decision-making process".[21] As SELC grew so did the number of Circles, suggesting that the fractal circle structure can be scaled up to meet the requirements of larger organisations. However, researchers have observed that adjusting to a decentralised model of governance can be challenging for some organisations. In their evaluation of Holacracy, Kumar and Mukherjee (2018) note that staff in Medium and the Lausanne Business School found the increased levels of accountability and responsibility in Holacracy. In Zappos 18% of staff chose to leave the organisation when Holacracy was adopted. Kumar and Mukherjee believe that Holacracy is a framework ahead of its time and that integrating new, younger employees must be balanced with the needs of an older workforce, particularly managers less comfortable with losing their status and power in the organisation.

During the fieldwork I observed that SELC's circle practice was well integrated into their governance practice. The disciple of working in circle formation was illustrated by Eli when he explained to me that *all* SELC meetings flow around the circle, and each round has the same clear structure: "There's a proposal, question, answer, objection round and our threshold for an objection is that […] you can only object if it harms the organisation, moves it backwards in its mission". The level of habituation was shown to change, and even restrict, collective expectations about SELC's process. For example, a dialogue emerged in the Reflective Group Conversation (RGC) when I suggested using a 'popcorn' method to randomly give me feedback. In response to this idea

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[20] In this and subsequent chapters I will refer to these methodologies as consent-based models, or Holacracy, if the discussion relates to the proprietary product (see Slade 2018).
[21] SELC interview with Hailey

the group paused, and then one member explained to me that the group were more comfortable when meetings in SELC worked inclusively and consistently around each of the participants in the circle.

Through daily repetition, consent-based decision-making processes repattern participant behaviour and expectations, thereby strengthening the embodied experience of equality and inclusion of diverse voices. All SELC meetings are structured in a circle formation and, in *each* round of the decision-making cycle, *each* person is sequentially given the opportunity to speak. There is the option to 'pass' and when there are no questions or objections everyone sequentially passes. A notable effect of making 'speaking' an automatic process is that no one is positioned to 'assert' themselves to be heard. I observed that this relatively simple practice had a balancing and quieting influence on SELC's culture, simultaneously reducing the need to compete for attention and making space for voices less inclined to assert themselves.

Over time, participants who identified themselves as being shy, reported that the expectation of contributing to SELC's decision-making cycles had cultivated their confidence. Reminiscent of Pateman's (1970) observation that participation is an active learning process, Frances associated the amplification of her voice with the development of her reflective skills as a member of SELC's non-hierarchical governance group: "[SELC] has helped me to form opinions about things that I wouldn't normally reflect on". By aligning their mission of equal participation in governance as the measure against which all decisions are made, the SELC collective seeks to integrate their decision-making with their substantive goals of democracy and social justice.

Governance functionality and design using circles

The architecture of Holacracy draws on Koestler's concept of holarchy, where self-managing nested 'holons' form subsets of the whole (1969). Using the form of the circle as the primary unit, Holacracy creates a system of intersecting circles, defined by their specific purpose and accountabilities (see Appendix 4 for an explanation of elements of SELC 2017 organisation chart). Robertson (2015) and others envisage Holacracy as a process capable of shifting the leader-centred pattern of behaviour in hierarchical organisations through making governance a more transparent

and dynamic process (Bodie 2017; Csar 2017; Kumar & Mukherjee 2018; van de Kamp 2014). Advocates for Holacracy argue that this method of decision-making makes governance more directly responsive to organisation members and organisational needs (van de Kamp 2014). The distinct patterning of SELC's horizontally structured organisation makes more sense when explored visually, through participant-generated drawings and SELC's organisation chart (shown in Figure 19).
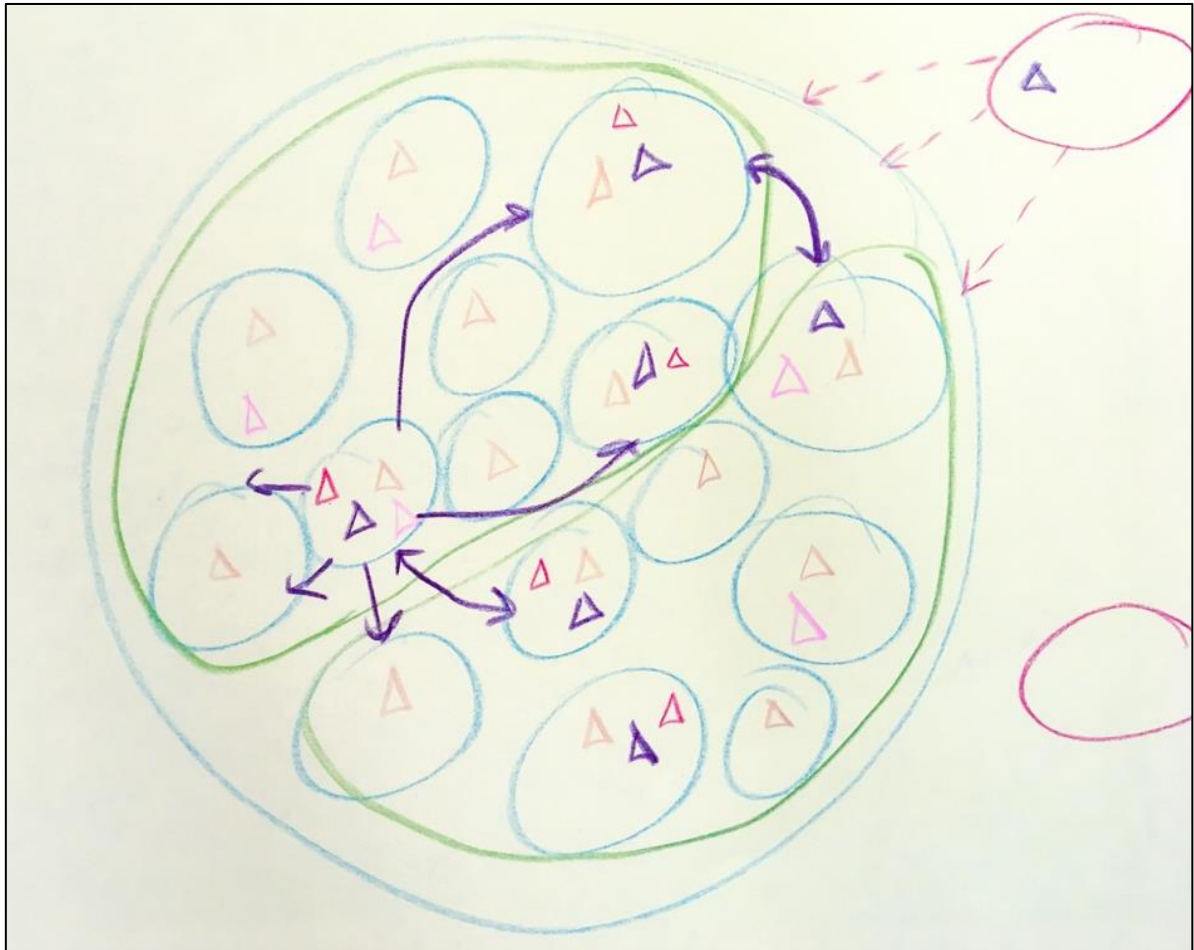
Figure 20: When there is a big decision, everyone shares responsibility in making it (Frances, SELC).

The primary body responsible for the management of SELC is the *General Governance and Strategy Circle* (commonly referred to as the *General Circle*). SELC Constitution clarifies the core members who are part of the General Circle which makes governance decisions for the

organisation, amends and expands the constitution. The General Circle is empowered to create new Circles. The process is to "approve the Circle's purpose, initial accountabilities, and initial Circle members. Any change to a Circle's purpose or accountabilities must be approved by the General Circle" (SELC organization policies May 2016).
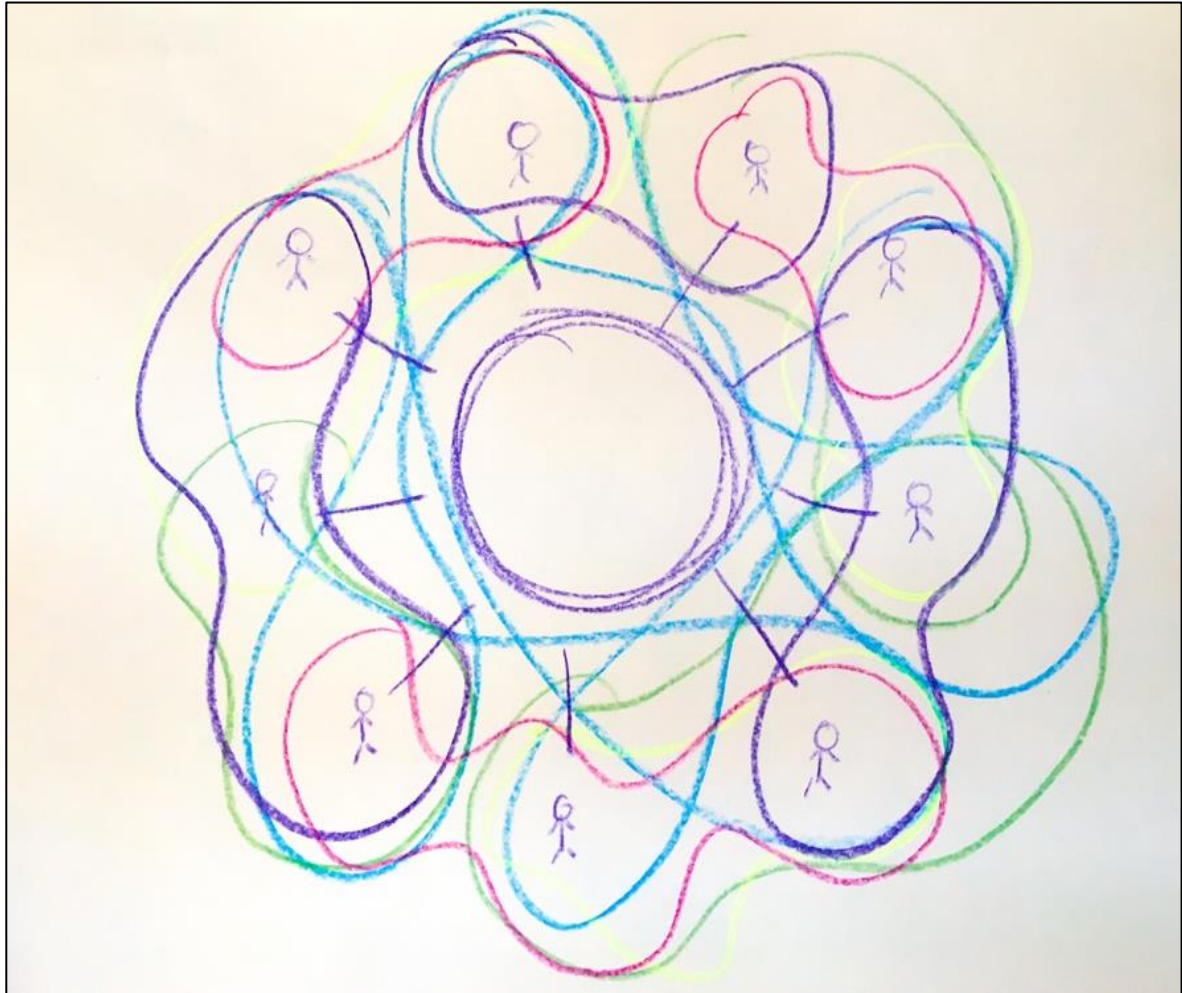
Figure 21: This is us all coming together; we are calm, cool and collected in the middle (Abbie, SELC).

The *General Circle* facilitates SELC's democratic process by inviting participant proposals to amend and extend the constitution: "When there is a big decision, everyone shares responsibility in making it".[22] The importance of the *General Circle* is indicated in Frances' drawing as the blue

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[22] SELC interview with Frances

outer circle that is big enough to contain all other circles (Figure 20). By contrast, Abbie's drawing (shown in Figure 21) placed the *General Circle* as the centre of the organisation: "This is us all coming together; we are calm, cool and collected in the middle".[23] Both interpretations illustrate the containing effect of the *General Circle* and its contribution to members' sense of stability and connection.

To build collective capacity and share knowledge horizontally, every staff member at SELC participates in several Circles and holds a number of roles. For example, Figure 22 shows one staff member as being a member of seven Program Circles and five Operations Circles. The roles assist co-workers to understand what each person is accountable for as each role has specific authority and accountabilities, and the transparency of knowledge created by digital systems facilitates role change (Csar 2017). Circle meetings can be attended online or in person.

Roles at the Law Center

Program Areas	Operations Areas
• Lead: Policy	• Board of Directors Coordinator
• Support: Community Renewable Energy	• Internal Resilience
• Support: Housing	• Conflict Engagement Lead
• Support: Food	• Retreat Design Team
• Support: Legal Profession	• Staff Skill Trainings Coordinator
• Support: Cooperatives	
• Support: Water	

Figure 22: An individual's chosen roles at SELC (Source: SELC website 2021)

In SELC movement between Circles is encouraged by policy and in practice, organisation members are encouraged to follow their personal interests:

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[23] SELC interview with Abbie

You can step out of Circles and then step into others - there is a lot of that. There is a low barrier for that […] We can join Circles or step out depending on your interest, if you step out you have to offload and find other people to take the role that you have been holding (Paige, SELC).

Movement between Circles is initiated through a cooperative sharing of ideas and information. Participants have the autonomy to self-select the roles they are interested in. The motion created by expanding and contracting circles is enabled by digital communication and information management systems. I observed SELC's working environment operated with a high level of transparency.

Holacracy transposes 'person-based roles' to 'task-based roles' to increase flexibility and decentre individuals from role identification. For example, Hailey explained the mapping process used to decentralise SELC's financial management:

We took our financial operations which were largely held by one or two people, and broke them into 19 different roles [which] are shared by five people […] it takes me 10 minutes a week to half hour a week - there's no role that takes anyone more than an hour a week […] now so many people understand our finances and have an eye on each transaction (Hailey, SELC).

The horizontal flow between Circles builds communication between group members, and this plasticity also permits SELC to be very responsive to process improvements as the momentum created by the movement of people in and out of Circles encourages multiple perspectives in project strategy. Kami explained the dynamic quality of SELC's governance:

Circles are constantly evolving; for example, food has shrunk over time, other areas that have developed, the policy circle is bigger now, also meta-policy component and training, grants working with different groups and the legal guide has moved into the café and

webinar […] We are parking a lot of circles and ideas that are not active or energised this time (Kami, SELC).

The movement between Circles gave group members a working picture of the interconnecting elements of projects and policy. This flow is represented in the graphic from SELC 2017 Annual Report (shown Figure 23). Compared to the static triangular form of a hierarchical organisational chart, the participant-generated drawings show an organisational dynamic characterised by overlapping and flowing movements. This vitality suggests an organic quality which enables SELC to expand and contract according to organisational need and in alignment with purpose. An organisational structure with both strength *and* flexibility is reminiscent of organisational theorist and cyberneticist, Stanford Beer's (1990) concept of "tensional integrity", where an organisation's structure is held together by the tension *between* members, rather than through the normative strategy of control or compression between layers of a hierarchy (Schecter 1991). Chapter Six will examine the ways structure can be used to enhance or reduce communication between members (Algera & Lips-Wiersma 2012; De Landa 1997; Woods et al. 2013).
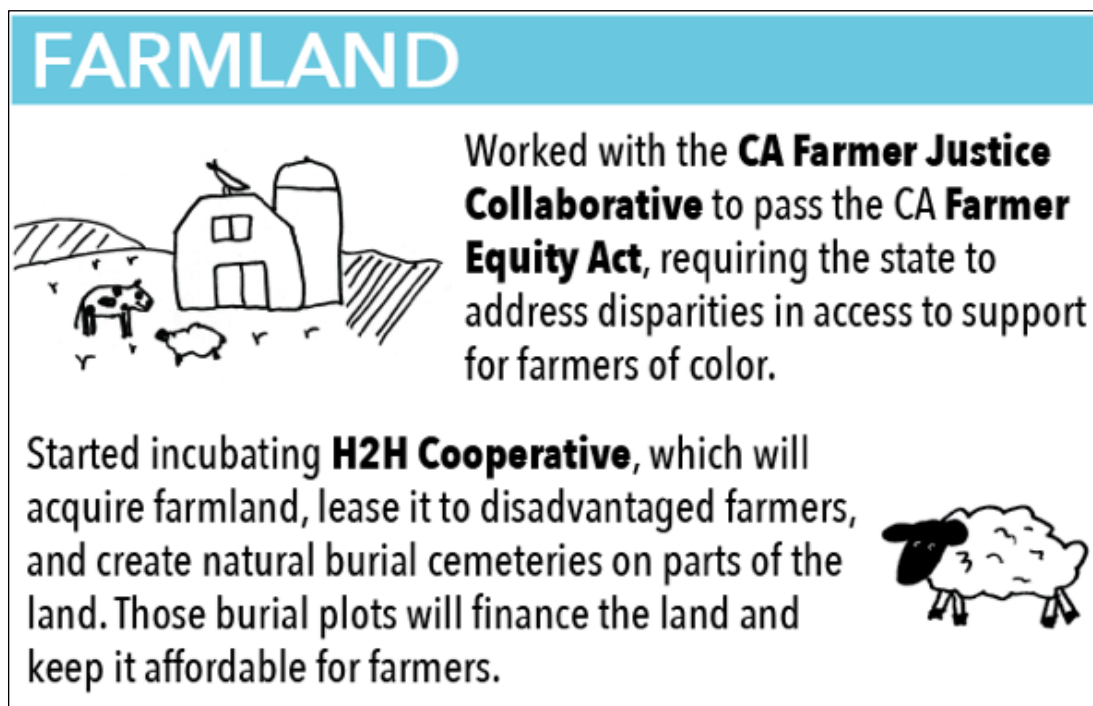
Figure 23: The interconnections between Program Circles (Source: SELC 2017 annual report)

In this examination of SELC's structural configuration, I have demonstrated that there are three interconnected, self-authorising patterns facilitating SELC's non-hierarchical governance. Self-authorising begins with each individual being authorised to manage their schedule, including moving between Circles and roles. The second level is the self-governed *Program* and *Operations Circles,* the third collectively governed *General Circle*. Chen (2016) identified decentralised agency as one of the factors that strengthens collectively governed entities where organising principles guide participants to initiate and create. Allowing autonomous self-authorising and self-managing behaviour to flow between each level of organisation strengthens SELC's fractal design: It supports participants' exploration *and* maintains the structural integrity of the organisation. The importance of structure as a container for organisational activity is a continuity between emerging and normative ecologies of organisation. The next section will explore the practices distinguishing SELC's consent-based governance.

Consent-based governance and non-hierarchy

Through the *General Circle* SELC has evolved a range of practices designed to engender trust between organisational Circles and develop confidence for participants to practise sharing their voice in decision-making. Ideally, non-hierarchical governance is non-coercive and non-directive, because its functionality relies on the willing participation of members. Sociocracy, the conceptual foundation of consent-based governance, operates from the "principle of no objection" (Edenburg 1998, p. 10). Unlike the ideal of consensus, consent in a governance context, does not rely on the absolute agreement of the collective to move forward. A critique of consensus is that it does not scale up easily and is often perceived as being impractical because of the time taken to come to absolute agreement (Robertson 2015). However, FoEM have integrated the principle of subsidiarity into their consensus process to reduce duplicating conversations.

The basis for "going ahead" with a proposal in SELC is that no one believes the decision will "harm the organisation".[24] Practitioner and consultant, Samantha Slade (2018, p. 107) distinguishes consent through the question: "Is there anyone who can't live with this?" and this can be seen reflected in Frances' description of SELC's consent-based decision-making:

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[24] SELC interview with Eli

We give permission to press each other, so as long as somebody isn't bringing something that others really feel will move us backwards, then it's like okay - let's go for it and if it doesn't work then somebody else can bring a proposal to change it. […] so there is never really this feeling of being kind of trapped […] into something that gets passed (Frances, SELC).

Having "permission" to "press each other" may initially appear contradictory, however this combination of concepts illustrates how non-hierarchical methodologies (including consensus) are able to engage directly without confrontation (see Polletta 2021). There are many variations of a consent-based methodology including Holacracy, Sociocracy and Percolab's Generative Decision Making. The online participatory tool, Loomio, gives these options: "I agree with this and want to go ahead", "I abstain and am happy for the group to decide without me", I disagree and think we can probably do better, but I will live with the decision" and "I block this decision because I have a strong objection and I am not Ok with it going ahead" (Loomio Collective 2020). The presence of playfulness in SELC's daily rituals also contributed to reconceptualising SELC's governance. For example, I observed fun 'check-outs' to end a meeting, including 'pick an animal that reflects your feeling now'. This activity took a couple of minutes and contributed feelings of lightness and humour through individual sharing.

Another distinctive practice that strengthened the appreciative tone in SELC: After a proposal was presented, the first round was 'comment, clarification and support' for the proposal, the second 'questions', the third gave the proposer a chance to respond to the questions. Only after three rounds of exploration that 'objections' were invited. Each round was highly disciplined, there was no discussion, but the collective clarity grew as the rounds proceeded. An advantage of consent-based decision making that prohibits discussion but elicits response to specific questions is that the attention is concentrated on thinking critically and clarifying objections rather than slipping into debate about details of a proposal that prohibit the full evaluation of a proposal.

When I was observing SELC's *General Circle*, I was surprised when the group conversation was punctuated by a seemingly spontaneous, single collective handclap. The clap communicated a feeling of mutual appreciation, and it was explained that when there were 'no objections' to a proposal, they agreed to punctuate that moment with a celebratory clap, before moving into the next proposal. These examples of experiential and embodied ways of being change the relational tone of SELC's decision-making to be lighter and more fluid. It is also less personal, while being highly engaged.

This discussion of SELC's governance has demonstrated how the structure of consent-based governance sets in motion a restorative engagement with several interconnected dualist concepts that often contribute to constructing the leader as superior to followers and limit the development of diverse approaches to decision-making. For example, an effect of circular decision-making practice that *expects* the input of each voice in each round appears to reduce individual attachment to authorship. Potentially this non-attachment reduces the need for protective behaviours to avoid blame. Being able to conceive of decisions with the attitude "if it doesn't work" then "somebody else can bring a proposal to change it" suggests that the binary hierarchy elevating success and excluding failure has been reclaimed in SELC. Creating the possibility that the cooperative stance taken in non-hierarchical decision-making enables more open, direct and reflexive dialogue between group members, because the focus has been relocated from the individual (e.g., success or failure) to the collective and an experience of mutual success.

My overall sense of SELC's governance was an experience of 'contained generativity'; SELC's enactment of consent-based decision-making enables many self-authorising voices to participate in governance. Each meeting I attended was disciplined and productive, and the relational tone was neutral in its warmth and the consideration between people created clear boundaries between group members. SELC's meetings were distinguished by having basic systems of inclusion in place (e.g., speaking protocols) and collective rituals (e.g., handclap) bringing embodied and emotional ways of being into the field of everyday governance practice.

By contrast, Friends of the Earth Melbourne (FoEM) is a grassroots community-based activist organisation whose governance was described by one member as a "jazz improvisation".[25] The jazz metaphor suggests a combination of creative freedom, unpredictability, informality and skill and also moments of discord, confusion and even chaos. The next section will examine authority and rules in FoEM consensus-based decision-making as an element of their radical prefiguration of an organisation where participants are free of authority as the exercise of power over others (Swann 2018).

Figure 24: FoEM commitment to consensus (Source: FoEM website)

Consensus-based governance as improvisation: Friends of the Earth Melbourne

This exploration of authority and rules in Friends of the Earth Melbourne (FoEM) will illustrate the effect of their commitment to prefigure a "leaderless" society, through the development of strong interpersonal relationships based on principles of solidarity, inclusion and diversity (Ward 2004). At the centre of FoEM's governance is consensus, which many participants described as an aligned expression of FoEM's values (see Figure 24). Over 40 years as a consensus-based organisation, FoEM have evolved their decision-making: "FoE […] attempts to continually examine the way it operates in order to improve access to as many people as possible, especially those who are not white, wealthy and male" (Walker 2004, p. 129). Positioning their governance as "anti-hierarchical",[26] FoEM's open form of governance seeks to share authority and closely

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[25] FoEM interview with Al
[26] FoEM website www.foe.org.au and interviews with Fiona, and Hal

resembles the organising principles of the Occupy movement. I will begin by introducing the practice and history of consensus-based decision-making, then I will distinguish the different style of organisation developed by SELC and FoEM, before moving into an examination of consensus as a form of governance that has been critiqued as creating a state of structurelessness, opening the organisation to the abuse of power via informal power cliques (see Freeman 1972; Leach 2016; Polletta 2014).

Of the four case study organisations, FoEM's structure and ideas are most obviously aligned with the philosophy of anarchism, which is recognised as one of the conceptual foundations of the non-hierarchical impulse in the western European intellectual tradition (Rothschild-Whitt 1979). "Four principles behind an anarchist theory of organisation: that they should be (1) voluntary, (2) functional, (3) temporary, and (4) small" (Ward 1966, p2). In theory, a leaderless organisation is formed when "spontaneous order" emerges as a group of people, driven by need, will experiment, until they eventually evolve out of chaos into coherent action (Ward 1966, p. 3). Through the cross-pollination between cybernetics and anarchism, this pattern of behaviour has been rehabilitated from revolutionary chaos to 'self-organising', and a recognised attribute of complex adaptive systems (Duda 2013; Swann 2018).

Figure 25: Mobilise, Resist and Transform (Source: FoEM website)

Consensus-based decision-making is central to FoEM's political praxis. Envisaged as a cultural "induction" for volunteer members, the process of consensus supports members to "learn by doing" and "find the way together".[27] FoEM's ideal is that through 'doing' consensus, individuals come to know the power of collective solidarity and feel inspired to join together to "mobilize, resist and transform" society.

Consensus: An inclusive organisational logic for many voices

Consensus decision-making is associated with a long history in collectively structured organisations committed to direct democracy (Leach 2016). Consensus reflects the democratic ideal that all people affected by a decision have the right to make proposals and to block decisions on the basis of their moral objection (Maeckelbergh 2014). Sociocracy 3.0 describes consensus as a process of "raise, seek out and resolve objections to decisions and actions" (Bockelbrink, David, & Priest 2015, p. 10). The principle of sitting together to listen to all viewpoints before making a decision is an ancient process still used by many Indigenous communities (Barlo et al. 2020). Australia's First Nations peoples use a process akin to consensus to resolve difficult and complex matters, where consensus is recognised as a method of decision-making and is particularly suited to situations when the community needs to engage in a gradual process of understanding towards collective agreement (Sveiby & Skuthorpe 2006).

Consensus decision-making in FoEM is imagined as a "structure" that functions to "protect not limit" the organisation and participants.[28] The day-to-day work of FoEM is conducted through Collective meetings, where campaigns are planned, organised and reviewed by its members. Fiona explained, FoEM's rationale is that the openness of consensus creates the space for mutual 'not-knowing' to release the creativity of the group from the confines 'waiting' for external direction from hierarchical leaders:

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[27] FoEM interview with Al
[28] FoEM interview with Fiona

Organisations with a hierarchical structure encourage the deferral upwards and the managers are expected to have all the answers. If you're open to not having all the answers, then new ideas begin to flow from the group (Fiona, FoEM).

By adopting a principle based approach, FoEM's governance is structured to resist authority stabilizing in Collectives (Maeckelbergh 2011). Long term coordinators and campaigners play an important role in facilitating an anarchist pedagogy (e.g., anti-hierarchical, non-coercive, autonomous and cooperative) (Rouhani 2012), by working to ensure that FoEM's Collectives reject any form of coercion or domination. For example, Al saw the consensus meeting process as "building strong muscles for campaigning" even if it means, "flailing around in a process of figuring it out".[29] In the Collective meetings I attended, I noticed co-ordinators subtly realigning any 'feedback' that could have been construed as being critical, modelling a light style of facilitation that was curious, appreciative and open to all ideas. Reflecting this intent, frequent words used by interviewees to describe the engagement between FoEM members were "personalised", "inclusive", "supportive", "adaptable", "flexible", "welcoming", "collaborative" and "open" (see Appendix 3 for the full list).

Over time, FoEM members imagine the inclusive and respectful interpersonal communication in Collectives will build confidence and trust in the group. Long term member Danae recounts her experience of freedom, autonomy and creativity in FoEM's anti-hierarchical ethos:

The philosophy [at FoEM] is more anarchistic – things only happen if you get people's consent to contribute to them and, if people actively want to get involved, they will. Personally, I experience more license and space with my own creativity […] you don't have to have 100% consensus to go off and do something, unless violent or very dangerous. There is so much autonomy within the space. Personally, I felt more told what to do in a traditional NGO hierarchical structure where you are an ant – someone in a room somewhere has decided the strategy and we have to do it (Danae, FoEM).

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[29] FoEM interview with Al

This description could be seen as an enactment of an affirmative movement whereby FoEM's consensus enables participants to begin reclaiming their identities as agentic subjects endowed with freedom and creativity (Heckert 2013). Danae's creativity was 'denied' when she was a powerless "ant" who is told what to "do" as the follower in the leader/follower hierarchical dualism.

There are many commonalities between the non-hierarchical practices developed by SELC and FoEM; however, the nature of their work and their stakeholders has produced very distinct styles of doing non-hierarchical governance. Principles of individual autonomy, inclusivity and equality can be seen to inform the relatively straightforward structure of FoEM Collective meetings. George, a FoEM volunteer, describes meetings as "efficient […] there were distinct roles (facilitator, minutes, time keeping) with clear agenda and useful operational principles" and as Danae explained, consent (e.g., involvement by agreement) initiates mutual respect in the relations between members. Like SELC, the agenda is created by the members who attend the meeting, and meeting roles are rotated to build collective capacity and share knowledge.

FoEM's governance model is designed to suit the fluctuations of their volunteer membership, in contrast to SELC's more complex structured cycles of decision-making using Holacracy. FoEM participants shared that learning 'how to do' consensus was FoEM's primary method of induction to collective culture. Characterised by an approach that works with "whoever turns up" and where "those who turn up" make the decisions, FoEM's model of practice-based induction is common in social movements and organisations (Chen 2016). Connie's recollection of FoEM's decision-making process in a Collective arguably fits that pattern:

> Decisions around what we did and how we were going to do it were generally made by those who showed up, and trying to keep open communication with those who couldn't be there at any particular point in time, but who were a part of the group - a very loose and shifting group (Connie, FoEM).

In contrast to the clearly articulated membership and roles in SELC's Circles, participation in FoEM Collectives is more likely to be voluntary, fluid and irregular. FoEM's governance model is a pragmatic one. Coordinators accepted the variability of Collective numbers, fluctuating anywhere from a regular core of three to six people, and expanding significantly at the height of a community-based campaign. Culturally, it is acceptable to attend meetings regularly, or from time to time. As an expression of FoEM and SELC's orientation towards ecological thinking, if an issue loses collective energy it is allowed to contract, becoming dormant until new energies revitalise the project.

FoEM's governance aligns with findings that consensus-oriented or "super-democracy" methods have to be consciously cultivated via a cooperative culture, which Rothschild and Max Stephenson's (2009) note, is a difficult task in a hierarchical society. FoEM coordinators and long term members were aware that participating in a cooperative manner as one of many voices demands specific interpersonal skills (Reedy 2014). Hal explains: "Making decisions collectively is a skill I'm committed to [at FoEM]: Acknowledging people, skill sharing, supporting other campaigns, willingness, excitement and love". Hal's approach integrates his *being* (willingness, excitement, love, commitment) with his *doing* (acknowledging and supporting others) to create mutuality where people are willing to give their time and energy.

The experience of cooperation emerging through consensus governance was highly valued by many participants I interviewed. In an interview Bill associates working collectively in FoEM as an experience of 'power-with' others. His description of cooperation as a beautiful and powerful process, has been recognised as a quality of collective organising (Swann 2018; Ward 1973). Bill's image of interdependence illustrates a self-authorising collective as a visceral fusion of 'being' and 'doing':

> We have power through being together and working together […] When you cooperate, you create patterns that can be beautiful and powerful. That's really the essence of Friends of the Earth. I think we have this sense of 'no one can do it'. We do it collectively, that's very much the essence (Bill, FoEM).

The harmony of affective relations in a high-functioning collective evokes Graeber's (2002, p. 72) compelling insight that the momentary experience of 'Another world is possible' is transformative. However, Graeber's qualifying "possible" and Bill's "can be" are an alert to the dynamic and changeable quality of a governance process that is conditional upon the *quality* of relationships across participatory organisations (Rothschild & Whitt 1986a). The image of the *6 Swords* (V Noble & Vogel 1981) shown in Figure 26, was selected by many FoEM members as an apt representation of the quality of relations between people. Hal explained: "[At FoEM] we believe in love and our view of the world that is not purely mechanistic". The art of 'doing' consensus is experienced as coming to a unified agreement in a way that is *not* at the expense of either diversity of perspective or inclusion of community participants. Diversity in this context refers to respectful and inclusive non-violent communication between members in a Collective that allows for honesty without the fear of social penalties, such as exclusion or ridicule (Ellison 2005). These images convey the way the principles of inclusion and equality have transformed the *experience* of authority in FoEM.

Consensus decision-making transforms the idea of unity from the normative value of 'unity as conformity to one voice' to agreement *within* a diversity of perspectives (Maeckelbergh 2012). Puck Algera and Marjolein Lips-Wiersma (2012, p. 128) argue that a reflective and open stance is more likely to eliminate tension that forms when participants are unable to be true to themselves because of power dynamics, (discussed in Chapter Three as defensive routines). A continuity between all ecologies of organisation, noted by Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012), is that personal autonomy and freedom required for authenticity is always balanced by individual accountabilities and responsibilities to the group. A difference between emerging and normative ecologies of organisation is the attitude towards the engagement with the idea of diversity. Central to non-hierarchical cultures practicing consensus is the recognition that "people are diverse and complex", and a variety of people enable a "diversity of outcomes" (Maeckelbergh 2014, p. 352).

Figure 26: When you cooperate, you create patterns that can be beautiful and powerful (Bill, FoEM). Image: 6 Swords (Noble &
Vogel 1981)

FoEM respondents consistently valued the ability of the group to listen to difference (e.g., doubts and disagreements) *and* find a path *with* them (rather than *over* them) as an expression of inclusion and diversity that is vital to the integrity of FoEM's consensus process. Consensus was attributed as a way of meeting where participants were invited to practise the open and creative aspects of reflexive thinking (Feindt & Weiland 2018). The experience of Occupy and WSF, discussed earlier in this chapter, demonstrated the learning instigated by the inclusion of the diverse perspectives of many voices in a fundamentally hierarchically structured society. Connie's reflection (below)

suggests that FoEM's efforts to include a diversity of viewpoints distinguishes their practice of consensus from other NFP whose approaches to consensus reduces collective engagement with dissent by reverting to a form of majority decision-making:

> The approach to consensus here is very unique, one that I haven't seen in other places […] A lot of places where they tried to do nonlinear group decision making, there'll still be ultimately an 80-20 rule. Whereas our consensus model isn't like that at all. It's more of a roundabout way, where there's discussion and people are putting out ideas and concerns. Gradually we sort of shape it and change it to put forward a proposal and if anyone has dissent then we re-work it a bit more, rather than saying, 'well most of us agree' […] It's this real sense that if anyone has an objection, then we need to find a different way to come about what we're doing (Connie, FoEM).

The intention of FoEM's consensus to harness difference of opinion without judgement was valued by many interviewees. Ostensibly, FoEM's philosophical radical openness to emergent strategy might appear to distinguish FoEM from SELC; however, I am not suggesting that SELC's outcomes are less radical than FoEM's, rather their aesthetic is more contained and reserved than that of FoEM's (see Appendix 3 for the full participant responses). Both organisations value their governance practices to engender a collective 'listening' towards 'finding' agreement which is 'shaped' in response to dissenting perspectives. To meet the needs of a volunteer, grassroots audience FoEM have developed a governance process that is less obviously contained by structure.

FoEM's practice draws upon 40 years of experience prefiguring non-hierarchically structured decision-making. Some of FoEM's more experienced practitioners gave me the sense that, at its best, FoEM consensus changes how participants approach each other, to "come in stripped down" in order to "meet" each other in all the diversity of the group.[30] The possibility of being witnessed by another is an orientation that Munro (2014) identifies as important to non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation. Chapter Three explored one effect of competitive cultures was to make it unsafe for participants to expose what might be perceived as vulnerabilities, Amanda Sinclair's (2014)

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[30] FoEM interview with Olivia

organisation-based vignettes for example, lay bare the sometimes desperate veneer of confident competence deemed necessary in corporate organisational contexts. In contrast, Olivia explains the importance of being "raw and stripped back" in FoEM to create the conditions wherein participants may begin to appreciate diverse perspectives:

> The process of consensus is really, really, important in the organisation […] Consensus is raw and stripped back when you walk into a room. It should be that. I believe you come in, stripped down, just there to make decisions together as a group, and talk, and disseminate information and try to understand each other. Because really, we all are coming from such different perspectives, backgrounds and upbringings, how we deal with things is quite different (Olivia, FoEM).

Olivia does not underestimate the challenge of "understanding" diverse perspectives and implicit in her description of being "raw" and "stripped down" is the recognition that meeting processes, such as consensus, bring forth emotional intensity. Sobering (2021a), and other scholars of participatory organisations (Hoffmann 2016; Jasper 2011), have recognised the importance of developing the collective skills to manage the emotional intensity that can be created in these forms of decision-making. I observed that striving to include diversity brought a distinctive quality to collective decision-making; for example, participants described how FoEM has cultivated an attitude of spaciousness in their process, from "gradually we sort of shape it" to "we find the way together", by making "micro-course corrections",[31] and "it is all about the interaction and the communication because that's how we reach consensus".[32] However, in part because of the presence of emotions in non-hierarchical decision-making, the effectiveness of consensus has been questioned.

Rehabilitating Consensus

I have shown the strong relationship between FoEM's philosophy and non-hierarchical structured authority and how FoEM participants value the process of consensus to nurture a culture based on

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[31] FoEM interview with Al
[32] FoEM interview with Jen

equality and inclusivity. However, FoEM's openness to working in a "roundabout" manner was at times perceived by some internal participants as messy and frustrating, an interpretation that has been associated more broadly with consensus-based decision-making. To interrogate the stereotype of consensus as an absence of structure I will begin by exploring the effect of Jo Freeman's (1972) influential paper, *The Tyranny of Structurelessness*. Then, I will review Freeman's (1972) less examined solutions to structurelessness in the context of FoEM's practice and examine frustrations with FoEM consensus. Finally, I will discuss research rehabilitating participatory governance and consensus (Leach 2016, 2013; Maeckelbergh 2012, 2011; Rothschild & Leach 2008; Sutherland, Land, & Böhm 2014).

As an insider in the women's movement, Freeman's (1972) perspective has given substance to the negative stereotype of non-hierarchical organisations by suggesting that non-hierarchical decision-making lacks structure, and arguing that without formal structure organisations will disintegrate into destructive power cliques. Freeman's thesis asserts that structurelessness is an intrinsic part of women's liberation ideology and that women's groups generate a lot of activity, but achieve few results: "Able people with time on their hands […] spend their time criticizing the personalities of the other members in the group. Infighting and personal power games rule the day" (Freeman 1972, p. 163).

The problem is that Freeman's analysis has been taken as a generalised fact, homogenising participatory governance as uniformly "disorganised and inefficient" (Gerlach 1983, p. 133). While Freeman's (1972) article does not refer specifically to consensus decision-making, the image of "tyranny" and the association with consensus as an ineffective decision-making method has captured imaginations. More recently Freeman's article has been cited by practitioner advocates of consent-based decision-making, to distance consensus from consent-based methods (see Bartlett 2019; Laloux 2014; Robertson 2015). Thus, Freeman's situated and personal observations about women's collectives in the 1970s validates a binary wherein consensus is the flawed underside to the efficient and effective methods of hierarchical decision-making. Further, the valuable contributions of consensus to NFP governance such as, capacity development for clarifying conversations, listening into complexity and diversity, and respectful communication,

among other things (Leach 2016; Maeckelbergh 2011; Polletta 2021), are denied through the radical exclusion of these attributes (Plumwood 2012).

FoEM staff demonstrated their awareness of the negative stereotypes associated with consensus; for example, Fiona's reflection emphasises the disciplined structure and process involved in FoEM's practise of consensus. Her explanation can be heard as defensive of consensus as much as a comprehensive description of FoEM's governance:

> Consensus is not a lack of leadership. Being an anti-hierarchical organisation requires specific structure, clearer process, and a strong commitment. Impacts how processes are handled and must be integrated with principles. We value dissenting voices as an opportunity to find better ways of working (Fiona, FoEM).

Yet, Freeman (1972, p. 163) did not only critique participatory organisations, she also made seven specific principle based recommendations to *strengthen* participatory structures by bringing more formality into governance practice (Meyers 2005). These are: Delegation of authority, making a clear line of responsibility (accountability) from the individual to the group, distributing authority widely, rotating tasks and applying rational criteria to the allocation of tasks and supporting participant skill development, diffusing information (transparency) and finally ensuring equal access to resources. I observed with interest that *each* of Freeman's principles are addressed in FoEM's governance processes. For example, FoEM discourages rigid role identification and limits entitlement within Collectives by rotating roles and shared digital platforms to ensure transparency of information and an appreciation of campaign synergies that support mutuality and knowledge sharing. Further, the principle of subsidiarity is used by FoEM to include the people most affected by the decision in decision-making.

Both FoEM and SELC referred to the principle of subsidiarity, illustrating the overlaps in non-hierarchical governance methods. Subsidiarity devolves authority and power away from the centre to the people most affected by decisions (Melé 2005). Contemporary iterations of consensus have streamlined the collective process by bringing elements of consent when individual decision-makers are permitted to act within the constraint of an organisations' operating principles (Chen

2012). FoEM's the acceptance of an individual's agency is framed as subsidiarity: "You take decision making down as low as you can to the people most affected by decisions. So, using that model, it all rests in the campaign collectives because they're the ones that employ people".[33] The inclusion of subsidiarity with consensus has been referred to as a modified form of consensus (Iannello 1992). Theoretically, subsidiarity might be seen as a trade-off between full participation and efficiency (Leach 2016). Another way of looking at the inclusion of subsidiarity in consensus decision-making, is that this movement reflects an evolution of non-hierarchical governance and the merging of the principles of consent and consensus. Governance in non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation, like normative ecologies of organisation, change over time as the adaptations between Freeman's observations of women's collectives in the 1970s and FoEM's governance practice in 2018 illustrates.

However, several respondents were critical of aspects of FoEM's consensus. A consequence of FoEM's principled intention to remove the "controlling hand" of directive forms of leadership meant that Collectives are "allowed to succeed - and to fail" and this was not always experienced as effective governance.[34] For example, Polly attributed the formation of informal cliques to a lack of formal process and the intensity of activist work: "FoEM is a stressful and busy environment where cliques form as certain people get along better […] I don't know that there are any formal processes to do with conflict and group dynamics". There are real relational consequences for FoEM participants when a Collective fails to reach consensus via principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.

Consensus can be undermined by strong voices. Connie explains her frustration working in a FoEM Collective where dominant personalities resist the collective process and undermine decision-making by 'those who show up' (Chen 2016). Connie's feedback aligns with Freeman's (1972) concern that open systems are vulnerable to 'capture' by informal coercive factions:

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[33] FoEM, interview with Bill
[34] FoEM interview with Al

When those with strong personalities or long-term engagement aren't present at a particular decision-making meeting, and question/challenge/re-open a decision after the fact. This happened a bit at [*XX Collective*] and caused a lot of frustration for everyone involved. Some decisions dragged on for weeks as a result and caused some resentments both for those who were present having their decisions un-made, and for those who felt decisions were made either hastily or just incorrectly. At times it also created confusion amongst the collective about what had been decided.[35]

Several FoEM participants experienced consensus as confusing, frustrating, messy, and disorganised. The combination of "strong personalities" asserting their power by "challenging" collective process indicates consequences that are relational (e.g., resentment, frustration) and procedural (e.g., decisions dragging on, confusion), when a stance of radical openness does *not* create equal participation and collective productivity.

The stereotype of consensus influenced FoEM's standing in the inter-organisational field. A number of staff members felt FoEM was systemically positioned as invisible and invalid "other" by other Environmental NGOs (ENGO)[36] Despite recognition as "the training ground for the movement" as many professional environmentalists in Australia "cut their teeth" working at FoEM,[37] some FoEM members felt their non-hierarchical style of organising was consistently undervalued and their successes inaudible to other ENGO. Bill expressed his frustration that FoEM's unconventional appearance in the field often meant that FoEM's long term contribution to the environment movement was obscured:

People's estimation of us is very low outside the organisation, you know we're the 'useless hippies who have consensus and don't get much done', we're the smallest of the ENGOs, we don't fit into the NGO model, so we're like the scrappy kids, and then you've got the 'serious people' and the 'important people'. We're the people on the 'outside'

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[35] FoEM personal correspondence with author Connie
[36] FoEM interviews with Al, Bill, Hal and Fiona
[37] FoEM interview with Al

who can only play outsider politics, and the [environment] movement is predicated on insider politics being the only valuable way (Bill, FoEM).

Feeling "we don't fit in" after decades of being a part of Australia's ENGO field suggests that FoEM has been positioned at the underside of several interconnected dualist concepts. Bill perceives FoEM is cast as the immature (e.g., scrappy kids), unimportant (e.g., small, low estimation) and an inconsequential entity (e.g., useless, on the outside, don't get much done) illustrating how FoEM is denied attributes associated with rationality such as reason and the presumably 'adult' skills of strategy and planning (Plumwood 2012). Explaining why FoEM's expertise and organisational successes are systematically discounted by their hierarchically structured ENGO peers. A rehabilitative strategy, discussed in Chapter Three, beyond the scope of this thesis, would be to examine those values that have been radically excluded from normative ENGO discourse.

New empirical research on consensus-based governance challenges the negative perception of consensus by offering case studies of consensus as efficient and effective (Maeckelbergh 2014). Leach's (2016) review of literature found insufficient evidence that consensus decision-making was less efficient than hierarchically controlled bureaucratic processes. Assumptions informing earlier research are being reassessed as part of the reclamation of consensus (Polletta 2002). In her illuminating study, Leach (2013, p. 182) distinguishes between the long-term success of US movements experimenting with non-hierarchical governance and German collectivist democracy (*Basisdemokratie*). A key finding was that US organisations "typically either revert to traditional bureaucracy or dissolve into factional conflict within a year or two" whereas collectivist democracy is now "the normative form of organisation in much of the German Left, and many groups have been able to sustain it for decades". Leach (2013) illustrates that the ability of individual organisations to sustain non-hierarchical governance practice is connected with societal values. In the US, the strength of individualism for example, may have created an additional barrier to organisations consolidating their non-hierarchical governance.

Reconsidering consensus beyond Freeman's (1972) thesis reveals the importance of horizontal decision-making structures to maintain conditions of equality in organisation (Maeckelbergh 2014). Leach has suggested that the real problem is not "structurelessness" as Freeman determined, "but how to *sustain* structures of tyrannylessness" by avoiding "systematic inequalities of power" (2013, p. 183; my italics). As an established non-hierarchically structured organisation, FoEM demonstrates considerable collective skill in their practice of consensus. Chapter Seven explores participants preparedness to engage with the emergence of "authority within their governance process" (Maeckelbergh 2014, p. 353). FoEM's experience sustaining non-hierarchy indicates the importance of both structure and process and a "strong commitment" to engage with inevitable emergences of power. Consensus-based models of decision-making change outcomes, for example Rothschild and Leach (2008) argue that while consensus may take longer than unilateral forms of decision-making, implementation is quicker and more unified because of the level of commitment generated through participatory governance.

This examination of FoEM's organisational logic has demonstrated the conceptual sophistication and interpersonal competence generated through committed consensus-based governance. At its best, FoEM consensus comes together "like a jazz improvisation",[38] although sometimes an improvisation is not coherent, and the ensemble is discordant. This metaphor speaks to the qualities of listening, agency, autonomy, and creativity that participants have associated with FoEM's anti-hierarchical governance. This chapter has introduced and contrasted two methods of decentralised governance used by SELC and FoEM to support 'many voices'. The next section will explore Pachamama Alliance's non-hierarchical governance and reflect on their experience of moving from a culture of 'one voice' to 'many voices'.

Pachamama Alliance and the Advice Process

The 'advice process' is a decentralised decision-making method adopted by Pachamama Alliance to support their transition from a hierarchically governed NFP to a participatory governed organisation. When I spoke to participants from Pachamama Alliance, they were three years into the journey and, at that stage, self-managing practices were being used by the staff group called

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[38] FoEM interview with Al

All-Team. At the time, I was told that the Board felt that integrating Pachamama Alliance's Board in the transition to non-hierarchy would happen in the future.

The advice process is a decision-making method developed by AES, a global power company (Slade 2018) which has become popular by being advocated by Frederic Laloux (2014) in his influential book *Reinventing Organisations*. The advice process assists organisations to decentralise by creating a consultation process that involves consulting widely with others when developing non-hierarchical decision-making capacities. Laloux positions the advice process as a solution that resolves the tension, he identifies, between the exclusion of voices in hierarchical decision-making, and the "exhausting, impractical" and "frustratingly slow" aspects of consensus (2014, pp. 100–101). Advice is sought both from the parties affected by the potential decision and from people with expertise in relation to that issue. It encourages group members to take the initiative in making decisions, and provides a method to ensure decision-making is informed (see Open Collective 2020).

In my conversations with Pachamama Alliance staff, I became curious when all references to the advice process suggested staff were not completely comfortable with it. All mentions of the advice process were conditional as the italicised words highlight:

> Sometimes the advice process is *overworked*. But for the most part it works.
> AP has been *moderately effective.*
> We practise the advice process *occasionally*, but *not fully.*
> In theory anyone can make any decisions, other than smaller decisions we're *not so confident.*[39]

The effect created in *All-Team* by the advice process appears to be a lack of confidence in themselves as decision-makers (Bailey & DiGangi 2017), reflecting a group not yet fully at ease with aspects of the collective process of 'becoming' non-hierarchical. Here for example, Eden expresses his concern that the group is getting "bogged down in disagreements", making the decision-making a difficult experience for Pachamama Alliance *All-Team* members:

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[39] Interviews with four participants, Pachamama Alliance

It is so big and challenging and painful. There is so much to take care of as a facilitator to ensure that everyone is being heard and there is a distinction between consensus and alignment (Eden, Pachamama Alliance).

Several reflections arise from these participant observations. Firstly, it appears that Pachamama Alliance is working with a form of consensus, but that they achieve 'agreement' at the cost of 'diversity'. This would explain why the group is left with the feeling of being 'unaligned'. Secondly, the sense of being 'stuck' is possibly a reflection of the inconsistent use of the advice process in *All-Team*. Pachamama Alliance's response to the advice process is also interesting considering Laloux's (2014, p. 100) confidence that it avoids the "bogged down" decision-making that he associates with consensus.

These inconclusive feelings about the advice process may indicate the extent of the collective challenge involved in becoming-a-non-hierarchical participant. For example, Frida described Pachamama Alliance's movement of transition as, "a struggle [...] We are in a dance between old and new models". These voices in Pachamama Alliance may reflect tensions emerging between participants who are not yet comfortable to be authentic because of unresolved or unconscious power dynamics in the group (Algera & Lips-Wiersma 2012).

I have described this 'becoming' as a process whereby participants find their own liminal pathway between known practices and relationships in a hierarchical organisation, and the rearranged non-hierarchical relational paradigm. Eden astutely reflected, "power, leadership and skills are different in a hierarchy". The challenge of 'becoming' was also experienced by many participants joining FoEM, Enspiral and SELC. What sets Pachamama Alliance apart is that *all* Pachamama Alliance's systems are being realigned towards non-hierarchy, and *all* participants are grappling with their own subjective realignment as a non-hierarchical co-leader/worker. Whereas the other case study organisations examined in this thesis are operating from a base of competency and confidence with non-hierarchical systems and practices.

Participants reported a wide range of responses to the comprehensive change in Pachamama Alliance. Cam was aware that commitment in the group to Pachamama Alliance becoming a non-hierarchically governed organisation was "quite varied", and he appreciated how this inconsistency was influencing the collective experience:

> Not everybody is 100% brought in, and not everybody spends as much time on it. The people least brought in are the kind of people who aren't here, don't work here, they are kind of on the outside, they come in and out. They are suspicious of it because when they come in, when they come in, they want something to happen quickly, and it doesn't work that way (Cam, Pachamama Alliance).

Ana described the quality of the collective engagement in Pachamama Alliance as "cautious" and she recognises a "certain" (i.e. not complete) amount of commitment to non-hierarchy. Ana felt uncertainty was due to the everyday quality of the challenge in becoming-a-non-hierarchical organisation, where the group found themselves in territory that was at times uncomfortable. In the following poignant observation, Ana distinguishes between the idealisation of non-hierarchy in the books about non-hierarchical governance which shows it as "all built out and pretty" and the experience of *All-Team* finding their way as a non-hierarchical organisation:

> There's a certain amount of commitment, a lot of uncertainty, because you know it's not all built out and pretty - you know it's not like Holacracy, where there's books about it, it's not even like you know, *Reinventing Organisations* (Ana, Pachamama Alliance).

Pachamama Alliance's case has illustrated how embedded hierarchical relational dynamics make the movement to non-hierarchy an emotional and cognitive stretch for participants. The extent of the change has been recognised by advocates for Holacracy and Laloux's Teal Organisations who recommend moving slowly and taking it one step at a time (Csar 2017; Freeman 2015; Mont 2017; Slade 2018; van de Kamp 2014; Wade 2014). Minimising the depth of organisational change in becoming a non-hierarchical organisation has been critiqued by Freeman (2015) who is critical of Laloux's (2014) text because it presents the transformation to participatory state

unproblematically, through "oversimplified perceptions of what introducing Teal will require" (Freeman 2015, p. 1).

Unfortunately, my engagement with Pachamama Alliance was limited to one-on-one interviews and the observation of only one *All-Team* governance meeting online. At the time of my visit, participants were exhausted by what I have interpreted as having to 'work on' transforming their governance and themselves at the same time. To have a clearer understanding of the dynamics around decision-making in this organisation, further observation would be required. I have shown that learning how to work in a non-hierarchical organisation is a process that demands reflexive skills to support participants in evaluating the source of their reactions to the unfamiliar practice and expectations. Becoming-a-non-hierarchical organisation is arguably a transforming third-order process of learning and change whereby participants came to see things differently (Sterling 2011).

Yet, alongside this reported discomfort, Pachamama Alliance's *All-Team* members recognised significant shifts in their culture. Indicators of improved relationships and increased interpersonal care and trust in *All-Team* were associated with decentralised governance. The sentiment of Dani's reflections was echoed by several staff:

> Previously there was a lot of gossip, now things are no longer hidden. Moving to a decentralised structure has vastly improved respect between people, so there is very little complaining, and we have more respect for different jobs. Marketing and communications are better planned, we are no longer waiting for people to ask (Dani, Pachamama Alliance).

Transforming passive resistance such as gossip and complaint may indicate increased interpersonal respect and proactivity associated with collectivist cultures. For example, in the pre-testing phase of this research, I noticed how the leader/follower dynamic in hierarchically structures organisations affected the direction and tone of collective conversations. I repeatedly witnessed participants self-censor their responses in deference to the direction taken by the leader.

This subtle and embodied cue marked a moment where the collective re-constituted the voice of the leader over the possibility of many different voices that the organisation had theoretically aligned with. This habitual deferral validates SELC's very purposeful strategy of separating the individual from a role by breaking a role into many tasks distributed to several people.

Dani's insights suggest Pachamama Alliance's transition, although unsettling to many, was generating self-managing behaviours in the group. Further, sharing authority was developing a more inclusive sense of the whole organisation and nurturing greater collaboration. These participants discerned that non-hierarchical decision-making was creating a different pattern of relations and influencing the pace and rhythm of decision-making in Pachamama Alliance. Their observations resonate with research of non-hierarchical organisations (Polletta 2021, 2012; Rothschild & Leach 2008), theorising that the aesthetic shifts (e.g., pace and tone of non-hierarchical relations) alters the organisational field and changes what is possible for participants.

Pachamama Alliance's experience suggests that transitioning to horizontal governance may be more disorientating if participants are not prepared for the extent to which the principle of non-hierarchy sets in motion multiple, cascading transformations in social relations. Transposing one's identity from being a follower to becoming a co-leader appears to be a significant shift. The next section will examine how non-hierarchical performance confronts accepted subjectivities in SELC and FoEM.

Opening to the possibility of becoming a self-authorising co-leader

To conclude this chapter, I will demonstrate how becoming-non-hierarchical co-leader disrupts familiar subjectivities by examining an array of factors contributing to participants' discomfort. These include the experience of equality, learning to self-authorise, adjusting to a system where direction evolves and where there is no external management and little directive feedback. This chapter demonstrates how reflexivity is an integral aspect of SELC and FoEM's decision-making praxis. More broadly, I seek to reframe participants' experience of *disorientation* to a non-hierarchical environment as transformative third-order change (Sterling 2011): Reinterpreting cognitive and emotional discomfort of not-knowing from being interpreted as a *weakness* of a non-hierarchical way of working, to *opening* the possibility of seeing differently.

The experience of equality between people is arguably uncommon in the hierarchically structured settler societies of Australia, the US, and Aotearoa-New Zealand. When organisational behaviour is framed by the hierarchical leader/follower dualism, participants may have identified themselves as both a leader (e.g., leading, directing, asserting with authority) *and* a follower (e.g., following, receiving direction and submission to external guidance) in different organisational roles and contexts. It is less likely that participants in hierarchically structured organisations will have experienced themselves as *equal with* other organisational members. Researchers of non-hierarchical organisations and attendant social movements have observed, the experience of equality can be transformational for individuals (Graeber 2002; Heckert 2013; Rouhani 2012). Participants were able to make this distinction as well. Rebecca observed that initially FoEM's non-hierarchical relations challenged her assumptions of knowledge as hierarchy when she explains how feeling on an "equal level" even though she "knew" little about the work was initially an intimidating experience:

> Coming into the Collective was pretty daunting at first because of the expansive freedom [...] to make all of our own calls and decisions about things. As soon as I arrived people made me feel like I was on an equal level to everyone else there, which was a bit scary because I didn't really know anything about what was happening (Rebecca, FoEM).

Many interviewees shared different ways that becoming-a-non-hierarchical co-leader had disrupted their confidence, as they grappled with accepted beliefs, expectations and habitual behavioural patterns, even when they recognised the overall effect of the transition as a developmental benefit (Polletta 2012). Adjusting to being a self-directed worker in a context where direction is largely self-determined and continually evolving was at times disorientating for some case study participants in SELC and FoEM. However, through the disruption participants came to see themselves differently, sometimes transforming their sense of self to become a self-authorising co-leader.

Becoming self-authorising was reported as a significant transformation for participants identifying as experienced professionals and adept hierarchical workers. Only one participant who was from Enspiral shared the challenge as one of becoming *less* directive and authoritative. Most often

participants reported finding the absence of supervision and external control as at times an overwhelming experience and an outstanding difference between non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation and normative ecologies, as Jen explains:

> It's really overwhelming at the start […] because the structure is really complex. A big part of that overwhelm is almost the confusion of non-hierarchical based structure [..] But there is almost a sense of dis-ease of not having THE person to go to, to ask the questions of the person of authority to go to (Jen, FoEM).

The lack of external validation provided by a supervisor and the clarity of a hierarchical directed workflow were initially missed by some. For example, Connie identified herself as a structured and methodological worker comfortable working in a company with a hierarchical structure of authority. She reflected that the lack of hierarchical direction at first made FoEM's non-hierarchical decision-making appear uncomfortably "chaotic" and "open".[40] Some participants in FoEM, Pachamama Alliance and SELC used words such as "confusing", "overwhelming", "messy" and "dysfunctional" to describe their initial reactions to the openness of participatory decision-making processes, and several FoEM interviewees reported taking a year or more of weekly meetings to develop the confidence to bring their voice into the consensus process.

Marc initially found SELC's decision-making "unstructured", but as he adjusted to the distinctly different tone and style of a non-hierarchical workplace, he came to appreciate the freedom afforded by being a self-managing co-leader:

> When I came into SELC it felt unstructured. Compared to the traditional structures that I was accustomed to. […] It was sort of a very fun environment as opposed to one where people come in and are very cordial with each other, but not really engaging, sort of, at a human level. And then the work itself was different; it was directed mostly by how you interpreted what the assignment was, what the role was. There was definitely direction, but it was limited, and you just decided how you were going to complete that task (Marc, SELC).

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[40] FoEM interview with Connie

In contrast, Abbie remembered her vulnerability transitioning to a non-hierarchy. She missed the clarity of hierarchical relationships and as a result her established sense of self was "disrupted" and Abbie found the responsibility and freedom of being a self-authorising worker to be a very uncomfortable experience:

> I was coming from […] work where I was used to working to very strict times - I was used to the typical hierarchical structure and expectations. I really struggled with not having a specific person to report to, not really having a good idea about how I was doing and how I was being perceived, the quality of my work. I felt thrown into a lot of different things and not really having a good gauge about how I was doing. [….] Everyone here is so amazing, and like very, very smart, and very prolific in what they do and so I struggled with the whole identity stuff too, *my sense of self was disrupted*. It was a combination of things for me (Abbie, SELC).

Describing her lack of confidence (e.g., I struggled) Abbie reveals her yearning for confirming feedback thereby exposing a gap between the subjectivity of the more externally focused hierarchical worker and the self-referencing non-hierarchical co-worker. For Abbie becoming-a-non-hierarchical co-leader really challenged her to re-orientate her subjectivity by trusting herself as a self-authorising and self-managing co-worker.

These participants illustrate that when authority is relocated *from* the external voice of the leader it must be consciously *re-owned* by each participant as 'I am', 'I do' and 'I can'. Potentially, this movement could be seen as an example of an individual reclaiming a 'lost' or 'forgotten' part of the self, as discussed in Chapter Three. In their conversations with me, a few participants also remembered a mix of uncertainty and excitement when they realised what might become possible when the behavioural constraints created by the leader/follower dynamic are diminished. Thus, meeting the invitation to engage as an equal, outside of the leader/follower relationship was both energising and confusing, as Carmen remembers:

I have more than 25 years in the workforce where I've always had a boss, and so you know who you have to please, right? You know whose agenda is *the* agenda. So, it's a little disorienting, but it's also, you know, it is very freeing and exciting (Carmen, SELC).

Realising 'I can self-authorise' appeared to be connected with participants experiencing the wellbeing associated with satisfaction and purpose (Fioramonti, Coscieme, & Mortensen 2019). This explains why so many case study members valued participation in non-hierarchical governance as a positive experience, even though at times it was also uncomfortable and emergent. Abbie, for example, developed her confidence in her capacity to contribute as a self-authorising co-leader in SELC. Here she expresses her satisfaction and empowerment as a decision-maker:

If I want something to change, I'm empowered to present that to the group and have that actually be my change that I want to see adopted and manifested. Which is really, really, amazing. That's something that you don't see in government work [*laughs*] forget about it! [*laughs*] (Abbie, SELC).

This discussion reveals the paradigmatic nature of the movement from a normative ecology of organisation, where authority is externalised (one voice) to a non-hierarchy where authority is internalised (many voices). The conditions of non-hierarchical governance support participants to find *their* voice, generating the self-confidence to be self-authorising. In SELC and FoEM, respect for the autonomy of the individual cultivated participants trust in their knowledge, skill, and intuition. As Chapters Five and Six will show, participants connected their confidence with greater emotional security of belonging to a consent-based culture.

Conclusion

Non-hierarchical governance in SELC, FoEM and Pachamama Alliance is constituted by a myriad of unique practices designed to strengthen the inclusion of diverse voices in decision-making and to reduce layers of social stratification by eliminating formal hierarchies related to authority and positional status. Common to the emerging ecologies of organisation in this study is the motion that transposes authority from being positioned at the apex of a triangular hierarchy to distribute

authority through the whole organisation via horizontally arranged self-managing units (e.g., Collectives, Teams and Circles).

The non-hierarchical organisational imaginary that is offered in this chapter presents the possibility of autonomous self-authorising participants who are empowered to work cooperatively. The reflexive orientation engendered through the practice of consensus and consent-based decision-making was shown to make possible an attitude of open inquiry, where thinking 'what would work better' generates a more responsive, flexible and creative culture. However, as a paradigmatic movement, the experience of becoming-a-non-hierarchical co-leader can be disorientating as through the performance of non-hierarchical decision-making embedded hierarchical behavioural expectations and subjectivities are disrupted.

Chapter Five - Advancement, Incentives, Recruitment and Onboarding: Becoming-a-non-hierarchical Co-leader

Through this thesis, I have shown how viable non-hierarchical organisations confront the belief that hierarchies are the only legitimate (valid and effective) form of organisation. I have acknowledged the tension brought about by *being* non-hierarchical in a hierarchically organised industrial-capitalist society and, in Chapter Four, I demonstrated how a decentralised governance structure can eliminate formal hierarchies related to authority and positional status. This present chapter examines how non-hierarchical organisations can reduce layers of social stratification through remuneration policy. Indeed, the differences between ecologies of organisation become particularly stark when financial reward, advancement and incentives are examined. In a non-hierarchy, a focus on individual advancement becomes largely redundant and as traditional imaginings around incentives and advancement are 'collapsed', different questions can be explored. What becomes possible for organisational culture when there is no ladder to climb? How are relationships within an organisation altered when remuneration is the same for all? These questions catalyse an examination of non-hierarchy as a different economy of power relations (Foucault 1982).

The first part of this chapter focuses on incentives and advancement through an examination of wage policy, social change, and community. Consistent with NFP organisational research findings, discussed in Chapter One, in each of the non-hierarchical case organisations, participants' alignment with social change was a motivational factor for their membership (see also Chen & Chen 2021). These aspirations are also contextualised by the acceptance that wages are a foundation of the work contract in industrial-capitalist societies, and this is a continuity underpinning all ecologies of organisation. In this chapter the effect of FoEM and SELC's equal pay policy is explored to understand how it reframes the concept of incentive to work and transforms social relations. Money is explored as a conflicted and complex area of the non-hierarchical NFP organisation's identity (Kolodziejski 2004). Finally, I will examine the entwined social, emotional and spiritual incentives reported by participants in FoEM, SELC, Pachamama Alliance and Enspiral.

The second part of the chapter concentrates upon recruitment (advertising and selecting staff) and onboarding (inducting new staff into non-hierarchical organisational practice). I will examine recruitment and onboarding as processes that set in motion opportunities for mutual discovery and relationship. The experiences of SELC recruits are explored to give insight to the specific processes and language that support new participants. The onboarding process provides distinct forms of support to address the technical knowing as well as the social and emotional dimensions involved in joining a non-hierarchical organisation. I discuss the importance of SELC, Enspiral and FoEM conceiving onboarding as an invitation into the paradigmatic movement of exercising leadership in a non-hierarchical organisation. I demonstrate how the onboarding strategies developed in FoEM, SELC, Enspiral and Pachamama Alliance are enabled by contemporary philosophy and practice-based learning from social change networks prefiguring alternative economies.

Re-imagining work: Income and social change in community.

Considering the importance of work for human wellbeing, the possibility of doing work that is satisfying and meaningful can be transformative (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy 2013). The incentive of financial remuneration is a continuity in emerging and dominant ecologies of organisation participation. Participants across all case study organisations revealed a tension around relations with money as a non-hierarchical NFP. The conflicting nature of these relations led some participants to recognise money as a 'shadow' aspect of their organisation's identity (Neville & Dalmau 2008).

Chapter Four discussed how the reason/emotion and adult/child dualisms can become embedded in the hippy-activist, non-hierarchical stereotype. Now I will extend this thread of exploration to demonstrate how other facets of the reason/emotion dualism can obscure the complexity of economic relations, community care and social change across ecologies of organisation in the Anthropocene. I found that some case study participants had a strong anti-capitalist, anti-materialist orientation. This was not true of all, nor are the four case study organisations identical in their orientation towards money and their 'place' in an industrial-capitalist society. For example,

Enspiral members identified the lack of financial compensation as an issue in the organisation because many people aspired to earn an income; however, they were volunteering their time to get their start-up going. Remuneration conditions did not surface in my conversations with Pachamama Alliance staff. Information from Enspiral ventures about their financial arrangements was not generally shared and ventures are not required to share their financial arrangements with other Enspiral members. This aspect of Enspiral would require further examination beyond the scope of this thesis. Responses to SELC and FoEM's equal pay policies are examined to highlight the dualism underpinning organisational relations with money, as a symbol of capitalism and the material compensation for labour.

The incentive of wages as an exchange for labour

An array of normative concepts can be seen to sustain the binary positioning of non-hierarchical NFP organisations as caring for environment and society. Arguably, these include at the collective level, the displacement of socio-political change as a societal responsibility and within the NFP sector, the denial of self-interest justifying inferior employment conditions for NFP work and the archetypal subject position of martyrdom and self-sacrifice as care for others/planet.

The exchange of financial compensation for labour is an important reason for working and a well-documented contribution to systemic social inequalities (Evans, Kelley, & Peoples 2010; Kalleberg 2013; Kelley & Evans 1993; Oseen 2016). In her study of an Argentinean cooperative, Sobering (2021b) observes that creative approaches to compensation are rarely conceptualised in connection with reimagining work and social values. To understand how the incentive of financial compensation can be altered to reflect non-hierarchical economic values, I will examine SELC and FoEM as both organisations have a constitutionally enshrined equal pay policy. Many participants in this study said that they valued the stance of this policy. For example, Jen justifies wage parity as a congruent expression of the principle of non-hierarchy at FoEM: "I feel it would be difficult to have a non-hierarchical system or organisation, I guess it cancels it out if you have a different pay structure for different jobs". FoEM's equal pay policy was recognised as reframing relationships between staff by removing competition for advancement. Consequently, Hal felt the equal pay policy freed up capacity and increased collective focus beyond individual self-interest:

In other organisations, roles are limited and to advance in the organisation individuals have to compete against their colleagues. Being non-hierarchical there is no ladder to climb. Instead, we have the freedom to focus purely on outcomes (Hal, FoEM).

Participant thinking about income policy and employment conditions illustrates the complexity of transforming relations with economic systems in a capitalist society, where relations with money are often conflicted by mixed emotional responses. SELC staff members work a mandatory 30 hour week and base their salary on the *MIT living wage calculator* (Nadeau & Glasmeier 2016). SELC's policy is based on the equation that "equal compensation = equal contribution".[41] Similarly, in FoEM, no staff member is paid for more than 30 hours a week, although a 20-hour week was reported as the average employment contract in 2017/18. On further examination, although both organisations have an equal pay policy, FoEM and SELC had contrasting cultural expectations around working beyond the paid hours, which influenced staff members' responses to their equal pay and basic wage policy. I will examine SELC first in greater detail before moving on to discuss FoEM.

Participants in this study reported that SELC's equal pay policy functioned to reduce social stratification and interpersonal competition within the organisation. Several staff identified their equal pay policy as one of SELC's most transformative policies, attributing it with furthering mutual cooperation. For example, Ian envisaged the equal pay policy as a commitment in SELC that respected the "inherent dignity of work" and a movement towards achieving the "wellbeing of individual members and prefiguring the societies and communities we want to live in". Yet, for some members, getting by on a 'living wage' created a tension because this radical philosophical stance had material implications for SELC staff. A few respondents felt that the effect on participants receiving a living wage made it potentially unsustainable for SELC members in an industrial-capitalist society such as the US:

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[41] SELC interview with Ian

Staff are challenged to juggle their work, their family and their life aspirations, as more people in the organisation have children, more of us have to grapple with their future, meeting new expenses and financial challenges. The living wage concept is something we can't assume will work for all in the long-term (Kami, SELC).

Participant responses indicate that, depending on members' material needs and aspirations, SELC's combination of an equal pay policy and a living wage might be interpreted as a burden and sacrifice or as a radical enactment of social and economic equality. Hailey explains how she sees the choices and the incentive for her is uncomplicated by the desire for an extravagant "lifestyle":

There's this feeling […] that we're kind of oppressed here by having this lower salary […] The reality is not that we're below average, the reality is not only are we above average by $10,000 plus benefits plus health care, childcare and we have job security […] I feel like that's the challenge. It's feeling like the world around us is going to become ever more divided, unequal, uncomfortable, dangerous. So how much are we going to be willing to just roll that uncomfortable situation and not live in those lavish lifestyles or how much do we want to shore up our resources and protect ourselves? At the very least we all have homes and good cars and all that […] I have a much lower budget kind of lifestyle and people don't necessarily want that (Hailey, SELC).

The cultural approach to unpaid overtime differed in SELC and FoEM, surfacing another tension around the incentive of income and the ideal of a 30-hour week and life/work balance. In SELC there did not appear to be an expectation of unpaid overtime, and most participants reported maintaining clear boundaries with their 30-hour work week. However, FoEM participants consistently volunteered their time over their paid work hours, which meant many staff members were unable to boost their income via a second job if needed. This situation was exacerbated by the challenge of living on a basic wage in an Australian capital city where, as Jen wryly commented, "For the last six to seven years we have not had more than Consumer Price Index (CPI) increase and you would know what it's like living in Melbourne…". Under FoEM's

employment policy, wages are increased annually according to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) set by the Australian Tax Office. In 2017 FoEM staff received their first wage increase over CPI in six years.

While I was onsite with SELC the proposal 'Salary increase for the 2018 budget' was put to the *General Circle*. I witnessed the discussion as a calm and rational examination of the organisation's ability to raise salaries, and the willingness of individuals to "step-up" to grant applications to enable an increase in income levels. On this occasion, SELC decided not to increase their Basic Wage.

The tension around money in FoEM is revealed in Al's ruminations, as he appears to be torn between an anti-capitalist principle, and the personal and cultural effect of FoEM's relationship with money. The equal pay policy builds collective solidarity; however, the expectation of unpaid work creates a sense of being imposed upon:

> The money thing is an issue. The flat salary is great. Whether you have been working there for five years or 50 years you are on the same wicket [i.e., equal]. There is solidarity in that, and we're *sacrificing* our individual income for the greater good. Everyone *should* be paid 5 days a week but there is a practical reality [...] We are always struggling for money (Al, FoEM).

By observing that staff "should" be fairly paid for their work, Al alludes to a desire for sufficient financial recognition and boundaries between work and the rest of his life. Polly expressed resentment that the expectation for unpaid work within FoEM was not communicated clearly in the recruitment process: "There are blurred lines leaving things at the office/home - everyone works way beyond their paid hours. This was not articulated to me in the interviews for the job". In identifying the dissonance created by a lack of boundaries around work I interpret that Polly wanted to challenge the expectation of overwork and personal sacrifice that she found in FoEM's organisational ecology. However, this is a difficult conversation to have when there is a culture of poverty and lack: "We are always struggling for money" becomes a barrier to cultural change.

Further, as Jen explains, in a non-hierarchical NFP it is easy to conflate an individual desire for financial remuneration as evidence of the "dis-ease" of capitalism, making the subject of money difficult within FoEM's anti-capitalist philosophy:

> There's a real conflict inside of FoE because most of the people here have a real disregard for the capitalist system, which means they have a disregard for money. But they are conflicted because they need money to run the organisation […] Everyone has dis-ease around fundraising. It's like no one wants to ask people for money, it's like we all get a bad taste in our mouth (Jen, FOEM).

The ideal of "sacrificing" oneself for the greater good has been associated with a number of archetypes including the caring protective mother (Stearney 1994) and teacher activist-carers (Janak & Blum 2012). Reflecting on subjectivities within the Occupy movement, Iain Munro (2014, p. 1138) observes that "a culture of self-sacrifice is a common theme". This cultural patterning explains why FoEM members might interpret their self-sacrifice as evidence of their care for others/planet. Motivated by the belief that FoEM 'carries' the responsibility to 'save' society creates conditions where there is collective acceptance that struggle, and the sacrifice of individual needs as evidence of change. Here Kev reflects a revolutionary subjectivity when he identifies with being in resistance to achieve radical social transformation through FoEM: "Without struggle we are nothing, 'Mobilise, resist and transform' - there is nothing here without that".

However, a number of staff had set boundaries between their contribution to FoEM and other responsibilities (and choices), challenging the expectation of sacrifice and creating the possibility that staff might more freely choose their levels of commitment. Drawing on the Jungian concept of shadow (Kolodziejski 2004), Iona identified a tension between self-care and burnout in FoEM:

> There is a 'shadow' around time and generosity of giving time and balancing self-care and burnout; I'm very aware of this. We balance personal needs in an environment where the tasks are never ending (Iona, FoEM).

Unsurprisingly, several of the participants quoted in this discussion identified money as a taboo subject and an aspect of FoEM and SELC's organisational shadow - as it was by several Enspiral and Pachamama Alliance participants. Organisation theorists, Bernie Neville and Tim Dalmau (2008, p. 14) suggest an organisation's shadow is indicated by its concealment from the agreed aspects of an organisation's public identity: "Every organisation has an organisational shadow which contains the best and worst of what it is in which the organisational ego is determined not to know about". Agreed elements of FoEM and SELC's identity is the commitment to social and environmental justice and equality; however, this discussion illustrates that the entanglement between individual needs and desires and ideological analyses make 'money' a complex area for both FoEM and SELC. Although several initiatives that speak to the rehabilitation of these binaries such as Social Enterprises (McKinnon et al. 2020), B-Corp's (Chen and Roberts 2013) and Friends of the Earth Australia Affiliate, Market Forces.

This split has two effects: first, it makes it difficult for participants to 'own' financially motivated desires within the collective; second, it reveals the contribution of a binary in the constitution of the non-hierarchical NFP ethos where 'right' behaviour (e.g., low budget lifestyles, scant financial desire and selfless giving to save others/planet) is opposed to 'wrong' behaviour (e.g., lavish lifestyles, desire for money and boundaried engagement to care for self before others/planet). In becoming-a-non-hierarchical co-leader it appears there is an opportunity for FoEM and SELC to explore the shadow around money beyond opposing binary positions, such as experimenting with non-traditional approaches to recognising financial needs (Sobering 2021b).

The introduction to this chapter opened the possibility of a different economy of power catalysed by a non-hierarchical structure and the ways in which the *absence* of hierarchy can illuminate power relations (Foucault 1982). While this discussion has not directly examined power, I have shown how the motion created by an equal pay policy and a living wage disrupts power relations embedded in hierarchically structured economies. This discussion has shown that the importance of income as an incentive for participation is obscured by a range of intersecting dualisms. It explains why non-hierarchical organisation participants may feel challenged to reveal *differences*

related to individual material aspirations or to identify financial considerations as a reason for working in a NFP non-hierarchical organisation and that while SELC and FoEM have formal conversations about levels of remuneration, the complexity of economic relations, material desires and attitudes towards care and social change influences all ecologies of organisation. Together these concepts contribute to reproducing the belief within the case study organisations that they carry significant responsibility for social change in society.

The incentive of changing society in an organisational community

Being motivated by shared values is common to participants across organisational types. However, in non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation, an aligned view of the world is required as the ground upon which interpersonal trust and relationship is generated - this important aspect of these ecologies will be explored further in Chapter Six. Consistent with NFP research findings, the members of the case study organisations were motivated by their organisation's mission for substantive social change (Anheier 2014). An aspect of non-hierarchical organisation identified by Rothschild (1979) was that values alignment (e.g., equal pay policy, non-hierarchy, social justice) builds areas of agreement and filters difference and diversity. This section will explore the range of motivations and values that draw paid staff to enter an employment contract in SELC, Pachamama Alliance and FoEM to show how the dimension of 'advancement' is reinterpreted in a non-hierarchical NFP context.

A persistent explanation given by the participants in this thesis for joining a non-hierarchical organisation was the motivation of being part of a creative project to make a 'better world'. The possibility of another way of living and working together is often an expression of a participant's knowing, and joining an organisation sets in motion an engagement with a participant's being through doing. Rothschild (2016, p. 11) spoke about blending personal desire and political visions for change in participatory organisations that seek to "prefigure in their functioning organisation what they wanted society to be and what they wanted their lives to be". The attraction to being part of a project prefiguring change is recognised by a number of scholars of social change movements and organisations (see Meyers & Vallas 2016; Munro 2014; Perlin 2015). In respect to the dimension of advancement, I will show that a commitment to a vision of societal change

does not signify a lack of ambition, rather a redirection of desire, from advancement of the self to the advancement of society. For example, Blanca reflected: "SELC's vision statement and areas of work matched up with everything I was interested in, and it was progressive and had an economic basis". I will begin by exploring the affect created by organisations where there is values and mission alignment; then, I will examine diverse motivations for participation.

Alignment with organisational vision was reported to be an essential requirement in the case study organisations, as Dani, a Pachamama Alliance staff member explained, "We hire people who feel they are part of the mission". Commonly held values were recognised as both attractor and 'glue' for FoEM members. Lew and Meg describe an organisational culture where reflective processes of discussion and inquiry are "fundamental" to engagement with FoEM's political analysis and intersubjective ways of relating:

> Shared values glue us together. Fundamental understanding that environmental and social justice are intrinsically linked. […] We wear our values on our sleeve and attract similar people with the same values. Complementing that is our consistent discussions about these ideas - what is consensus, what is hierarchy? Constantly exploring and keeping it alive and us on track. We talk about bullshit as well!! [*laughs*] (Lew and Meg, FoEM).

Lew and Meg speak from the confidence of long-term membership of FoEM, where interwoven philosophical and practice questions about hierarchy and consensus are a part of everyday clarifying conversations (Polletta 2021). Shared values, such as a systemic analysis of social and environmental problems, can be seen to influence FoEM's enactment of non-hierarchy (e.g., doing consensus, respect for diversity). The companionability and humour expressed in Lew and Meg's laughter and the reference to talking about "bullshit" reflects a relaxed and informal organisational culture which I observed more generally in FoEM. For example, the call to "beer o'clock", offered as an inclusive relationship building practice, was often presented in the form of a community-wide invitation to transition the ongoing conversations about strategy and politics from office to

pub/cafe. This quality of inclusive camaraderie was recognised as incentivising ongoing participation by making new members feel welcomed.[42]

Figure 27: Presencing the guidance of the Achuar People and the Amazon rainforest in Pachamama's office (Source: Houseman 2017)

The impulse to contribute to a social movement with the potential to transform planetary relations was felt by some participants in Pachamama Alliance and SELC to be a powerful attractor. For example, Blanca imagines a "force" beyond an individual's conscious cognitive awareness that draws participants to SELC; "We come in different shapes and are connected by a common gravitational force". The idea of a compelling more-than-human force was spoken of in Pachamama Alliance's community; Ana describes being part of something that is bringing light to the world:

> It's so huge and all-encompassing […] It's not even our universe, it's beyond that. Our focus is on the Earth now, in our world, but it's also bright and shining, trying to illuminate our world (Ana, Pachamama Alliance).

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[42] FoEM interview with Rebecca

The reference to illumination evokes the spiritual foundation coming "from a call from the Achuar people" of the Amazon that motivates and informs Pachamama Alliance's work. Pachamama Alliance programs are founded on the intention to "integrate Indigenous wisdom with modern knowledge to support personal, and collective, transformation that is the catalyst to bringing forth an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, socially just human presence on this planet" (Pachamama Alliance.org n.d). Brent remembered being moved to participate by Pachamama Alliance's theory of change because it engaged both his intellect and his heart: "I thought the [*Awakening the Dreamer*] symposium the prototype […] encompassed all of the personal and professional elements of my mission".

Figure 28: Pachamama Alliance's governance grounded by the Kapok tree (Source: Houseman 2017)

The importance of Pachamama Alliance's understanding of spirit, grounded with Indigenous People's ways of knowing spirit through relationship with the non-human natural world, resonated with all participants and was evident in the decoration of the office environment. Every surface of the office intentionally brought forth a relationship with the rainforest and the Achuar people (see Figure 27). Pachamama Alliance participants explained how they were motivated working in an

organisation where respect for Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon was evident; for example, Giana was "very inspired" to find an organisation whose US based leaders "defer to Indigenous wisdom", and this "endeared a deep level of trust". Hank valued being able to work for an organisation that was "open to be led by spirit". Giana's drawing represented Pachamama Alliance's governance as a Kapok tree with "deep roots into the spirit of life itself". The Kapok tree, shown in Figure 28, is a strong presence in Pachamama Alliance's meeting room.

The possibility of becoming a non-hierarchically structured organisation emerged over time *through* Pachamama Alliance's immersion in the Achuar people's epistemology. Cam (below) describes the influence of witnessing the profound interconnectedness between the rainforest and the Achuar peoples. The relationality between the Achuar and the rainforest informed Pachamama Alliance to better align their governance model with their mission of changing the dream of industrial-capitalist society by reducing the separations created by hierarchical governance:

> I'd say that the rainforest and Indigenous people, which are not two separate things, it is a whole, has informed [non-hierarchical governance] as a possibility because you can see there's nothing hierarchical in nature and there's nothing hierarchical in the way an Indigenous community operates, there are hierarchies, but the basic structure is about everybody working to take care of everybody else - you can see it like a model or an inspiration (Cam, Pachamama Alliance).

Pachamama Alliance, SELC and FoEM were formed to address an array of interconnected social, political, and environmental problems. Members expressed their alignment with the mission and values variously as their contribution to necessary societal change; belonging to a group with similar values and an intellectual desire to work in an organisation with an integrated systems analysis of problems. Further, organisational alignment with the worldviews of Indigenous Peoples and ecological ways of knowing made linear ideas of 'advancement' more difficult for participants to invest in.

Figure 29: Everything is connected even if it's not particularly mainstream beautiful (Jen, FoEM). Image: 9 Swords (Noble and Vogel 1981)

Many participants in each organisation situated themselves and their work within a complex, uncontrollable, interdependent ecology. For example, Hal saw in the *9 Swords* (Figure 29) Tarot card (V Noble & Vogel 1981) the characteristics of non-linear complexity that motivated his participation in societal change work, where there was a quality of "chaos" in the "messy reality" of "defending" others and the planet:

9 Swords shows the messy reality, the chaotic environment of defending the environment and defend each other, messy process of creating change, we have opponents, it's not simplistic, we deal with complexity, we are in the business of dealing with complex problems – whether social, environmental, or economic (Hal, FoEM).

The *9 Swords* was selected by several FoEM participants as an embodiment of the tender, visceral and chaotic reality of the social and environmental problems they were resisting/transforming. Jen distinguished FoEM's work by the layered interconnections she perceived, "Everything is connected even if it's not particularly mainstream beautiful, [*long pause*] but it just feels really raw". Munro (2014, p. 1136) locates the tradition of "bearing witness" as part of a "culture of truth", characteristic of social movements and activist organisations where "the practice of bearing witness as a means by which the memory of injustice and oppression is not forgotten". A product of the intensity of bearing witness to another's remembering is the experience of solidarity.

Solidarity is recognised by a range of participatory scholars as a rewarding aspect of engaging in participatory organisations and democratic social movements (Brecher 2000; Jasper 2011; Polletta 2021, 2012; Sobering 2021a). Chapters Four and Six explore the potency of being 'seen' and 'heard' by another working in Circle. The participants in the case study organisations were cognisant that the direct style of communication characterising non-hierarchical collective engagements create a field that can be experienced as 'real' (e.g., true or meaningful), and reported as mostly rewarding, at times being seen as uncomfortable.

The incentive of engaging with the messy reality of social/environmental change brings a grittiness to FoEM's discourse about change. In contrast, the motivations described by Enspiral participants are not without vitality and passion, but they are more inwardly directed towards creating an organisational field capable of nurturing a new form of entrepreneurship. Enspiral members explained that they are not seeking to change the world by combating injustice *outside* their organisation: they are motivated by the possibility of creating a thriving micro-ecology, within which participants will transform their experience of work. Therefore, the Enspiral community

relate to the organisation as a dynamic experiment that exists to reimagine work, community, livelihood, and professional relationships:

> Enspiral is about creating an environment and an ecosystem where people can know who they are and transform and become greater. It's very much an individual transformative project in community (Karl, Enspiral).

With the motivation to create a vibrant alternative, many Enspiralites, like Harris, are disappointed by their experience with the world beyond Enspiral, "I'm absolutely committed; there is no alternative for me - Enspiral is Plan B." As introduced in Chapter One, Enspiral leverages an enterprise focused culture with "the ambition to change the world" through an attitude of "Generosity - helping each other profit".[43] Enspiral is organised to enable members to experiment with collaborative approaches to business and there is a keen interest in developing ventures that profit financially. With an interest in being through doing, Earl explains his desire to make Enspiral a functioning enterprise:

> For all the things that [Enspiral] is or people imagine it to be, if [Enspiral] doesn't have wheels and doesn't move forward its wasting its time; we can go around genuflecting, meditating and hang around in pot luck circles and shit, but the rubber's got to hit the road with this (Earl, Enspiral).

The task of creating an ecology of organisation based on mutuality is recognised in Enspiral as requiring personal change, described by Karl (above) as "an individual transformation project". For many, the possibility of work infused with mutual care and creativity reveals an embodied yearning. Cali remembers her attraction to an organisation forging new ways of working: "I heard of young people co-working, communicating, building, creating together - I couldn't fathom how I could participate [in Enspiral] even though something in my heart was ringing with that". Participating in Enspiral's ecology of organisation had a substantial effect on most of the participants I interviewed. For example, Earl felt transformed via his experience of work from

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[43] Enspiral interview with Karl

disengagement (e.g., "not committed") to desire (e.g., "wanting to"), altering his experience of his agency and creativity at work:

> I was drawn in by the potential to impact, the creativity [to] change work. [...] This is like stepping into a way of wanting to live. Previously, I was not committed to work [...] now I have to find boundaries" (Earl, Enspiral).

The transformation Earl underwent in Enspiral was both pleasurable and rewarding. Consequently, Earl, like other case study members, identified their non-hierarchical way of working as an incentive. The different experience created within non-hierarchical organisational relationships had been inconceivable for Earl, Cali and Harris because, as discussed in Chapter One, equality, inclusion, trust and mutual care are not foundational principles for dominant ecologies of organisation. Others also clarified this contrast. Here, Marc attributes his practice of non-hierarchy at SELC as a personal discovery where he found the power and agency to "change the system" by "exercising my voice":

> Before I came here, I had never worked in a participatory, democratic workplace. SELC is an intentional environment where structure supports our ability to exercise my voice and to change the system. The not-for-profit I was working with [...] was hierarchically organised [...] there was little ability for me to find my voice, it was a case of 'here's your job - do it' (Marc, Enspiral).

The positive affective value of practicing non-hierarchical governance incentivised participation. The possibility of organisational culture of mutual care and equality where people experience more creativity and productivity in their work together was also a motivation. Cam, for example, imagines Pachamama Alliance's non-hierarchical governance as prefiguring the societal transformation he desires:

> What we are doing [in Pachamama Alliance] is trying to see if there is something else in the way we work with each other that would be more creative and effective and be

consistent with the way someone would want to work in the world when they are transformed (Cam, Pachamama Alliance).

This examination of incentives has shown a diverse assortment of motivations encompassing expressions that are personal and political, concrete and abstract, embodied/feeling and intellectually known. For many in FoEM, Enspiral, SELC and Pachamama Alliance, the alignment of values, vision and purpose made joining a non-hierarchical organisation an emotional experience of connection that "felt like homecoming"[44] and "I've found my tribe".[45] In Chapter Six, I will extend this investigation by examining recruitment and social control and belonging and social relations. The next part of this chapter explores participants' experience and approaches to recruitment and onboarding.

Recruitment and onboarding: Conditions supporting a non-hierarchical culture

Organisational recruitment is an exercise in finding the 'right' fit for a role, taking into consideration a mixture of factors. Clarifying effective process and policy supporting the growth of their non-hierarchical organisational culture was a prominent area of inquiry in Enspiral, FoEM and SELC. Recruitment and onboarding processes were seen to set the tone for participant expectations and alignment with different ways of knowing, doing and being as a non-hierarchical co-leader. The formal procedures of recruitment and onboarding in these organisations introduced the often unfamiliar practices of a horizontally arranged collectivist-democratically governed organisation: Inviting new participants whether paid or volunteer, to place themselves with a different economy of non-hierarchical power relations where there are no ladders of promotion to climb and where relationship is the primary basis for engagement (Chen 2016; Heckert 2013).

This section describes a range of strategies used to invite new members to bring their voice into the Circle of decision-makers. As with most aspects of non-hierarchical organisational life, recruitment and onboarding are experienced as reciprocal processes with/between new and existing members. I will examine recruitment and onboarding as processes that set in motion

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[44] Pachamama Alliance interview with Hank
[45] Enspiral interview with Remi

opportunities for mutual discovery and relationship, beginning with a detailed examination of SELC's recruitment process followed by the onboarding practice, and the philosophies and social networks drawn upon by the case study organisations.

Recruitment: The challenge of diversity and the "right fit"

Each case study organisation I worked with across my study developed a unique approach to recruitment. FoEM and Enspiral have more organic recruitment processes where 'joining' and 'membership' are more relevant descriptions of the recruitment style. In FoEM, the historical pattern is that participants begin as volunteers joining a collective. Therefore, many FoEM staff reported applying for paid positions as a collective member, which meant they were already 'onboarded' when they became a staff member. To nurture a healthy non-hierarchical ecology of organisation with the capacity to foster business ventures, Enspiral members sought to attract both diversity and a good cultural fit. In the following extract from an interview transcript, Liam examines some of the collective challenges experienced through Enspiral community building, arguing for diversity over homogeneity:

> If interviewing for a good culture fit, we reinforce homogeneity. Tension comes from this diversity, wanting diversity means being okay with tension. If people think differently that is a source of tension, but actually it can be really beautiful […] Here I have the opportunity to learn and grow and experiment (Liam, Enspiral).

In principle, Enspiral participants focus on building relationships first. New Contributors are volunteers who join Enspiral, attracted to its potential as discussed in the first part of this chapter. However, it is only from the relational base that the possibility of working together *may* emerge. Distinguishing the tone of relationship in Enspiral as "non-binding", Otto explains Enspiral is "Not an employment or contractual relationship, the ties are gentle [and] deliberate". Non-binding relations engender autonomy and a quality of non-attachment that accepts that the commitment of 'Contributors' and 'Members' will be variable and will change over time. In November 2021 Enspiral members formally ended the distinction between Members and Contributors.
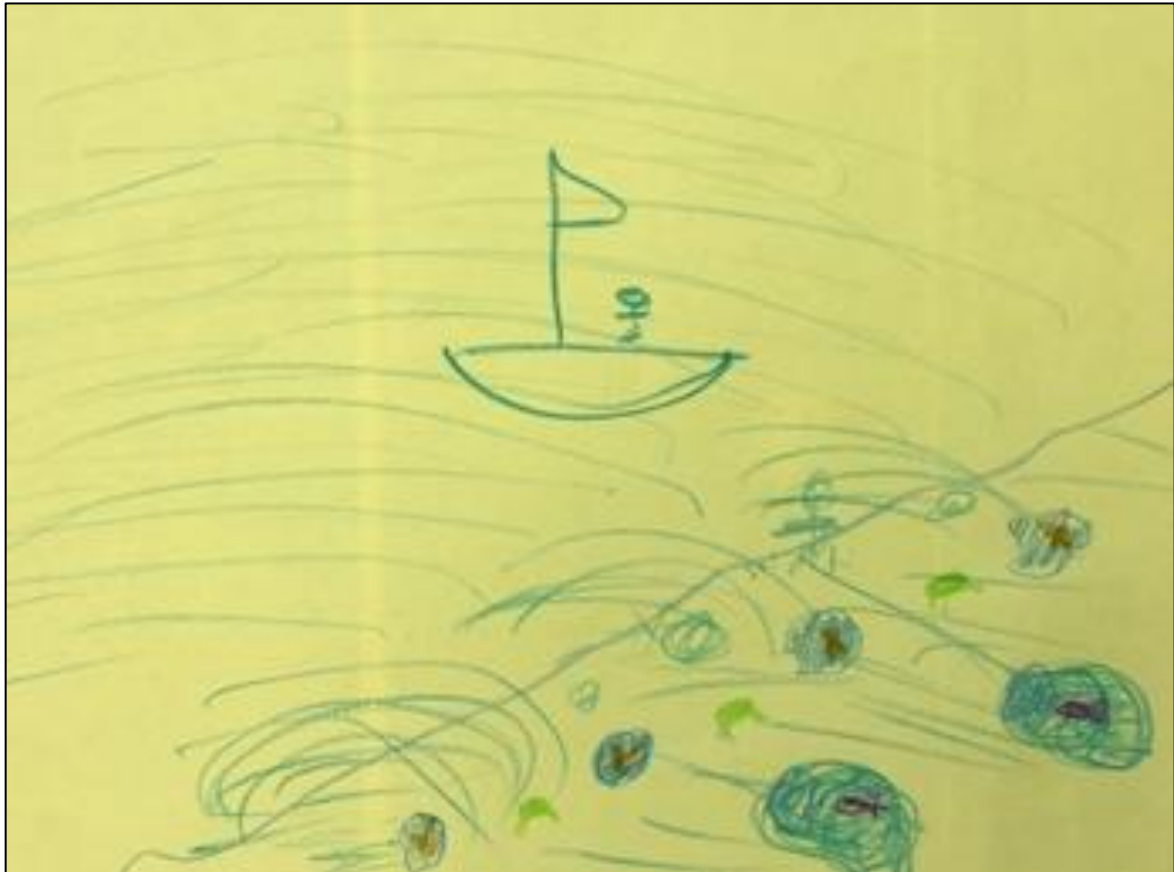
Figure 30: There is constant movement keeping this ecosystem alive and dynamic (Mike, Enspiral).

The 'flow' in Enspiral's recruitment and onboarding is aptly illustrated in Mike's drawing of Enspiral as a rocky shoreline (shown in Figure 30). Imagined as an interstitial zone connecting land, sea and sky, Enspiral is shown as thriving in an ecology that is open, moving and diverse:

> There is energy, ebb and flow, the stuff close to the edges, some pools are bigger, deeper and more interesting from an ecological perspective. Creatures coming to shore on the tide, others return again to the ocean, there is constant movement keeping this ecosystem alive and dynamic. We have sent ripples around the world (Mike, Enspiral).[46]

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[46] Other drawings from Enspiral members imagine Enspiral's governance as a flower feeding and being pollinated by bees in a garden, as a rainforest as a house, a streetscape, as a village with portals to other dimensions, as a cell within the body.

The ecological metaphor in Mike's drawing values difference and diversity within the community: The pools closest to the ocean are "deeper and more interesting". Suggesting that through the recruitment of new members, Enspiral's ecology is revitalised by the exchanges of energy and constant movement of life between the shore and the ocean. Thus, the 'motion' created by new members (e.g., their ideas, viewpoints, and ways of knowing) is important to the health of Enspiral.

While most of SELC's recruitment is for paid positions, they also concentrated on cultural fit. Two SELC staff members gave detailed descriptions of their recruitment process, recalling the affectivity of their first interactions with SELC via position description, hiring criteria, and interview. These narratives demonstrate how SELC's recruitment process has moved from the traditional approach with an emphasis on the individual parts (i.e., to find the right set of skills for a position), to thinking about recruitment as the beginning of a relationship with *all* members. This shift illustrates the fluidity of organisations designed around the bond of relationship and it brings different considerations to the fore in recruitment: For example, Frances stated that "We start with the person. We start with the spark rather than the skills", reflecting her confidence that "People develop and grow here [at SELC]". SELC's recruitment focuses on the person first; therefore, staff explained that resume and referees are merely preliminary considerations.

When assessing whether potential participants will "fit" in, SELC looks for a "spark", as an indication of a participant's readiness to change and grow into non-hierarchical practice. Explaining the importance of a "spark", Carmen from SELC told me that attitude was rated more highly because "Skills can be built, you know. Participation, personality, willingness can't [*laughs*]". The high value of attitude is reflected in SELC's hiring policy, where the top criteria was "kindness and warmth" and the second, "strong commitment to economic, racial, and environmental justice" (see Appendix 5 for SELCs hiring policy). The hiring policy positions SELC as a non-competitive workplace and prioritises people "Not strongly driven by a desire to get fame and attention". It also frames work as a calling: "Sees work with SELC as more than a job; sees it as a way to live what they love". Personal attributes identified in the hiring policy were "Honesty, integrity, humility and a sense of humour". Carmen remembers her reaction on first reading SELC's job description because it was "perfect" and that moved her emotionally:

When I read the job description […] I literally ran downstairs from my old office and called my partner and said, 'Oh my God I've just read the most perfect job description', […] I was almost crying cause I wanted it. It's one of those things where you want it so bad that I might not even try because I don't know how I'll deal with the disappointment if I don't get it. Seriously, it just felt like this is what I've been looking for, it matched so many of my collective values, you know of working, living in collective. This focus on really developing people; The job description was very clear that you didn't have to have all these skills but that you would be trained into the job, if you were the right fit. *That just felt so different than any other job description you've ever read*. […] The 30 hours (working) week drew me here. The pay structure probably being the primary. The valuing of admin skills equally with program skills. I think a lot of NGOs talk about that, then it doesn't really pay off (Carmen, SELC).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, SELC's living wage and equal pay policies and 30-hour week were appreciated as enactments of SELC's philosophical commitment to economic equality and a work/life balance. For Carmen the combination was motivational because, unlike other NGO roles, the position addressed her material and philosophical needs related to work. The equal pay policy also was perceived as taking the pressure off participants to negotiate their salary package. Interestingly, FoEM's equal pay policy elicited a similar response from Jay, who was nervous about her ability to negotiate for herself effectively:

As a woman who studied sociology and had worked numerous low-level jobs complementing parenting and Uni before I came to work at FoEM. When I was getting ready to start applying for jobs, I was feeling so nervous because I knew that so much of the pay gap was because so many women were not able to negotiate well. It was stated in the job ad, and that was just so great everyone gets paid the same, and I read about that as well in the constitution, and I just felt so free as an individual, not to have to engage in that at all (Jen, FoEM).

Allowing greater time for their recruitment process generates space for a reciprocal introductory engagement between a potential employee and organisation members. Staff tasked with recruitment indicated that SELC's stated intention was to give interviewees a taste of SELC's unique way of working and, communicate SELC's aspiration to be an environment of equals. Potential recruits are typically invited into an iterative process with core staff. The questions posed by Marc give some indication of the intensity of this process in SELC: "Recruitment takes place through multiple rounds of interviews, involving more staff members to propose questions. I want to ask why does poverty exist? What drives you? What are you moving towards?" The thoroughly personal approach to recruitment was developed to help the group determine "a good fit". Part of this exploration was an examination of a participant's "willingness" to engage in non-hierarchically structured relations.

SELC's recruitment process modelled their circular decision-making so that potential recruits could demonstrate their ability to listen spaciously to others. Dario's recruitment process extended over months, and he was appreciative of the opportunity to sense into SELC's different way of working. He explains how the extended time frame allowed him to make a considered and informed decision to join SELC on graduation:

> What really drew me to the job posting […] with SELC it was a combination of the work and the organisation. I probably had at least four rounds of six rounds of talking to people, three proper interviews […] I had an interview with almost all the staff and then I had a final interview with [a colleague] who wasn't able to make the full staff interview, Hailey and one board member. And then afterwards I also met with Hailey […] and was just kind of bouncing around my thoughts of what was going through my mind as I was trying to make that decision. I was like this is an *experiment*, this is a challenging way to approach work and organisation and I really *trust* these people as people I would want to work with and around and *I trust their sensibility and their wisdom and their ability to honour when they've made mistakes and work on this together*. Yeah, let's do it (Dario, SELC).

SELC's recruitment process endorsed their ethics and integrity. It gave Dario sufficient interaction to develop the trust he needed to say yes to the job offer. Other staff reported a shorter engagement process, and many came to SELC via community networks where they had already formed relationships with SELC staff.

This examination of SELC's recruitment has demonstrated how the language and processes used in recruitment gave these participants confidence to join an organisation that was clearly different from any other organisations they had been a part of. SELC appears to strive to create a recruitment process that sets in motion the active participation of many voices as equal partners in experimental forms of governance. However, participants reflected that effectively bringing new participants into a non-hierarchical organisation is a complex process requiring an extended period of onboarding.

Onboarding: An induction into the patterns of non-hierarchy

Participants in SELC and Enspiral engage with onboarding as a supported process of self-discovery and learning for recruits. In relationally based organisations, each new member instigates a noticeable recalibration of the group and onboarding sets the tone for future collective engagements. This section will discuss some practices and philosophies underpinning SELC, Enspiral, Pachamama Alliance and FoEM onboarding into a non-hierarchical ecology of organisation.

This thesis explores how a non-hierarchically structured organisation can instigate a paradigmatic shift in its participants through the unfolding process of becoming-a-non-hierarchical co-leader in the performance of day-to-day decision-making. To appreciate the importance of onboarding as the transitional point of entry, Eli from SELC wisely observes, "Onboarding has an impact on how you even build relationships within the organisation". To conceptualise onboarding as an *invitation* into a paradigmatic shift, I draw on Foucault's (1983) reflections about the conditions that enable a "non-fascist life" because the intent of non-hierarchical relations is for the subjects to become conscious of behaviours and conditions that reproduce relations of domination. The exploration of

internal relations of power and domination in a hierarchically organised society was at the centre of Foucault's work (1982):

> What is needed is to "de-individualise" by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations. The group must not be the organic bond uniting hierarchized individuals, but a constant generator of de-individualisation (Foucault 1983, p. xiv).

The practice of consent and consensus-based decision-making, examined in Chapter Four, can be imagined as one of the integral structural 'generators' of de-individualisation that the case study organisations employ. In performing non-hierarchical decision-making, new members are introduced to a collective characterised by reflexive engagement and embodied ways of being together described in Chapter Four and Six. The intention of equal and inclusive social relations in non-hierarchical governance sets into motion a shift to the collective (e.g., goals and purpose) decentring the focus on individual directed desires for advancement. Francesca Polletta (2021) argues that groups demonstrating the capacity for a light or playful tone between people, that develops a direct communication style and takes time needed to talk through issues, enables group members to transcend the dominant preoccupation with individual self-interest. As a transitional phase, the purpose of onboarding is to initiate and encourage recruits to become (more) self-reflective and self-organising.

However, because these ways of being in organisation are mostly unfamiliar, SELC, FoEM and Enspiral appreciate that onboarding can be difficult for some. Thus, SELC's onboarding continues to be augmented to give recruits more time to adjust to working non-hierarchically, as Paige explains their rationale:

> Even though [people] are self-selecting, there are really different levels of fully understanding and being ready for [working non-hierarchically]. Part of the work [of onboarding] is getting people to the point where they are ready for this […] there has to be space for that, we keep extending the onboarding and adding elements (Paige, SELC).

Having the *desire* to be a non-hierarchical co-leader, may in itself not be enough for an individual to be "ready" for some of the subjective challenges provoked in the transition. Sharing authority

and the experience of working in a group without the protection of roles and relationships ordered by familiar hierarchical relations was explored in Chapter Four and found at times as confronting. Part of the learning during onboarding is technical (e.g., a few participants commented that working across multiple platforms was complex and at times cumbersome). The more challenging dimension of learning is recognised as social - as participants begin to understand the less conscious layers and adjustments involved in becoming-a-non-hierarchical co-leader. Framing onboarding as supporting new members to learn "how to exercise leadership" differently, Ian suggests at least six months of structured support across a range of organisational domains is required. Experience has shown SELC that a shorter transition is neither "reasonable" nor "possible":

> We've been on a learning edge exploring the onboarding process because what we're asking people was not reasonable or possible in terms of skills and experience. Support and training are both technical and social learning how to exercise leadership in a non-hierarchical organisation. Now onboarding is a six-month process, and it is structured to include policy education, projects, peers, formal roles for support building skills and capacity and comfort levels, mission and theory of change (Ian, SELC).

The persistence of hierarchical behaviours is explained by Foucault (1983, p. xiii) as located in the micro level of "fascisms" that exist in all people and "cause us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us". Deleuze and Guattari (1987) expand the idea, describing "microfascisms" as the human desire to order, rank, control, repress, direct, and impose limits on another person or thing (O'Byrne & Holmes 2007). The concept of microfascism is used in this thesis because it helps decentre the effect of power as power-over, and acknowledges the desire to order and control others as relatively mundane human yearning. Enspiral members accept that all organisational participants will grapple with microfascisms, as Karl explained: "No matter how hard [I/we try] hierarchies keep trying to reassert themselves in the group - inside of myself, inside of people and inside of things". Thus, non-hierarchy might be better considered as an *aspirational* state, and one that any community of practice will be continually engaged in becoming-with from the point of recruitment and onboarding.

Labelling "non-democratic individuals" Rothschild and Whitt (1986a) have helped distinguish behaviours that undermine the goals of non-hierarchy (e.g., inclusive, transparent, equal, non-coercive relations); however, this classification sets up a separation which inhibits the acceptance of multiple ways of knowing/being and limits inclusivity by personalising the behaviour. One of the biggest conceptual shifts that can occur in onboarding is to invite participants to think about hierarchies as internally constructed. Each new recruit learns to appreciate the value of daily practices of governance and individual self-reflection to sustain cultures that are "tyrannylessness" (Leach 2013). Contextualising this understanding is the opinion of Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1994) and Bogue (2009, p. 54) who assert that "No genuine, viably functioning human collectivity exists at present". By viable they mean genuinely non-hierarchical relations. When examining the onboarding process in the organisations I noticed that participants were broadly aware of the ways the more subtle operation of power between people makes the non-hierarchical principle difficult to hold.

Therefore, while the 'ladders' of social stratification associated with authority, positional status and pay levels have been removed in the SELC and FoEM, other more shadowy 'ladders' are constantly being constructed i.e., the desire to have others behave in a certain way or to control outcomes (see the discussion about "little Miss-Fix-it" in Chapter Six, and white middle class values in Chapter Seven). To have the relational resilience necessary for sustaining a reflexive cultural field, onboarding into a non-hierarchical organisation takes participants into relational territory that is personal and at times confronting. Mike identifies the importance of trust in Enspiral: "What makes Enspiral unique is trust: A willingness to stay in relationship, which is not our normal experience". Enspiral devised a peer-to-peer mentoring framework to develop social bonds capable of mutual trust.

Enspiral established a system of stewarding to onboard Contributors into the community in a very organic manner: "Members are responsible for stewarding the culture".[47] Stewarding is imagined as a creative and relational process, through which participants are connected into seasonal

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[47] Enspiral interview with Jade

rhythms in Enspiral, such as the everyday check-ins and annual gatherings: "Stewarding - each person looks after another and regularly keeps in touch with them. It feels good and how it's done is your choice".[48] The process of stewarding was designed to create a foundation of relationship which is central to Enspiral's epistemology: "We're on-boarded through relationship; we create new relationships with people".[49] It is only from the ground of relationship that professional alliances, ventures and contracts for the delivery of work might emerge. Over the period of this research, Enspiral's approach to stewarding continued to evolve as the organisation changed. In 2018-19 another iteration of stewarding was proposed by a working group and was adopted, making it a more flexible, self-selecting group process renamed as *Stewarding Pods*. As Enspiral has grown beyond a primarily Te Whanganui-a-Tara-Wellington based community, some of the practices designed to nurture onboard new Contributors no longer worked for all new participants. For example, the Member who invited me to be a Contributor was unavailable as a steward and I was indecisive and did not select a steward and so I did not have the experience of being 'stewarded into Enspiral'.

Onboarding in Pachamama Alliance is enriched and grounded when staff go to the Amazon rainforest and meet the Achuar and other Indigenous peoples through one of Pachamama Alliance's *Journeys to the Amazon.* "The rainforest deepens connection, when we visit the rainforest, we know what is at stake; it's very relational".[50] Described as transformative by many staff, this immersive experience is felt to open team members to a deep connection with the rainforest and the Indigenous nationalities of Ecuador, both vital sources of guidance in Pachamama Alliance's decision-making and strategy. Fundación Pachamama Alliance works to protect the Sacred Headwaters of the Napo and Marañón Rivers. Indigenous nationalities of Ecuador including the Shuar, Achuar, Sápara, Shiwiar, and Kichwa territories.

The different ways Enspiral, SELC, Pachamama Alliance and FoEM conceptualised their onboarding process reveals the strong influence of contemporary philosophy on practice. The language and practices developed by global networks emerging from a range of social and

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[48] Enspiral interview with Otto
[49] Enspiral interview with Liam
[50] Pachamama Alliance interview with Dani

environmental justice movements has helped these organisations articulate their difference as non-hierarchically structured NFP organisations (Eikenberry 2009; Maeckelbergh 2014). Table 4 gives a snapshot of some of the key thinkers, theoretical influences, the networks and movements that the case study organisations drew upon in 2017-21.[51] Many of these networks and thinkers are referenced through this thesis.

This wide network of relationships enriches the inter-organisational field of each of the case study organisations, strengthening their social fabric and making thriving non-hierarchical organisations possible (Scharmer & Kaufer 2013). Common to all the case study organisations is a use of conscious language practices drawing on non-violent or non-defensive communication (Ellison 2005) and an affirmative approach to social relations which can have the effect of expanding what is possible (Fraunhofer 2019). I will give a more detailed explanation of FoEM and SELC's onboarding with reference to their conceptual influences shown in Table 4.

FoEM believes that the practice of consensus is potent enough to affect the transformation of both the group and the individuals within them, as discussed in Chapter Four. Many FoEM members understand the extent of the conceptual leap participants undertake when they move from a hierarchically structured ENGO to an anti-hierarchical organisation such as FoEM. In 2016 the *Operations Collective* (the collective responsible for communication systems) began developing an induction for new members that would introduce key principles and ideas of non-hierarchically organised systems to new members of FoEM collectives.

Table 4: Theory, networks and social movements supporting onboarding into non-hierarchical organisations

Organisation	Global/National Networks & Movements	Thinkers & Theoretical Influences

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[51] Table 4 was created with input from members of Chris Tittle from SELC, Sam Castro from FoEM and with reference to websites from Pachamama Alliance and Enspiral and *Better Work Together* (2019), a collection of essays from Enspiral members.

SELC	Networks: P2P, New Economy, Commons, Non-Profit Democracy, Food Sovereignty Movements: Occupy, Open Source, Climate Justice, Black Lives Matter	Cooperatives and solidarity economy: J. Gordon-Nembhard, K. Akuno (Cooperation Jackson), E. Whitfield (Fund for Democratic Communities), E. Kawano (US Solidarity Economy Network) Climate and capitalism: N. Klein, Movement Generation Justice, Ecology Project, Commons, Climate Justice Alliance's Just Transition framework Housing: Bollier, Östrom, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor Emergence: A.M Brown, J. Macy Non-defensive communication
FoEM	Networks: FoE International National Affiliates (Aust), P2P, World Social Forum, New Economy, Commons, Food Sovereignty Movements: Climate Justice	A deep green anarchic feminist, anti-capitalist lens is part of the FoE DNA. Deleuze & Guattari rhizome, Y. Wadsworth (Action Learning), A. Kia, Snowden Cynefin framework, Yoemans, Laceweb, Wheatley & Frieze, Victorian Women's Trust projects Nonviolent action and communication
Pachamama Alliance	Networks: Fundación Pachamama, Global facilitators Movements: New Democracy, Black Lives Matter	P. Hawken, T. Berry, L. Twist, J. Perkins, W. Erhard, V. Shiva, J. Macy, Van Jones, Starhawk, Eisenstein, Laloux, McKibben, Complex Systems, Shamanism, Indigenous peoples of the Amazon.
Enspiral	Networks: P2P, OuiShare, Percolab, Art of Hosting, New Economy & Social Innovation, Commons, Transition, Open Collective, Holochain, Scuttlebutt Movements: Occupy, Degrowth, the Platform Cooperative, Open Source, Zero Waste	Degrowth, Post-capitalism, sharing and collaborative economy, digital nomadism, lean start-up/Agile methodologies, Circular Economy, social innovation, Complex Systems & Design thinking, Māori traditions, Theory U, Eisenstein, Laloux, Felber, Östrom, Bollier, Benkler, Bauwens, Kegan

FoEM's onboarding is distinguished by its signature programme, the hour-long *Anti-hierarchical Rhizome Training* an induction to all new FoEM volunteers and staff (Figure 31 shows a group workshopping the training at the FoE Australia 2018 AGM retreat). Named after Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of the horizontally moving rhizome, FoEM's induction has integrated FoEM case studies and activities to introduce concepts such as complex adaptive systems (Snowden & Boone 2007; Van Beurden et al. 2013), consensus, meeting facilitation and

nonviolent direct action (Seeds for Change n.d), rules of the swarm (Abraham, Guo, & Liu 2006), decentralised and emergent leadership (Wheatley & Frieze 2006), among other concepts.

Figure 31: FoEM Anti-hierarchical Rhizome Training 2017 (Source: Houseman 2018)

To provide new recruits with the tools and knowledge to develop their knowing and being, supporting them to exercise leadership in a non-hierarchical organisation, SELC created a comprehensive reading syllabus to introduce SELC's programmatic areas, mission, and theory of change. Topics include cooperatives and cooperative law, race, class and economic democracy, gentrification, housing and equity, grassroot finance, food justice, renewable energy and the solidarity economy, among others. Available on the *Staff Onboarding and Orientation Checklist* (Sustainable Economies Law Center 2016), each topic is supported by a range of resources and study is completed by a lunch with members of the relevant Circle. For example, in the unit "Capitalism and the Sharing Economy" the focus was to explore the "fundamental principles of capitalism and an emerging alternative, the "sharing economy" and understand the share economy

as a transition which is evolving consumption and production habits as well as the labour market syllabus included: (Cagle 2014; Orsi 2013; Schneider 2014; *Shareconomy - A Documentary Feature Film* 2014). Beyond the weekly reading programme, each new recruit is supported by a team of three mentors offering different levels of support from weekly to daily check-ins and debriefs.

To introduce recruits to the principles of non-hierarchical communication and engaging with conflict, within six months of joining SELC all staff are required to learn about non-defensive communication, non-violent communication. Non-defensive communication has been adopted to provide SELC with practice-based tools to assist them to move away from habits of blaming, judging, criticising and interpreting others and towards clarifying and listening. To complete new recruits' engagement with non-defensive communication, they are asked to "write a short summary on lessons learned from the readings, ideas for improving SELC's internal and interpersonal communication processes, and other takeaways from the readings" (Sustainable Economies Law Center 2016).

As feedback on the affective impact of SELC's onboarding and mentoring, Abbie recalled a time when she was struggling in her transition from being a hierarchical worker to becoming-a-non-hierarchical co-leader. She recounts how a conversation with her mentor reframed her experience of discomfort to thinking appreciatively of what was working and not working as a form of feedback on SELC's governance system. Abbie felt that this intervention helped her to reflexively reappraise her personal tensions as collective learning:

> Early on I had a meeting with Ian, and he said something that really resonated with me. He said "Part of the work is to figure out what works and what doesn't, through this whole process it is like we are creating a model for other people. There is value in working out the tensions and learning out what is working/not working for people. That was helpful for me (Abbie, SELC).

This mentoring illustrates the way a participant's uncertainty was transposed in a participatory context from being 'managed' as an individualised failure to adjusting to a new role, to becoming a self-development experience *and* a valuable contribution to the ongoing success of the whole organisation (Cooperrider, Sherman, & Woychik 2014). The movement towards de-individualization in a non-hierarchical community is contingent on participants being willing to embark on the intensity involved with self-knowledge introduced through recruitment and onboarding processes. As Eden from Pachamama Alliance commented: "Building trust and growing ourselves requires the rigour of daily practice". Chapters Six and Seven will explore the play between individual self-forming and belonging and a non-hierarchical organisational community in greater depth.

Conclusion

Equal remuneration policy and non-hierarchically structured roles disrupt the power relations embedded in hierarchically structured systems of role-related remuneration, setting in motion a shift from individual to collective advancement. Participants' motivations encompassed a range of personal, spiritual and political goals including the possibility of liberation from the tyrannies of hierarchical systems. However, entanglement between individual needs and desires, and anti-capitalist philosophical orientations make 'money' a complex area for members of FoEM, Enspiral, SELC and Pachamama Alliance.

Recruitment has been shown to be a process of mutual assessment of a participant's 'readiness' to work non-hierarchically, which is a commitment to ongoingly examine the emergence of power in social relations. A wide network of inter-organisational relationships informed the induction practices developed by the case study organisations. Onboarding was found to set in motion processes of self-discovery and relationship building, inviting participants into the paradigmatic movement of exercising leadership in a non-hierarchical organisation.

Chapter Six - Reconfiguring Social Relations and Social Control: The Power of Circles and Belonging

This chapter will examine the social phenomenon of belonging to show how social relations are constituted in the non-hierarchical case study organisations where legitimating the "use of centralised authority or standardised rules to achieve social control" is refused on principle (Rothschild-Whitt 1979, p. 514). The structural arrangement of the circle and the effect of SELC's culture based on kindness and deference will be explored to understand how social cohesion might be possible without the mechanisms of managerial control and discipline. Chapters Four and Five have examined formal policy and practice designed to maintain a stable, functioning organisation guided by non-hierarchical principles. In this, more speculative chapter, I will analyse participant-generated drawings and responses to Tarot images, arguing that they are archetypal expressions that offer insight to some deeper cultural yearnings about relationships with organisation (Hillman 1990).

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first section concentrates on the ways non-hierarchical social relations are constituted in the case study organisations. The positive affective value of belonging in community (Ahmed 2010) is explored through the promise of relationality in non-hierarchical organisational life. The importance of belonging in a caring and safe organisation is revealed in the imagery selected by participants. Chapter Five uncovered how a values-based community set in motion participant 'readiness' for the interpersonal intensity and directness of non-hierarchical governance. In this chapter, participants' responses to the relational process of becoming-a-non-hierarchical organisation are examined as an embodied experience of belonging (Bawaka Country et al. 2015; Wright 2015). The interplay between authentic self-expression (Algera & Lips-Wiersma 2012) and the experience of a vital reliance on others (Braidotti 2011) will be seen to create opportunities for developing relationships built on interpersonal trust; the conditions that nurture non-hierarchical social relations.

The second section will examine how organisational culture provides a framework for social cohesion through an exploration of SELC's informal culture of kindness and deference. Rothschild (1979) recognised the tension between participatory cultures based on strong relational bonds with

their tendency towards a values-based homogeneity and the capacity of collectivist organisations to mature into more complex and culturally diverse organisations. With reference to participant interviews and SELC's Reflective Group Conversation (RGC), I will examine the interplay between conflict styles (2008) and the influence of inherited class/skin identities in shaping culture and bodies (Ahmed 2007), to explore how non-hierarchical participants visualise and practice being in relationship.

The third section explores how the geometric form of the circle contributes to the cohesion of a non-hierarchically structured organisation. The influence of the shape of the circle on participatory governance is examined variously as a configuration for practice, a model for process, a metaphor for equality and inclusion and an archetype that evokes wholeness and unity. I will explore how the structure and process of 'working in circle' can nurture an inclusive culture where diverse beliefs, values, truths and perspectives are able to be voiced and received with respect.

Social relations formed through belonging in community

Belonging in community is a powerful human desire that may be felt as an emotional yearning to connect with others (Wright 2015). Belonging has been associated with feelings of trust, connection, safety and wellbeing (Roffey 2017) and enhances participants' responses to self and others (Dobia et al. 2019). Community development practitioner, Peter Block (2008, p. xii), poetically describes belonging as a "longing to be", indicating the ontological aspect of belonging whereby individuals yearn for a 'being' with organisation that is meaningful. Belonging can be a complex felt experience. Sarah Wright (2015, p. 392) recognises that belonging is actively created through a wide range of human and non-human practices, processes and performances. I approach this discussion about non-hierarchical social relations acknowledging that the moments documented here are partial, transitory and situated expressions of organisational life (Capra & Luisi 2014). To explore what happens when the ideal of belonging is 'upset' by the often-messy reality of relations in a non-hierarchical organisation, I attend to the intensities created through social relations.

I begin by examining the promise of belonging that circulated within the case study organisations to distinguish the elements that constitute relationship in the non-hierarchical organisations bounded by the context of a disruptive Anthropocene Earth. Following this, I explore how the process of becoming a-non-hierarchical co-leader can support an experience of authentic social relationships. My approach to understanding the experience of belonging and relationship in the case study organisations acknowledges the epistemologies and ontologies of Australian First Nation Peoples whereby "co-becoming" describes an interrelated human participants shape place and are shaped by multiple relationships with place (Bawaka Country et al. 2016, 2015; Emmanouil 2017). In the case study organisations, a vital and dynamic relationship between participants and the concept of non-hierarchy is recognised as embedded in the organisational identity. For example, Chapter Four demonstrated how participants grappled with ideas of inclusivity and equality and negotiated the emergence of hierarchical expectations in organisational social relations (e.g., the expectation of direction, seeking confirming feedback, lacking confidence to exercise one's voice). Thus, the values embodied in the concept of non-hierarchical organisation actively contribute to participants co-becoming, just as Dreaming stories of Bawaka Country shape the decisions and actions of the people. This is demonstrated through participants' knowing, being and doing in organisation as policy/practice is redesigned, and parameters around space and time are altered in response to the principles underpinning non-hierarchical social relations.

The experience of basking in the positive affect created by belonging with a non-hierarchical community was deeply appreciated by many participants in SELC, Enspiral, Pachamama Alliance and FoEM (Bailey & DiGangi 2017). The 'knowing' created by shared values was shown in Chapter Five to be a foundation of relationship in the case study organisations. However, it is through 'doing' that deeper understanding of non-hierarchical cultural values, such as equality, inclusion and diversity, can emerge (Polletta 2012). Wright and colleagues, with Bawaka Country (2016, p. 463) explain, "It is by knowing and being that one does. And this includes telling stories, sharing knowledge". Non-hierarchical relationships shape participants' intention 'to be' in a way that is worthy of trust and to do that which is respectful for other beings and things.

Knowing and being a non-hierarchical co-leader is enacted in the performance of decision-making, in online communications and through the stories told about people and practice. Anarchist scholar, Jamie Heckert (2013, p. 5), argues that non-hierarchical practice can create "another state of mind necessary for and produced by anarchist(ic) social relations, characterised by vitality (freedom–equality) […] and love". Imagined as "fractals of democracy", Heckert believes non-hierarchical relations have the potential to nourish creative freedom at all levels of organisation. Case study participants' felt sense of the organisation's field is illuminated in their responses to selected Tarot cards, giving an indication of the relational tone constituted through their everyday practice as non-hierarchical organisations/participants.

Participants valued the qualities of integrity and care that they experienced as embodied in the workplaces created in SELC, FoEM, Pachamama Alliance and Enspiral. When asked "What words characterize the quality of your engagement as a group?" Common words included "trust", "collaborative", "compassionate", "caring", "careful", "loving", "respect", "creative" and "welcoming". The more tentative or difficult aspects of each organisation's being together also surfaced. For example, FoEM was experienced as "transient", "messy", "burdened" and "frustrating" (see Chapter Four) and Enspiral was "chaotic", "exhausting" and "overworked" and SELC as "overwhelmed", "emotional reserved" and "veiled", all will be discussed later in this chapter. Possibly as a reflection of Pachamama Alliance's growing confidence towards becoming-a-non-hierarchical organisation, Pachamama Alliance members described the quality of their collective engagement as conditionally 'becoming-more', for example, "*building* trust, cautious, committed to *certain* things, uncertain, *still* careful, *still* constrained and figuring it out" (See Appendix 3 for complete lists by organisation).

In the interview, participants across all four organisations were drawn to select two Tarot cards: The *Sun* (shown in Figure 32), and the *Wheel of Fortune* (shown in Figure 33) (Vicki Noble & Vogel 1981). The Sun was the most frequently selected Tarot card in this study. These images were chosen by participants as expressions of both the recognised 'heart' of the organisation and its challenge and shadow, i.e., the concealed and disowned aspects of the organisation's identity. Responses to these contrasting images reveal the emotional complexity of belonging in a non-hierarchical community in an industrial-capitalist society in the Anthropocene.

Figure 32: I've found my tribe in community, so I can go out and not be afraid (Rebecca, Enspiral). Image: Sun (Noble & Vogel 1981)

With the familiar phrase, "We're hand-in-hand together"[52] Jacqui communicated the positive affective value of consenting physical contact (e.g., hugs), revealing the trust she associates with SELC's social relations and reflecting the connection of belonging (Jasper 2011). Abbie connected the emotion of "happiness" with the "underlying harmony" created by the shared values and

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[52] SELC interview with Jacqui

purpose in SELC: "Hanging out together, striving for a better world".[53] The heartfelt potential of Enspiral is imagined by Nadia as a transformative possibility, where a more beautiful and happier world might just 'happen' in an instant:

> This amazing energy that is all around us that we could harness and all, like the image on this card, is people and animals happy and together. It's the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible, so if it's just there, we have to just take it and just do it - just flipping at any moment into a different way of being (Nadia, Enspiral).

A valued aspect of these non-hierarchical social relations was the experience of being cared for and caring for other people and the Earth. For example, Rebecca recognised the feeling of "Caring for each other and just feeling really safe within it because of that, and that shared emphasis on caring for the Earth and each other" in FoEM. The connection between belonging and security and safety was echoed by several participants who recognised belonging as a protection from an often scary and volatile world outside the organisation. Here, Remi describes how she draws on the security and safety produced by her belonging in Enspiral and attributes it as empowering her action in the outside world:

> I'm in the world surrounded by people, by community, supported and feeling good about the world. I've found my tribe in community, so I can go out and not be afraid. I harvest and bring it back to my community (Remi, Enspiral).

The safety and comfort of belonging was revealed in participants' strong delineation between life *inside* the non-hierarchical community and the world *outside*. Enspiral participants identify strong personal relationships as the foundational social contract underpinning the group. For example, Karl values the potential in Enspiral's social relationships as "A formed community moving beyond transaction when 'I'm seen' and 'I belong'" (Karl, Enspiral). His words evoke the potent possibility of unconditional acceptance and immersion with an archetypal source, such as the eternal mother or the universe (Hillman 1990). The ideal of Enspiral as creating belonging was

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[53] SELC interview with Abbie

reflected in organisational materials, indicating that the engagement with the human longing to belong is a conscious aspect of Enspiral's 'offer' to potential members/contributors.

The experience of belonging as a sanctuary was a valued dimension of relationship in SELC. Here Hailey describes SELC's community as providing emotional respite from the unbearable pain of bearing witness to the ecological destruction and the fragility of life on Earth in 2017:

> We are in the world that I swear could just fall apart, all the fish in the sea might die, hurricanes, Donald Trump […] I'm like, this world could devolve into things like war, fascism, complete ecological destruction, so I can't bear that in mind all the time. Then within our organisation there's a desire, a culture of always trying to relieve discomfort (Hailey, SELC).

The contrast between inside and outside was extended by participants to express the emotional pain of 'knowing' the ongoing human devastation of the Earth and yet, feeling compelled to exclude an authentic communication of the endings implicit within the Anthropocene. A yearning to be 'true' to despair contrasts with the facade of toxic happiness and confident ongoingness accepted in normative societal discourse, as Paige from SELC explained: "Our challenge is not trying to put on a happy face for our funders. What is happening in the context of de-growth and climate change is devastating".

The necessity of strong social relations in SELC, Pachamama Alliance, Enspiral and FoEM was emphasized through participants' awareness of the vulnerability of their work within the biospheric field. Several participants used the visual prompt offered by the Tarot cards to highlight the impermanent and dynamic aspects of co-existing in an expansive non-human world. The *Wheel of Fortune* card (Vicki Noble & Vogel 1981) was selected to acknowledge the relationship with the Earth and the smallness of human existence in the cosmos. For example, George approached his work as a FoEM activist with acceptance that it was impossible to control change: "It is organised chaos. We don't know what's going to happen and that's the nature of social change; we have to allow ourselves to be flexible" (George, FoEM).

Figure 33: We have many different aspects; we transform and align with nature. The needs of people generate alignment (Marc, SELC). Image: Wheel of Fortune (Nobel & Vogel 1981)

The planetary scale, present in the *Wheel of Fortune* (Vicki Noble & Vogel 1981), arguably illustrates participants' movement away from the dominant imaginary of the omnipotent human. Marc envisages SELC's social relations as receptive, fluid and responsive: "We have many different aspects; we transform and align with nature. The needs of people generate alignment" (Marc, SELC). The recognition of the unpredictability of systems' change exposes the vulnerability of human relationships, and Enspiral participants, in particular, demonstrated an

awareness of the fragility of social relations. In fact, several Enspiral participants wondered whether the promise of belonging was worth the ongoing effort required to generate the vision: "It takes a lot of energy to have something exist in this world and not just break off into pieces and float off into different directions and sometimes that's absolutely what's needed […] not to try to hold things together too much and to let things go on" (Nadia, Enspiral). Nadia's words also illuminate the impossibility of the form of social control that attempts to "hold things together" in a non-hierarchical organisation.

Issues of social control intersect with social relations in Enspiral. Several Enspiral participants who had moved or were moving their energy away from the organisation questioned the value of committing themselves to "have something exist" when it had failed to meet the promise of equal social relations that distinguishes a non-hierarchical community from normative ecologies of organisation. Veronica from Enspiral reflected with regret that in her experience, Enspiral had not managed to transcend power dynamics: "Power exists in non-hierarchical structure […] We had to use social coercion to get things changed; The idealism of decentralisation didn't work and our work over the last seven years has been unpaid". This disappointment appears to be less about the lack of financial reward and more about the inability of Enspiral's non-hierarchically constituted relationships to generate a functioning organisation. Many Enspiralites conceptualise failure through a developmental lens, for example, Anton from Enspiral described discerning "an appropriate way to make decisions together that takes into account contribution and different levels of engagement, balancing sovereignty, accountably and collective wellbeing" as a learning edge for Enspiral. I will tease this problem out in greater detail because it furthers Rothschild's (1979, p. 513) finding that social control participatory organisations "rely on personalistic and moralistic appeals to provide the primary means of control".

Perceptions of different (e.g., unequal) levels of participation and contribution have affected the relational field in Enspiral. Veronica told me the story of "little Miss Fix-it" which clarified the concerns raised by Anton (above) about collective understanding of 'doing' that maintains equality but acknowledges differing levels of engagement and accountability. Veronica reflected that she noticed herself exerting social control by moving into an assertive "fixing" mode in reaction to the

inaction of others: "When people are asleep it triggers little Miss Fix-it". In a hierarchical organisation, Veronica's fixing might be interpreted as proactive leader like behaviour but, in an non-hierarchical context, it could be seen as an example of "non-democratic behaviour" (Rothschild & Whitt 1986a). Participants who are not "awake and conscious" were perceived by some as a challenge to Enspiral because their inaction reduced "collective wellbeing". It is a reasonable expectation that in egalitarian cultures members will/should contribute equally as these organisations rely upon the contributions of a group of active, self-managing individuals to function without the support of external social controls, such as rules and supervision (Beeman et al. 2009; Rothschild 2018).

Yet, Veronica and Anton's reflections foreground the vulnerability of participatory environments to the emergence of "microfascisms" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987) that is, the desire to control, limit or direct another - even from people like Veronica and Anton who are experienced and committed to the enactment of non-hierarchical governance. Members of the Enspiral community told me how they had developed their capacity to have more direct conversations about responsibility and accountability in participation.[54] However, as discussed in Chapter Four, it is easier to create systems of accountability within contractual salaried relationships than it is with largely volunteer communities, such as Enspiral and FoEM.

Capacity development, such as learning not to re-act and overstep interpersonal boundaries and clarifying roles and accountabilities are an important second-order learning response seeking to 'do it better' in response to emergences of "Little Miss Fix-it". It is also possible to 'see things differently' using a more critical deconstructive lens (Sterling 2011). The relational dynamic reproduced in "little Miss Fix-it's" classification of her 'less engaged' co-leaders as asleep (and herself as awake), constitutes a binary positioning of the subject as 'awake' as active/conscious (and acceptable), and the object as 'asleep' as passive/unconscious (and unacceptable) as a non-hierarchical participant. Positioning this way separates and excludes those who might appear asleep or who are different in their presentation of being-a-non-hierarchical co-leader. The easy emergence of this hierarchical division in the context of being accountable for making things

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[54] Enspiral interview with Gerald

happen in an organisation is indicative of the difficulty of respecting individual difference and accepting diverse ways of being, knowing and doing in non-hierarchical organisational cultures.

Figure 34: Enspiral is all growing together; it's hard to know what it will grow into [...] you have to constantly update the stories (Gerald, Enspiral).

By framing participation as 'co-becoming', this thesis allows the possibilities for a radical co-existence of difference to emerge. Within a society prioritising equal social relations there will always be the potential of an 'unbecoming': in the incompletions, inconsistencies and failing to be-a-non-hierarchical participant/organisation (Wright 2015). This potential was illustrated through the many participant-generated drawings, where Enspiral's social relations were imagined via a range of ecological metaphors (see Chapter Five for examples). The rainforest drawing (shown in Figure 34), and accompanying narrative, illustrates the possibility of reciprocal

interdependence that values difference and diversity as a key ingredient of non-hierarchical relations:

> We have a couple of big trees, a few shrubs, maybe the odd tree that has collapsed, a few mushrooms growing out of it, new life forms, a bird, there are a few bits of manure helping to fertilise the plants. [Enspiral] is all growing together; it's hard to know what it will grow into […] Everyone describing Enspiral is looking at it from a different angle, and if you read last year's description, well the shrubs have changed, the trees have changed, so you have to constantly update the stories. There have been a few trees that have fallen over, and new things have come out of them […] There has been some pruning [we] dropped a few branches and that's created a bit of mulch (Gerald, Enspiral).

In the Enspiral 'rainforest', the different characteristics and contributions of large trees, a bird, flowing water, fungi in soil and under rotting tree branches etc., all contribute to each other's co-becoming: a conceptualisation that integrates cycles of growth, decay, death and renewal, and interprets breakdowns (e.g., fallen trees, dropped branches), as an expected characteristic of a healthy ecology of organisation. Through his drawing, Gerald values the unique offerings of each of Enspiral's members and contributors, however small, to create Enspiral's thriving ecosystem. While Little Miss Fix-it, brings order and efficiency, Gerald's drawing challenges the relevance of managerialism in a non-hierarchical ecology of organisation.

Observing that "Everyone describing Enspiral is looking at it from a different angle" reflects an acceptance of diverse stories about Enspiral. This attribute was appreciated by many as an expression of the diversity, autonomy and inclusion in Enspiral's culture.[55] Developing the tolerance for the existence of conflicting organisational stories is a movement that illustrates an acceptance of multiple interpretations of 'reality' or truth in organisation and indicates the possibility of the expression of multiple epistemologies within a functioning organisation (Goddard, Kallis, & Norgaard 2019; Haraway 1988), as Gerald explains:

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[55] Enspiral interviews with Bella, Tom, Liam, Cali and Dave

The challenge with talking to Enspiralites is they often talk about how they want it to be as if it is [*laughter*], so I'm often hearing from other Enspiralites how amazing things are, and I'm like ah 'is it really like that?' I guess it's how we want it to be (Gerald, Enspiral).

These insights about non-hierarchical social relations and the experience of belonging have explored the possibility of acting from a 'being' that accepts a decentered human subject in the ecology of a dynamic universe. An 'organisation as a rainforest' imagines a diverse ecology of organisation where seemingly small and insignificant elements are necessary to the vitality of the whole (Capra & Luisi 2014). Thinking ecologically about organisational life acknowledges that each perspective is limited and a necessary part of the whole, a move that values the inclusion of diversity. However, a difference between the rainforest and a human organisation is the complexity of social relations and their reproduction of inequality regimes (Acker 2006).

Therefore, while Little Miss Fix-it's repair work can be read as an expression of microfascism (Deleuze & Guattari 1987), it can also be read as a call for the mix of accountability and self-knowledge required to sustain an egalitarian culture (Rowek 2018). The potential for participants to experience their interdependence in organisation as a *knowing* can be traced through the participants' embodied engagement in their becoming-a-non-hierarchical co-leader, thereby setting into motion a culture of mutual respect and care with diversity. This exploration of social relations has also illustrated the ongoing challenges of social control in an organisational context without the external force of hierarchical boundaries and rules.

After extensive research on participatory organisations, Polletta (2021, p. 145) argues that more inclusive, egalitarian, empowering, cooperative social relations *are* possible, and that these qualities can be produced when organisations "engaged in serious reflection about group responsibilities, status-leveling humour, and direct challenge". It is relevant to this discussion about Enspiral's efforts to sustain equality and inclusiveness that Polletta appreciates how demanding this can be. Referring to her case studies, Polletta reflected that: "There was nothing especially easy or natural about the relationships they forged. Their newness made them difficult to practise; it certainly made them difficult to sustain" (Polletta 2021, p. 145). The next section

will explore some of the practices and ways of knowing used to sustain emerging non-hierarchical social relations.

Authentic relations, comfort, and organisational vitality

Relations constituted through non-hierarchical organisational practice were experienced by case study participants as creating deep bonds between group members, generating interpersonal trust as an embodied knowing. Polletta (2021, p. 7) imagines new democratic relationships being characterised by trust and care often associated with friendship, but not limited by the exclusivity and informality of familiar relations. A range of organisational practices and rituals have already been discussed that prioritise affective relationships and enable trust to be developed in the case study organisations. In Chapters Four and Five, the importance of an open organisational field was related to enabling reflexivity and the performance of non-hierarchical governance was seen to build collective trust as participants found their way into becoming self-authorising co-leaders. The contribution of authenticity in social relations and the experience of vital reliance in organisational interactions will be explored to illustrate how the case study organisations are able to weave the relational fabric capable of sustaining non-hierarchical social relations.

The idea of a "vital reliance on others" is explored by Braidotti (2011, p. 288) in the context of developing affirmative ethics. She suggests that the experience of relying on others is life enhancing; it diminishes separations between people and furthers the capacity to collaborate beyond the restriction of hierarchically structured relations. In organisations with psychologically unsafe cultures (May, Gilson, & Harter 2004), the concept of "vital reliance" might be inappropriate; however, in non-hierarchical organisations where participation is based on consent, vital reliance on another can set in motion a strengthening of relationship (Polletta 2012). The idea of authenticity underlies the possibility of honest and direct communication about power and conflict which was shown in Chapter Five to be an important indicator of non-hierarchical organisational health (Rothschild & Leach 2008). Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) argue that authenticity is demonstrated when participants are comfortable to be "true to themselves" in an organisational context and that this is reflected in organisational decision-making that is inclusive of divergent perspectives. In this section, I will follow the interplay between authentic self-

expression and the effect generated by a vital reliance on others and show how co-becoming in a non-hierarchical organisation can generate interpersonal trust to create the conditions supportive of interdependent non-hierarchical social relations.

How the experience of reliance was generated differed in each organisation: the commonality was 'being' and 'doing' that caused participants to risk 'bringing' more of themselves to their social relations. A range of encounters were mentioned by participants, including nonviolent direct action, residential retreats, check-ins, being deeply listened to, bearing witness to another's vulnerability, standing for something that matters and sharing life stories, among other interactions. The emotional intensity (e.g., being seen, known) characteristic of non-hierarchical interactions (Rothschild & Whitt 1986a) can nurture greater interpersonal responsibility, respect and reciprocity in the organisation (Barlo et al. 2021; Gibson-Graham 2014; Kimmerer 2011). It can also be off putting, exhausting and alienating (Polletta 2012; Rothschild & Whitt 1986a). The experience of such vital reliance on another is less familiar in the goal-orientated, competitive, and transactional relationships common to normative ecologies of organisation.

FoEM members valued the depth of interpersonal trust that was developed in the embodied intensity of front-line environmental activism. The solidarity developed through participatory forms of activism is recognised by Polletta (2012, p. 2) when she observes "Giving people a stake in the decision gives them a stake in the success of the action and in the survival of the group". FoEM campaigners recognised that in activism they experienced moments of intense interpersonal responsibility and accountability for other collective members. Lew from FoEM observes that participating in nonviolent direct action "you trust the other members of the campaign with your life, and it cements relationships". In her research on collectivist organisations, Sobering (2021a, p. 33) recognises that the emotional intensity created through public-facing events become interaction rituals that "generate feelings of emotional resonance that create group solidarity" in organisation. Lew attributed the depth of the bond "forged" between FoEM members to years of collective action.

The ritual of residential retreats was valued by participants in Enspiral, SELC and Pachamama Alliance as dynamic process orientated events that strengthened the social fabric of the group

(Chen 2012). Described as 'deep dives' in Enspiral retreats provided participants with a communal space within which they could tell stories, explore tensions and conflicts in a spacious way, play together, cook and eat together, and experiment with new ways of working.[56] The risk involved in these events was of an interpersonal emotional nature. Mike recalls retreats as culturally aligning and healing moments:

> A deeper 'get to know you', actively hearing each other's stories, to understand what makes each of us tick, we made space for the relational work and [have learnt] to identify triggers and facilitate our co-workers (Mike, Enspiral).

In Enspiral and SELC's organisational discourse, it was accepted that engaging with trauma, grief and emotional pain was part of becoming-a-non-hierarchical co-leader. In Enspiral, several participants associated their participation as part of their personal healing journey. Jade commented, "People arrive at Enspiral with a certain degree of [being] broken through a range of traumas", and Dave associates "hard conversations" with his personal growth and enriching social relations: "Conflict and hard conversations become clearer when people are in relationship [at Enspiral] The whole thing is deeply challenging. That's what keeps me here growing". In Pachamama Alliance, Eden found bearing witness to another to be a unifying experience that transcended interpersonal frictions between co-workers: "Deep respect and listening to each other [is a] process that forces us to remember people's dignity". The experience of a vital reliance on others in Pachamama Alliance was enriched by Shamanic journey processes in the rainforest, the annual *All Team* retreats and daily processes such as check-ins. These ritual events were cited as deepening relationships and creating close teams (Houseman et al. 2020).

Because close emotional connection is transitory, actively undertaking emotional labour to nurture social relations can become an ongoing expectation in non-hierarchical organisations (Sobering 2021a). However, engaging in the emotional work of processing one's "triggers" and "reactions" can be depleting, as Isabel from Pachamama Alliance explains: "Each of us must do our own personal work here. It is exhausting: Caught up in clearings, in upsets and resentments. Taking

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[56] Enspiral interviews with Anton, Cali, Jade, Liam, Otto and Tom

care of individuals to take care of the whole". By contrast, Dani appreciated the effect of this personal development as a continual 're-opening' of *All Team,* helping them remain receptive to each other: "We need to challenge our intimacy by being spiritually vulnerable together and remaining open".

These reflections suggest that dynamic relations help generate vitality in social relations help sustain non-hierarchical cultures. On further examination, there appears to be a critical relationship between comfort and the possibility of diverse social relations (Ahmed 2007) in a non-hierarchical organisation. In Chapter Five, for example, I demonstrated how the case study organisations sought new recruits that were a 'good fit' to working in a non-hierarchical culture; however, Rothschild (1979, p. 514) problematised the idea of a 'good fit' as the most subtle and indirect mode of social control. Selection based on homogeneity helps cohere emergent non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation, but it also creates a filter to diversity.

Eli from SELC helped me appreciate how SELC was intuitively navigating between generating a stable and comfortable organisation on one hand and encouraging diversity and embracing the disruption of dissent on the other. Eli was questioning his ongoing relationship with SELC, and one of his concerns was with the positive effect created by 'comfort' in non-hierarchical social relations. Here Eli wryly observes, that while comfort is undemanding, it reduces energy:

> It's very comforting to have supportive co-workers. There's a lot of ways in which we support and offer comfort and the more comfortable we get, the lower you sink into the couch, the harder it is to get out […] and so like the leather couch, where it like, sticks to you and (*long meaningful pause*) (Eli, SELC).

The embodied feeling of "sinking into" suggests that the vitality of a non-hierarchical culture requires the friction of diverse social relations to prevent homogenisation (De Landa 1997). Eli extended the sense that he was no longer comfortable on SELC's metaphoric couch when he described the couch sticking to his legs. Eli's reflection constitutes 'comfort' as an effect of homogeneity, where filtering diversity creates a monoculture that is comfortable (Santos 2007).

The problem with monocultures is that unless artificially sustained, the imbalance produces problems in any ecosystem (e.g., stagnancy and pestilence), ultimately disrupting its integrity and impoverishing the system (Macy 1991). Thus, although uncomfortable at times, sustaining the generativity of diverse relations between group members emerges as a condition of thriving non-hierarchical organisation.

Yet, as participants reported earlier in this chapter, if friction becomes constant in an organisation, the experience may become exhausting and unsustainable. Possibly as an intuitive response to these dynamics, I observed that each of the case study organisations appeared to have a cyclic pattern of expansion (in response to new inputs e.g., people, process change or events) and then settling into a period of comforting familiarity between group members, before the next cycle of growth/disruption. This pattern could be seen mirrored in bigger organisational cycles as participants matured and their needs changed. It was particularly evident in SELC and Enspiral where many participants had joined the organisation in their late twenties or early thirties:

> As we are evolving, we've had to work on a balance between professional and private boundaries. Many of us met in our 20s, now we're forming relationships, having babies and wanting to buy houses. We are now more inclusive of other personalities and other factors. There's a greater level of complexity (Jade, Enspiral).

In this exploration of social relations and belonging, I have shown how the non-hierarchical organisational communities met participants' archetypal yearnings for belonging and the possibility of caring, safe relations that can create a secure oasis in a dynamic and changeable universe/world. However, co-becoming as a non-hierarchical participant meant that change, disruption, and growth is both expected and generally welcomed.

Social order via a culture of respect and kindness

In normative ecologies of organisation, social control is maintained through the direct mechanisms of supervision and rules, requiring a tone of objective neutrality to reinforce the directives of management (Rothschild & Whitt 1986a). The caring, relational orientation of non-hierarchical

ecologies of organisation confront many of the norms governing interpersonal relationships in normative hierarchically structured organisations, where an impersonal formality (e.g., professional, unbiased and neutral) characterises the ideal relational style in which there is "no room for emotions" (Rothschild 2016, p. 24). Organisational stories shared in this chapter demonstrate the freedom experienced by self-authorising participants and the lack of direct controls (Jorgensen 2018). This section will examine how a cultural engagement characterised by kindness and respect has evolved in SELC as a 'replacement' for the directed forms of social control familiar in hierarchical systems.

Rothschild and Leach (2008) reflect that the way conflict is handled reveals the strength of non-hierarchical social relations. From an organisational perspective, being able to deal openly, fairly and objectively with conflict is vital to an institution's ongoing sustainability and, as relationally-centred organisations, many participants told me that "trust and trusting is foundational".[57] The possibility that SELC's professional demeanour and interpersonal style characterised by polite kindness and deference might be an expression of their non-hierarchical relational norms was explored in SELC's Reflective Group Conversation (RGC). Through participant reflections, we deconstructed the elements of SELC's distinctive interpersonal style to appreciate how SELC, as a collective, manage their organisation professionally (e.g., in a consistent and fair manner) while maintaining strong relational ties between members. This conversation revealed the influence of "white middle class" culture and values and illustrated some of the barriers to authentic engagements with diversity and inclusivity in SELC.

In the interviews, participants had articulated the distinctive qualities generated through SELC's collective engagement. Some of the most persistently described characteristics of SELC's collective field were "kindness", "care", "thoughtfulness", "respect", being "reflective" and "intentional" (see Appendix 3 for a summary of the words used by participants to characterise the quality of group engagement).[58] Quinn distinguished SELC's interactions as being infused with a consent-based attitude of "deference and humility" which she discerned helped generate a less

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[57] SELC interview with Ian

[58] The list in Appendix 3 is more extensive than that in Figure 35 which was compiled before I had completed all the interviews and was based on my handwritten notes rather than the full transcripts.

emotionally charged organisational field. Quinn illustrated the way emotional spaciousness was nurtured in SELC's social relations with an example of a typical scenario of how SELC co-leaders communicate with each other: "These are my thoughts, and I'm open to suggestions". An approach that connected with Hailey's observation that her co-leaders were at times "really choosing their words carefully" to avoid being judgemental. Other participants attributed the "spaciousness and openness" created in SELC's interpersonal relations as an effect of their "nuanced relational skills", where the group strove to make "no assumptions" and resist "interpretation", [59] as another aspect of reflexivity.

In the RGC, participants valued how SELC had intuitively evolved their distinctive behavioural code and non-violent style of communication, whereby direct communication was possible without being received in a way that was personal (e.g., judgemental and blaming). Reflecting on the capacity of collectively governed organisations to increase diversity, Chen (2016) observes participants engage in a praxis between the values of radical inclusivity and giving feedback in a manner respectful of both the collective values and that of the individual. Polletta (2021) has contributed to articulating the relational nuances that engender the distinct style of intimacy that can be created in participatory cultures:

> If group members became something like intimates with each other, it was not because they exposed their personal drives and demons, but rather because they helped each other to engage in critical self-reflection about their group's purposes and how they should pursue them (2021, p. 150).

Polletta (2012) has sought to distinguish non-hierarchical cultures from the limiting frame of friendship based social relations because their implicit informality can create a barrier to the formality needed to engage in conversations about power, responsibility and accountability.

Several participants identified a quality of emotional reserve in SELC's interpersonal communication. This quality was attributed to SELC having "a culture of white, middle-class

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[59] SELC interviews with Dario, Ian, Kami

(WMC) professionals".[60] Reserve was also described as being "conflict avoidant" and "hesitant". In the interviews, many participants shared their concern for creating a culture of kindness and mutual care, and this meant that many reported endeavouring to prevent hurting or diminishing others through processes, such as the bi-annual peer review and self-evaluation performance review conversation or more generally when giving peer to peer feedback (Sustainable Economies Law Center 2016). For some, the quality of emotional reserve made SELC's collective engagement feel at times "stifling" and "veiled". A few participants identified an unconscious relational pattern of "avoiding 'sticky' areas" and "skirting around" difficult issues.[61]
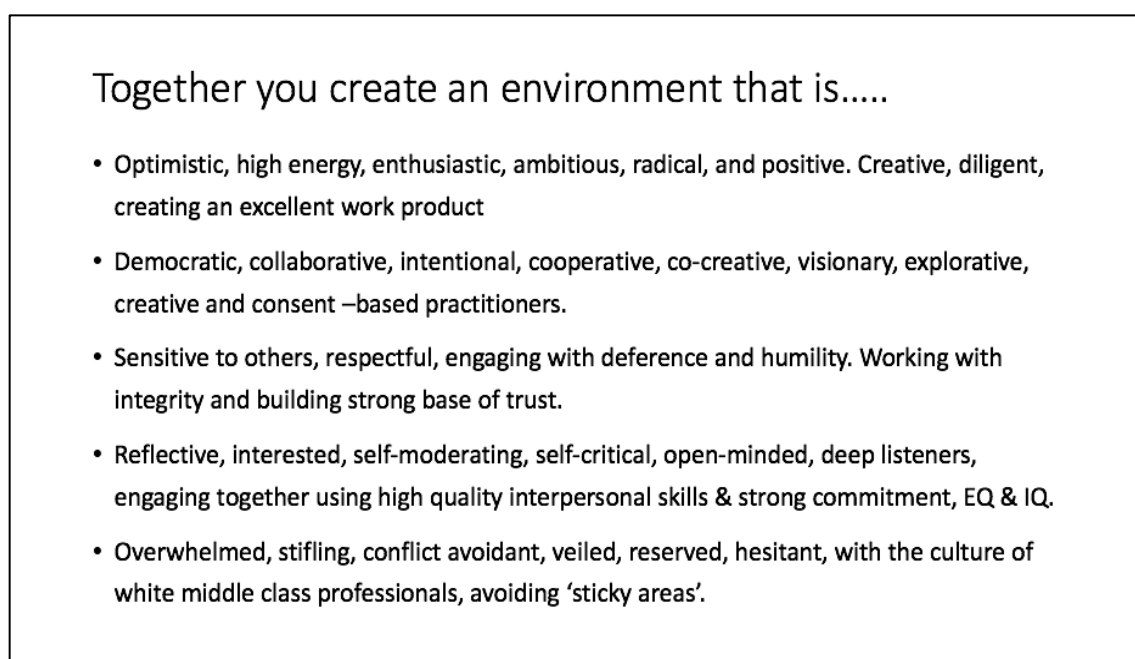
Figure 35: Summary of participant words that characterise SELC's engagement as a group (Collated for RGC 2017)

When I shared a summary of words chosen by participants to characterise SELC's collective engagement (shown in Figure 35) in the RGC, the description of SELC as "conflict avoidant" and "stifling" triggered a deeper collective discussion about the 'edges' of SELC's culture as some members were surprised to the point of being uncomfortable at the comment. To explore this

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[60] SELC interviews with Nick, Eli, Paige and Carmen
[61] SELC interviews with Abbie, Paige, Eli, Carmen and Nick

further I have found Rothschild and Leach's (2008) theoretical continuum helpful. Three ideal-types of organisational culture are proposed to explain the diversity of engagement with conflict in participatory organisations. Fight cultures directly 'call out' perceived imbalances of power and "avoidance cultures" have a low tolerance for conflict dynamics. In a non-hierarchical environment, when conflict is avoided and direct confrontation shunned, concentrations of informal power are enabled. Between cultures of avoidance and conflict, Rothschild and Leach (2008) identify the ideal middle ground of a "culture of candour" that meets conflict without charge and combustion. Although candour is evident from time to time, Rothschild and Leech's (2008) discerned it was an aspirational approach to conflict in collectivist cultures.

While individuals communicated their sense of SELC's avoidant style of engagement as reserve and hesitation, my private conversations did not reveal the tension of informal power hierarchies or instances of domineering behaviour in SELC. In fact, I have demonstrated how SELC enacts many of the attributes of a culture of candour through the caring and inclusive modes of being together. The Reflective Group Conversation (RGC) helped distinguish SELC's more subtle and unconscious practices that control a diversity of expression in the organisation. An edge of SELC's culture that became clearer in the RGC was the presence of voices seeking to engage more directly with "the negative stuff". One participant, for example, did not name what the negative stuff was, but she sketches areas where there has been evidence of a failure of relationship. Further, implicit is a lack of commitment or capacity in SELC to investigate because "we don't know how to do it":

> We probably don't tend to talk about the negative stuff [*group laughter*]. But also, because everyone who has stayed obviously has been comfortable enough to stay. The process of the last two people leaving has been something that we haven't really been able to process, probably because we don't really know how to do it, and we haven't been able to get the feedback from people who decided to leave and why [SELC] was hard for them (SELC, RGC).

A distinction is made between those who are "comfortable" as the ones that stay - and those who leave because they found SELC a "hard" place to work, alluding to the homogeneity of SELC's

organisational field. In the interviews, a number of participants had raised concerns that explained this veiled comment more explicitly. There was recognition that in "sweeping under the rug things that happen" and "not addressing race head-on when it impacts SELC's work" had reduced openness and "stifled generative relationships".[62] Others reported feeling personally uncomfortable in SELC's culture; they described a mix of SELC being too quiet, overly polite, and relentlessly productive, all of which indicates a "lack of plurality of being" in SELC's culture.

As a result, some participants reported that they were "filtering" and "maybe not being themselves as they would be"; in other words, they did not feel comfortable to be authentic. The reasons given for being uncomfortable were varied, from: "it feels less accepted to have meaningless chat" and "the people here are very quiet. Loudness jars". Members with an intersectional experience of gender, race, class and/or cultural inequality, described feeling "a lot of pressure on yourself to act in a certain way in a professional setting" towards being quiet, polite and productive. With these different expressions of "not being themselves", the overall reflection that "It's hard to change the culture of an organisation to allow for plurality of being without including the diversity of people" rang true.[63]

The contribution these participants have made is to disrupt the background assumed by the white middle class (WMC) professional culture which, as Ahmed (2007, p. 150) astutely delineates, has a profound impact on culture by shaping and "orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up' space". By bringing an awareness to the influence of cultural style in social exchanges and the tone of conversation, Paige, Eli, Blanca and Abbie's insights question the ways SELC's cultural norms make it "hard" for a diversity of being to exist in SELC's institutionally white, middle-class field. These voices bring attention to the subtle ways difference is filtered and a particular way of being reproduced. Thus, social control is maintained by limiting the presence and expression of other not-quiet/kind/polite/thoughtful ways of being-a non-hierarchical co-leader in SELC (Ahmed 2007). On reflection, qualities which have been reinforced and are evident via SELC's recruitment criteria (see Chapter Five and Appendix 4).

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[62] SELC interview with Blanca and Eli
[63] SELC interviews with Paige, Eli and Abbie

The invisibility of the influence of WMC in SELC's culture was beautifully revealed in this self-reflection that was shared in the RGC discussion. This participant shares her realisation that *if* some people feel "stifled" in SELC, they may also be struggling to "live within" SELC:

> I was really surprised at the word 'stifling' and I was surprised at the culture of white middle class and then I realised well that's because I <u>am</u> a white middle class professional [*pause - group laughter*], sooo I wouldn't necessarily know what that means, but I am fascinated to hear if there are people inside the organisation that feel like they are not part of that culture, that, that is a foreign culture that they are dealing with [*mmm from others*] and trying to live within the organisation (SELC, RGC).

The invitation to hear from those who felt that SELC was "foreign" was not taken up, maybe because their experience of difference was more complicated and painful than could be usefully communicated in our forum. Ahmed advises that racial inequality cannot be fixed, but rather engaged with "as an ongoing and unfinished history that we have yet to describe fully" (2007, p. 165). While well meaning, a self-identified WMC person being "fascinated" to hear from the others who feel "stifled" reveals a gap of sensitivity and the potential of this exploration within SELC. Following the thread of the conversation, another participant, also self-identified as WMC, sought to reappraise and even reclaim SELC's relationship with WMC qualities of culture. His insight was the possibility that behaviours associated with the stereotype of WMC might be reflective of a new, distinctly SELC style of being-non-hierarchical:

> For me there is stuff like kindness, a little bit of emphasis on etiquette and a little bit of boundary keeping - I'm not going to go so close and be so familial or loose that I feel like I might invade someone's space or trigger something. But I wonder if by naming that descriptive thing as white middle class professionals, we are not allowing a new thing to emerge because we are seeing certain similarities it has with an old thing, and not renaming that and seeing that maybe there is something good at a certain level of boundary (SELC, RGC).

SELC's culture was uncomfortable for some people because of the absence of qualities, for example, loudness, roughness, frivolous chat, reminiscent of FoEM participants relaxing by "talk

about bullshit" (discussed in Chapter Five). Common to many environmental groups, the majority of participants at FoEM are university educated white middle class. One participant shared "feeling like an outsider" because of the dominance of whiteness at FoEM.[64] Another reflected on feedback from her self-identified working-class friend who experienced FoEM as inaccessible because it was such "an upper middle-class culture".[65] As Ahmed (2007, p. 159) explains, "If whiteness allows bodies to move with comfort through space and to inhabit the world as if it were home, then those bodies take up more space". The idea of "allowing a new thing" to emerge from the carcass of WMC professional values would require the ongoing commitment to collective engagement with the effects of systemic oppression. At the time of my visit, SELC were engaged in an intense self-inquiry with the goal to "Discuss our ideas around power and empowerment in the organisation and how that shapes direction" (Houseman diary entry 2017).

The participants who had found SELC's culture "hard" because of the predominance of qualities such as being quiet, kind and polite, among other things, recognised that these ways of being were embedded in SELC's norms of interaction. Albeit "unintentionally", WMC values connected to class and racial identities infuse the expectations of individual capacities, organisational aspirations, work techniques and habits in SELC.[66] For some participants, it appears that belonging in SELC meant living with their discomfort and possibly beginning to articulate something of the personal and collective effect of this exclusion. Acknowledging that inherited class and racial identities are aspects of relations that could not yet be shifted in SELC, I will return to considering what a culture of respect, kindness and diligence might make possible in the collective.

SELC's approach has through informality allowed for intimacy and through an attitude of politeness and kindness created more distance around social relations to allow for the formality of contractual relations. These co-existing relational dynamics have set in motion a culture capable of critically reflecting on collective process and outcomes. This was acknowledged by an external board member, who appreciated SELC's culture as "diligent" in the production of "creative and

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[64] FoEM interview (pseudonym withheld to protect identity)
[65] FoEM interview with Danae
[66] SELC interview with Eli

excellent work".[67] A participant in the RGC sought to distinguish the contribution of kindness to SELC's formal governance processes and, in so doing, he clarified the difference between informal as loose or casual (i.e. disordered, wild and unsystematic), and informal (i.e., comfortable and open), in SELC's expression of non-hierarchical governance:

> Kindness, as like a replacement for formality in our organisation. Because we are going off-road, if you will, in terms of the structure and governance and all of this, so to make sure it doesn't just run wild, there's so much process that we introduce to manage our new way of doing things. I think when we pull from the mainstream, that comfort that comes from it also allows for more informality. I think critical feedback and the way that that can be given, if we need to create a structure or a process and formality around how to do that, that seems like a higher barrier than being more informal about it. It seems like the benefit of having that comfort and informality is to allow for more direct engagement, if that makes sense? (SELC RGC).

Here, the comfort created by an informal culture is seen to facilitate exploration (i.e., new way of doing things), as well as creating the space for communication between people that is both kind and direct. The integration of kindness and respect in SELC's professional communication style enables the organisation to meet requirements that are formal and contractual, (e.g., employment contracts, agreements, responsibilities and accountabilities) and facilitates strong social bonds between participants.

The final section of this chapter explores working in the form of the circle as a structural arrangement that supports the performance of non-hierarchical social relations. Thinking about form is useful, as Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012, p.128) indicated when they ask *which* organisational structures might enhance reflexive cultures? In response to their question, and to understand what the practice of non-hierarchical governance makes possible, I will examine the relationship between form and social control.

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[67] SELC interview with Gabby

Transposing social control via Circle form and a culture of respect

Working in a circle is a distinctive design feature of the case study organisations. I will explore what is set in motion by working in the form of the circle to discern the contribution of form to social control in non-hierarchically structured organisations. I will demonstrate how the geometric shape of the circle contributes to the social cohesion of these organisations by simultaneously addressing the symbolic, metaphoric, archetypal and practice effects of configuring meetings in the form of the circle.

In Organisation and Management Theory (OMT), references to form and structure are most often used interchangeably to explore how structural design can strengthen organisational function (i.e., decision-making flow, metrics and incentives, roles and division of labour) (see Ansell & Torfing 2016; Egeberg, Gornitzka, & Trondal 2016; Gellerman 1990; Maduenyi et al. 2015). Selection of organisational form is theorised as 'shaping' organisational relations with authority and power (Pugh 1973). The intention of the triangular form of hierarchical structured organisations is that structure enhances the positional control of the leadership group at the apex of the triangle (Diefenbach 2013). However, as demonstrated through this thesis, the ubiquity of the hierarchical structure exemplifies Bateson's (1972, p. 506) "trusted idea", whereby the absence of "thoughtful inspection" obscures the limits of the model.

Non-hierarchical, decentralised organisations are often distinguished from hierarchical norms by being referred to as 'flat' (Bunning 2016; Kumar & Mukherjee 2018). Critical management theorist Martin Parker (2012) problematises the description of a flat structure because a focus on either horizontal or vertical planes reduces the three dimensional vitality of *all* organisational social relations. This observation is reflected in my findings, where only one of approximately 60 participant-generated drawings illustrated their governance as a horizontal line (shown in Figure 36). Explaining his view of FoEM's governance Ed, an external board member said "FoEM is a very flat structure: nobody is boss. It works really well in terms of equity". Mostly, participant drawings rendered non-hierarchical governance to show it as multi-dimensional, organically shaped, in movement and interconnected.
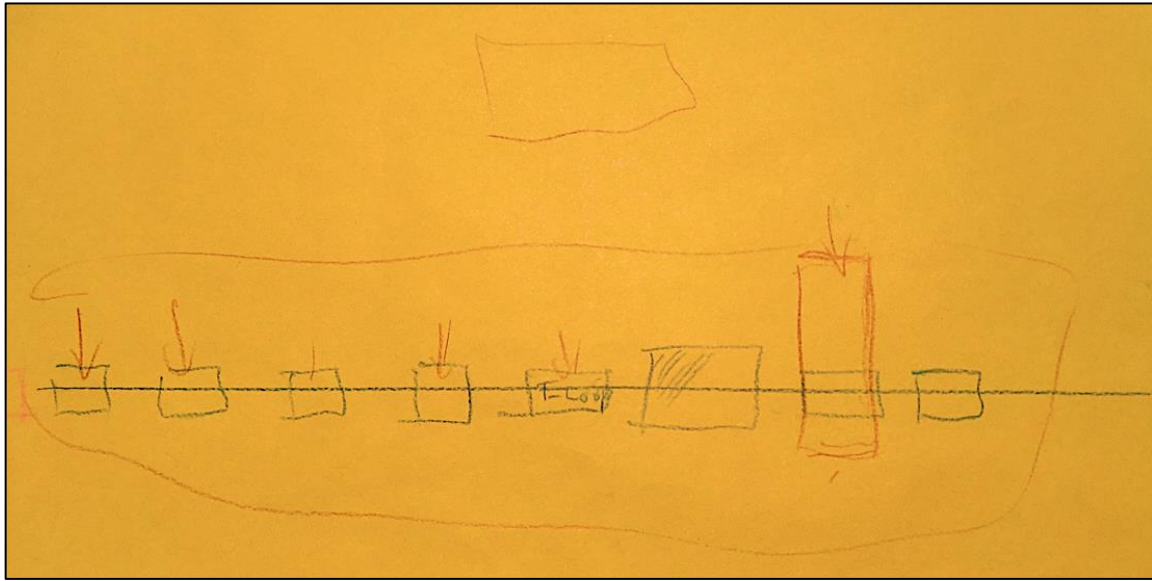
Figure 36: It's a very flat structure: nobody is boss. It works really well in terms of equity (Ed, FoEM).

I begin by thinking what kind of shapes help to understand organisational structures with reference to Bonaventura de Souza Santos (2004) who describes organisations as mesh, Manuel De Landa (1997) who contrasts between hard centres and 'meshwork', and then Deleuze and Guattari (1987) who contrasts vertical structures with horizontal 'rhizomes'. On an inter-organisational scale, Santos (2004) observes that emergent behaviour is generated by a flow of engagement between the states of control and openness (sometimes described as anarchy), and that this oscillating pattern can be discerned in the movement between hierarchical and distributed forms of organisation, which Santos imagines as having a mesh-like structure, now familiar in network models of organisation (Galaz et al. 2012).

De Landa (1997) reflects upon the ways the architecture of a city influences the behavioural patterns of people. Hierarchically planned cities designed around a "central place" system and "pyramids of urban centres" are characterised by "hardness" and "homogenisation"; qualities which optimise rationality and efficiency and reduce flexibility. Whereas in market towns, a "meshwork-like" assemblage or network system is created "where a heterogeneous group of people come together spontaneously; they tend to organize themselves into an interlocking urban pattern that interconnects them without homogenizing them" (De Landa 1997, pp. 30–31). De

Landa's insights suggest that ideally the self-organising units in a non-hierarchical organisation (e.g., Circles, Collectives, Teams), have the ability to connect without compromising diversity.

To distinguish the vertical habits of (hierarchical) arborescent assemblages, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) play with the metaphor of the horizontally growing rhizome (decentered and non-hierarchical). The horizontally growing rhizome has been attributed with qualities of resilience and adaptability, surviving within different and seemingly unrelated and diverse ecosystems and embodying the possibility of flourishing without either a central root system or an obvious generational point (Bolt 2018). FoEM, like other political/environmental activists, underground resistance movements and grassroots environmental organisations, has taken inspiration from the rhizome to theorise the benefits of horizontal methods of organising. The tree and rhizome metaphors highlight the enabling and constraining relational dynamics produced by each form and challenges the binary construction of ontologies based on control and a predictable linear order that exclude the efficacy of horizontal moving organisational relationships (Woods et al. 2013).

Each of these conceptualisations illustrate how organisational practice might be affected by form, potentially enhancing or restricting behaviour. As a metaphor, working in the form of the circle offers another contrast to the hierarchical structured organisation where the triangular design keeps attention focused on the leader.

The archetype of the circle: Yearning for wholeness and inclusion

In this investigation of the circle and social cohesion in the case study organisations I will explore the circle variously as a symbol/metaphor for organisation structure, as a practice, a symbolic space or process, and as an archetype. At times 'circle' will be simultaneously referring to the interaction between the symbolic and practice implications of the form. I draw on an interdisciplinary selection of theorists to provide insight about the qualities of the structure of the circle and its contribution to the non-hierarchical decision-making and the values of equality, inclusion and respect. The circle is an ancient meeting architecture with embedded symbolic and archetypal meaning. In an organisational context, the practice of 'working in circle' is supported by a growing evidence base, confirming that the process of working in circle integrates a symbolic process into an empirical domain by describing the configuration of the circle as generating the capacity in the

group to 'hold' strong emotions and engage with complex issues in organisation (Mattaini & Holtschneider 2017).

Participants in the case study organisations demonstrated an intuitive respect for the circle as a meeting architecture, recognising that working in the circle configuration increased participants' voice and supported the collective co-becoming as a non-hierarchical community. Mike explained that in Enspiral "We work to make power transparent via circle and dialogue". Evoking the power of the circle as process, Carmen discerns that although systemic social inequalities, such as class, gender and racial exist in SELC, there is the capacity *within the Circle* to open difficult conversations about interrelated inequalities:

> We still have gender, we still have class, we still have race, we still have all those things. But at least we're starting from a place that's at least a little more thoughtful. I think we still have to call them out explicitly. The circle structure is a method to call them out. The expectation that people are going to care […] when I call it out it's not going to be met with 'there's something wrong with you' (Carmen, SELC).[68]

An effect of the bias towards the hierarchical metaphor and designing the information flow of organisations as hierarchies (i.e., top-down organisation charts) is a paucity of empirical research. Only recently has the potential of the circle as a practical organisational structure been documented in Organisation and Management Theory (OMT), see for example (Ball, Caldwell, & Pranis 2013; Hamlin & Darling 2012; Wilbur et al. 2001). However, First Nations peoples have long practised working in circle (Hughes & Barlo 2021) and, as Martha Brown and Sherri Di Lallo (2020) observe, the depth of Indigenous knowledge embedded in circle practice must always be acknowledged by non-Indigenous practitioners. Yarning in circle, for example, is a highly structured protocol used by Australian Aboriginal Elders (Barlo et al. 2020) Bronwyn Carlson and Ryan Frazer (2018, p. 46) explain how Yarning is arranged using the physical form of the circle:

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[68] 'The circle structure' is a reference to the circular process of consent-based decision-making discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Participants sit facing one another, with no one speaker occupying a privileged position of power. There are no universal models for how the circle might be ordered; power is instead negotiated depending on the purpose of the circle.[69]

Articulating the principles that guide Yarning when practised in non-Indigenous communities, Barlo and colleagues (2020, p. 93) explain that *reciprocity* honours the process, and an attitude of *responsibility* maintains *relationship*, honouring and respecting the *dignity* and *equality* of all participants. Being respectful and trustworthy protects the *integrity* of the yarning space and ensures the *self-determination* of each and all participants. All of which are strongly aligned with the principles of non-hierarchy discussed through this thesis.

Many First Nations peoples in Canada and the United States use 'Talking Circles' as a community process for dialogue and restorative justice. Working in a circle may be described variously as 'Peacemaking Circles', 'Healing Circles' and 'Sharing Circles' (Buchanan 2020; Pranis 2015; Pranis, Stuart, & Wedge 2013). In Aotearoa-New Zealand, the "engaging-with" of restorative justice practice is seen as compatible with Maori relationally centred values such as reciprocity, respect and inclusivity (Drewery 2016, p. 194). Brown and Di Lallo (2020, p. 369) recognise Talking Circles as "safe spaces where relationships are built, nurtured, reinforced, and sometimes healed; where norms and values are established; where people connect intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally with other members of the circle". Their observation is that working in circle "increases voices" and "decreases invisibility", both of which support inclusiveness and equality in the group. Through the discussion of consent and consensus-based decision-making, I demonstrated the potency of working in a form congruent with values of inclusion and equality, common to emerging organisational ecologies.

Less visible, but arguably as influential, are the archetypal aspects of the circle form which demonstrably contribute to their inherent capacity to focus and contain the force of a group. Jungian theorists and cultural philosophers have researched aspects of the circle, including its symbolic, archetypal and mythological influence in human culture (Cooper 1978; Harms 2011;

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[69] The values that guide Talking Circle processes include love, respect, inclusivity, generosity, courage, trust, sharing, empathy, humility, and honesty (Pranis 2015).

Jung 1964; Nichols 1980). The circle is a shape and symbol with ancient and sacred lineage (Cooper 1978). Jungian cultural research identifies the circle as a shape that brings a resonant archetypal power into its centre. The strength and wholeness of the circle is recognised in sacred geometry as a shape that is a manifestation of One (Harms 2011).[70] From a Jungian psychological perspective the power of the circle is explained by von Franz (1964) as a shape that expresses "the totality of the psyche in all its aspects [….] it always points to the single most vital aspect of life – its ultimate wholeness" (1964, pp. 266–267). As an ancient practice, working in circle is associated with generating collective power through ceremony, ritual and magic. It is a shape that has offered humans the potential for safety, for spiritual unity and harmony (Nichols 1980). Circle practitioners and cultural theorists see the emergence of the circle in story, myth and symbol across cultures as a confirmation of its energetic and symbolic vitality (Gebser 1986). The circle is known as a sacred form, resonant with organic shapes and life's cyclic patterns; it reflects the wholeness in living forms (Cooper 1978; Jung 1973).

Contemporary non-hierarchical organisational practitioners approach the practice working in Circle as the basis for collective processes (Baeck 2015; Baldwin & Linnea 2010; Brown 2005; Macy & Brown 2014; Slade 2018). Indeed, after over twenty five years of organisational group work, Christina Baldwin and Ann Linnea (2010) have noticed more groups adopting the circular form. This is evident for example in the kinds of collaborative conversations undertaken to support transformative change through collaborative conversation, where repeatedly "people are surprised by their own capacity to access insights and come to decisions no one had imagined when their meeting started" (Baldwin & Linnea 2010, p. 8). A pattern also seen in SELC and FoEM, where in Chapter Four, undertaking consent-based practice in a circle configuration was felt to create a flexible container (i.e., with clear boundaries) for non-hierarchical governance.

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[70] The mathematical ratio of the circle is Pi π, one of the five transcendent numbers that leads to infinity (3.1415926….).
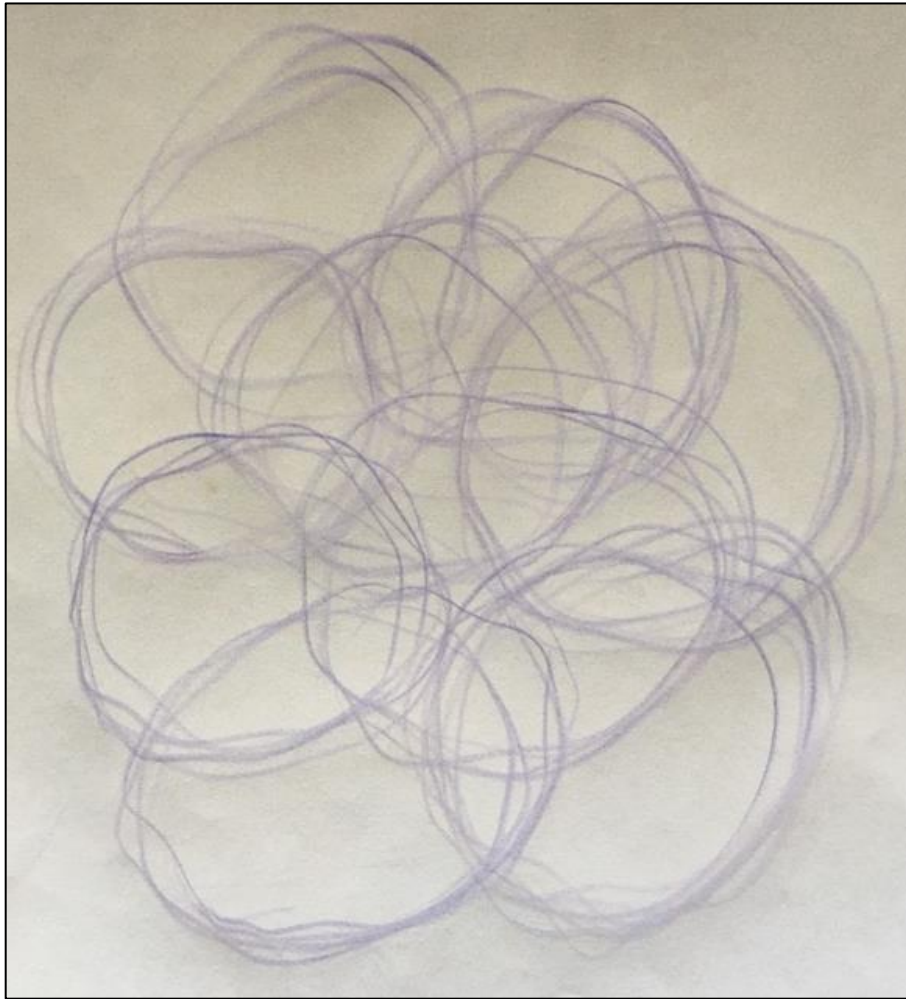
Figure 37: Rounded, interlocked, no sharp edges, things are fluid, round. There is lots of overlapping complexity (Cam, Pachamama Alliance).

Participant-generated drawings demonstrated the energetic importance of the circle in governance, and they also acknowledged the focal point in the circle's centre: "We're all here in the circle" was a frequent metaphor for non-hierarchical governance.[71] The circle is imagined as a conduit for the movement of communication and information in governance, as shown in Figure 37, where Pachamama Alliance's governance is illustrated as a series of overlapping circles. The artist felt that the circular form enabled the group to expand their awareness into the complexity of the whole organisation. This narration emerged through long pauses as Cam drew:

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[71] SELC interview with Blanca

Rounded, interlocked, that's kind of what's coming up - no sharp edges, things are fluid, round. There is lots of overlapping complexity. Parts unique, [*pause*] not common, [*pause*] lots of commonality. The core is denser. [*pause*] In two dimensions this is what it looks like. In three-dimensions there are more interrelating circles, so information flows easily around the core issues that everybody is working on (Cam, Pachamama Alliance).

The process-based experience of collective power, combined with a symbolic, even spiritual experience of wholeness and interpersonal connection was created for Cam by working in, and with the archetypal circle. When prompted to illustrate FoEM's governance, Hal evokes the "magic" (Brown & Di Lallo 2020) he experiences in FoEM's circle practice, which he describes as "A range of people in a spiral motion with the shared point of focus. Superhero energy combining the sword and the flower - love". The symbolic power of being together in a circle was perceived by Hal and others,[72] as an empowering force, enabling the group to draw upon an archetypal "superhero energy". Hal recognises the bond of love being generated by the process of working in circle, symbolically connecting FoEM participants and focusing them to transcend "tradition" for "something better". These qualities of the circle as process and structure can transform the emotional tone and aesthetics of decision-making, as the archetypal qualities of wholeness enable the circle configuration to hold the magic of collective intimacy (e.g., feelings of love and gratitude) and absorb tension when breakdown, shields and triggers emerge in a group (Baldwin & Linnea 2010, p. 116).

The capacity of circle work to generate a safe space, open hearts and connect people has been observed by many practitioners using circle in group contexts (see Baldwin & Linnea 2010; Brown & Di Lallo 2020; Pranis 2015). Sometimes as Paul from Enspiral alludes (below), metaphoric 'shields' can be required as 'protection' from the intensity of the collective "birthing" that other participants recognised could occur in their governance circles.[73] With reference to the *10 Discs* Tarot card (Noble and Vogel 1981), Paul explained the essence of Enspiral's governance as "It always comes back to people sitting in circle. The intention is on the shield, both shielding and

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[72] FoEM interviews with Ha, Bill and Olivia
[73] Enspiral interview with Jade and Connie FoEM

displaying" (shown in Figure 38). The empirical research undertaken by educator Sue Roffey (2013, p. 46) indicates that "circles have limited impact if the relational values are not embedded within everyday interaction". Roffey's finding reinforces the importance of protocols developed by First Nations Elders to provide organisational practitioners with the principles to underpinning the relational integrity of circle based work (Barlo et al. 2021, 2020).

Figure 38: It always comes back to people sitting in circle. The intention is on the shield, both shielding and displaying (Paul, Enspiral). Image: 10 Discs (Noble and Vogel 1981).

For many case study participants, the circle was offered as an apt metaphor for non-hierarchical governance. Participant examples showed working in circle helps focus the conversation away from individuals towards the centre while also increasing the visibility and audibility of each participant. Configuring governance processes in a circle formation symbolically contained the group setting in motion more inclusive cultures where diverse opinions and ways of being are held and respected.

Conclusion

Relationality constituted through non-hierarchical practice was shown to nurture deep bonds between group members, generating interpersonal trust as an embodied knowing. Thus, relationally focused cultures set in motion thriving, functioning organisations without imposing rule-based systems of disciplinary order. The imaginary of organisation as sanctuary is a compelling possibility, where an organisational community provides a nucleus of safety and trust from which to navigate the social and environmental challenges of work in the Anthropocene epoch. When an organisation is engaged with as a living system, the movement of ideas and people within, between and around the organisation produces a nutritious harvest and plenty of 'compost' for the next cycle of growth.

Practice of working in circle configuration is an integral structural and symbolic element of the non-hierarchical organisational assemblage, whereby the archetypal strength of the circle enables and contains the group. The reliance on trusting, authentic relations between group members is one of the conditions of non-hierarchical vitality. Yet, deeply ingrained inherited class and racial identities are not easily altered. The difference between the ideal of equal inclusive relations and reality indicates that tensions and contradictions are an inevitable and accepted part of the shift towards non-hierarchical organisation.

Chapter Seven - Social Stratification and Differentiation: Recognising Difference and Renewing Governance

This chapter will examine how the case study organisations attend to the formation of social hierarchies by striving to address obstacles to inclusive and diverse social relations. Framed by the possibility that non-hierarchical governance contributes to renewing organisational imaginaries in the Anthropocene, this chapter foregrounds an ecological understanding that all life is connected and "all flourishing is mutual" to understand what a non-hierarchical renewal might look like (Kimmerer 2011, p. 258). The cultural conditions that nurture a non-hierarchical organisation will be explored through two mutually reinforcing movements; whereby in a non-hierarchical organisation direct examination of the 'dis-ease' produced by power relations creates the opportunity for participants to renew their connection with human/non-human worlds.

Firstly, I investigate how Enspiral, SELC and FoEM engage with relations of power, conflict, and the emergence of hierarchies in non-hierarchical organisations. The later work of Foucault (Fornet-Betancourt et al. 1987; Foucault 1983, 1982) will be drawn upon to examine how Enspiral and FoEM participants conceptualise relations of power. I will examine how Enspiral transposes leadership from being embodied in an individual to becoming an invitational act. Then, participants' experience of the more insidious layer of intersectional social inequalities will be examined through Enspiral's dialogue about emotional labour (Hochschild 2012). Finally, I will consider the affect created by the archetypal presence of the founder in Pachamama Alliance, Enspiral and SELC, with reference to participant-generated drawings, interviews, and SELC's Reflective Group Conversation.

Secondly, I move from deconstruction to renewal of governance in a more speculative reading of findings generated in this research, to explore the restorative effects of striving to manifest non-hierarchical principles of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in an organisation. I will review the cultural contribution made by dialogic and emergent group work methodologies (i.e., tools and processes) to daily practice that nourishes participants and provides a new language for social relations. The concept of renewal is shown to be problematic if the differentiation underpinning

unequal relationships remains unspoken. Reconnecting through relationship is illustrated through the experience of pleasure in FoEM, Enspiral and Pachamama Alliance. Both movements contribute to the momentum of becoming-a-non-hierarchical co-leader.

Investigating power relations: Barriers and openings in non-hierarchical practice

Critical scholars in Organisation and Management Theory (OMT) engage with power as a complex and slippery concept with multiple presentations in organisational settings (Alvesson & Spicer 2012; Fleming & Spicer 2014; Gaventa & Cornwall 2008; Jorgensen 2017). This thesis explores how non-hierarchical relations can transform how power is conceptualised as direct engagement with the effects of power is integrated into the scope of governance activity. In normative ecologies of organisation, the experience of leadership, power and hierarchy are closely interwoven, whereas in non-hierarchical environments leadership and power are unmoored from the certainty of hierarchically ordered relations. The practice of non-hierarchical governance provides scholars with more experimental ethnographic contexts to examine how social relations reproduce systemic inequalities in industrial-capitalist society (Borkman 2006; Meyers & Vallas 2016; Rothschild & Leach 2008; Sobering 2019a). I begin by exploring evolving discourses about power and conflict in non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation.

To understand how relations of power are experienced and known by participants in non-hierarchical organisations I apply Foucault's (Fornet-Betancourt et al. 1987) claim that power is *always* present in economic and institutional relations. Engaging with power relations surfaced as a complex area of non-hierarchical organisational governance: Participants in SELC, FoEM and Enspiral revealed a nuanced understanding of power relations that become possible in the absence of formally structured hierarchical relations. As here, for example, Nadia differentiates her experience of 'leading' in Enspiral's non-hierarchical community. She discerns that in a hierarchical system, the 'right to rule' (i.e., power-over) confers a mix of status, authority and power that protects leaders, whereas in Enspiral the act of leading as power-with can expose an individual to critical feedback usually prohibited in a hierarchy:

Positions of power and leadership are aligned in a hierarchy, then taking acts of leadership comes with a certain amount of protection because of your role or your station. If you are operating in a non-hierarchy leadership, it is a very vulnerable act: you don't necessarily have any power backing you exactly.[74]

To prevent social hierarchies forming, SELC, FoEM and Enspiral proactively employ policy and structure to amplify the inclusion of many diverse voices. Rothschild (Rothschild-Whitt 1979) distinguished the dimension of social stratification in the collectivist-democratic typology by the intention to reduce differentials between participants and resist categories of individuals and/or groups with greater social prestige and material privileges forming. In this thesis, some viable governance practices employed to prevent hierarchies forming (e.g., role rotation, consensus and consent-based decision-making, working in circle etc) have been discussed (see Borkman 2006; Leach 2016; Sobering 2019a). Pay inequality has been clearly linked with social stratification (Avent-Holt & Tomaskovic-Devey 2019) and the reproduction of intersectional social inequalities in hierarchically structured organisations (Kelley & Evans 1993; Meyers & Vallas 2016; Oseen 2016). Thus, the equal pay policies in FoEM and SELC (discussed in Chapter Five) offer an effective strategy to inhibit hierarchies of privilege forming. However, participants in FoEM, Enspiral and SELC were clear that the combination of structure and policy was supported by a collective praxis whereby participants develop the capacity to address power relations openly and respectfully.

Conflict as a failure of relationship

The case study organisations illustrate how the absence of a hierarchical leadership structure creates new possibilities for approaching conflict. In normative ecologies of organisation, conflict can reflect poorly on a leader's authority, the systems of supervision and the principle of rule-based order. When conflict is perceived as a failure to control, the object creating conflict and the disciplinary mechanisms related to that object are understood as 'the problem'. This orientation often results in new rules or stronger penalties to regain control and authority, an expression of a mechanistic logic, where the focus concentrates on fixing or removing poorly functioning objects

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[74] Enspiral interview with Nadia, February 2018

(Draman 2016). In relationally centred non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation, conflict is viewed as a lack of relationship: "When trust is missing it shows up in our working together".[75] Reorienting the approach to conflict from asserting hierarchical control to attending to relationships changes the focus of all organisational engagements. An examination of Enspiral's approach to conflict demonstrates what becomes possible when interpersonal dynamics are prioritised.

Enspiral's dominant discourse aligned conflict with relationship rather than as a contest of power. As a reflection of their interconnected ecological thinking, Enspiral members connect the 'breakdown' of conflict with the wellbeing of the whole organisation (Sterling 2003), as Veronica demonstrated in this statement: "When blocking occurs in Ensirla's decision-making online, it indicates a breakdown in relationship". A broad consensus emerged that because of the focus on relationships in Enspiral, conflict is not a big issue. Mike, for example, was confident that the 'bank' of collective trust enabled more open and reflexive dialogue, and reduced conflict arising between people:

> Trust is daily work to maintain. We didn't expect explosive conflict because of it. Open conversation - not personal criticism - but critical thought. This took us a while to identify (Mike, Enspiral).

Evolving practice and structures to nurture interpersonal trust is explained as an unfolding process. Identifying benefits of relationally based decision-making, researchers have appreciated the value of giving *time* for the collective to talk through decisions and reach mutual understanding, though not necessarily agreement. This generosity towards the process has been seen to produce highly efficient project implementation and generate inclusivity (Polletta 2021; Rothschild & Leach 2008). Finding mutual understanding reflects commitments to both process and substantive outcome. In the following data fragment, an Enspiral informant highlights the importance of clarifying responsibility and accountability to avoid misunderstandings and personal disagreements escalating into conflicts:

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[75] SELC interview with Ian

When a conflict comes up, we drill into it and often we find we just need to clarify an agreement or expectations. The people personally involved need to resolve their personal differences and, from the perspective of the wider network, there is often a missing agreement or lack of agreement. It took a long time to develop how we deal with conflict (Gerald, Enspiral).

Gerald's expectation that individuals self-manage interpersonal differences was echoed in SELC and FoEM's approach to day-to-day disagreements.

When I met Enspiral in 2017, the community was still making sense of one "super significant conflict" involving two highly active members.[76] Both parties in the conflict participated in this research; they are still part of the broader life of Enspiral. Different interpretations of the breakdown were shared through *Enspiral Tales* under the heading *Refactor* (Irving 2016). The irreconcilable nature of the differences brought some abrasive textures of pain and disappointment into the Enspiral narrative of belonging (explored in Chapter Six). However, for some members, Enspiral's relationally focused response to the breakdown demonstrated what was possible when conflict was met with care for the community, here Felix describes what happened:

Through *Loomio* we called an emergency meeting so we could discuss what was going on and how we could support [the members in conflict]. The response seems standard, but it wasn't. Concern was not about protecting the organisation, or minimising harm. Rather than how to support the individual people experiencing the conflict - we considered what they needed. It was very personal and supportive. We considered who might best support each individual, extending our care to include best friends and partners. Hardly any tension was felt. This left friendships in the network intact, and relationships maintained. How I knew them hasn't changed (Felix, Enspiral).

The measure of success perceived by Felix was that Enspiral's relational fabric, "how I knew them" remained "intact". Putting people first and responding empathetically is arguably a

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[76] Enspiral interview with Cali

demonstration of a high functioning, emotionally intelligent group (Mayer & Salovey 1993). Felix appreciated that Enspiral's first concern was to care for the relational infrastructure (e.g., extending care into networks, such as family and friends of those involved in the conflict), in contrast to a conventional conflict response which Felix felt would have been to protect the organisation's reputation. Yet, I am not convinced that "hardly any tension was felt": It was the first big, and possibly unexpected, organisational conflict, and while reflexive processing around the event contributed to Enspiral's collective growth, in the twelve to eighteen months following the peak of the conflict several key participants withdrew from Enspiral citing emotional exhaustion and burnout as factors. Many systems in Enspiral evolved as a result of this conflict and as Cali explained, it "would be dealt with differently now". This discussion has illustrated how in a non-hierarchical community empathetic care is possible; it has also exposed the vulnerability of volunteer based, relationally-focused organisations to conflict that tears at its relational fabric.

The shifting relations of power

Power emerged as a distinct discourse in SELC, Enspiral and FoEM. It was mostly explored in relation to the formation of hierarchical stratification in society. Shared conversations within each case study organisation demonstrated a nuanced political analysis of power as embedded in habitual behaviours and patterns of thought, and rooted in hegemonic structures of domination, control and exploitation (Peters 2020). For many participants, negotiating emergent power dynamics was understood as a necessary condition to sustain a 'tyrannylessness' non-hierarchical culture (Leach 2013). Ideally the influence of values such as inclusivity, equality and openness to diversity and dissent *should* change power relations in non-hierarchical organisations. However, reflecting on her learning in Enspiral, Silvia Zuur (2018, p. 251)[77] acknowledges the difficulty of engaging directly with power:

> The ideals of non-hierarchy, which can look great on paper, but in reality may be quite a different experience. The disconnect is around power. Power is like dust in a house: it

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[77] Silvia Zuur participated in this research and her contributions are protected by a pseudonym.

settles and accrues in the corners. Power is never spread evenly in an organisation. If power is not addressed or named, it will gather in unnamed places.

The collective 'will' to actively engage with power reflects an understanding present in SELC, Enspiral and FoEM, that power relations become an issue when they are allowed fester. In one of his last interviews, Foucault discerns that the capacity of movement distinguishes relations of power from being either productive or dominating: "Instead of being variable and allowing different partners a strategy which alters them, find themselves firmly set and congealed" (Fornet-Betancourt et al. 1987, p. 114). Therefore, while relations of power remain flexible, the effects of power can be productive and enabling, but when movement is prevented, power relations can set into oppressive patterns (Välikangas & Seeck 2011). Thinking about power in Enspiral, Nadia describes an ideal group, 'able' to respond to "invisible" dangers within the "crocodile pit" of power which she imagines constantly "flowing" around the organisation, within and between people:

> There is this whole crocodile pit of invisible power structures […] I think a healthy non-hierarchical group is constantly talking about and reflecting on; How do we engage together? What are our policies? Are they still working? Can we improve them? Let's talk about power. How is power flowing around in this environment? Is this what we want? (Nadia, Enspiral).

What stands out in Nadia's evocative description of power is the constant movement and the pattern of reciprocity in the collective processes she imagines. She reflects a yearning for more communication that is open, direct and reflexive, capable of surfacing complex relations of power. Illustrating a level of empowerment in Enspiral, Nadia's description assumes a group with the capacity to collectively decide "what we want" (Rothschild & Leach 2008). However, the metaphor of a crocodile pit suggests undetected power relations are dangerous in a non-hierarchical context.

Avoidance of direct engagement with power in a non-hierarchical context is likely to make conflict situations more emotionally charged events. Rothschild and Leach (2008) advocate honestly

'talking about power' to enable participatory forms of governance to thrive. Their research illustrates how finding equilibrium between 'fight' and 'avoidance' cultures will be influenced by an organisation's cultural, situational and historical circumstances. As non-hierarchical organisations become more culturally diverse, it follows that participants will have different interpretations regarding the behaviour that constitutes a candid communication about power dynamics. Anton reflected that the indirect nature of online communications in Enspiral enabled more aggressive communication when he said: "Conflicts are often played out in text, showing up through people's written personas". However, Isla, an Enspiralite with origins outside Aotearoa-New Zealand, assesses Enspiral's culture as conflict avoidant:

> The Enspiral culture is very facilitatory and careful: The Slack-bot suppresses inappropriate language. The 'impulsive self' is not okay. Other cultures outside New Zealand might be more direct and combative. Conflict at Enspiral can be the silent freezing out culture because it is unexpressed. Maybe the conversation about power begins by accepting the existence of power? (Isla, Enspiral).

Rothschild and Leach (2008) present evidence showing that many experienced non-hierarchical organisations had *moments* where all members felt they could speak freely, openly and equally; however, the difference between the ideal and reality indicates that transforming conflict from fight or avoidance to candour requires practice. The consent-based language protocols modelled in SELC, Enspiral and FoEM offer a pathway to becoming able to communicate directly about power without being combative (Ellison 2005). Even so, the delicacy of conversations exploring the effect created by predominantly white middle class non-hierarchical organisations (discussed in Chapter Six), reveal the subtle way systemic inequalities are reproduced in industrial-capitalist societies (Meyers 2005).

In the interview, Ian acknowledged that relations of power as a shadow in SELC's accepted identity (Neville & Dalmau 2008) makes power hard to address honestly. Ian named a myriad of differences that were vulnerable to becoming a hierarchical division between people, such as "the power of the founder, the power of titles, the power of experience, of race, class, and education, the power of being able to articulate yourself in a group" (Ian, SELC). This thesis has demonstrated

that talking about power is difficult, even when participants have a systemic analysis of intersectional inequalities, the effects of power are experienced personally and felt deeply (Ahmed 2014).

Figure 39: No matter how hard, hierarchies keep trying to reassert themselves in the group - inside of myself, inside of people and inside of things (Karl, Enspiral). Image: Devil (Noble and Vogel 1981)

Participants in FoEM and Enspiral chose the image of the *Devil* Tarot card (V Noble & Vogel 1981) as an embodiment of the entangled co-constitution of power and hierarchy in industrial-

capitalist society (shown in Figure 39). For some, the *Devil* was a "diagram of capitalism",[78] and for others it captured the fractal formation of hierarchies in society, between and within people in organisations. A FoEM participant commented in the Reflective Group Conversation that these "hierarchies [in the *Devil* card] require constant reflection and self-critique" as the immobile relationships in the card were seen as indicative of asymmetrical relationships of domination. This description recognises the reciprocity between individual and collective when engaging with power: While the collective enacts their responsibility to create safe containers in which talking openly about power becomes possible, individuals are supported to cultivate skills of "radical reflexivity" (Townley 1995, p. 276). Reflexive self-inquiry was exemplified by Veronica, who in Chapter Six, demonstrated candidness in her self-reflexive analysis of her 'undemocratic' coercive reactions as "Little Miss Fix-it".

Several participants in FoEM and Enspiral identified varied conditions that might prompt unequal power relations in a non-hierarchical organisation. Their analysis helps reveal the relational dynamics that are set in motion as individual expectations of leadership, authority and power affect the ways social relations are constituted. As Foucauldian scholar Edward Barratt (2008, p. 523) warns, "Even the most promising, consensually validated political arrangements have the potential to harden into an oppressive pattern". Overwhelmingly, participants conceived of power as relational, as these few examples illustrate: Connie identifies hierarchies forming through unequal relations of knowledge and experience in FoEM: "The challenge is fighting this whole hierarchical thing [reference to *Devil* card]. It forms through the tyranny of knowledge […] where those who know the most are relied on the most and needed all the time". Karl locates the first movement that creates a differential in social relations whereby the action of asking permission of another is an abandonment of sovereignty:

> The biggest challenge is resetting people's expectations of being peers with each other,
> adult to adult. Start to deeply engage with what personal sovereignty means, how to relate
> to people when they step on your sovereignty, or you step on theirs, or when you give
> away yours, when you seek permission from your peers instead of seeking consent. When

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[78] Interviews with Tom (Enspiral) and Hal (FoEM)

you force people to do what you want them to do. I'd say all of those things are a shadow, the shadow of our society. How to step beyond that and release from that (Karl, Enspiral).

This narrative suggests that *each* member of a non-hierarchically structured group, such as Enspiral, needs to reset their expectations of others by withdrawing the projection of superior qualities onto particular individuals who step into acts of leadership (Rowek 2018). Then theoretically, in the absence of the projection, the conceptual space is available for participants to enact the responsibility and accountability of being a self-authorising, self-governing peer, thereby, enabling the act of leading to become a more ordinary social exchange that is shareable between organisational members.

The distinction between "permission" as granting and obtaining authorisation to act, and "consent" as willingly given agreement, is an indicator of the tonal movement from the directive style of leadership to an invitational approach to becoming-a-non-hierarchical co-leader. Dave described his preferred style of leading as "leadership by doing": The act of leading is available to any group member when those enacting leadership openly invite others to join them with: "Hey, will you follow me?". Dave experienced this inclusive form of leading in Enspiral as "energising and respectful" because he felt free to join or decline the invitation whereas leading by command removed the freedom of others to *refuse* their consent: "This is what we need to do - can you go do it for me". Dave's explanation of permission and consent-based leadership illustrated an inherent assumption of entitlement in directive forms of communication.

Participants in Enspiral, SELC and FoEM were very sensitive to the inhibiting effect produced by behaviours and language embodying commands (Massumi 2015). Enacting behaviours that assume an authoritative stance - even as a considerate 'asking' permission is considered the seed of domination over others. Organisations strongly affected by defensive emotions are theorised as generating behaviours motivated by fear such as comparison and competition, in order to win the favour of those in control (Srivastva 1990). A directive leadership style is clearly not aligned with an autonomous community of self-directing, non-hierarchical participants. Towards building collective capacity to engage honestly and openly with power relations in their organisation FoEM

induct new members via their *Anti-hierarchical Rhizome Training*, SELC were engaged in an inquiry into SELC's "white, supremacy culture" (see Jones et al. 2018), and in Enspiral a number of participants referred to working with Māori facilitators, whereby "Māori input is helping us become a bi-cultural organisation".[79]

However, in Enspiral, SELC and FoEM, several women, and others who self-identified as people of colour and/or working-class illustrated that the experience of sovereignty can be subtly made unavailable (e.g., taken out of reach) through exclusive entitlements embedded in culture. Differentiation continues to be reproduced in non-hierarchical organisations through the unconscious comfort with middle class, white ways of being in majority white, middle class organisations (Ahmed 2007). The attributes of the archetypal leader is highly influential: Embodied in self-confident, authoritative and directive individuals (Nye 2008), who are most often white, heterosexual, male and privileged (Acker 2006), this archetype is strengthened in societal memes (Day & Zaccaro 2014) and popular media representations (Steyrer 1998).

The depth of the cultural imaginary surrounding idealisation of leading, leadership and the embodiment of leader-like behaviours was reflected in the way Enspiral as a community were wrestling with ways of being-a-non-hierarchical co-leader. Earl observes "Everyone wants to be [the leader] in some ways and Enspiral doesn't work if people live into their vision of that". Earl's reflections demonstrate the dynamic relationship between participants and the concept of non-hierarchy, challenging participants to appraise their habitual desires about leading and being led.

Heroism as an expression of masculine leadership was identified by Veronica as a threat to Enspiral's non-hierarchical relations. Pinpointing the emergence of individualism in Enspiral's organisational discourse with the belief that: "*We* have the answer, *we* are the best, *we* are the most beautiful and the boldest", Veronica passionately rejected the superior stance assumed by the heroic voice, saying it "gives me the heebie-jeebies". This embodied response to the masculine alerted me to the possibility of dissonance in gender relations in Enspiral, arguably related to behaviour that might be interpreted as dismissive of others. In her survey of the status of women

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[79] Enspiral interviews with Otto, Dave and Jade

in non-hierarchical worker cooperatives, Genna Miller (2012) argues that women face barriers to equality in terms of their status and participation in decision-making.

Four of seven Enspiral women interviewed, very gently articulated their concern that they experienced and/or observed gender-based inequality in Enspiral which they identified as a lack of appreciation and an absence of open conversation about gender. The emotional labour contributed by women in Enspiral was named as largely 'hidden' (e.g., unconscious and unspoken). In her seminal work *The Managed Heart*, Arlie Hochschild (2012, p. 112, 1979) explains why women seemingly 'slip' into caring roles in the workplace: "the emotional labour of women becomes more prominent because men in general have not been trained to make their emotions a resource". Culturally patterned behaviours, such as emotional labour and social power were labelled by Cali as contributing to "toxic power hierarchies" in Enspiral. Cali reasons that the affect produced by differentials in social capital (Siisiäinen & Martti 2000) is because of cultural associations with their way of being: some individuals are elevated and given more trust:

> The shadow which we have tried to work on is the whole *Tyranny of Structurelessness* shadow. In the gaping void of named toxic power hierarchies, patterns emerge, and they are normally based around either emotional labour or social power or longevity or age, strength of voice or types of character. We are better at recognising these. There is still the tyranny of 'someone should …'(Cali, Enspiral).[80]

Gendered relational dynamics enable emotional labour to be interpreted as a natural (e.g., effortless) female attribute (see Acker 2006; Erickson & Ritter 2001; Miller 2012; Sobering 2016; Sobering, Thomas, & Williams 2014). When constituted as the underside of the male/female, reason/nature binaries, emotional labour can be dismissed as not requiring the same explicit consideration as other skills (Knights & Kerfoot 2004). Jade identifies this pattern through the different remuneration rates for work that in Enspiral had been more identified with men (e.g., programming) and women (e.g., hosting and setup): "Emotional labour has been financially

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[80] Reference to Freeman (2013) *The tyranny of structurelessness*. See Chapter Four for a discussion of Freeman's thesis in the context of consensus decision-making.

undervalued in the payment for a programmer versus [that of] environmental setup [hosting] and greeting".

'Emotion work' is defined by Hochschild (2012, p. 112) as ways of engaging "that affirms, enhances, and celebrates the wellbeing and status of others". This explanation aligns with interpretations of some in Enspiral who recognised the "emotional burden"[81] of nurturing and welcoming group members had been carried by specific women. Anton noticed that caring in Enspiral "tends to fall on a few shoulders, and they tend to be women, women with a lot of context who know what's going on and believe in the project enough to go the extra mile". Extending the research on emotional labour in collectivist organisations, Sobering (2021a) and Hoffman (2016) argue that the emotional intensity involved in participatory governance increases the demand for emotional labour.

Doing emotional work can deplete the doer's sense of wellbeing, potentially resulting in burnout and withdrawal (Erickson & Ritter 2001). The risk of undervaluing women's emotional labour in Enspiral was articulated as a concern (by a few men) and as a cause for concern and resentment (by a few women).[82] Veronica attributed the lack of formal policy supporting emotional wellbeing in Enspiral: "When relationships break down there is no one there to care for repair". However, the conversation about emotional labour was clearly in the orbit of collective conversation. Jade appreciated change was happening when she discerned Enspiral was "becoming able" to have conversations about the structures and practices reproducing systemic inequalities in Enspiral:

> We are getting better at acknowledging the impact of the feminine, such as emotional labour, and becoming able to talk about how to recognise and compensate people for their emotional labour (Jade, Enspiral).

The movement of "becoming able" suggests the Enspiral community have developed greater appreciation of the complexity of gender-based inequalities and the need for purposeful

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[81] Enspiral interviews with Dave and Anton
[82] Enspiral interviews with Jade, Veronica, Nadia, Dave, Anton and Cali

engagements towards mutual understanding of their effect (Ely & Thomas 2001). Dave saw engaging with power and surfacing the intersectional inequalities as a process, he thought Enspiral were "Becoming more conscious of using the language of power and privilege and status and that I think is worthwhile and good - I still think we are also still pretty much babies at that - how to talk about power and how to confront power".

Yet, 'talking about' the reproduction of inequality is not enough to disrupt such well inculcated cultural values. A number of critical scholars argue that empowerment and egalitarian talk might feel good, but talk without action maintains relations of power (Ahmed 2004a; Eliasoph 2016; Polletta 2006). This is not to deny the value of forging equal social relations through dialogue, but as Polletta (2021, p. 26) discerns, "equality in talk" must be accompanied by a recognition of difference that materially changes cultural ways of being together. Polletta (2021) identifies that a material transformation has occurred when a group is able to communicate through a wide range of registers - from giving and receiving direct feedback to light-hearted and playful banter (qualities discussed with reference to the case study organisations in Chapters Four and Six).

The extent of cultural change and a recognition of difference in Enspiral was reflected in other respondents' narratives. Harris, a self-identified white heterosexual man, shared a little of his discomfort in participating in conversations that challenge his gendered privilege when he comments: "White men [in Enspiral] are nervous in conversations about gender, power and privilege. We're learning to see what's happening better, I like to see people call me out". Both Harris's disquiet (e.g., white men are nervous) at receiving direct feedback and Jade's calling out inequitable pay rates for (women's) emotional labour in Enspiral, demonstrates what Foucault (1982) describes as the movement of power occurring through "strategies of struggle". These accounts suggest Enspiral as a community is finding its way towards a recognition of difference that is transforming the experience of all participants.

Reflecting on strategies that might offer some release from dualist structures of thought, Plumwood (2012, p. 60) cautions that "escape" routes are often presented as "mazes containing mirrors, side-tracks, looped trails and knots". Sociologists, Joan Meyers and Steven Vallas (2016),

also approach the deeper levels of social change circumspectly, advising that if the social relations enabling inequalities are obscured in day-to-day interactions, then it is easy to slip back into socially differentiated patterns of behaviour to reproduce systemic inequalities.

Yet, participants' experience of 'becoming able' suggests the case study organisations are experiencing the disruptive motion created as the collective addresses the effects of power on relationships. Carmen brings attention to the significance of this movement when she notices that in SELC, she is not the *only* one challenging the invisibility of intersectional inequalities: "Other people are surfacing things: gender, race, economics, whatever. Here I feel I've got so much to learn from these people [and] I don't feel like the most radical one on staff" (Carmen, SELC).

Non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation have the *capacity* to nurture the conditions of openness, which are necessary to address the effects of toxic power hierarchies inhibiting some voices from full participation. Arguably, this type of direct dialogue is less prevalent in normative ecologies of organisation, where frank discussion resulting in moving relations of power can be blocked via a range of behavioural strategies designed to maintain an array of hierarchical structured power relations (Alvesson & Spicer 2012). According to Foucault, achieving new freedoms by lifting taboos and eliminating oppressive conditions merely reveals the possibility of discerning more ethical social relations, "Liberation opens up new relations of power, which have to be controlled by practices of liberty" (Fornet-Betancourt et al. 1987, p. 115). I have demonstrated how a non-hierarchical organisation requires candid investigation of power relations to maintain their vitality. The next section discusses the positioning of the founder as a difference that causes the collective to consider the possibility of difference and equality.

Different and equal? Examining the role of founders in non-hierarchical NFP

Founders carry a unique role in any organisation (Abraham & Deo 2006). They are often an embodiment of the organisation's vision and can be related to as a manifestation of complete commitment to the realisation of its mission (English & Peters 2011). The role of founders in NFP organisations is considered an under researched topic generally, and scholarship investigating founders in non-hierarchical NFP is even more limited (Block & Miller-Stevens 2021; Block & Rosenberg 2002; Ceaser 2018; English & Peters 2011). On a mythic level, the founder is a

recognised archetype, capable of stimulating less conscious and often emotional dimensions of social relations (Rickards 2015). An element of the founder's strength lies in their symbolic connection to the archetypal founding myth and the eternal archetypes of rebirth, renewal and death (Kostera 2012).

In a non-hierarchical context, the influence of strong, charismatic individuals can create tensions in the group because their personal power creates a hierarchical dynamic in the group (Bartunek, Walsh, & Lacey 2000). At the time of this research, the founders of Pachamama Alliance, Enspiral and SELC were still actively involved in organisational governance.[83] This section will explore how members of these organisations rationalise the status of the founder in a non-hierarchical context, with reference to interviews, participant-generated drawings, and SELC's Reflective Group Conversation (RGC). The discussion will illustrate the persistence of the archetype of the founder by examining an array of attributes that participants felt differentiated founders from other participants; valuing the founder as visionary and highly committed member and in SELC and Enspiral resisting the potential hierarchy created in relations with the founder.

After over twenty years as a hierarchical NFP organisation, it was not surprising that participants saw Pachamama Alliance's co-founders as sources of spiritual and strategic leadership. The co-founders were spoken about in ways that reflected deep love and respect for them. The 'issue' of succession came up in most interviews as members struggled to imagine a future where the source of inspiration and direction would be transferred from being embodied in the founders (Kostera 2012).[84] Giana asked, "How does Pachamama Alliance live and move beyond [the founder's] leadership?" However, a few participants leveraged the potential of non-hierarchical governance to imagine a time when co-founders and leaders would no longer be needed.

In Pachamama Alliance, the decision to become non-hierarchically structured has been discussed as part of a bigger vision into building the capacity for people to 'be the change' and 'change the dream' of industrial-capitalist society (Pachamama Alliance 2019). Distributing leadership by

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[83] The one founder from each organisation participated in this research.
[84] Pachamama Alliance interviews with Ana, Dani, Eden, Frida and Isabel

dissolving hierarchy is imagined as a potent catalyst, capable of shifting Pachamama Alliance's governance beyond the confines of the archetypal founding myth (Kostera 2012). Cam, for example, frames the possibility of moving beyond the leadership of founders as a fractal of the change Pachamama Alliance envisages through prefiguring participatory governance:

> At some level the problem of succession is a result of a hierarchical structure. It is part of the trash - it's another thing to deal with […] Finding another [leader] is no longer the right thing to do. In an idealised world we would get rid of the 'head'. At some level it gets so distributed that the whole organisation disappears - people stepping up and taking responsibility (Cam, Pachamama Alliance).

The notion that finding another figurehead is "no longer the right thing to do" is a compelling idea that in 2017-2018 reflected Pachamama Alliance's commitment to support the democracy movement in America during President Trump's final term (F4DC; Kuttner 2018; Small Planet Institute 2019). Cam's confidence recalls the arguments of an earlier leadership scholar, Cecil A. Gibb (1968) who disputed the widely held belief that leaders were differentiated from their followers according to their position at the apex of an organisational hierarchy of influence (see Gronn 2008). After a career as a leadership theorist, Gibb (1968) predicted that distributed forms of governance would develop people's capacity (as self-managing co-leaders), reducing and even eliminating the need for leaders.

Enspiral, by contrast with Pachamama Alliance, was formed as a non-hierarchical organisation. Therefore, participants came to the interview with me having investigated how the symbolic presence of the founder might disrupt non-hierarchical social relations. Enspiral had a founder, and an initial follower who described himself as "the second dancer, the guy standing on the edges who joins the first dancer".[85] From the start Enspiralites sought to diffuse the idea of the founder as different from other members. Yet, in Enspiral's formative years, the founder was attributed as having a "significant role in inviting people into possibility" of the "generative multidimensional

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[85] Enspiral interview (pseudonym withheld to protect identity)

playground"[86] of Enspiral. In a generic fashion, the concept of founder's syndrome was used by some participants to explain what was interpreted as archetypal responses to the founder as 'source'.

Founder's syndrome is theorised as developing when an individual is attributed with influential powers and privileges (Block & Rosenberg 2002). It is described as a "disorder" because founders often resist change (Boustani & Boustani 2017). Finding that hierarchically structured NFP boards involving founders did not favour term limits and exhibited less interest in renewal, Stephen Block and Steven Rosenberg (2002) and Donovon Ceaser (2018) argue that when founders become overly identified with their role, they can create conditions that will sabotage the inclusion of diverse voices (e.g., contrary to the founder). However, Enspiral's founder did not exhibit any of the dysfunctional traits recognised as founder's syndrome and, in 2016 as part of Enspiral's evolution, the founder stepped away from highly visible roles (e.g., Catalyst).

Late in 2017, participants I interviewed still recognised the influential contribution of the founder as Enspiral's "thought leader". Anton recognised attitudes toward their founder as an aspect of Enspiral's shadow whereby the principle of individual sovereignty was inverted. He explained how Enspiral's focus on autonomy and sovereignty as "you are not the boss of me" has an underside which is "longing to be led and have someone who people can refer to when the going gets tough".[87] The resonant power of the archetypal founding myth is theorised as surfacing when the organisation is perceived as under threat (Kostera 2012). Thus, when things become difficult in Enspiral an automatic response can be to blame the founder for not being there to 'save' the organisation:

> There is always a source [...] There are shadows associated with [our source], most of which I am coming to the conclusion are unfair, I think that people are projecting and blaming [our founder] for any problems or dysfunctions in the organisation (Cali, Enspiral).

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[86] Enspiral interview with Anton
[87] Enspiral interviews with Karl and Anton

The reference to 'shadow' here recognises the developmental process involved whereby many individuals experience themselves transitioning from having hierarchical leader /follower relationships to more equal peer-to-peer relationships (discussed in Chapter Four). Cali and Anton interpreted the projection of 'blame' onto the founder as an indication of the extent to which group members were not yet able to be fully accountable for the adult-to-adult relationships made possible in a non-hierarchy (see Keegan & Lahey 2009). These participant perspectives align with Enspiral's discourse about power whereby the act of projecting authority onto the founder is an abdication of personal sovereignty (discussed earlier in this chapter).

The presence of the founder brought attention to relational differentials in SELC, and the Reflective Group Conversation (RGC) enabled a more extended exploration of the complex social relations evolving around SELC's co-founder (known as the founder within SELC).[88] As a young organisation in its teens, SELC's founder was a strong presence at the time of my fieldwork. SELC's founder's vision and presence resonated throughout the organisation, and participants indicated some unease as the founder was carrying a proportionally large percentage of responsibility for the whole. Blanca surfaced a tension when she said that the founder "provides leadership even though *she tries not to*. Her fingerprints are on the organisation as its author and thought leader. She is listened to". Two participant-generated drawings (Figures 40 and 41) provided powerful metaphors that illustrated the founder as a central figure in SELCs governance. I used these drawings as a prompt for the Reflective Group Conversation (RGC) as participant relationships with the founder had emerged as a strong theme in the interviews. SELC members, including the founder, consented to examine the influence of the founder and the ways the founder was being constituted in SELC.[89]

The leadership of the founder in SELC was illustrated in several ways. For example, as a creative presence via illustrations in the office and the website. The founder was the *only* member of the group who was part of every Circle. This did not mean the founder attended all the meetings;

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[88] SELC was founded by two attorneys: one of whom works full time in SELC, the second is a member of the Advisory Board.

[89] The founder consented to the conversation about her symbolic and actual role in the RGC.

however, contact was maintained with each Circle using *Slack* and *Asana,* giving the founder a comprehensive overview of activity. Consequently, the founder worked more than the stipulated 30-hour week. The founder was not seen as 'directing', yet Quinn observed that "she does hold the threads". Around a third of participants recognised the founder as the source of SELC's vision.
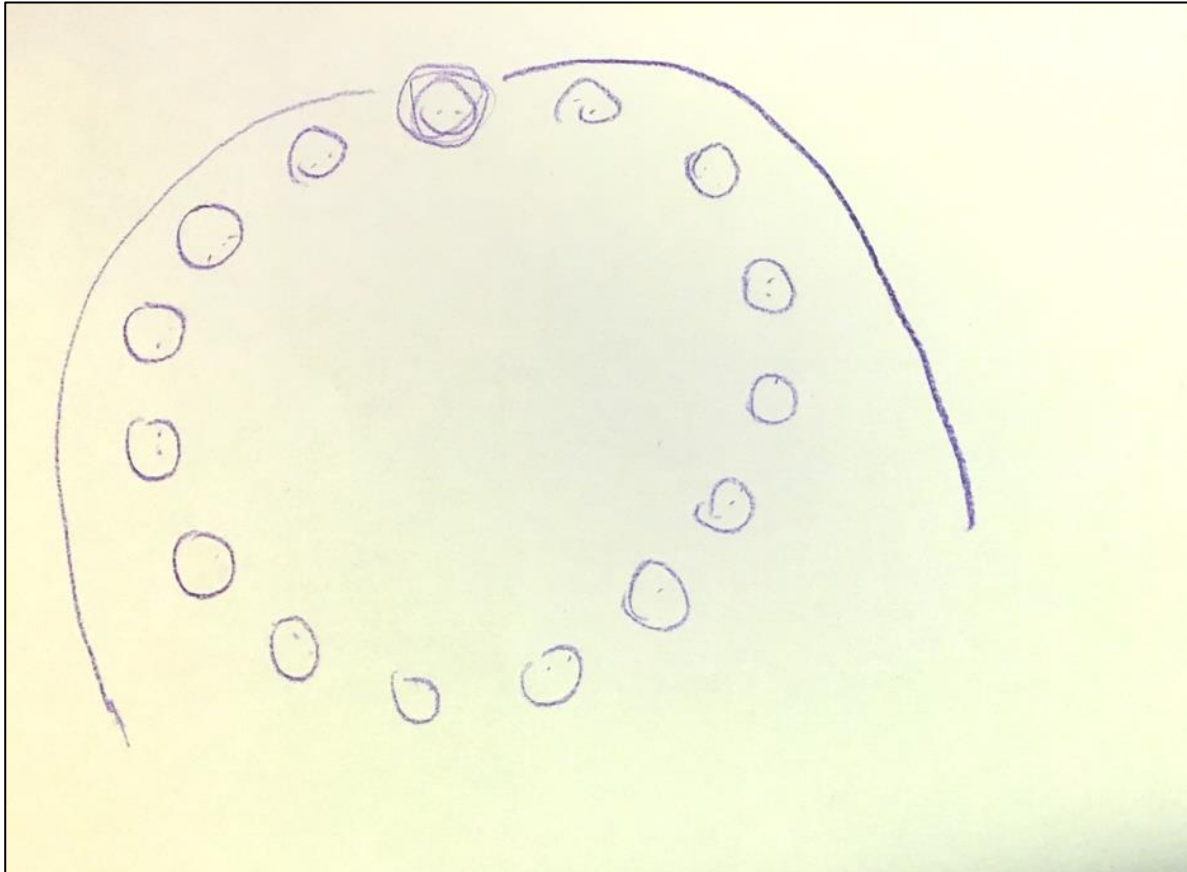
Figure 40: Our founder's arms holding the group, the circle together (Paige, SELC).

The archetypal founder *is* a point of difference and a social and symbolic demarcation. By taking more responsibility in organisational life, SELC's founder risked reproducing herself as the leader, potentially constituting a leader/follower dualism in herself and/or others and setting in motion a level of deference to her position as founder. One participant alerted me to the discomfort emerging from stratifying social relations when she asked rhetorically, "What does it mean in a democratic organisation where one or two people hold a lot more power [and] others feel like there is an emotional debt to them?" (SELC). The idea of an emotional debt intimates that other participants

might defer their 'voice' in respect to the more authoritative voice/s. The dynamic created by the founder was recognised as one of many shadows of power in SELC.[90] It is important to note that the period of my fieldwork in SELC coincided with the founder's leave; therefore, my observation of SELC was mostly undertaken without the founder's physical presence in the group, a factor which potentially altered participant behaviour and influenced my perceptions of social relations.

Central to the RGC was the effect of the founder's 'holding' shown in the two participant-generated drawings of SELC's governance dynamics. The drawings opened a rich seam of conversation where several participants shared that they had been thinking about the founder's position but had not publicly spoken about it. One drawing showed the founder's arms encompassing the whole and "holding the group and the circle together" (Figure 40). This drawing arguably evokes the founder as an archetypal caring maternal presence (Stearney 1994), reflecting the founder's care as encompassing the group. This drawing shows the founder having an overview of the organisation that is larger than that of others in the circle.

The second drawing shows a singular, central sun whose energy radiates outwards bringing light to SELCs solar system (Figure 41). The artist explained:

> The sun is [our founder]. The moons are the other visionaries. The planets amplify and evolve into smaller orbits. They might find a different solar system (Blanca, SELC).

A similar metaphor emerged from a FoEM participant who recognised the qualities of life-giving sun-like energy in long term team members where were described as "a resource of wisdom to draw upon … around these engaged/passionate citizens are orbiting; a sun, planets and moons".[91] The SELC moons were attributed to three people in the organisation, whom the artist recognised as articulating SELC's big picture vision and values. The motion symbols drawn around the planets are indicative of the potential inherent in each of the planets to move out of SELC's Californian-based solar system. This was a reference to an internal conversation whereby SELC's model might

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[90] SELC interview with Ian
[91] FoEM interview with Al

be replicated in other American states; thus, the planets might become suns capable of powering their own self-sufficient solar system.

Figure 41: The sun is [our founder], the moons are the other visionaries. The planets amplify and evolve into smaller orbits. They might find a different solar system (Blanca, SELC).

Differentiating relationships in SELC as a sun, moons and planets provoked the group. The drawing appeared to confront the *idea* of SELC as a non-hierarchical organisation and participants' sense of themselves as 'equal among equals'. I will examine the emergent flow of the conversation through participant reflections to demonstrate SELC's collective capacity to explore a sensitive topic, where members listen with care for all participants. The conversation also illustrates SELC's third order thinking capabilities: It begins by exploring the metaphor of 'the sun' to differentiate the person from the role, then moves into a more reflexive stance that reimagined possibilities for

the leadership qualities attributed to 'the sun', and finally a epistemic level reflection imagines the RGC as an evolutionary moment in SELC's relations (Sterling 2011).

The life-giving sun as a metaphor for the founder was a problematic image for some. One participant describes the vulnerability she felt at being categorised as a lesser 'planet' rather than a pivotal 'sun'. Directing her reflections to the founder, this participant articulates the amplifying the archetypal force of the founder in SELC:

> I often feel like I don't want to be a sun, but I feel like sometimes I have resources or insights that I wish people would seek out from me, but I feel like they go to you [*directing comment to founder, followed by a sound from founder…*] It's maybe because you [the founder] are bright and shiny (Kami, SELC).

In the RGC, the founder chose to explore the dynamic she experienced between the expectations she placed on herself as the 'I' who is responsible, and her desire that her co-workers did *not* have that expectation of her. The founder was sensitive to the double bind her level of commitment created in the organisation (Bateson 1972). The tension reflected in the founder's concern that she should not be the only 'sun' brought her attention to the way she engages with the group and the organisation:

> I feel like I am not the only sun in this organisation. Or maybe, I'm getting credit for the 'suns' of other people, or the brightness of the ideas of other people. Yes, definitely, I am questioning, how much from other people's perspective do they feel the gravitational pull of our organisation is influenced by me in ways that cannot be controlled? (SELC RGC).

When the metaphor of the sun was reconceptualised as a *way* of bringing light and energy to the whole through moments or acts of leadership, the energy in the group shifted and a broader reflection about leadership became possible. The various explorations of the sun as the leader gave participants an opportunity to appreciate how they transferred their authority when they attributed the founder with superiority, whether as certainty, knowledge, vision or understanding. The idea

of the leader was transposed from a set of attributes that were identified in a *person*, to becoming *an act* that could be shared. The participant (below), realises his assumption that the founder/leader is the only one able to 'get' the complexity of the 'whole' organisation:

> It's hard to have the vision of the whole, so maybe there is this reliance on, or this leaning towards thinking that [the founder] gets the whole thing' […] Can the sun at some point in an organisation shift from a person, or a team, or circle or a process? […] Does understanding the whole empower more people to feel like the sun is not one person? [The sun] is a direction that we build and can refine and check-in on periodically (SELC RGC).

Another participant sought to separate the individual person from the archetypal role of founder when he reflected that the 'idea' of founder was constituted through relationship with other members, opening the possibility of a different relationship with that individual:

> With [the founder's] role: To what extent is some of that [individual person's] behaviour, and to what extent are *we* trained to see and process a founder's behaviour - so noticing that we can change our actions, our perceptions and our descriptions of our actions - both of those might be leverage points (SELC, RGC).

In closing the RGC, members of the group expressed their appreciation to have 'outed' their concerns about the role of the founder. Leona English and Nancy Peters' (2011) found that openly talking about the role of the founders in non-hierarchical feminist organisations was avoided because it was perceived as being destructive to the internal cohesion of the organisation. The sense that this was a topic that many people had been thinking about - and that no one was talking about - was identified as a taboo topic and because people were sensitive to the feelings of the founder, they avoided an open discussion.

I think we have talked around [our founder's role] a lot because it is taboo [*sounds from group*]. My sense is that we go in cycles and there are patterns - like when we are testing the boundaries

of the organisational structure and that is one of those moments now. I think it is actually really healthy and important because […] there's opportunities for more understanding for each of us individually and to be fair to [our founder] (SELC RGC).

This final reflection frames SELC's exploration of the symbolic relationship with their founder in an evolutionary light by appreciating the conversation as a 'healthy' tussle that has moved SELC's 'boundaries' and transformed participant relations to be more equitable. The RGC surfaced the founder's role as an explicit conversation that might be addressed again. The mutual care with which the conversation was undertaken signalled acceptance in SELC's community of the founder's need to continue 'holding' the organisation in her embrace. SELC members demonstrated courage in their collective ability to deconstruct the founder's contribution to leadership in SELC. This was followed by expressions of willingness from members to re-own the attributes of leadership (e.g., seeing the whole, empowering others and offering directional insight) that they had automatically 'given away' as an exclusive aspect of the founder. This examination of the founder has confirmed the stickiness of the archetype. It demonstrates how, in emerging ecologies of organisation, the principle of non-hierarchy can support participants to separate the individual from the archetypal qualities assigned to the founder. Since conducting this fieldwork, the founders in SELC, Enspiral and Pachamama Alliance have continued to reduce the prominence of their voice in their organisation by altering roles and titles.

I have shown how SELC members actively work together in the RGC to make sense of the complex emotions surrounding their founder. Participants were able to be seen sharing feelings of vulnerability and desire while exercising care for each other. The fluidity and openness demonstrated in this conversation, and others explored in this chapter, demonstrate the possibility that even when negotiating difficult areas of personal identity, attachment and power relations, a non-hierarchical community can generate a mutual flourishing (Kimmerer 2011). The next section will explore renewal in the relationally-centred, case study organisations.

Encouraging organisational renewal: Knowing, being and doing

In this final section of the discussion chapters, I will consider a few of the ways non-hierarchical governance might encourage organisational renewal. After defining how I will use the concept of

renewal, I will contextualise the tools and processes used by the case study organisations, described in Organisational Development (OD) literature as discursive group work methodologies (Oswick 2013). Then, I will explore how the emotional polarity between discomfort and pleasure might contribute to processes of organisational renewal.

This thesis has sought to contribute to a different organisational imaginary (see Chen & Chen 2021; Escobar 2018; Haraway et al. 2015; Scharmer & Kaufer 2013; Wright et al. 2013); whereby organisations become generative economies, responsive to the societal condition of the Anthropocene. The concept of renewal I am using draws upon Kimmerer (2011), an ecologist of the Anishinaabe Native American tribe, who recognises the interdependence between restoring social relations and regenerating Earth's ecological systems. From this integrated perspective, a renewal of culture informed by principles of respect, responsibility and reciprocity with nature, will have a beneficial effect on fragmented natural ecologies:

> Reciprocal restoration is the mutually reinforcing restoration of land and culture such that repair of ecosystem services contributes to cultural revitalization, and renewal of culture promotes restoration of ecological integrity (2011, p. 258).

Applying Kimmerer's vision of renewal to an organisational setting brings attention to social relations based on mutual respect, which have the potential to set in motion a revitalisation of relations with human and non-human worlds. In this thesis I have proposed 'becoming-with' the principle of non-hierarchy as a transforming relationship, however, as this chapter has demonstrated, renewing social relations beyond stratification is a demanding endeavour necessitating the support of structure, policy, practice, and process. Deep democracy scholar, Marcella Rowek (2018), advises that fostering healthy and respectful social relations is nurtured by ongoing empathetic encounters between organisation members. While on site, I observed a range of communication and facilitation tools, described more generally here as discursive group work methodologies, that were integrated into daily practice by the case study members. To clarify the contribution of group work methodologies to generating a respectful cultural field, I will explore the alignment between them and contemporary non-hierarchical organisations seeking to enact democratic principles of EDI and transparency in governance.

Developed from the 1970s onwards, discursive group work methodologies have been recognised as producing conceptual distinctions that have fostered participatory processes and given generations of people the opportunity to experience the personal and collective power of democratic decision-making (Block 2008). The surge of participatory approaches is recognised in OD literature as evidence of a movement from positivist to constructivist interpretations of organisational change (Bushe & Marshak 2015; Mirvis & Gunning 2006). It is plausible that long term community engagement with participatory tools and processes have increased the capacity for cooperative ways of working (Scharmer 2009).

Figure 42: Open Space agenda for Enspiral Summer Fest 2018 (Source: Houseman)

Observing the prevalence of group processes that are more dialogic and emergent (i.e., participatory and collaborative), organisational theorist Cliff Oswick (2013) recognises that the norms of OD have been transformed. Oswick acknowledges the influence of, for example, Open

Space Technology (OST) (Owen 1997), World Café (Brown 2005), Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, Sherman, & Woychik 2014) and story-telling (Boje 2014). These, and many other approaches, have brought complex system's thinking into organisational change processes, influencing the management and leadership paradigm (Weisbord & Janoff 2010).

The infusion of discursive group work tools and processes have made a vital contribution to the cultural field of non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation. This thesis has remarked on the influence of micro-practices (e.g., co-created agendas, check-ins and non-defensive communication) in the case study organisations and I observed the direct influence of OST in Enspiral's 2018 Summer Fest residential retreat to co-create a collaborative agenda (shown in Figure 42). Reflecting on conceptual contributions from the inter-organisation field to onboarding in Chapter Five, discursive group work methods integrating ecological thinking and participatory processes emerged as notable influences in *Work that Reconnects* (Macy & Brown 2014), *Theory U* (Scharmer 2009) and The Art of Hosting (Art of Hosting n.d) network (see also Table 4 in Chapter Five).

Identifiable group work elements have enriched participants' social engagement by strengthening case study organisational capacity. These include: Non-defensive language and an appreciative orientation, to enable spaciousness and foster non-judgmental curiosity; leadership as facilitation to establish parameters for collective engagement, ensuring the safety of group members without controlling outcomes; and emergent processes inclusive of experiential and intuitive ways of knowing, doing and being to encourage the participation of 'many voices'. In FoEM, Pachamama Alliance, SELC and Enspiral retreats, for example, I took part in activities that moved between storytelling, movement, meditation, song, games, making and repairing materials (Integrating art in a Home Group reflective debrief shown Figure 43). Participants such as Nadia appreciated the expertise they had developed as facilitators:

> Enspiral teaches you skills that are astonishingly rare […] like how to run a meeting so you can actually get stuff done, everybody gets heard and action points come out of it and notes were taken, it's not just the loudest people (Nadia, Enspiral).

Discursive group work tools and processes have been recognised as cultivating an organisational field capable of 'holding' the intensity of communication, described in this thesis as more authentic, reflexive engagement between participants (Mindell 2008; Rowek 2018). Research by Elizabeth Hoffmann (2016) indicates that compared to conventional, hierarchical organisations, workers in democratically governed cooperatives experienced greater freedom to express themselves emotionally at work. Collaborative group work processes have contributed to generating organisational environments that participants described as being both soothing (e.g., kind, caring, safe) and emotionally expressive by being open to dissenting perspectives. Many participants reported that their non-hierarchical organisational community had a revitalising effect on their organisational engagement - Mike recalls Enspiral as "Healing through hanging out". On joining Enspiral, Cali recognised the great disparity between the direct communication characterising non-hierarchical social relations and those in the corporate sector which she infers were more guarded:

> Probably for the first year I was still holding on very strongly to the fear of rejection. [In Enspiral] my radical candour and honesty were met and mirrored back to me in an authentic way. […] No sense of me being judged as a boss, or others judging me as a boss, because there are no bosses here, and that is truly indescribable for somebody who has not experienced that (Cali, Enspiral).

Yet, even in communities committed to non-hierarchical relations, I have demonstrated how deeply ingrained cultural patterns related to class, gender and racial identity create hierarchies of difference (Plumwood 2012). With reference to participant interviews and responses to Tarot imagery, the rest of this chapter will explore the potential of emotional polarities to motivate action and participation (Jasper 2011). On one side of this experiential continuum is discomfort and emotions such as anger, anxiety and grief experienced through engagement with processes that confront inherited identities, and on the other side is the joy and pleasure of belonging in an inclusive community. Following Plumwood (2012), I will speculate that this emotional polarity instigates conversations with the potential to renew social relations - as *more* non-hierarchical relationships with difference are made possible. I will elaborate.

Naming the unnamed is uncovered as an important aspect of cultural renewal. Second wave radical, lesbian feminist, Audre Lorde (2020) brings attention to the importance of the poetic form because, through emergent creative expression "we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought". An idea that resonates with Erich Jantsch and Conrad Waddington (1976, p. 10) who over 40 years earlier recognised "language as the organ of consciousness". While this thesis has included the embodied language of the senses to articulate what is happening in each organisation (Warren 2012), words name the effects of dualist structured thought on non-hierarchical practice. This inquiry has revealed the effects of hierarchically structured relations whereby some differences such as, whiteness and middle class values have become normative and other differences such as non-whiteness, loudness and women's emotional work are experienced variously as absences, invisibilities and hyper-visibilities (Ahmed 2007). I have shown that it is hard to 'become-with' as a non-hierarchical community when some voices and associated ways of being are excluded.

Verbalising the experience of backgrounded or hyper-visible differences is very difficult (Plumwood 2012). The tension involved is illustrated in participants' feelings of 'discomfort' and being 'stifled'. For example, several women in SELC felt a taboo around enacting 'loudness' by being noisy or by engaging in frivolous chat that might disturb the white middle class culture which was noticeably quiet and industrious. In Enspiral women felt their emotional labour was undervalued because their acts of care for the collective were taken as 'given' (as a natural female trait). Underneath the invisibility of emotional labour is a denial of collective responsibility for emotion work (Hochschild 2012), which is bound together in a series of interlocking dualisms including reason/nature, male/female, rationality/animality and public/private (Plumwood 2012, p. 43). These hyper-separations perpetuate the unconscious reproduction of gendered social relations, rendering the emotional work done by women as invisible and voiding their autonomy as consenting participants.

Renewal becomes problematic if it is idealised as returning social relations to a condition of 'harmony' and the differentiation underpinning unequal relationships remains hidden. Proposing restoration as deconstructive processes, Ahmed (2014) imagines healing will validate the veracity of the injury and expose the normative 'truths' that caused the wound to form:

> Healing does not cover over, but exposes the wound to others: the recovery is a form of exposure. The visibility produced by recognition is actually the visibility of the ordinary and the normative or the visibility of what has been concealed under the sign of truth (Ahmed 2014, p. 200).

Naming the nameless disrupts established patterns of relations and is, at times, emotionally painful. Therefore, participants may respond to being present to naming the nameless by defending aspects of their identity (unknowingly) enmeshed in inherited gender, class and/or racial hierarchical relations of difference. An element of defensive self-protection can be seen in Harris's grappling with his emotions as a participant in Enspiral's conversations about gender, power and privilege. He assesses from the distance in the third person with "White men are nervous" and then he self-identifies as a white man with: "We're learning".

The intensity of the emotional work of being accountable in participatory organisation appears to be peculiar to collectively governed organisations (Sobering 2021a). This quality has been described in this thesis as personally revealing 'raw and stripped back' and participants appreciate self-inquiry as an ongoing commitment, as Hal from FoEM explains "It takes constant vigilance for things like dismantling the patriarchy. It's easy, even when you are well intentioned - speaking as a man that you occupy a place of privilege". Participants' 'readiness' to do the emotional work of addressing relations of power has been framed as a necessary commitment to sustain non-hierarchical relations: "You need to be self-aware, and you need to be showing you are interested in doing personal development".[92] The expectation in self-managing cultures that individuals will be responsible for their self-understanding has been discussed as amplifying the intensity of non-hierarchical governance. This exploration of naming the nameless reveals the complexity of renewal, however I suggest that each of these conversations towards a non-hierarchical relationship with difference is grounded by the relationality and reflexive practice that is set into motion in a non-hierarchical organisation.

Emotions move people and reflect the attachments and connections that create social relations (Ahmed 2004b). Social movement theorist, James Jasper (2011) argues that the interaction between contrasting emotions (i.e., anger and joy) is generative. I have concentrated on the more challenging and de-energising emotional experiences that alone, might ultimately reduce interest in participation. Fortunately, participants reported experiencing the positive experience of belonging in a non-hierarchical community as enlivening. Many participants acknowledged that they had matured through striving to manifest the principles of EDI. Increased self-confidence was connected with the experience of being accepted *while* revealing their more authentic selves (Algera & Lips-Wiersma 2012). Eli reflects how co-becoming in SELC forged a stronger sense of himself, which he marks by noting a non-hierarchical relationship between public (work) and private (home) expressions of self:

> I've been able to find a way to be more of myself. What I mean by that is, I don't necessarily have to change all that much between work and when I go out into the world.

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[92] Enspiral interview with Remi

And that's been great for my own development because at some point when I'm working somewhere else in the future, I'll have a stronger sense of myself going into it, rather than being influenced by the culture of the organisation more so (Eli, SELC).

A generator of positive emotions such as love, pride and excitement, belonging is a powerful motivator (Jasper 2011). The stimulating combinations of love and freedom arguably heighten participants' experience of working in a non-hierarchical organisation. In response to a question about their relationship with their organisation, Iona and Cam gave emotionally embodied responses that perhaps would be considered out of place in a hierarchical context. Iona described her experience of dynamic openness in FoEM "I feel nurtured and liberated. The flow of energy is fresh. Nothing is stagnant. I am naked". Cam experienced Pachamama Alliance as an intimate connection with himself and the world when he said, "It feels free, and loving, and connected. Diving in, going in, abandoning". These sensuous descriptions give an embodied dimensionality to Massumi's (2002, p. 36) description of freedom as "the perception of one's own vitality, one's sense of aliveness, of changeability".

The experience of freedom within the disciplined practice of a non-hierarchically governed organisation was recognised by several participants[93] across the case study organisations in their response to the *9 Cups* Tarot card (V Noble & Vogel 1981)(shown in Figure 44):

FoEM is the only place where I feel there's a lot of space to be really playful in the things we build and achieve as well - and creative in the way we go about it. That's one of the things I really love about this place; it has given this part of my brain [the opportunity] to really grow (Connie, FoEM).

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[93] Interviews with Iona and Connie (FoEM), Hailey (SELC), Veronica and Otto (Enspiral), Dani (Pachamama Alliance).

Figure 44: The essence of FoEM is freedom; it might look radical and disorganised, but in practice it is disciplined, methodical and strategic (Iona, FoEM). Image: 9 Cups (Noble and Vogel 1981)

Together, the words and enthusiasm associated with the *9 Cups* image communicate the possibility of wellbeing in the workplace community, where individuals experience their autonomy and safety and elect to express more of themselves in organisational life (May, Gilson, & Harter 2004). As this final participant reflection from Cali shows, sometimes personal and collective interests align in visions of societal renewal set in motion through non-hierarchical systems of governance:

What I am describing here is the whole, the interdependence and the independence, I would end by drawing a big circle, 100s of other nodes. My vision is that by 2027 a million people will be working in small groups based on trust and love, that are interdependent to some degree [and] where they want to be with other such organisms (Cali, Enspiral).

The potential embodied in Cali's vision of a multitude of interdependent organisations based on 'trust and love', has been shown to be conditional on collectives choosing to undertake the messy work of recognising difference and nurturing inclusivity as they become-with the principle of non-hierarchy.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the basis for social stratification, role and relational differentiation in Enspiral, SELC and FoEM. Accepting that society without power relations is not possible, participants in the non-hierarchical case study organisations intentionally engage with organisational culture as a source that will reproduce systems of differentiation through in normative traditions, privilege, and the attribution of hierarchies of skill and/or cultural difference. A flourishing, non-hierarchical organisation is explored as being conditional on participants' self-reflexivity and collective engagement with the ongoing emergence of hierarchies of difference and systemic inequalities of power.

Discursive group work methodologies can be practised to strengthen and embody the values of equality and inclusion in non-hierarchical cultures, providing tools that support direct, non-defensive engagement with relations of power. The possibility of renewing the imaginary of organisational governance occurs when participants address the emergence of systemic inequalities and learn to recognise difference in ways that substantially change cultural practice away from hierarchically structured social relations.

Chapter Eight - Concluding Reflections: Non-hierarchical Organisational Imaginaries

Introduction

My conclusion chapter begins by reviewing the core problems this thesis has addressed. This is followed by a summary of the theoretical and methodological approaches I have adopted in this short-term organisational ethnography, and an effort to draw out areas of originality and creativity that may be evident in my study. Thirdly, I review the contribution each chapter has made to the wider questions that this thesis has explored, and the implications of these contributions to a variety of possible audiences. In the fourth section, I reflect on some of the issues that arise from this thesis and identify some core areas beyond the scope of this thesis that may benefit from further research. Lastly, an overall reflection is made about the contribution this thesis has made towards opening possibilities to see governance differently.

The problem: The limitations of hierarchical governance in the Anthropocene

This thesis may be understood as a response to the problem of generating a paradigmatic level of change in organisational knowing, being and doing, without instigating systemic collapse. The response I have offered in this thesis is one that I have felt called to personally, having been left with a host of questions emerging from my career across a variety of diverse organisations, and one I have been called to intellectually following from my reading and engagement with three distinct bodies of scholarship, Earth Systems Governance (ESG), feminist organisation and cultural theory, and collectivist-democratic organisational research.

My thesis has proceeded based on the proposition that organisational governance influences how societies respond to change, evolve and survive. As I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, a growing body of scholars (Chen & Chen 2021; Delanty & Mota 2017; Dryzek & Pickering 2018; Hanusch & Biermann 2020; Plumwood 2012) have expressed concern that the lack of responsiveness by liberal-democratic institutional governance to anthropogenic climate change has revealed the paradigmatic limits of normative governance and leadership. In short: things need

to change. And yet, the *stability* of hierarchically structured organisation and *unitary* approaches to leadership habitually resist the destabilising effects of diversity, thus inhibiting organisational evolution. While ESG scholars have hypothesised that more deliberative and ecologically attuned forms of democracy could transform organisations from being driven by an ethos of consumption and competition to governing with an ethos of planetary stewardship, they have not necessarily addressed the in-situ, practice-based challenges involved in transforming *how* governance is *done*. It is this, the doing of governance differently, that sits at the heart of my thesis.

Considering the entrenched dynamics of hierarchically structured systems of authority, this study has investigated not for profit (NFP) non-hierarchically structured organisations as sites which open up potentially vital information about how organisational governance might be imagined otherwise. Given their positioning on the periphery of bureaucracy and corporate organisation, I have traced some of the greater freedom NFP have to explore different expressions of governance. Via an empirical exploration of the practice of four NFP non-hierarchical organisations, this thesis has demonstrated that collective engagement with the non-hierarchical values of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) can set in motion substantial shifts in social relations, participant experience and decision-making processes. Non-hierarchical governance is shown to be supported by transformative practices of ecological thinking and reflexivity, which are arguably more readily fostered in a relationally focused non-hierarchical organisational culture. Additionally, this thesis reveals that it is not hierarchies in isolation that are the problem for organisational governance, but a network of dualist relationships within industrial-capitalist culture that reproduce systemised expressions of power and domination in organisation.

An intense short-term, multi-sited ethnography of non-hierarchical governance

The approach I have developed throughout this ethnographic study has been to build and extend on critical strains of OMT literature, which has done an excellent job of acknowledging that hierarchical systems of authority are firmly rooted in the industrial-capitalist cultural imaginary. However, the added element that I have contributed to existing OMT literature via this thesis is an extended expression of what a posthumanist orientation might open in this field of research. Posthumanism embraces complexity and highlights unexpected relationships: disturbing human

centrism and surfacing our interdependence with the non-human world. It is my hope that by demonstrating the potential of posthumanism for OMT thought, that I might encourage other scholars to think in this direction alongside me.

This study furthers a vital body of literature initiated by Joyce Rothschild (2021, 2016; Rothschild & Whitt 1986a; Rothschild-Whitt 1979) who extended Max Weber's (1968, 1948) ideal-typology to include NFP collectivist-democratic organisations as exemplars of a substantive-rational organisation. The combination of a non-hierarchical structure and associated ideals of societal change has led collectivist-democratic organisations to be mostly omitted from academic management and leadership curricula. Organisational governance literatures remain strongly influenced by classical management ideals based on the ideal-typology of the bureaucratic-hierarchical organisation where attention is focussed on doing governance better. This approach has the effect of accepting the ontological assumptions about organisational purpose, the nature of people in organisation and the effect of hierarchically structured systems of authority on participants and organisational outcomes. Governance as an epistemology perpetuates bureaucratic-hierarchical governance and limits engagement with complex issues such as power and the externalisation of Earth's systems in organisational life.

Critical OMT perspectives, including feminist and queer inflected practices, have disrupted normative assumptions about people by deconstructing relations of power, identity, and concepts of leadership in organisation. Feminist scholars (Acker 2006, 1990; Ahmed 2012, 2007; Haraway 1988; Sinclair 2014, 1998) in particular have worked to reposition governance practice - often theorised as neutral, rational and objective - as a fallible human process influenced by situated knowledges and time-bound relationships. The abstract technical language of governance literatures has been analysed to reveal organisational assemblages that are biased towards reproducing the ideal 'leader' as male, heterosexual, white and middle class, whilst dismissing the contribution of 'other' presentations of leadership. This diverse critical body of OMT literature contributes to opening governance to a wider range of participants and developing language to talk about power.

As I have explored in this thesis, in concert with the discipline of economics, normative governance epistemology excludes consideration of the Earth's life-supporting services in organisational accounting. The methodological separation of the system of organisation from the natural systems they are dependent on, has created a conceptual blindness that limits organisational responsiveness to anthropogenic climate change. Complex systems theorists (Capra & Luisi 2014; Macy 1991; Meadows 2008; Wheatley 2006) have highlighted the epistemological incompatibility between simple, linear economic frameworks and the dynamic interconnected feedback patterns of complex natural systems. Further, as Australian First Nations scholars (Barlo et al. 2021, 2020; Bawaka Country et al. 2015; Graham 1999; Karulkiyalu Country et al. 2020) have observed, the ontology expressed in the rationality of the linear and reductionist organising logic of the western European intellectual tradition reduces connection to place and decreases awareness of the integrated relationships between ecological and social health and wellbeing.

However, as I have demonstrated in this thesis the resilience of normative governance in the face of these diverse critiques highlights the hegemonic relations which maintain the structural and strategic parameters of organisational governance and prevent the flourishing of systems other than hierarchy. Given that I have conceptualised normative governance as being bound by embedded dualist systems of thought, I do not underestimate the scope of the project to instigate organisation renewal which may become more responsive to the needs of people and planet. With a spirit of posthumanist eclecticism, I have drawn a diverse range of theoretical tools to assist my engagement with participants knowing, being and doing governance.

To distinguish non-hierarchical governance as a site of difference and to avoid creating a binary between hierarchy and non-hierarchical governance, I developed an *ecologies of organisation* approach. I have drawn on Gregory Bateson's (1972) framing of ecology in human systems as the interaction and movement of systems of ideas, in and between organisations and participants. As a central metaphor, I have differentiated participants knowing, being and doing in *emerging* ecologies of organisation from accepted values and norms associated with *dominant (normative)* ecologies of organisation, to reveal continuities and differences between ecologies.

To resist universalising, my investigation has intentionally blurred the conceptual and disciplinary boundaries between often siloed categories of 'individual', 'organisation', 'society' and the 'biosphere', so that the territory of 'organisational governance' is constituted within and between the grand scale of the biosphere and the granular specificities of participants' embodied knowing of 'becoming-with' a non-hierarchically structured organisation. I have found Val Plumwood's (2012), insights about dualisms to be invaluable in this thesis for deconstructing the influence of dualist systems on individual subjectivities, interpersonal relationships and organisations. It is my hope that this thesis has created the conceptual space to show what a non-hierarchical relationship with difference might look like in an organisation.

The mythic level of analysis has been explored in this thesis too, in order to reveal the deeply embedded and subjectively known dimensions of the non-hierarchical organisational imaginary as indicators of yearnings, desires and necessities for organisational participants in the Anthropocene. Theorised as being discovered via the senses, feeling and embodied sensation, archetypal images are taken as a 'felt' level of knowing. Engaging with this level of being has helped to uncover participants' less-conscious motivations and perceptions related to identity, purpose and meaning in non-hierarchical organisational governance.

Doing governance differently requires different ways of thinking and being together. Organisations demonstrating reflexivity have been theorised as generating a culture where autonomous participants work collaboratively and where participants are willing to scrutinise core goals and objectives with a critical mindset. Ecological thinking is a complement to reflexivity. Ecological thinking develops understanding of the non-linear characteristics of complex systems, bringing attention to the quality of relationships and the mutuality of interdependence. Both ecological thinking and reflexivity are recognised as being difficult to enact in hierarchical organisations, therefore this thesis has brought attention to the potential of ecological thinking and reflexivity in non-hierarchical organisation.

This ethnography follows non-hierarchical governance over multiple sites and combines short-term duration observations with more interventional methods that engage participants' propositional ways of knowing, through experiential and participatory methods to involve

participants' experiential and presentational ways of knowing. Across this thesis, I have had the benefit of working with data drawn from interviews, participant-generated drawings, observation, participatory dialogue and image selection and interpretation from over 60 participants in non-hierarchically structured NFP organisations in wealthy settler societies. The four organisations, who agreed to be named in this study, are Friends of the Earth Melbourne (Australia), Pachamama Alliance (United States), Enspiral Foundation (Aotearoa-New Zealand) and Sustainable Economies Law Center (United States).

I have demonstrated a posthumanist understanding of knowledge as both situated and partial by engaging with knowledge 'as becoming', in contrast with more conventional qualitative research approaches that might seek to determine and qualify fixed states of being in the objects of study. Theory is presented as insights, concepts and openings created through observations, analysis, and interpretation. This lighter, less universalising style of theorising is reflected in my guiding questions: firstly, to explore what changes are set in motion as participants work in a non-hierarchical system, and secondly, to demonstrate what the practice of non-hierarchical governance makes possible in organisational governance.

The discussion chapters, shaped by my distinctive fieldwork methods, build on Rothschild's (1979) eight common dimensions of organisation, to which I have added a ninth dimension of 'onboarding' to illustrate some critical distinctions of contemporary non-hierarchical practice. I have engaged with symbolic images and visual metaphors by using creative data collection processes (participant-generated drawing) and unorthodox visual tools (such as Tarot cards as an interpretive device). These different 'ways in' to collecting data and engaging with participants have opened exciting opportunities to radically re-imagine the possibilities of governance. Together, my particular mix of methodology and theory have been designed to amplify the non-hierarchical imaginary and reveal the potential of collectivist governance to move theory and practice of organisation beyond the limitations of hierarchically structured relations. Having now accounted for how I designed my study and the bodies of literature it seeks to extend, I will now move on to highlighting the key findings of this thesis.

Findings: 'People grow there' - Becoming-a-non-hierarchical co-leader

This thesis has framed the process of becoming-with a non-hierarchical organisation as a catalysing movement that transforms relationships, structure, policy, and practice. As several respondents observed: 'People grow here'. Tracing the circulation of principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion in governance decision-making in non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation in the Anthropocene, reveals a complex and moving set of relations that is quite resistant to a generalisable, linear summary. However, the distinctive effects of collectivist-democratic governance are *felt* in quality of the relations between individuals; *heard* in the tone and language used in governance; *seen* in the archetypal and metaphoric images chosen by participants, and *enacted* in the policies, projects and values prioritised by each organisation; and cumulatively *known* by their substantive results wider society within the biosphere.

The vacuum created by the absence of formal structural hierarchical systems of authority sets in motion a foundational ontological and epistemological movement *away* from the concentration in dominant ecologies of organisation on control via the disciplinary techniques of rule-based order. In Chapter Four, the transposition of legitimate authority from the 'one' authorised voice of leader and executive to 'many' self-authorising voices of the collective is felt by participants as a structural shift in social relations. The momentum of change is sustained by non-hierarchical *systems of inclusion*. Foremost of these is the practice of consensus and consent-based decision-making which repattern the collective for the transparent flow of knowledge and information, and inclusion of all voices. A myriad of daily micro-practices reduces the likelihood of *power-over* dynamics and purposefully distributes authority via the fractal design of horizontally arranged, intersecting, self-organising units.

Openness is created in a group when problem solving is approached as a critical inquiry. Consent-based processes generate ecological and reflexive thinking as the group seeks advice and feedback from their system of influence to decide the best solution at any point in time. However, the invitation to become *self-authorising* may uncover individual fears of failure and feelings of unworthiness as an equal in governing. Becoming a confident non-hierarchical participant can entail a subjective repositioning, at times a painful and lengthy process of healing and renewal, as

the absence of an external authority figure exposes the deep-seated attachments held by many participants to the certainty of a hierarchical command structure.

Non-hierarchical governance is recognised by the four NFP organisations as a substantive expression of their organisational mission for societal change towards, for example, environmental justice, social inclusion, equality, and wellbeing, among other things. Each organisation's non-hierarchical practice-structure is designed, and frequently attuned, to support achievement of agreed goals. Principle-based cooperative governance is adaptable to the locus and type of work, and responsive to meet specific requirements of the organisation and its participants, whether staff or volunteers. In Chapter Five, a different economy of power relations is made possible through structural supports, such as an equal remuneration policy and non-hierarchically structured roles and responsibilities. The 'glue' of shared values and the incentive of working to create a better world motivates participants to work cooperatively, setting in motion an ontological shift from individual focused advancement more aligned to generate *power-over*, to collective advancement and the possibility of *power-with*.

Joining a non-hierarchical organisation is distinguished in SELC, FoEM, Pachamama Alliance and Enspiral as requiring both a 'readiness' and 'willingness' to be an active organisational member in a relationally focused organisation. A condition of sustaining non-hierarchical social relations, organisational members are expected to take responsibility for their ongoing reflective self-awareness. The meta-level learning and change necessary in the paradigmatic movement of becoming-a-non-hierarchical participant is nurtured through place-responsive onboarding. Extended non-hierarchical processes of onboarding include variously; the study of political philosophy (knowing), practising communicating with non-defensive language (doing), and participating in experiential events intended to strengthen the connection between members (being), all which mentor participants towards exercising their voice as a *co-leader*.

In Chapter Six, the distinctive experience of belonging in a non-hierarchical organisation is revealed through emergent archetypal images of collectivist-democratic culture and work. Images of belonging in a safe and trusted workplace convey consent-based cultures as enabling

participants the freedom to be simultaneously collaborative and autonomous. Being together as a participatory community may be felt as an intense connection and as an easy 'hanging-out together' that holistically nourishes body, intellect, and soul. And yet, the vulnerability of the non-hierarchical human enterprise within the disruption of the Anthropocene magnifies participants' awareness of the enormity of the unknowable universe that is beyond human control.

A robust relational infrastructure is generated through the experience of relying upon each other and being 'seen' more authentically. However, the strong relational base sustaining non-hierarchical ecologies of organisation, exposes a tension between the desire to preserve relationships and organisational needs for direct communication as equals about issues of accountability. The archetypal circle form expresses the potency of the non-hierarchical collective experience, where the symbolic unity of the circle is manifested in the *power-to* effect change. *Working in circle* develops connection between participants, and the visibility and audibility of circle members enriches mutuality and strengthens appreciation of diversity as an indicator of organisational vitality.

Each organisation must discern their authentic methods to engage with relations of power and social stratification. Ongoing dialogue related to difference, diversity and inclusion can become normative when the *critical engagement with relations of power* is accepted as a necessary aspect of maintaining non-hierarchical relations. In an organisational community where power relations are habitually jostled about a diversity of perspectives can be heard and included in decision-making. When conflict is transmuted from being related to as a failure of disciplinary control, to being interpreted as a breakdown of trust and relationship, the collective becomes attentive to its wellbeing. Situated in predominantly hierarchical industrial-capitalist societies, the four non-hierarchical organisations learn through reflexive participation in globally spread communities of practice.

In Chapter Seven, conversations exploring women's emotional labour in Enspiral, and racial diversity and white middle-class values in SELC, illustrate that deeply ingrained class, gender, and racial identities are not easily or quickly altered. The ideal of the founder shows that even in a non-

hierarchical culture, the imaginary of the unitary leader continues to stimulate expectations, desires, and frustrations. It is possible to renew the experience of governance by nurturing the ground of relationship and openness created by reflexive processes and non-defensive communication protocols. Collective striving to manifest organisations permeated with the substantive effects of equality, diversity and inclusion can have a restorative effect on individual participants who experience the practice of governance as contributing to their personal sense of wellbeing and happiness. A significant contribution of non-hierarchical governance is its development of the collective capacity to grapple with difficult issues with respect and care for the entire relational fabric of the organisation.

Limitations and openings for future research

As a result of this research, I can see numerous potential pathways for future research. I will begin by reflecting on some of the limitations that arise from this study before identifying possible scope for further research in other non-hierarchically structured organisations.

Considering each case study organisations are English speaking and located in the Global North with a fairly homogenous cohort, a clear limitation of this research is the diversity of participants, the type of organisation and their geographical location. For future studies there is an opportunity to engage NFP organisations outside Australia, Aotearoa-New Zealand and the US, and especially to engage with organisations based in the Global South or in Australian First Nations communities where participants are differently influenced by the western European intellectual tradition. It should also be noted that whilst I interacted with a wide range of informants in each organisation (i.e., board members, staff, volunteers) gaps existed. For example, I did not engage with many participants who had chosen to leave the organisation and I did not meet any who were highly critical of non-hierarchically structured governance. These could be possible foci of future studies.

The concern with the lack of heterogeneity in non-hierarchical organisations has been investigated by recent collectivist scholarship, however there is significant scope to expand research to include perspectives from more racially and culturally diverse organisations. Another interesting line of research would be to follow participants who moved back into a hierarchically structured

organisation. It would be valuable to reflect on the learnings of such participants and whether they are able to transfer the best aspects of their non-hierarchical practice and understandings into other organisational contexts.

An aspect of this research that could be considered a limitation was my personal relationship with each organisation and having taken an appreciative stance. Reflecting on the ethical challenges of a participatory methodology with small organisations, future studies contemplating a similar research design might plan for a longer immersion in the organisation and undertake more than one reflective group conversation as these provided fruitful data which required greater continuity of participants to deepen and extend the conversation and create a more co-created research outcome. Alternatively, a less personal and more quantitatively oriented research project might bring other tools to consider the findings of this thesis about for example, wellbeing and satisfaction in non-hierarchical organisations. It would be valuable to refine demographic understanding of non-hierarchical organisations.

Including Pachamama Alliance, an organisation transitioning from hierarchy to non-hierarchy, was a valuable inclusion to this study. However, it might also be considered a limitation because the extent of the transformation moving between systems required a different research approach. As discussed in Chapter Four, to better understand the effect of their transition to non-hierarchy I discerned that Pachamama Alliance needed a longer research engagement. There are many for profit and NFP organisations who, like Pachamama Alliance, have adopted a non-hierarchical structure. This category of organisation is worthy of a specifically designed research project towards understanding how they might be better supported to transition their systems and practices and which parts of hierarchical and non-hierarchical practice can co-exist productively without reproducing systems of inequality as collectivist researchers have argued (Meyers & Vallas 2016; Sobering 2016).

This research has sought to inform practitioners in organisations prefiguring non-hierarchical governance. A limitation of this approach is the situated nature of findings, this research has not been designed to be generalisable and yet my discussion extends findings from abstract theoretical

explorations by ESG scholars calling for greater ecological thinking and reflexivity to transition normative governance (Eckersley 2020; Hammond, Dryzek, & Pickering 2020; Lepori 2019; Pickering 2019; White 2019). There appears to be more opportunity for situated empirical research of non-hierarchical organisations to contribute to the practice-based areas of concern raised by ESG scholars.

Finally, in this short-term, multi-sited organisational ethnography I have integrated three less commonly used elicitation methods: participant-generated drawing, the symbolic device of Tarot cards and a 'reflective' collective conversation with research participants to explore the data and test my initial interpretations. My approach extends the academic conversation about the value of creative and participatory methods within organisational ethnography, specifically with participatory and posthumanist researchers. There is an opportunity for further research on the contribution that can be made using these methods, or indeed an integrated combination of such methods in OMT and social science research more generally.

Emerging ecologies of organisation: Renewing governance in the Anthropocene

The quest that has motivated this study has been to open possibilities of seeing, doing, and knowing governance differently to meet the situated challenges of an Anthropocene Earth. This study has advanced understanding of NFP non-hierarchical governance and confirmed the capability of ordinary people to undertake the work of governance with integrity, commitment and skill. However, the magnitude of the cultural transition to structures-other-than-hierarchy explored in this research reveals a significant philosophical and practice gap not capable of being addressed by first-order analyses of governance or society, embedded as they are with dualist assumptions of organisational purpose, hierarchical modes of engagement and systems of accounting disconnected from the material reality of our interdependence with Earth's life-giving systems.

An experienced organisational practitioner, I have found the operational aspects of collectivist-democratic governance have not been the only remarkable feature of this research. What has also emerged is a different paradigm of organisation where the complex textures of human relationship in organisation is brought into focus. As I have demonstrated across the chapters of this thesis,

transitioning from hierarchy to non-hierarchy as individual or collective is an extended process of birthing that can be fraught with uncertainty and pain, as well as rich pleasures and potential.

To NFP organisational participants, this thesis offers several accounts of what non-hierarchical governance can make possible, what it can look and feel like, and why it can be so challenging. By considering four case studies, I hope I have offered NFP readers a more connected up imaginary of how work can be a vital experience of being connected in community with the Earth, of joy in being nourished by belonging and the power of experiencing oneself as a respected, self-authorising co-leader. And yet, as I have shown in this thesis, non-hierarchy can be deeply confronting.

While emotionally and intellectually rewarding, the movement to sustain non-hierarchical relationships that are equal, diverse and inclusive requires fortitude; the energetic exchange in a collectivist-democratic organisation is often far beyond the scope of normative organisation. For organisations struggling to realise their non-hierarchical values, this research highlights the importance of relationships that might sustain the rigours of non-hierarchical practice. It illustrates that this new paradigm of organisation requires all participants to renew their ways of communicating and listening together: Principles of EDI can only be constituted in social relations that are authentically respectful, caring and curious of difference.

Ideal presentations of leadership and governance are powerful imaginaries influencing the normative organisational field. The resonance of normative imaginaries of governance and leadership are often brought into relief as non-hierarchical participants engage with the unfamiliar subjectivity of co-leader. The different paradigmatic images that emerge in the non-hierarchical organisational field brought into being in this research, open the possibility of governance as a mundane or unheroic practice: Where all participants work to reason together as equals there are few decisions that a committed collectivist-democratic organisation cannot discern their way through. I hope that any NFP organisation participants who read my thesis feel that my work has done justice to their experiences and offers new provocations for thought and practice.

To the field of OMT, I hope this thesis demonstrates the potential of NFP consent-based cultures. It is my view that such cultures can nurture the ground for a dialogue of care and respect that can attend to the wounds created by centuries of patriarchal, capitalist, colonial logic. Becoming-with non-hierarchy is dynamic; non-hierarchical organisations are simultaneously robust, in the capacity to harness the cooperative power-to enact change *and* transitory, because relationality is actively constituted through being and doing together. Ideally, the interplay between collective participation, individual voice and the experience of power is always in motion in a non-hierarchical organisation. A 'being together' that is collaborative and exploratory reflects aspects of an emerging non-hierarchical ontology.

These dynamics change the premise of theorising, reducing the efficacy of fixed and generalised models and bringing the research focus to understand better the changes to knowing and being set in motion through doing non-hierarchical governance. If non-hierarchy is an aspirational state as I have suggested, the possibility emerges that other organisations might more tentatively step into experimenting with aspects of non-hierarchical governance, towards extending autonomy, self-organisation and creativity to all organisational members whilst appreciating the triggers that reproduce systemic inequalities.

The meta-order framing of organisational activity within the biosphere broadens the scope of this research beyond the customary anthropocentric focus of much OMT scholarship. This experimental repositioning of the biosphere within the system of concern to governance may at times be read as an unnecessarily complicated addition. And yet, it normalises the inclusion of the biosphere in OMT research *without* the biosphere being the central focus of the thesis *per se*. Further, by differentiating the higher scale of the biosphere and the very intimate scale of participant subjectivities, this thesis interrupts universalising tendencies that produce false equivalences of scale and importance between Earth and human enterprise.

As a doctoral candidate, approaching governance as *co-becoming* allowed the constituting effect of the non-hierarchical concept of difference to emerge into the knowing and being of this thesis, and into me. Witnessing the collective pleasure and mutual regard that infused many non-hierarchically structured meetings surfaced many of the wounds I have unwittingly carried and

reproduced as a participant in hierarchical systems of governance. This research has provided me with abundant evidence that governance meetings do not have to be infused with unspeakable feelings of discomfort.

The posthumanist inspired circle I 'convened' to produce this thesis included the case study participants, their organisational assemblage, my university supervisors, my ethnographic-theoretical-dialogue companion, and the conventions of PhD scholarship, among other things. Inviting the 'voice' of non-hierarchy into the circle, enlivened the effect of the guiding principles of EDI, helping me to 'stay with' the unruly difference this becoming-with enables. My circle honours the contribution of Australian First Nations scholars and their heritage of collective, non-hierarchical practice; becoming-together through story and knowledge helped me discern how the concept of non-hierarchy 'shaped' us, and how the concept of non-hierarchy is being shaped by our multiple our stories about organisational governance.

The Anthropocene continues to interrupt the imaginary of human rationality, the rising seas and melting ice have brought into question the logic of a system that has privileged human desire over the wellbeing of all other living systems on Earth. Identifying the conceptual barriers to effective governance for the Anthropocene is a first analytical step. Practising ways of knowing, being and doing governance that might meet the societal challenge of reducing carbon emissions and ceasing to degrade and destroy biospheric health that humans rely upon to support their life on Earth can be a next step that is open to many people.

In the hierarchically structured societies of post-industrial capitalism, movement away from hierarchical organisation is still a culture-shattering/transforming idea. However, the potency of the ecologically reflexive collectivist organisation is available to all participants and all organisations. The imaginary that resonated through the archetypal images of emerging ecologies of organisation is that when 'many voices' collaborate they create patterns that are indescribably beautiful. The practice of non-hierarchy offers a myriad of possibilities, both subtle and obvious, for collective renewal to the world.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Copyright permission Motherpeace Tarot cards

From: Karen Vogel <karen@motherpeace.com>
Date: Friday, 17 September 2021 at 3:54 am
To: Sarah Houseman <S.Houseman@latrobe.edu.au>
Cc: Vicki Noble <vicki@vickinoble.com>
Subject: Re: Request for permission to use copyright protected material in PhD Thesis

Dear Sarah,

I'm resending this because I used Vicki's old email and wanted to be sure you have her correct email and that she is included in this communication.

I checked with Vicki and we are delighted to give you permission to use the Motherpeace images in your thesis as well as for conference presentations and journal articles.

Good luck with your thesis,
Karen

Karen Vogel
Motherpeace Tarot
karen@motherpeace.com
motherpeace.com

> On Sep 15, 2021, at 11:40 PM, Sarah Houseman <S.Houseman@latrobe.edu.au> wrote:
>
> Dear Sir/Madam,
> **Title**: @1981 Motherpeace Tarot (V. Noble and K. Vogel)
> **Copyright owner**: U.S. Games Systems, Inc – 1983
> I plan to reproduce 7 Motherpeace Tarot cards to support my analysis as part of my Doctor of Philosophy thesis: *Emerging Ecologies of Organisation: Renewed Governance in the Anthropocene*, La Trobe University. The full request is attached for your reference.
> My dissertation is due to be submitted for examination in 1 month (mid-October 2021**).**
> **Expected publication:** Early 2022. **Distribution**: The Ph.D. dissertation will be available online to students and scholars via La Trobe University library. I may reproduce some or all of these 7 cards in conference presentations and journal articles after publication.
> Thank you for giving this request your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future. Please feel free to contact me if you require further clarification.
> Kind regards,
>
> Sarah Houseman
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Case study Interview questions 'SELC'   Date: Name:

New Governance for the Anthropocene: Becoming Dynamic and Regenerative seeks to investigate, understand and document the 21st century governance practices and structures developed by organisations striving to create better working environments and to meet their organisational vision. Changing governance practices and structures, particularly among non-profits with a goal of social transformation, is a leverage point. My purpose in this research is to inspire organisations by modelling new ways of governing, making this conscious shift accessible to other organisations.

Section 1: Purpose to explore and value the range of ways of knowing and being together each organisation uses in their governance practices

1. What drew you to SELC? (Prompt: what/who was of importance? What got you to be there?)
2. What were your expectations/anticipations and fantasies/ imaginings for this group and how did this unfold for you?   (Prompt: At what point did you have a sense of the common vision? How does your experience here contrast with other employment you have had?
3. What words characterizes the quality of your engagement as a group?

Section 2: Purpose for participants to critically reflect upon the impact internally (in individuals and the group) and externally (community, stakeholders, and environment) of their governance processes.

4. Please draw the organisational governance structure (Prompt: Think about how governance decisions are made, what does this look like? Give me an overview of how the energy flows between parts of the organisation)
5. How are SELC's assumptions about the world/change/people embedded in their governance structure? Impact of a non-hierarchical structure? SELC's unique decision-making processes. Example?

Section 3: Purpose for participants to appreciate the ways they have brought consciousness into their governance - to articulate the magic of their governance

6. What is your contribution to the work (internal/external) of the group?
7. Are there any specific or unique processes related to people (Prompt: recruitment/day to day management/ feedback/ disciplinary/decision-making/ termination) used by this organisation to distinguish its values?

8. As a visionary organisation with a clear mandate to transform society. What/who motivates, provides leadership and vision here? (Prompts: Strategic goals? Community? Individuals? Vision/Mission? History? Board?)

Section 4: Purpose to identify the seeds of the various transformative shifts the organisation may have experienced as a group.

9. Where does the organisational shadow reside? Taboo topics that you are aware of that are hard to explore in relation to leadership, power and governance? (Prompt: how do you censor yourself here? what causes you sadness or anger? Are these addressed in any review/collective processes?)

10. Comment on processes used/ group dynamics/ how conflicts were named /enacted /resolved. Celebrations? Example?

Section 5: Purpose explore Tarot hermeneutic & opportunity for a final reflection

11. Select 3 cards: a card for you in this organisation, a card for its essence or vision, a card of its challenges. Title each card.

12. Reflecting on your experience at SELC through this conversation, what is alive for you now? Any feedback to me about this process? (Prompt: words, feelings, a particular event?)

Appendix 3: Summary of 'Words that characterise your engagement as a group'

These lists were collated from interview q 3. What words characterizes the quality of your engagement as a group? The groupings were presented at the RGC. The words in bold were used by multiple people.

1. FoEM's engagement as a group …

- **Personalised**, naturally thoughtful, aware, engaged and **inclusive**, loving, social, playful, creative, joyous, spontaneous, time generous and burdened (administration team) and **careful** (interpersonal), helpful, balancing burnouts and giving, distant when first met
- Unified by a deep commitment to social justice and the environment. Working to be free from assumptions and prejudice, privilege that can have strong feelings and take action
- Giving **support and solidarity**, empowering, sharing knowledge and providing supportive accountability, here people are cared for regardless of role/position
- **Open** to new ideas, lacking cynicism, willing to debate, participative, inviting contribution, comfortable, **challenging** the world, enthusiastic, valuing individual perspectives, **adaptable**, radical, **flexible**, emergent, living in words
- **Strategic**, detailed, expert, knowledgeable, coming from a place that everything is connected, long term thinkers, stayers, focusing on outcomes rather than the growth of the organisation, having the clarity in the collective vision it achieves
- Like a communal share house, it is a nice place: **welcoming, collaborative**, loving, transient, messy and frustrating, socially flexible (bounce ideas around), both inconsistent and constant, always talking to each other

2. Enspiral's engagement as a group …

- **Entrepreneurial**, connected, networked, rapid paced, Open Source, technical literacy, progressive, community, unashamed to be different, complex, chaotic, changing patterns of society that only support some people's processes
- **Generous, ambitious** vision, disruptive, **intelligent**, committed, radical thinking, fearless, pragmatic and rational, internally motivated, collective intelligence, dynamic, dangerous, exhausting, overworked
- Curious, open, questioning, generative, divergent/convergent, diversity, Maori culture, **creative, experimental**, collaborative, enabling, welcoming, thoughtful, aware, conscious, careful, quietly and calmly moving forward with strength, difficult to pin down, living thing, complex and changing fast, alive
- Acknowledgement of humanness, explore doing things that value people, unashamed to be different, grateful, **holistic**, whole, self-actualisation, personal growth, emphasises everyone's contribution, not just one side and perspective
- **Trust** (assume positive intent), **authentic** (whole self comes to work), honest, truthful, integrity, optimism, deliberate, intentional, compassionate, protection, wholesome

3. SELC's engagement as a group

- **Trust,** trusting, **kind**, patient, warm, **caring**, loving, honest, compassionate, soft, communal, family, comfortable, collective, convivial, friends, **community**, huggers, fun, laughing, silly, humorous, high-quality engagement.
- Optimistic, high energy, enthusiastic, ambitious, radical, positive, mutual enjoyment, **intentionality,** space and openness, open-minded
- Democratic, collaborative, cooperative, **creative**, co-creative (seeking and integrating feedback), visionary, explorative, healthy, consent-based practitioners, nuanced relational skills (no assumptions or interpretation), engaging together using high quality interpersonal skills and strong commitment, EQ and IQ.
- Fundamentally ideologically aligned. A good cultural fit, can be exclusionary a combination of age eloquence and written skill also why we have been successful, we don't have any arguments.
- Sensitive to others, **respectful**, engaging with deference and humility, working with integrity, **thoughtful**, building a strong base of trust, diligent, excellent work product
- **Reflective**, **self-reflective**, interested, self-moderating, self-critical, constructive, deep listeners.
- Overwhelmed, frenetic, stifling, conflict avoidant, veiled, reserved, **hesitant,** 'skirting around', avoiding 'sticky' areas, with the culture of white, middle-class professionals.

4. Pachamama Alliance's engagement as a group (collated from interviews, there was no RGC)
- **Building trust,** generative, compassionate, sensitivity, **committed**, committed to certain things, acknowledged/seen, open, willing 'not to know'
- Skilled, coming together with mutual **respect**, affinity, hopeful
- We are an alliance, a partnership, a dreamer's perspective, idealistic bent
- Cautious, uncertain, becoming more creative, still careful, still constrained, figuring it out

SELC Organisation Policies

Hiring

Qualities we seek: We will seek staff with the following qualities, and we think very carefully before hiring a Core Staff member that is lacking in any of the following:

a. Kindness and warmth

b. Strong commitment to economic, racial, and environmental justice

c. Strong written and oral communication skills

d. Good time management and task management

e. Diligence and attention to detail

f. Honesty, integrity, and humility

g. Sense of humour

h. Tech savvy or quick to learn new technologies

i. Independent, self-motivated

j. Self-confident

k. Works well with others

l. Flexible and open-minded

m. Works well in a variety of settings (remotely, office, events, legal cafes, meetings)

n. Willing to take on a diversity of roles within the organization, per SELCocracy's dynamic system of assigning roles

o. Not strongly driven by a desire to get fame and attention

p. Sees work with SELC as more than a job; sees it as a way to live what they love

q. Values the "unconventional" nature and outlook of the organization, including SELC's mission, communication styles, governance, and operational structure.

(Sustainable Economies Law Center 2016)