

HOLDING TENSION, TRUSTING PROCESS

Reading Woven Threads: Principles of Working felt like a quiet affirmation of so much that is vital and often left unsaid in our work. It captures the rich and complex territory we navigate when working with people and place. The principles outlined are not a checklist or toolkit, but something deeper – a moral compass for those of us committed to participatory, place-based practice.

What struck me most is how these principles don't shy away from difficulty. They acknowledge paradox. They invite us to work through uncertainty rather than around it. As someone who has worked for years at the intersection of culture, community, and place, this honest grounding is refreshing and necessary. We need more of this – more language that allows for nuance, more leadership that is comfortable with not always having the answers.

The call to 'trust the process' is a familiar one, but here it is rooted in a recognition that change is rarely linear. Instead, it emerges through long-term relationships, accumulated small actions, and the courage to co-create without knowing exactly where we'll land. This feels especially important at a time when many of us are still pushed to demonstrate short-term outcomes to funders or partners, often at the expense of deeper, slower work.

The invitation to take seriously the 'small and quiet' is another crucial provocation. In a world obsessed with scale, metrics, and visibility, it is powerful to be reminded that everyday acts of listening, noticing, and showing up can build profound belonging. What might our projects look like if we began by mapping absence as well as presence? If we designed from lived experience first, not organisational need?

And perhaps the most generative thread woven through the piece is that of civic power. Not just as an outcome, but as a way of working – in dialogue, in solidarity, and with care. The reminder that nature is a co-creator, not just a setting, felt particularly timely. It prompts us to consider more-than-human perspectives in shaping place. What kinds of projects become possible when we listen not only to people but also to land, to seasons, to species?

There are quiet challenges in this piece too – ones that those of us in leadership roles should take seriously. How are we making space for different voices in our structures and decision-making? Are we really listening, or just appearing to? What infrastructures are we putting in place for long-term, relational work, especially when project funding ends?

Woven Threads gives us a generous and grounded provocation. It reminds us that this work is not about heroic interventions, but about steady, values-based practice. About learning to sit with complexity and walking alongside others. I hope those who attended the gathering carry these principles forward, and I hope others in the field take a moment to reflect on how they show up in their own work.

Let's keep the conversation going. What tensions are you holding right now? And what might become possible if we worked through them, together?