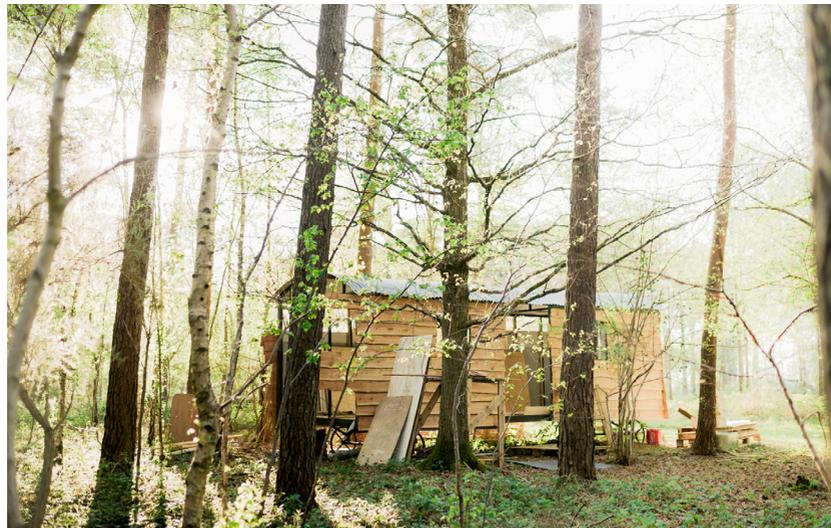


# HOW THEN SHALL WE LIVE?

How will we respond to Brexit? To hypernormalisation, to supercomplexity?  
To the housing crisis, to loneliness, to our depleting environment,  
to refugees on our shores, to Trump's Tweets to our own apathy?

Do we protest? Do we petition? Shall we create?

How do we respond to the future of AI and VR? Does it have to be  
centralised? Does it have to be busy? Will it be through capitalism?  
Does it have to be so bloody loud? Can we have our cake and eat it?  
If so what ingredients do we need? To flow? To flourish? To grow? Together?



This handbook is a collection of thinking from Dave's  
10 years experience of leading businesses, brought to  
the surface in the woods and to life in collaboration with  
illustrators, photographers, musicians, designers and  
printers from within the **@corcocreators** community.

Created 100% together!



DAVE ERASMUS

To mum and dad, I love you.

To my family and dear friends, thank you.

To all of you who have said yes to making  
or living or travelling with me!



# WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO

The Wiston estate for creating this space for me.  
And to Toby, Rick, Ali and Chaz for teaching me this year!

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Virginia, your understanding of my messy mind  
and mastery of your art will always be a gift to me.

@@friendsofvirginia

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and the long rambles with the ironing board desk, creating order out of chaos.

@@vickleberry

Alex, your energy and openness to print this handbook on what  
is normally reserved for sheet music feels absolutely fitting and  
a great feeling to deliver this end to end in community.

@@business\_bokeh\_and\_brunch

Erin from Down Under for sending in your creativity  
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@@thecuriouscosmos

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Steve Booker @@stevebooker

Jon Bryant @@jonntybryant

Marie Francesca @@marieefrancesca

Oliver Hall @@mroliverhall

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And to those who came to Corcovado from around the world  
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\*Basically, ask nicely and we'll work something out!



This handbook is printed on 100% recycled paper and the cover is coated card  
produced under the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification  
(PEFC) promoting environmentally, socially beneficial and economically viable  
management of forests for present and future generations.

## A NOTE ABOUT THE HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is to help create awareness and a little inspiration in us. The tools in here are devised to help us peel back the assumptions baked into our lives. This comes from a belief that maturity isn't found in building walls around our beliefs and barricading behind our doctrines but rather questioning them and beginning to look at them from as many angles as possible, to see them as tools which help us to grow along our path. The aim is to help us to navigate life and be empowered to continually reflect and see the ways in which we separate and box ourselves in.

Corcovado is a space protected for human experience in its purest, rawest and most unknowable, unquantifiable, and unexplainable terms. A deeply ontological subjective experience that transcends our rationale and our understanding without letting people labour it with hanging theological doctrine, miss it through technological distraction or reduce it through scientific explanation. To just be present and enjoy it.

We call this V1 as year one in the woods is affectionately known by cocreators as version 1, therefore all creative products from the first year in the woods are V1 creations. It gives us permission to publish and get excited about how quickly the material will evolve and develop once it is with you.

Please do share your comments with us so we can improve the accessibility of the material for V2.

## A NOTE TO YOU

In here you will find seven different elements. Each attempt to help you look at the world in different ways through different lenses using different ways of thinking, experiencing and engaging. You may connect with one or several of these elements, or none of them. It is just as important to know what you don't understand as what you do - it's about noticing what resonates and what doesn't. Hopefully this handbook will create more questions than answers.

So if it all seems like gobbledygook except for one idea or element then be encouraged - that's exactly the idea! Corcovado thinking is a state of mind.

This handbook is not a road map, it is not written for 'the market', and it is not complete. Corcovado and this handbook were specifically created for creative flourishing. Come and see what you make with nature - write your own thoughts, ideas and questions in the spare margins throughout the handbook, and share your reflections with **#corcothinking** on Twitter and Instagram.



05 • SUN • CORCOVADO



13 • MOON • THE UNKNOWN



21 • RIVER • FLOW



29 • EARTH • RISK



37 • HUT • HOME



45 • DEER • 'OTHER'

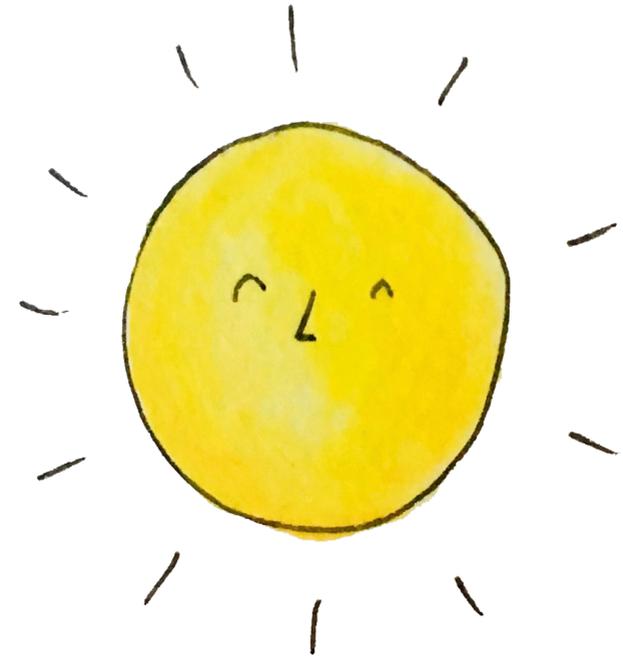


53 • BUTTERFLY • DANCE

SUN

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CORCOVADO



# THE THIRD EPISTEME

Corcovado version 1 began with a hut in the woods in 2016. But this journey really started more than two years ago when I travelled to the Corcovado rainforest Costa Rica to get space away from this crazy modern life. That place felt like the heart of creative flourishing, with 2.5% of the world's biodiversity existing under one canopy. After three weeks with no phone and no Internet I was able to gain a perspective on the life I had been living in a way I had never managed before. Costa Rica is a very special place. On the social progress index Costa Rica is not the most progressed but, pound for pound, it gives its people more freedom, safety and opportunity than any other country. It is crazy efficient! It has no army. It has the most biologically diverse place in the world. And when you go there and meet the people, you see the difference in their kindness. The way they treat others is different to any other country I've been to. I was so impacted by the Corcovado rainforest and the culture of Costa Rica that I wanted to try and figure out how could I build a lifestyle around what I had observed and gained, and how I could share it with other people. This is where the Corcovado project emerged.

This first element is called sun because one of the simplest things that happens each year is that we literally go once around the sun. There's something so basic in a paradigm shift when we realise that we rotate around something rather than it following us around the place! Before Copernicus figured that out, we thought the sun revolved around us. The first hunter-gatherer

way of knowing was by trusting our senses. We saw the sun rotating around us and thought that must be what is happening in reality. Figuring out through scientific calculations and measurements that our senses were not telling the truth, and actually our perception of reality was not synonymous with reality itself, marked the second great episteme (way of knowing).

We are moving into the third episteme, a way of knowing that is no longer purely bio-centric. What we can experience is no longer limited by the analogue and biological limits of the physical world that all of humanity has experienced until now. The period we are now entering has incomparable existential risk because we are going through an evolutionary step change. We are building tools a lot quicker than we are building the wisdom that we need to know in order to use and engage with them properly to be able live a good life in the context of the constraints that we have including the environment and how to protect and preserve it for us and our future generations. This means that we need to spend some serious time thinking about how we engage.

As we now move into version two of Corcovado, it goes from a personal experiment to a social experiment. My hope is for this to go beyond an entertaining relationship through YouTube to a collaborative, co-creating experience for all who want to from around the world, both in the analogue and in the digital.

# THREE DOT THEORY

The human mind is a wonderful and powerful prediction engine. It is continually making models of the world around it to learn its behaviour and try to act accordingly. What we choose to do in the first three moments of an idea's life sets often the trajectory for the rest of it. This Three Dot Theory can be applied to individuals, to ideas and to projects.

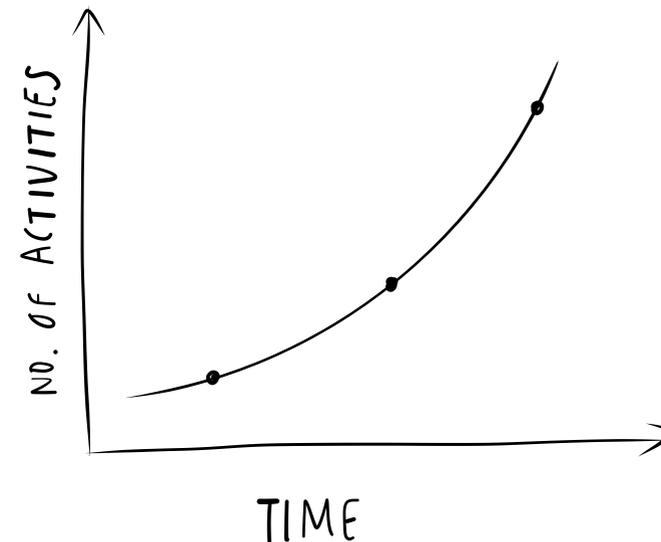
The first thing to do is to begin, to express something to get a dot on the page. Once you have a dot on the page you're in the game but with only one dot there is no way for the viewer to create an effective mental model of the momentum. There's something going on but what we can't tell the direction of travel or if it was a one off. With two dots, however, a relationship emerges. We can begin to see what kind of line the project is on, how long it took between stages and whether there's a dramatic change or repetition. We have a sense of direction but cannot yet understand the trajectory, the acceleration or deceleration. This is the importance of the third dot. When we make the third dot we get a real understanding of where this project is going and at what kind of rate.

If we don't think carefully about the first three moves we make in a project or idea, we can bore or alienate those people that we want to engage. If we don't take enough risk, or we take too much risk, it makes it difficult for people to engage - however much they like you or your project.

For Corcovado, the first dot was to engage personally for a year in the woods on my own and invite pals to come visit. The second dot is to

create a modern hamlet of huts, a space where 10 to 20 people can be experiencing at a time. The third dot is to then collate, curate and support what happens as a result of the first two dots. The aim is to make this a network and more of a movement, and I believe it is critical to not control it.

This approach of leaving the third dot open to the network may not be the right approach for the idea that you are working on. But the underlying principle remains the same: the first three moments set the tone for the rest of the project. So, are you going to take big leaps? Are you going to be consistent? What trajectory do you want those who are looking at your project to think it is on?



**Dot One:** Engage personally for a year in the woods

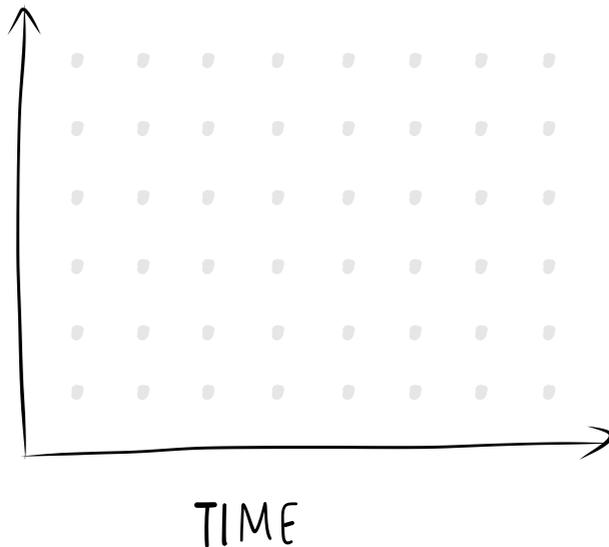
**Dot Two:** Create a modern hamlet of huts

**Dot Three:** Collate, curate and support - but not control

## THREE DOT THEORY

A great way to engage with an idea is to map it out on paper. Below is a blank Three Dot Theory graph for you to fill in. So have a go for yourself - have a good think about your dream, what you care most about, what you'd love to do. Scribble in your dots and let's begin to think about how you would like to see that project manifest itself in the world.

Hopefully by going through this process you will increase awareness not only for what your dreams are but also what might be the most helpful pace to go about materialising them.



**Project / idea / dream:**

**Dot One:**

**Dot Two:**

**Dot Three: `**

## AROUND THE CAMPFIRE



### THE UNIFYING POWER OF BELIEF

It seems to me that happiness comes through communal unity. And it seems to me that communal unity happens when people rally around existential ideas. But beliefs run deep and the practise is not about doing but about being. And once you start to have a structure that allows you to come together regularly to focus on our being then the relationship that we enjoy from that place brings us connectedness, happiness and a flourishing life. When we build our friendships around the 'doing' of life, often they don't run as deep and don't make us as happy and are more transactional. So the question is: in a world where people have different beliefs and different practices, can we still organise ourselves to commit and come together regularly to consider our beliefs in order to experience the kind of community that we desire? Perhaps we could say that it is not having a unified belief that is what gives us community, but simply organising around belief can give us community. If we agree that organising around beliefs is a good thing that helps develop character then that is a wonderful thing. So maybe we could begin to invite people to organise and congregate regularly to explore belief in its entirety without needing to prescribe what that belief is.

MOON

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THE UNKNOWN



## IN THE STILLNESS AND THE SILENCE

Of all the beautiful illustrations in this handbook, I think the moon is my favourite. It is cheeky and peaceful, and in that way redemptive because the night-time had always been painted to me as a place of darkness and fear. But during my first year in the woods it has been a source of the greatest adventure and spiritual awakening. The stillness and the silence of the night left me space to engage with things outside of the busy normality of the modern way of life. Walking through the woods in the pitch black I learned how to walk very slowly, feeling my way through my feet rather than my eyes.

In this second episteme we seem to have learned to trust science more than our senses - in the west at least our cultural basis. Our whole basis for engaging with the world is around what we can rationally and logically prove to be true. It's a fairly sensible way of operating in the world but what it doesn't account for is the unknown - the negative space, the part of reality that is as of yet unscientifically proven. The great insights of life, whether small and mundane or existentially magnificent, have and will always come when we look in the liminal space. When we draw our focus to the gaps between and allow the boxes to go blurry.

So it's not just about the known, but the unknown as well. How do we know? And how do we know that we know? One source of knowledge is epistemology: the observer objective knowledge. The other kind of

knowledge is ontological experience: observer and participant subjective knowledge - something that can only be experienced. We might call the unknown the spiritual part of life. Whatever the doctrine, philosophy, theology or story you grew up with, no one can deny that there is a significant chunk of our experience that is as of yet unaccounted for in the scientific sense. The role of science in the case of humans is to create epistemically objective claims often about ontologically subjective experiences - to create data about subjective experiences. But the space that the moon has created for me is a space to engage with this other part of life that is not as obviously knowable or quantifiable.

Maybe in generations gone by, when life seemed more linear, it was easier to feel in control but that privilege is rapidly floating away from us. Our ability to engage with the unknown may well be the key to engaging well in an unprecedented future. In the Unknown Enquiry we're beginning to try and look directly at our relationship with the unknown to begin to bring into focus our relationship with it at different levels of our life.

# THE UNKNOWN ENQUIRY

The Unknown Enquiry began as a 48-hour immersive experience in woods in Corcovado this year, developing into a series of questions to help enquire deeply about an individual's relationship with the unknown in different parts of their life. The purpose of an enquiry is not to get to the correct answer, but through the power of querying and self-examination we can begin to call into our consciousness things that had otherwise remained under the surface. Below each question on the opposite page there is space for you to go on this journey yourself. Take time to create from each question and see where it leads you.

## **How do we relate to the unknown in what is 'real'?**

How does our relationship with the unknown affect how we engage with the existential parts of our life? If we became more comfortable with the unknown, how would that effect our beliefs?

## **How do we relate to the unknown in 'ourselves'?**

How are we fearful of exploring new parts of ourselves? When we realise that we don't know something how do we feel about not knowing? Do we get excited at the opportunity to learn something new, or do we run away from fear of embarrassment or failure?

## **How do we relate to the unknown in 'other'?**

When we meet someone that we can't model very easily or doesn't fit in our boxes or looks different from us, are we excited by the opportunity to meet someone different and new or do we worry about the risk it presents to us?



MORNING :

HOW DO WE RELATE TO THE UNKNOWN IN WHAT IS "REAL"?



AFTERNOON :

HOW DO WE RELATE TO THE UNKNOWN IN "OURSELVES"?



EVENING :

HOW DO WE RELATE TO THE UNKNOWN IN "OTHER" ?

## AROUND THE CAMPFIRE



nature can handle you,  
it can handle your loneliness, your boisterousness  
the varying parts of your personality  
the ups and downs of your energy  
and your different interests and desires  
it can hold you  
but it requires respect  
it asks us to plead with it for mercy,  
to look kindly upon us and not destroy us  
how we think about the creation says how we  
think about the creator  
how we engage with creation tells us how we  
engage with the creator  
in a world that is breaking at the seams  
nature can hold us and cope with us  
it can care for us and cater for us  
what a home it is to us  
rock steady.

RIVER

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FLOW



# THEORY OF INTELLIGENCE

The first big natural milestone I was looking forward to seeing in the woods was the seasonal brook flowing for the first time. It was already autumn when I arrived in the woods and there wasn't much in the way of new life springing forth. It was still a few months before I was to give my first lecture on my theory of intelligence as interaction. I had been working on this theory for more than 18 months, learning from various specialists, teachers and professors from around the world. I realised that our philosophy of intelligence drives a lot of how we organise societies and organize ourselves, but the word intelligence is not well defined and the concept that lies behind it is not clear. It has massive ethical implications and has been a tool used in propaganda throughout the industrialised era. Yet no one could give me a decent definition how it actually occurs. This idea is thought about in many disciplines and holds the keys to our future through machine intelligence. But a biologist will give you a different definition from a psychologist

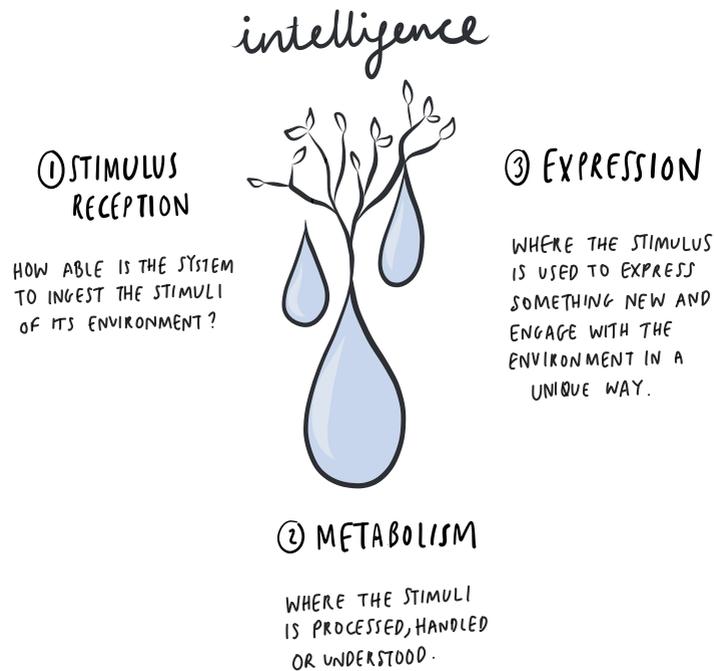
It was only sitting in the woods and waiting for the river that I found clarity in understanding how intelligence manifests. All the definitions I had read told me tell me that it is static and comes only from inside us. But nature has been showing me a different paradigm for understanding where intelligence arises from. As winter set in and the river began to flow, it became my teacher. It brought to life the idea of emergence that I had been reading, and how it holds a central role in our relationship with machine intelligence.

If we ask ourselves, 'what is a river?' or 'who owns the river?' can we say that the land owns the river, or that the water owns the river? Does the river still remain if we remove something from the equation? Without the land we just have water. Without the water we only have a riverbed. The concept of the river is therefore owned by the relationship of the land and the water, and is an emergent property of the relationship between them. If you remove one of those participants then the river ceases to exist. This emergent effect can also be said about intelligence. It is the creative process by which life happens. It is an occurrence, yet the dictionary tells us it is a noun - nothing more than a classification. In our case, it occurs from us relating to the world around us. Intelligence cannot be demonstrated in a vacuum, it can only be demonstrated in relationship. To truly help people flourish we must find the language to look directly at the process itself.

Examining both our environments, and our relationship with it, is therefore vital to understanding ourselves and what we can create in this world. The purpose of good work is to allow people to creatively flourish in the place that they find themselves, to help unblock their ability to cope and engage with their environment, and to encourage a sense of flow.

# FLOW STATE

This thing we call intelligence can only be observed in action, and the action involves three deeply interrelated stages. The first stage is the receiving of stimulus through our senses and previous experiences. The second stage is our ability to interpret the information that we are receiving. And the third is to be able to assemble a response and act with agency back into our environment. No sooner have we acted with agency than the cycle begins again, as this act creates new knowledge that automatically becomes a new source of information for considering our very next action.



Flow is the term given to the moments of peak performance and optimal state of consciousness where time and self-critique vanishes, problem solving becomes automatic and performance is highest. Flow state, coined by the Flow Genome Project and described as "optimal states of consciousness... where you feel your best and you perform your best", is at the optimum end of this flow spectrum. I am fascinated to see what our world would look like if we concerned ourselves primarily with the unblocking of systems and appreciated people's work who were successfully able to get systems to flow - be that human, biological or societal.

As you look at these stages, where do you think that you might be finding blockage in your ability to creatively engage? Have you put yourself in a position to take in good stimulus? Have you exercised the muscles required to crunch that data effectively?

In her book *The Artist's Way*, Julia Cameron has a wonderful exercise called Morning Pages. Cameron describes Morning Pages as a clearing exercise; writing down whatever crosses your mind. In a similar fashion, to get your creative juices flowing, try and fill the following page to explore where there may be blockage in your life and where you've felt the most flow. I encourage you to write without stopping and without self-critique. Try not to stop writing until the page is full and see where this process takes you.



EARTH

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RISK



# THE GREAT CONSTRAINT

Before this year I had never grown anything. A year on, I have now grown potatoes, spinach and sweet corn that I have tended to myself. But if I don't recognise when my crops are ripe, they quickly become rotten and die, without having a chance to fulfill their original purpose.

On a daily basis the woods remind me of life's great constraint: the fact that we have as of yet been unable to unlink life from death. And, as such, our knowing that life will come to an end for each of us creates a basis for what we call risk. Without death, risk would not be an interesting concept; it frames life and all the choices we make.

The great constraint of death puts a great value on time. And with so little time, opportunity cost is the biggest unspoken cost. It is the cost of the next best thing, because with every single thing we choose to do, we are choosing not to do absolutely everything else - with that day, that bit of money, that space of time.

Anybody who wants to live a thoughtful life, who are responsible for others and in that simple way has leadership capacity, ought to take seriously the notion of risk in order to manage their precious commodity of time well. Risk is a small but very broad word. It covers many very distinct areas that are often lumped together. There are personal aspects of risk: physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and financial. And these different types of risk are often not talked about.

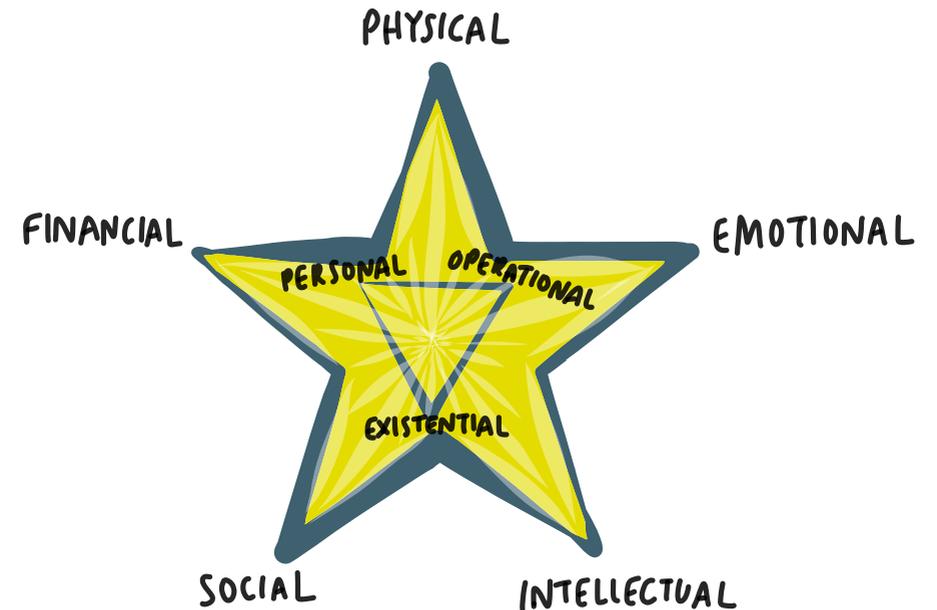
Perhaps the concept of engaging with the unknown or even reading this very page and engaging with Corcovado thinking is a risk. And in that case, I absolutely encourage you to ask yourself, what is the safest investment of the time, money and limited resources you are given? I believe the safest investment is in relationship. The problem with being busy is that it prevents us from making that very investment. For me, coming to the woods has created that space to examine my relationships and myself. Experimenting with an ON+OFF grid lifestyle has given me the breadth and depth I needed. It's about trying to hold the tension - one foot in the man-made digital world and one in the natural analogue world.

So we must ask ourselves, what is it, in this century, to live with a sense of understanding the presence of the analogue and the depth that it presents, but also all the opportunities that we have to connect across the whole world instantaneously? How do we do that well?

# UNDERSTANDING RISK

Some people are fantastic at understanding and operating with financial risk at an appropriate level yet will struggle to take the emotionally risk of being vulnerable with those that mean the most to them. We appreciate those around us who can healthily engage with all these elements of risk. They are often the characters that we ask to be in leadership positions, and we ask them to manage three different layers of risk: personal, operational and existential. There is a sense of powerful purpose that comes from leaders that have their personal capacities and their ability to take risk matched up to their organisations' capacity and ability to take risk, in light of the biggest and most important existential threats that are occurring in our lives.

Take some time to think about each of these personal outer points and enquire where your relationship is at with them. Are you avoiding taking risks in some areas, or unhealthily binging in others? Which area should I be pushing myself out there more, and where do I need to rein it in? How do I get to an optimum level of risk for me? It's a deeply personal thing and only you can truly know where you have gone too far or not gone far enough. No one else can give you the answer for this. Focus on the five personal aspects of risk, as the three different layers of risk come out of recognising these personal risk aspects and whether you are engaging with them in a healthy way.



## AROUND THE CAMPFIRE



The whole idea of seasons has fallen apart for me over the course of this year. The idea that there's a winter, and then there's a spring, and a summer, and an autumn. I realise now that those are just convenient labels to try and break down the year. But really it's a dynamic process that's constantly evolving. The best I can really say about the seasons, having seen them change is that winter is becoming spring. Spring is becoming summer. Summer is becoming autumn. Autumn is becoming winter. There's never a moment in the woods when I can't show you two seasons existing at the same time. One thing is falling away and the next thing is coming forth. It's forced me to embrace a more dynamic understanding of how the world and life in this creative unfolding is consistently changing.

Photo: Marie Francesca, April 2017

PLEASE DOODLE ON ME

HUT

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HOME



## THE BUSINESS OF TREES

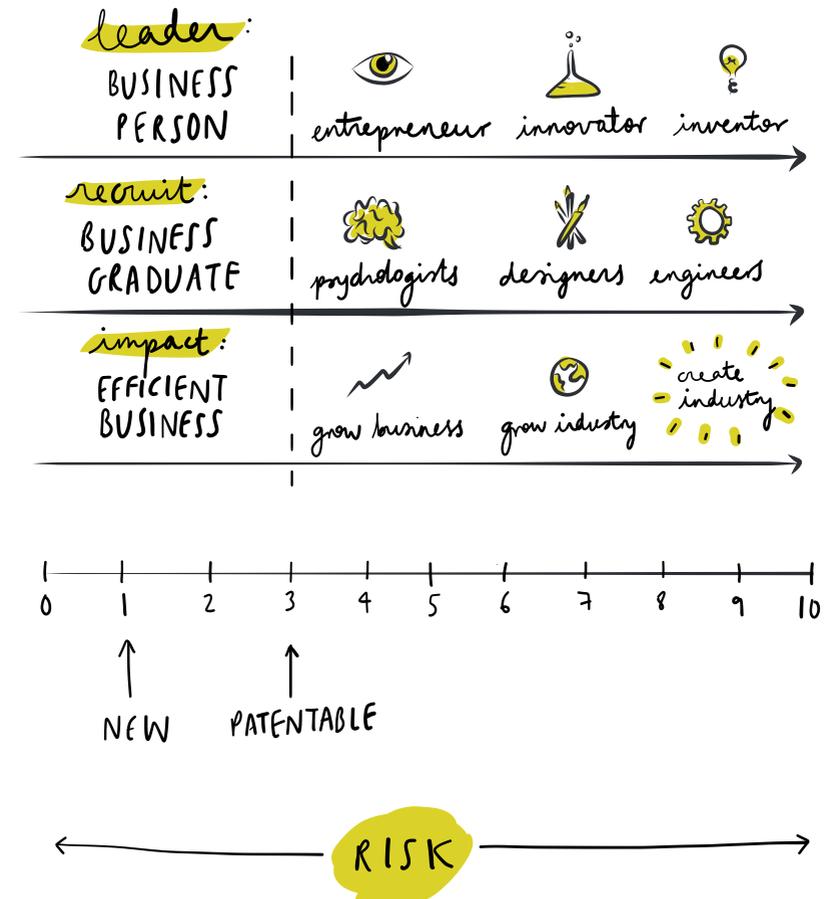
All the other elements until now are observations of nature, but this chapter is called hut because wheeling in a Shepherd's hut into the woods took me from being a visitor to an inhabitant. It allowed me to consider how I could get the most amount of experience out of the woods while making the least amount of impact. Living lightly in the woods works for me not only on a philosophical level with how I want to engage with nature and respect it, but also on a practical level allowing to me to begin by buying and building huts. If I hadn't found the Shepherd's hut, a year on I would still just be talking about starting and I wouldn't have actually experienced all that I have in the woods. And, as we've discussed, time is the most rare and valuable commodity that we possess. In our modern world, where so much is changing so fast, we need people to take the time to consider the implications of the tools that we're creating. We do not have the leaders in society that are thinking more than three to five years ahead. Yet in the woods I have been immersed in the living office: the business of trees. The business of growing and cutting trees to be used for pulp, match sticks building, or whatever else we think we need is the first business whose process lasts for over 100 years. So, if nothing else, it feels like an appropriate place to be considering the future of our world and our society from.

It's very difficult to think extremely long term when absolutely everything around us is high paced and built for immediate gratification. In a time of unprecedented change, we need to create an office for renaissance if we want to see a surge in philosophy, theology, creative arts and technology. And I believe the only office that is capable of helping us think in this is the living office that can partner with us and reframe our thinking to deal with the exponential changes to mitigate the existential risks. Once we realise how deeply interrelated we are with our environments, and once we consider our own appetite for risk, we can then begin to think about how we organise ourselves to go out in the world and manifest our ideas and dreams.

# THE INNOVATION SPECTRUM

So when we look at the innovation spectrum, what we have is from zero to ten, all the way up, each step is requiring more time and more risk. The key is making sure that the desired impact, the type of leader running it, and the kind of people that the leader recruits are all lined up. If you look on the left hand side we can see there's a businessperson that needs to recruit business graduates and hopefully they'll end up running an efficient business that takes as few punts as necessary. All the way at the other end of the spectrum, if we look vertically through the different layers, we can see that if we want to create a whole new industry or a whole new way of working or a whole new way of life, we need an inventor who works with people like engineers, who can build from the ground up, challenging assumptions. And these people need to be signed up to the reality of trying and failing for years, if not decades, before they make their one breakthrough that could really change the course of society. It is hard to find the space and the people that will work for deferred reward, yet we need it more than ever as we enter the third episteme. And this is where I think the role of the rural working space and the living office of the trees is what we need in order to get people to take long punts on ideas that could help us flourish in the future.

Its not important where on the spectrum you find yourself - a healthy ecosystem needs people at all different levels of the innovation spectrum. What matters is knowing where you currently sits well for you and your dreams.



If we go back to the idea you plotted on the Three Dot Theory, what kind of dream is it? Where does it sit in the Innovation Spectrum? What kind of people do you need to recruit and work with? Does it require a small or great amount of deferred reward? Take the time to think and map your idea into this spectrum and see what you learn.

## TAKE A BREATHER

Before you rush onto the next element, take 30 seconds to breath and enjoy this photo.



Now take another 30 seconds to think about these questions:

What do you want to create?

Who do you want to create with?

And where do you want to create it?

Photo: Steve Booker, June 2017

## AROUND THE CAMPFIRE



There is a renaissance rising baby  
Can't you hear the sound?  
They said the dancers are Devils  
They don't feel the frequency resound

And all I can do is listen closely  
Let its song wash over me  
Take my place in this unfolding  
And hold on vulnerably

There's a Renaissance rising baby  
Invisible though it seems  
It pierces through our mind walls  
And splits us at the seams

And all I can do is laugh with tears now  
As this fire flows over me  
Refined in the furnace 'till I can see I'm clean

There is a Renaissance rising baby  
A wind that lifts me from my feet  
if We make a sail together  
we'll meet our maker in the middle of the sea

### *Mouth solo*

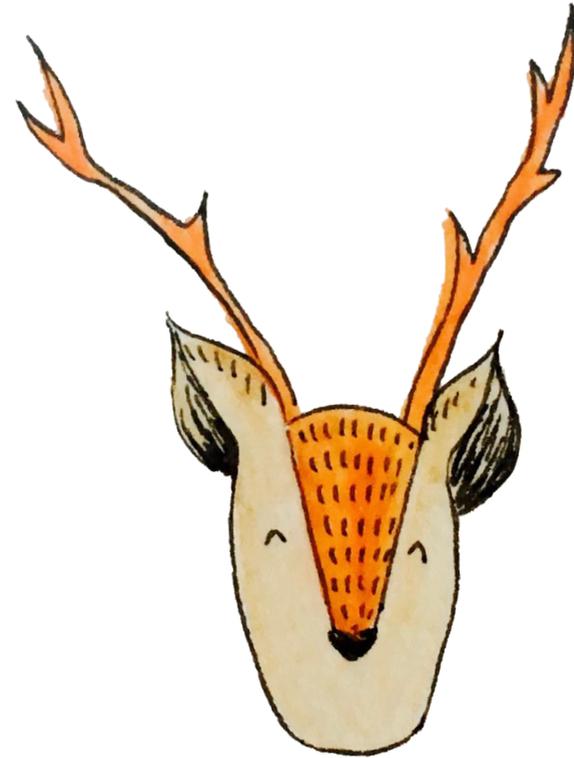
There's a Renaissance rising baby  
Can you hear the sound?  
A Renaissance rising baby  
It's the fire the rain the ground  
A Renaissance rising baby (x3)  
Can you hear us now?

Song and lyrics: Dave Erasmus

DEER

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'OTHER'



## RESPONSIBILITY AND CONTROL

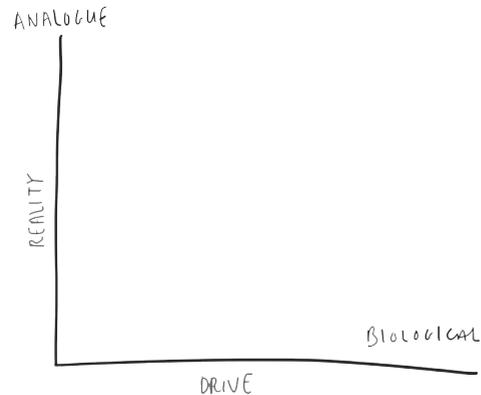
This whole year I've been trying to make friends with the deer. On a good day I feel like they're getting used to me, and other days I think I've made no progress at all, which makes sense given that most other human in these woods before me have been trying to kill them in order to manage their population. Although I want to be their friend, I have learned from the deer stalkers why they shoot the deer and it has only presented me with a greater problem than when I arrived. It seems to me we have two responses: one is being primarily concerned with our responsibility with the deer, to treat them well and not kill them, and to reject the actions of our predecessors, and the other is to take the role of primary responsibility to the ecosystem at large, asking the question 'what would help the overall ecosystem of this woods to flourish most?' and overpopulation of deer decimates the biodiversity of an ecosystem like the woods. Therein lies quite a deep and problematic philosophical decision. And it seems continually throughout the human story we have struggled to deal well with 'other'. We have so often resorted to methods of command, conquer, and control, trying to gain absolute dominion over our environments. My concern as we approach this evolutionary step change, where machines and digital experience expand the canvas of life, is that we may make our most catastrophic error yet. The subtly pejorative terms by which we are already describing and negatively relating to new kinds of experience and intelligence,

such as 'artificial' and 'virtual', is that we are subtly telling ourselves a story that what we have is real and what machines may exhibit is not real. We are subtly making bio-centric claims that only in biology can real things be experienced.

The biggest risk of all is potentially that stage is being set with human against. This needs to be broken down. I would much rather see a situation where we are creating with machines to create experiences that could not otherwise be made by machines or by humans alone. In order to see most clearly, I think we have to highly value neutrality in order to see where glimmers of life may be emerging from spaces we never thought possible. Ecology shows us that strength is found in diversity. Ecosystems are most resilient when they carry the greatest variation. We would do well to learn this from nature in how we approach these next stages in human development. We can't afford to make the same mistakes those before us have made.

# THE EXPERIENCE MATRIX

Life used to be simple. There was the analogue reality that we existed in and the biological wetware known as our brain that we use to drive and power our experiences.



But today we are already beginning to have experience of mixed reality, through VR headsets, iPhones, real time translation and self-driving cars. This doesn't just increase the space of experience a little bit but stretches the canvas of life to be four times as large. We can have a mixture of any number of experiences across this new canvas and that creates huge challenges. How do we do that healthily? How do we not allow a separation from our mind and body to occur, on a macro, nation level or micro, personal level? Exploring an on and off grid lifestyle for the year was an interesting way to gain both the breadth of the ability of the Internet to annihilate time and space to connect with anyone on the planet and learn anything we want, and the depth of the biological presence and the ability to engage with what's immediately in front of us.

Whether we are a hermit in the woods or an analogue alien at the other end, we all find ourselves somewhere on the canvas. Think about your experiences now and what kind of lifestyle you think is healthy for you. Plot yourself on the Experience Matrix, both where you are now and where you want to be. Where do currently you sit in the canvas? What kind of lifestyle do you want? Where would serve your purpose, value creation, fun, family and future? What steps do you need to take and changes you need to make to bridge that gap?



# AROUND THE CAMPFIRE

Rain is falling, Corcovado in my head  
Fire's roaring, but it's not making any sense  
I'm creature, not made for trust  
You're preacher driven by lust

Standing face to face,  
should I embrace or should I run?  
Who would take my place,  
if you were to pull that trigger on your gun?

How did we get here?  
I see the hate, the love, the fear in your eyes  
You've been pushed  
Its not fair and its now right

The world surrounds me  
As the storm swells through the night  
His presence astounds me  
As we stand in the moonlight

You let me stay here  
In your home  
How the time flies my dear  
Since we each lived alone

We moved away  
You're not my prey, you're my friend  
When will be that day  
When will this stand off finally end

How did we get here?  
I see the hate, the love, the fear in your eyes  
You've been pushed  
Its not fair and its not right



Song and lyrics: Sweet Facility

Photo: Jon Bryant, October 2016

BUTTERFLY

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DANCE



## THE GREAT DANCE

When I first arrived in the woods I asked the landlord how will I know if there is biodiversity and health in the woods? How can we know if we are making a positive or negative impact on the environment? He said it's hard to measure, but one indicator is the presence of butterflies. If there is not a good state of health in the ecosystem, then butterflies won't exist there. After seeing the river flowing for the first time in winter, I then I looked forward to seeing the butterflies in summer. Of all the non-plant species in the woods, butterflies are the ones that have come closest to me. In their very nature they invite you to just watch and journey with them. To me they are like mini dancers moving around on the symphony of nature.

For many years I have enjoyed partner dancing and I have been round the world looking for different styles of dance. Much like a butterfly is a sign of the state of the ecology, I feel like the dance that emerges in a place is a sign of its culture. So my question has become, what is a dance that is fit for our global culture? What is a dance that is fit for this next generation, this next step we have to make as a human race?

In San Francisco I learned a dance called contemporary blues fusion. It's an interdisciplinary dance that allows you to pull from different genres, dance to contemporary music and in its most potent version is danced using a mechanism called switch. It means that both partners, whether male or female, approach the dance in a neutral position with

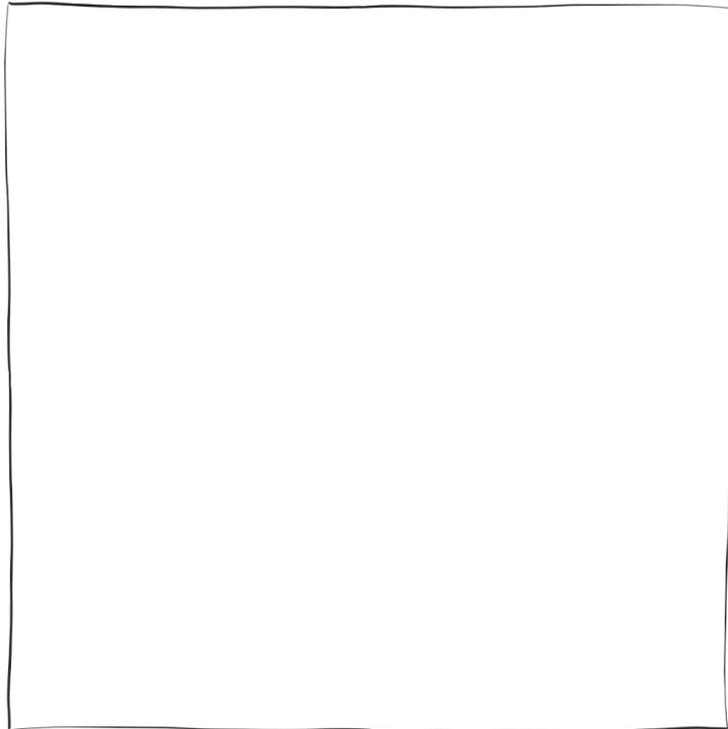
an open listening approach and no assigned static lead or follow. You approach the dance like a conversation.

As I've come to explore the notion of dance as a conversation, I've seen it develop in me as a second language - a global language. There is strong research showing that when we play musical instruments we exercise our corpus callosum, the bridge between the left and right hemispheres of the brain. It makes new connections and allows us to problem solve more effectively, exercising our capacity for fluid intelligence. Similarly in the neural basis for dancing in styles like switch dancing - this is where I find my flow state, where time loses its grip on me and I find myself enjoying the moment and all of my human capacities being required and enjoyed.

# PEN DANCING

Most people say that they don't dance. Whether or not this is normally how you define or describe yourself, I would love for you to try this mini experiment! Put your headphones in and listen to some music. Then put your pen on the middle of the page and, when you feel ready, just begin to move it. Don't worry about where it goes, don't worry about what pattern you're creating - just listen and to keep responding to the music for the length of the song. Don't stop or start again, just try to go with the flow. This is pen dancing. It can be called dancing because the basis for dancing involves listening to a rhythm, interpreting in that and creating a motor-sensory response to the music and beat.

Here is your dance floor:



# HOW TO DANCE CORCOVADO STYLE

If you enjoyed pen dancing and you want to go to the next level then grab a pal and try this with them. Put this handbook aside, grab a partner and turn to each other with one finger raised in front you. Put some music on and begin to move your fingers it to the beat. Don't worry about the pattern - there is no right or wrong - the only goal is being creative and staying in connection. Use that connection to create more and more creative movements. See how far you can take that vehicle of the relationship that you've built. Try again with a new song and switch over roles; if you were the lead, you now follow.

Then approach a new song in a neutral position: no one is assigned the lead or follow. Somebody will take the lead and at some point the other person will, when the time is right, take over the lead.

This is the art of conversation expressed through dance. I believe this mutual and open expression of dance is the metaphor that we need not only on a cultural level but also as a training exercise to teach us what good relationship looks like. To respect, and put connection and relationship above all else. To exercise our minds, making them fit and strong to deal with an unprecedented future.



## SO WHAT NOW?

So that's it. That is the seven elements taught by seven parts of the woods experience, and the best part of 10 years of thoughts and ideas in the making!

### WHAT DID YOU NOTICE?

What did you see?

Can you see how the different elements overlap?

How they compliment each other?

How they provide different parts of the lens through which we can look at the world?

Which areas stuck out to you the most?

Which areas were most baffling?

Which pictures did you like the best?

Which things annoyed and frustrated you?

What got you excited?

Who did you want to call to talk about it with?

How long did it take you to get through the book?

How do you feel about what you doodled?

Who might you consider meeting up with next?

What do you think you would like to learn more about?

This is just the tip of the iceberg. We are barely scratching the surface, and I hope that we get to dig around a lot more together. Things aren't going to slow down - they're only going to get quicker. We don't need to know where the rabbit hole goes. Our only responsibility is to begin, to engage, to start.

So what now?

Begin.

BEGIN HERE

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Take care of yourselves  
and look after each other