

Erin Manning: Concepts

For us, to write philosophically is not to cast a predefined conceptual trawlnet into the waters of an outside practice. It is more like dipping into the same creative pond. A stone dropped into a pond produces a ripple pattern. Two stones dropped into the same pond produce two ripple patterns. Where the ripples intersect, a new and complex pattern emerges, reducible to neither one nor the other.

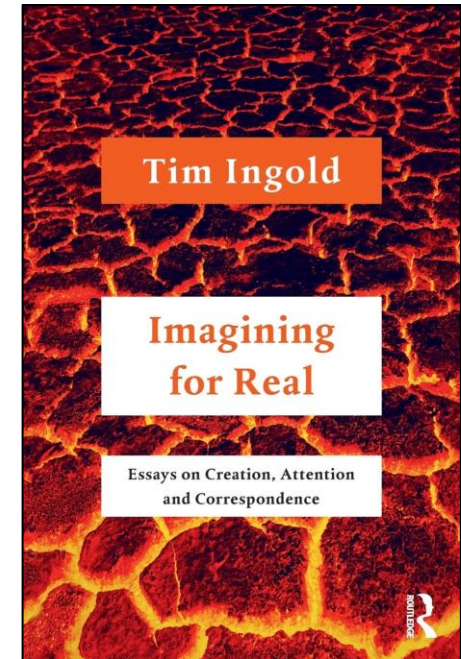
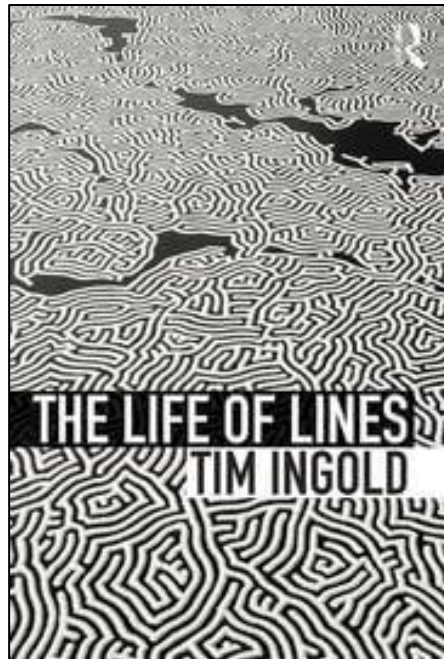
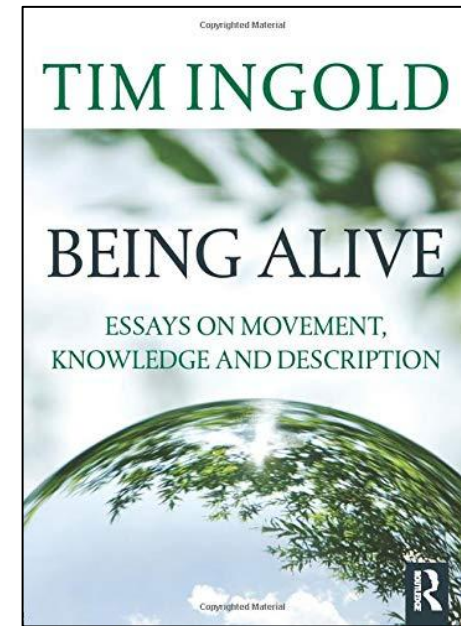
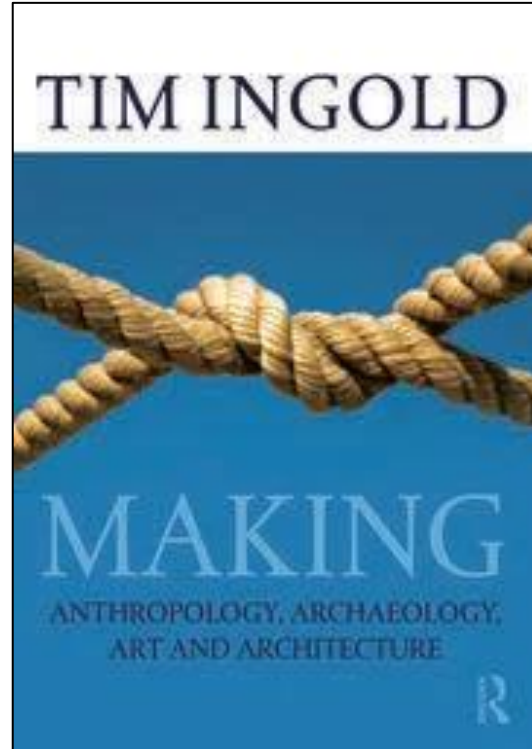
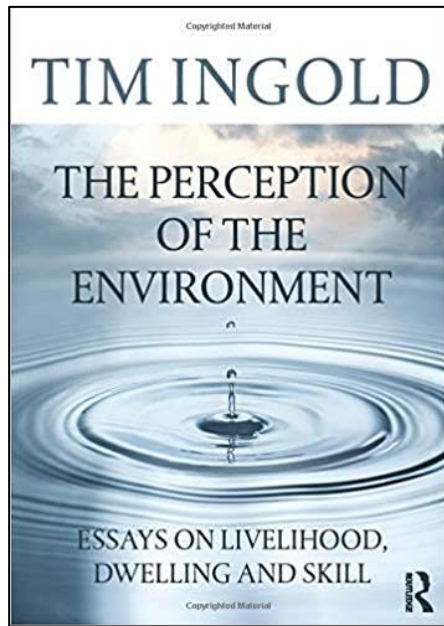
Manning, E., & Massumi, B. (2014). *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience*. University of Minnesota Press.

You're late, you're hurrying from the subway to the office on a crowded rush hour sidewalk. Bodies all around, thicker and thinner, faster and slower, in a complex ebb and flow. In the ebb and flow, temporary openings come and go. Your perception is focused on the coming and going of the openings, which correspond to no thing in particular. Each opening is a field effect. It is an artefact of the moving configuration of the bodies around you, factoring in their relative speeds, and their rates of acceleration and deceleration as their paths weave around each other and around obstacles. The opening is not simply a hole, a lack of something occupying it. It is a positive expression of how everything in the field, moving and still, integrally relates at that instant. It is the appearance of the field's relationality, from a particular angle. The particular angle is that of your body getting ahead. The opening is how the field appears as an affordance for your getting-ahead. Your movement has to be present to the opening as it happens. Wait, and the opening closes. Its perception and your moving into it must be one. There is no time to reflect, no time to focus, assess, and choose. If you focus on one body over another, you see one body then another – and not the opening in the field of movement they share. You have to soften your focus, letting the field's changing configuration dilate to fill experience. You have to let what is normally your peripheral vision take over, attending to everything in the "same way" ...You have performed an integral dance of attention, seemingly without thinking.

But you were thinking, with your movement. Your every movement was a performed analysis of the field's composition from the angle of its affordance for getting-ahead. Entering the dance of attention, your perceiving converged with your moving activity, and your activity was your thinking. You entered a mode of environmental awareness in which to perceive is to enact thought, and thought is directly relational.

... in retrospect, it will likely appear to you that the predominant object singled out by your memory – the sidewalk – had been your affordance from the subway to the office... But in the mode of environmental awareness that effectively got you to the office on time, it was not the object "sidewalk" that afforded the last leg of your commute. It was the fleeting openings, now forgotten. The openings are long gone. The sidewalk remains. The stability of the sidewalk, its ability to re-feature in experience from moment to moment, is an enabling condition for the ephemerality of the openings. This is how what we single out as objects figure for environmental awareness in the moment: as fused into a field of movement, their stability entering into that field on equal footing, as one contrast in its complex relational patterning.

Manning, E., & Massumi, B. (2014). *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience*. University of Minnesota Press. pp.9-10



To create any thing, Aristotle reasoned, you have to bring together form (morphe) and matter (hyle).

In the subsequent history of Western thought, this *hylomorphic* model of creation became ever more deeply embedded. But it also became increasingly unbalanced.

Form came to be seen as imposed by an agent with a particular design in mind, while matter, thus rendered passive and inert, became that which was imposed upon.

Ingold suggests that:

skilled practice ... is a question not of imposing preconceived forms on inert matter but of intervening in the fields of force and currents of material wherein forms are generated.

Practitioners, I contend, are wanderers, wayfarers, whose skill lies in their ability to find the grain of the world's becoming and to follow its course while bending it to their evolving purpose.

(Ingold 2010: 92)

Material approach

(Co)design and prototyping through digital fabrication









Ethical & political
decision-making

Our relationships with
materials, tools, the
environment, etc



We can refer to a “hybrid research collective”:

in which the interdependence between humans, and humans and the non-human world is foregrounded and concerns for co-existence are ethically negotiated. In this heterogeneous grouping, human and nonhuman actants exert influence, pushing and pulling the research process in various ways.

Cameron, J., Gibson, K. & Hill, A. (2014). Cultivating hybrid collectives: research methods for enacting community food economies in Australia and the Philippines, *Local Environment*, 19:1, 118-132.

Ingold: Materials are substances-in-becoming

In a world of materials, nothing is ever finished: everything may be something, but being something is always on the way to becoming something else.

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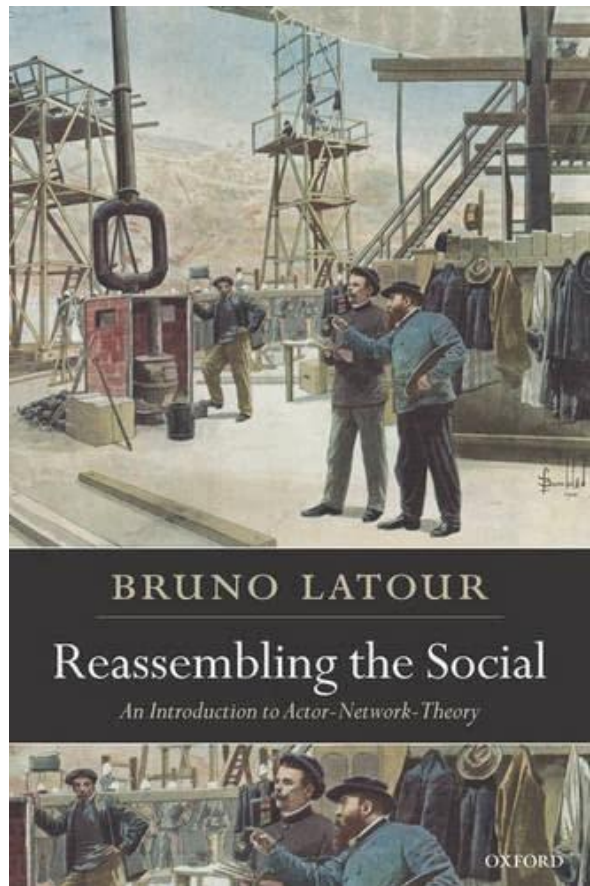
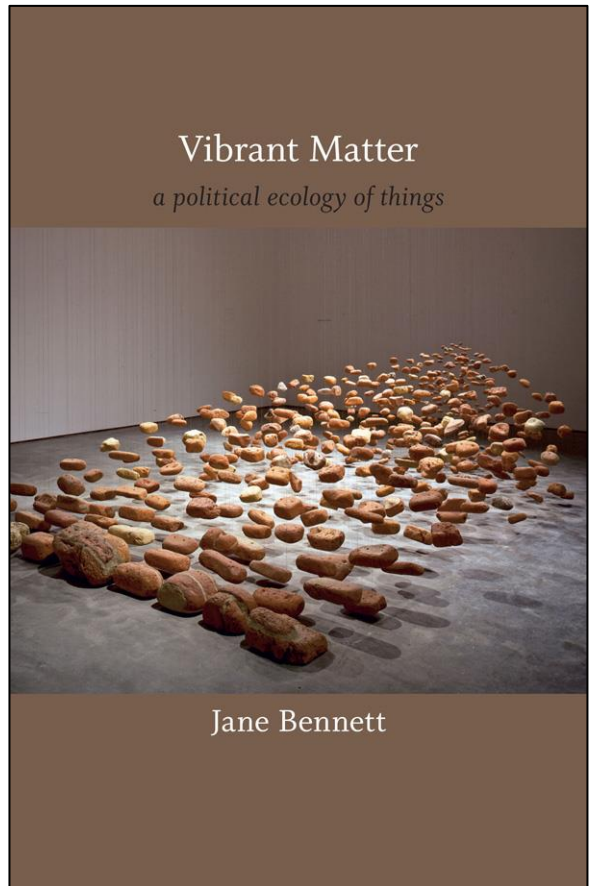
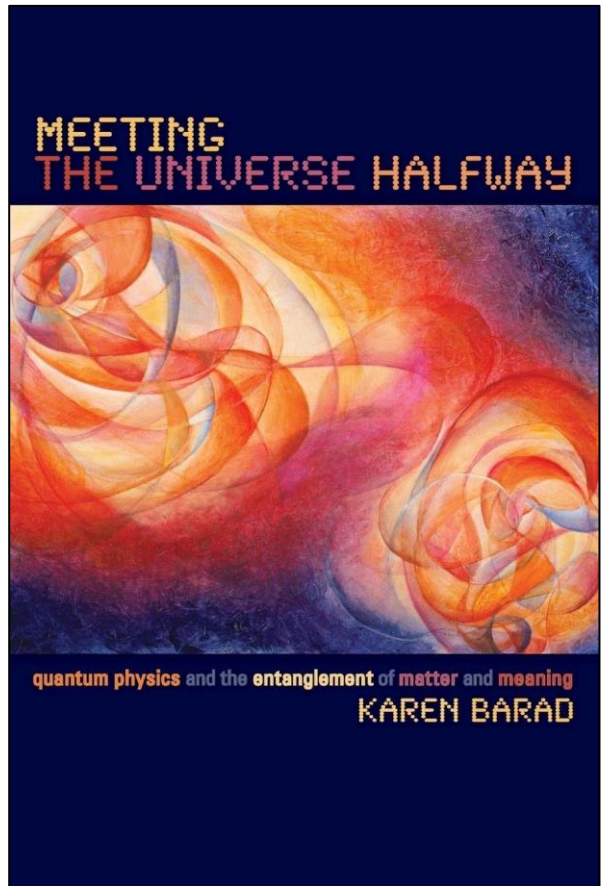


Ingold: processes of
“correspondence”
or “becoming”

... in practice, making is less a matter of projection than one of gathering, more analogous, perhaps, to sewing or weaving than to shooting arrows at a target.

As they make things, practitioners bind their own pathways or lines of becoming into the texture of the world...

Thus the creativity of making lies in the practice itself, in an improvisatory movement that works things out as it goes along.”



Matter as history and becoming

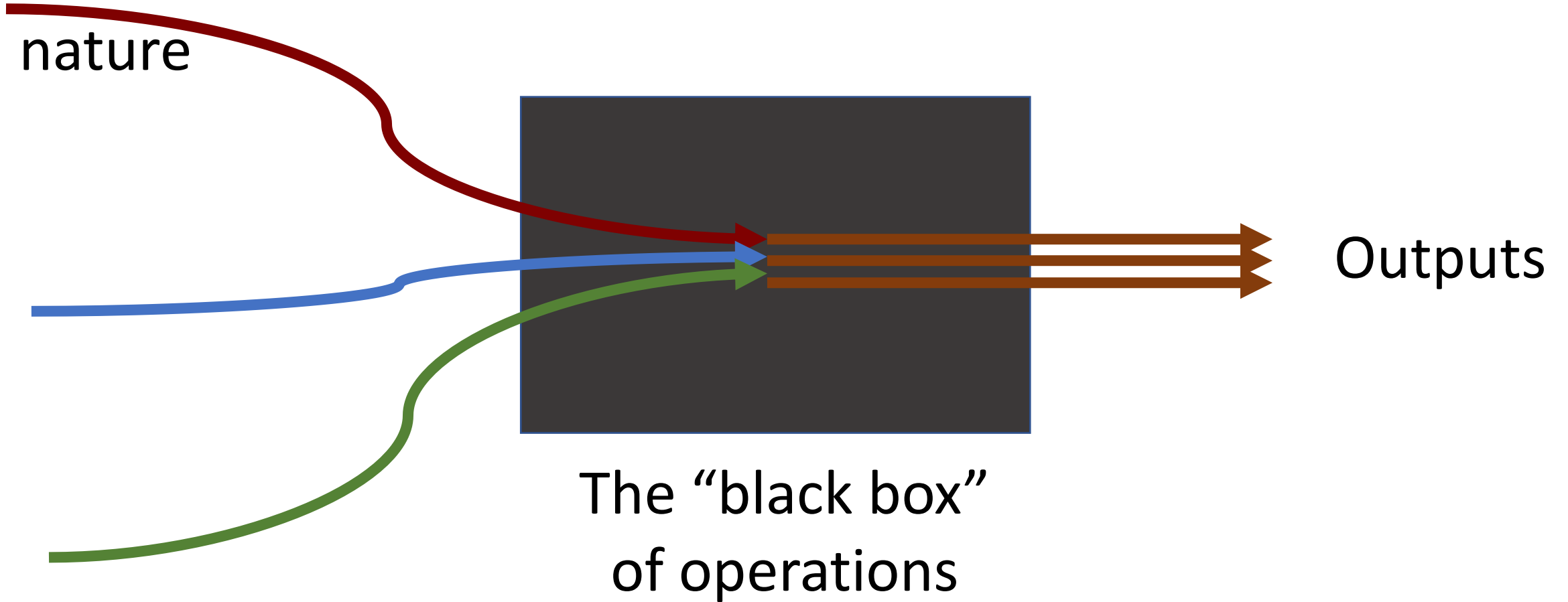
Heidegger:

“Everywhere, everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it standing reserve”.

Or?

- Natural capital
- Natural resources
- Eco-system services

“Inert” inputs
– including
materials
extracted from
nature



The “black box”
of operations

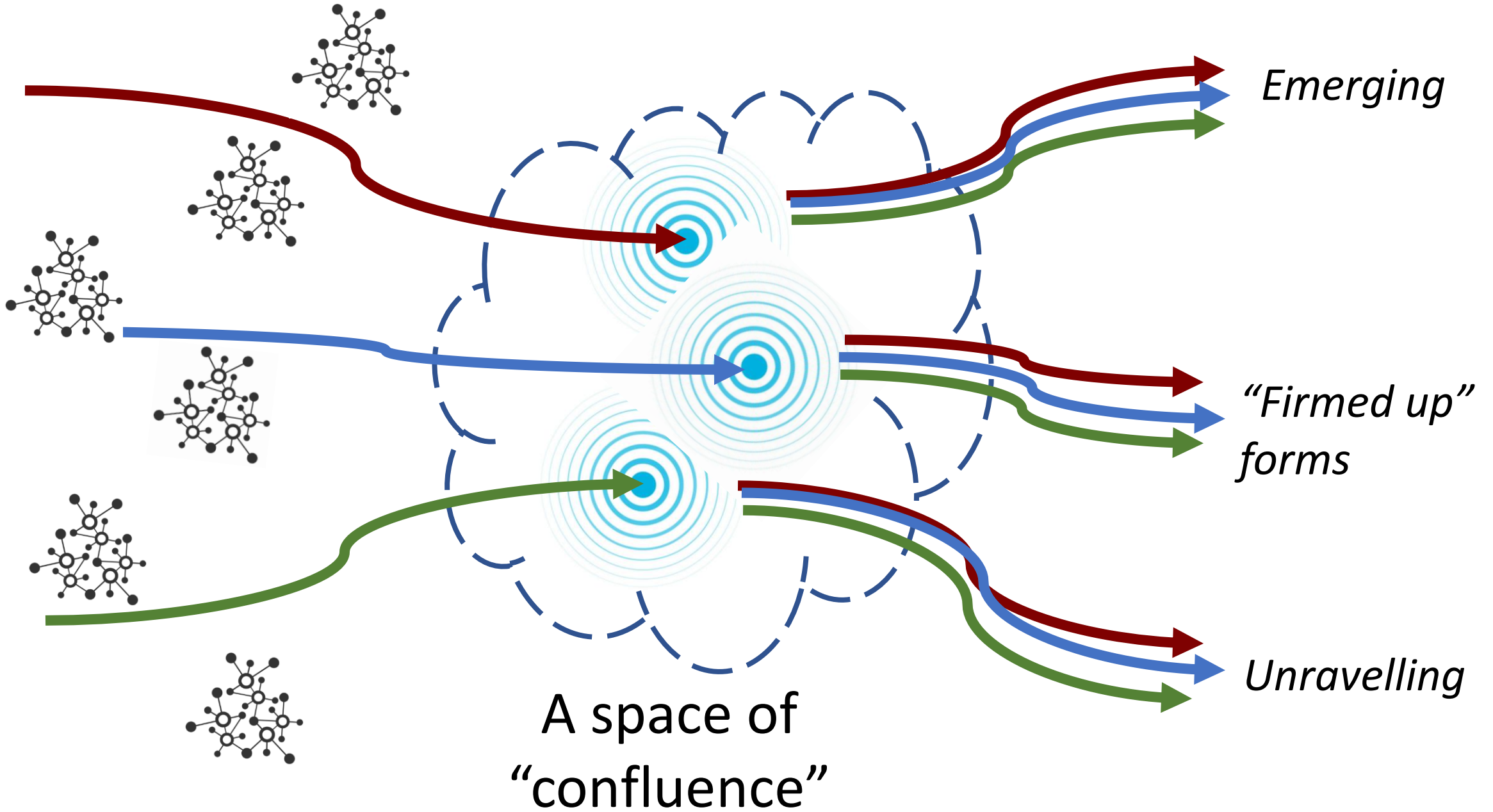
Outputs

“What we traditionally view as ‘independent’ elements – the person with the bat, the bags, the people in the field – are not truly independent. They are all mutually defining... Alone they would [all] be virtually without meaning. It is when we bring all these elements into a mutually defining relationship that we can speak about ‘playing baseball’. Let us then speak of the baseball game as *a confluence*, a form of life in this case that is constituted by an array of mutually defining ‘entities’”

(Gergen, K. (2009). *Relational being: beyond self and community*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.54).

Inputs

Outputs



“We do not uncover pre-existing facts about independently existing things as they exist frozen in time like little statues positioned in the world ... Rather, we learn about phenomena—about specific material configurations of the world’s becoming. The point is not simply to put the observer or knower back in the world (as if the world were a container and we needed merely to acknowledge our situatedness in it) but to understand and take account of the fact that we too are part of the world’s differential becoming ... [thus] which practices we enact matter—in both senses of the word.”

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p. 91.

Latour: learning to be affected

Latour (2004) introduced the idea of “learning to be affected” to explore the process by which bodies learn to become more and more receptive to the world around, and to be “moved, put into motion by other entities, humans or non-humans” (p. 205).

Latour illustrates the process through the training of noses for the perfume industry.

Pupils start with “a dumb nose unable to differentiate much more than ‘sweet’ and ‘fetid’” but with the use of odour kits pupils develop – become – a nose that can distinguish more and more subtle differences in odours (p. 207). Thus, the body is “an interface . . . by which we learn to register and become sensitive to what the world is made of” (p. 206).

Latour, B., 2004. How to talk about the body? The normative dimension of science studies. *Body and Society*, 10 (2/3), 205–229.





Abram, D. *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology*.

Wander over to that oak, or to a maple, or a sycamore; reach out your hand to seal the surface of a single, many pointed Leaf between your thumb and fingers. Note the coolness of that leaf against your skin, the veined texture your fingertips discover as they roam across it. But notice, too, another slightly different sensation: but you are also being touched by the tree. That the leaf itself is gently exploring your fingers, its paws sampling the chemistry of your skin, feeling the smooth and bulging texture of your thumb even as the thumb moves up on it.

As soon as we acknowledge that our hands are included within the tactile world, we are forced to notice this reciprocity: whenever we touch any entity, we are also being touched by that entity...

Such reciprocity is the very structure of perception. We experience the sensuous world only by rendering ourselves vulnerable to that world.

Sensory perception is this ongoing interweavement: the terrain enters into us only to the extent that we allow ourselves to be taken up within that terrain.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty: The Phenomenology of Perception

Perception is not first a perception of things, but a perception of elements (water, air . . .) of rays of the world, of things which are dimensions, which are worlds, I slip on these “elements” and here I am in the world, I slip from the “subjective” to Being.

“Returning to the things themselves”

To return to the things themselves is to return to this world prior to knowledge, this world of which knowledge always speaks, and this world with regard to which every scientific determination is abstract, significative, and dependent, just like geography with regard to the landscape where we first learned what a forest, a meadow, or a river is.

The Intertwining - The Chiasm

"The world seen is not 'in' my body, and my body is not 'in' the visible world ultimately: as flesh applied to flesh, the world neither surrounds it nor is surrounded by it. A participation in and kinship with the visible, the vision neither envelops it nor is enveloped by it... my body as a visible thing is contained within the full spectacle. There is a reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other."

Mazis, G. (2017). *Merleau-Ponty and the Face of the World: Silence, Ethics, Imagination and Poetic Ontology*. New York: SUNY Press.

“Merleau-Ponty saw ahead for humanity an increasing reduction of the world of meaning to that of data to be endlessly manipulated in order to solve practical problems; this reduction would ultimately cause us to lose touch with the depth of sense. This depth is comprised of the felt gestures of the world, felt solidarity with the world, the imaginal deepening of this felt sense, the poetic articulation of the unique ways that things appear to each of us, to each group and age, and a rootedness in deeper and vaster horizons that take us out of the petty and partisan.” P. XV