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BeWeDō®: Co-creating Possibilities with Movement

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Mark Bradford, 2015
This thesis is dedicated to Jay and our daughter Ella.

Thank you for always being there, and keeping me moving forward.
I wish to thank the three people that have made this research possible: my supervision team of Sarah Leberman, Julieanna Preston, and Max Schleser who always pushed me to think openly and creatively. Throughout this research I have had the fortune of working with colleagues at Massey University cross-institutionally at both the Massey Business School, School of Management as well as the College of Creative Arts, School of Design. I also acknowledge the support of my family, friends and colleagues who helped me shape my ideas including the late Aukje Thomassen, Wendelin Kipers, Roy Parkhurst, Craig Cherrie, Richard Halson, Sam Rye, and my research assistant Mon Patel. Finally, I owe a special gratitude to all the participants in this research who have willingly dedicated their time and energy.
One of the main challenges in contemporary creative practice is shifting beyond collaborative thinking to more relational ways of engaging co-operatively with each other. The interdisciplinary research focused on investigating how can the movement practices of the Japanese martial art of Aikidō facilitate leadership development for co-creation. This research synthesised diverse literatures focussed on aikidoka, leadership development, and creative modes of practice as processes in action and in relation to collective creativity and the context of co-creation within the experience economy.

The Aikidō principle of aiki was used as a theoretical framework where experiential knowing – anchored in relational processes – focused on engaging my body and its experiences as a site of learning and a participatory way of knowing. This design-led ethnography combined autoethnography and visual ethnography through two Phases of fieldwork. The findings from Phase One highlighted four concepts zanshin, hipparu, extension, and common center, which were blended into the BeWeDō® conceptual framework. The BeWeDō® framework was investigated experientially in a series of workshops as part of Phase Two. The workshops involved me being immersed in a relational leadership process which encouraged participants to be in the moment and generate co-creative movement. Six key themes emerged: Aikidō is not BeWeDō®; BeWeDō® is more than collaboration; Aiki involves
"the two of us"; an aiki approach invites co-operation; BeWeDō® positions the body to lead co-creative movement; and BeWeDō® moves the conversation to a different place.

This research is the first to investigate how Aikidō movement practices can facilitate leadership development for co-creation. Beyond the influential act of an individual or individuals, the BeWeDō® framework is a relational leadership approach founded on the idea that individuals are constituted by social processes: a new way of co-creating possibilities to facilitate leadership development specifically for co-creation. BeWeDō® is a unique co-creation experience innovation. Furthermore, BeWeDō® extends beyond notions of embodied leadership and embraces the role of emplacement for transforming co-creative possibilities.

Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>Dedication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii</td>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii</td>
<td>Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xi</td>
<td>List of figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xvii</td>
<td>List of tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xix</td>
<td>Glossary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Chapter 01: Introduction
3 Introduction
10 Ways of understanding, acting, looking, and searching
11 Phase One
12 Phase Two

13 Chapter 02: Literature Review
15 Aikidō
15 Introduction
16 The Art of Aikidō
18 An Aikidō Shinryukan class
21 Aikidō and co-operation
22 The dōjō
23 What is aiki?
28 Aikidō leadership beyond the dōjō
An aiki perspective
Leadership Development
Introduction
Leadership for collaborative contexts
Creative leadership
Distributed leadership
Affiliative leadership
Authentic leadership
Adaptive leadership
Relational leadership
Leadership development
Relational processes and the experience economy
Co-creation
Introduction
Collective creativity
What is co-creation?
Co-creation as designing
Relational approaches to co-creation
Movement for co-creation
Improv and Aikidō Shinryukan
Chapter 03: Methodology
Methodology
Introduction
A design-led ethnography
Autoethnography
Visual Ethnography
Ways of understanding, acting, looking, and searching
Participant observation
Visual ethnography
Semi-structured interviews
Ethical considerations and approval
Data analysis
Credibility and trustworthiness
Chapter 04: Keiko
Phase One – stage one
Introduction
The Aikidō Shinryukan dōjō
“This is no longer your arm – it’s mine”
“Keep the connection”
Chapter 05: BeWeDō®
Phase Two
Introduction
The BeWeDō® Workshop Series
Tai no henko
The BeWeDō® Workshop Series approach
BeWeDō® Enspiral Workshop Series
BeWeDō® Lifehack Labs Workshop Series
Key themes emerging from the BeWeDō® Workshop Series
Introduction
Role of metaphors
Theme 1: Aikidō is not BeWeDō®
Theme 2: BeWeDō® is more than collaboration
Theme 3: Aiki involves “the two of us”
Theme 4: An aiki approach invites co-operation
Theme 5: BeWeDō® positions the body to lead co-creative movement
Theme 6: BeWeDō® moves the conversation to a different place
Critical reflections
Workshop participants
Summary
Chapter 06: Conclusions
Conclusions
Contributions
Future directions
References
Appendix A: Table 1. The aikido moves in a typical design conversation between two developers (Socha, 2004, p. 2).
Appendix B: Ethics: The Aikidō Shinryukan dōjō.


Appendix F: Ethics: BeWeDō® Workshop Series.

Appendix G: Aikidō Shinryukan 4th kyu certificate.

Appendix H: Coding spreadsheet [detail].

Appendices I–O: See electronic files.

Electronic files: Appendices I–O.

- Appendix I: Coding concept map [detail].
- Appendix J: Coding concept map.
- Appendix K: Coding word list [detail].
- Appendix L: Coding concept map the keiko concept of common center.
- Appendix M: Concept mapping the keiko concept of zanshin.
- Appendix N: Clustering of the four concepts which captured the essence of keiko’s movement practices.
- Appendix O: BeWeDō® Workshop concept maps.

All figures by Author unless indicated.

List of figures

Figure 1. Drawing of Aikidō’s jiyu-waza. Fieldnotes [detail] (15/2/2005).

Figure 2. Drawing of Aikidō’s jiyu-waza. Fieldnotes (15/2/2005).

Figure 3. Unknown. 1939. A portrait of Morihei Ueshiba in 1939. Photograph. Kobukan dōjō Era (2), in Aikido Journal, via Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 4. Westbrook and Ratti’s (1970, p. 100) dynamic sphere.

Figure 5. Keiko, Nobuko Koyama Shihan Aikidō Seminar, Wellington (1-3/7/2008). Video: Keir Husson, Michelle Bradford and Mon Patel.

Figure 6. Relational leadership in action, New Zealand National Aikikai Gasshuku, Auckland (10-13/3/2007). Photo.

Figure 7. Aikidō Shinryukan movement practices, New Zealand National Aikikai Gasshuku, Auckland (5-7/3/2010). Photo.

Figure 8. Members of the Aikidō Shinryukan community of practice, Nobuko Koyama Shihan Aikidō Seminar, Wellington (3/7/2008). Photo: Aikidō Shinryukan.

Figure 9. In Aikidō a black belt (yūdansha) is used to distinguish a practitioner of a higher grade. New Zealand National Aikikai Gasshuku, Auckland (10-13/3/2007). Photo.

Figure 10 A. Fieldnotes [detail] (17/12/2012).

Figure 10 B. Fieldnotes (7/2/2013).
87 Figures 10 C. Fieldnotes [detail] (14/2/2013).
87 Figure 11. Design drawing interpreting keiko’s co-creative practice. Fieldnotes (26/11/2014).
88 Figure 12. The BeWeDo framework emerges. Fieldnotes (17/5/2013).
98 Figure 14. Aikidō Shinryukan dōjō, Tasman Street, Wellington (23/2/2008). Photo: Stephen Rowe.
98 Figure 15. Aikidō Shinryukan dōjō, College Street, Wellington (27/3/2007). Photo.
98 Figure 17. K2 dōjō, King Street, Massey University, Wellington (28/5/2008). Photo: Stephen Rowe.
98 Figure 18. Old Museum Building, Tea Gardens, Buckle Street, Massey University, Wellington (3/7/2008). Photo. Stephen Rowe.
98 Figure 19. Hombu dōjō, Aberfoyle Street, Auckland (11/3/2007). Photo.
98 Figure 20. ASB Stadium, Kohimarama Road, Auckland (11/3/2007). Photo.
98 Figure 21. Aikidō Tenshindo dōjō, Drummond Street, Wellington (25/4/2010). Photo.
98 Figure 22. Aikidō clothing defines clear hierarchies (3/7/2008). Photo: Stephen Rowe.
100 Figure 24. Fieldnotes recording aikidoka dialogue. New Zealand National Aikikai Gasshuku, Auckland (11/3/2007).
104 Figure 25. Fieldnotes (27/9/2007).
110 Figure 29. Fieldnotes (4/2/2008).
111 Figure 30. Fieldnotes (3/12/2007).
112 Figure 31. Drawing extending Westbrook and Ratti’s (1970) dynamic sphere. Fieldnotes (2/8/2008).
114 Figure 33 A-H. Images from the New Zealand Aikikai 40th Anniversary Gasshuku, Auckland (5-7/3/2010). Photos.
118 Figure 34. Aikidōka demonstrate Jo technique, Nobuko Koyama Shihan Aikidō Seminar, Wellington (1-3/7/2008). Photo: Stephen Rowe.
121 Figure 35. Aikidōka at the K2 dōjō, Wellington (1/6/2008). Photo: Aikidō Shinryukan.
126 Figure 39. The New Zealand Aikikai 40th Anniversary Gasshuku, Auckland (5-7/3/2010). Photo.
127 Figure 40. Drawing-acts capturing the interactions of keiko. Fieldnotes (27/8/2009).
128 Figure 41. The keiko interface. Fieldnotes (29/4/2009).
134 Figure 42. Aikidōka collaborating and co-creating together at the New Zealand Aikikai 40th Anniversary Gasshuku, Auckland (5-7/3/2010). Photo.
139 Figure 43. The keiko concept of zanshin. Nobuko Koyama Shihan Aikidō Seminar, Wellington (1-3/7/2008). Photo: Stephen Rowe.
139 Figure 44. The keiko concept of hipparu. Fieldnotes (2/8/2008).
139 Figure 45. The keiko concept of extension. The New Zealand Aikikai 40th Anniversary Gasshuku, Auckland (5-7/3/2010). Photo.
139 Figure 46. The keiko core concept of common center. The New Zealand Aikikai 40th Anniversary Gasshuku, Auckland (5-7/3/2010). Photo.
141 Figure 47. Fieldnotes depicting relationships between concepts (9/11/2012).
142 Figure 48. Early vector drawings try to visually capture “relationships between, interplay, lived-through, pivotal, relational(in)between, in(be)tween, many small circular connections . . . .” Fieldnotes (26/4/2010).

Fieldnotes depicting BeWeDō® as a moving point (6/12/2013).

An aiki approach to co-creation (detail) (27/8/2010).

An aiki approach to co-creation (27/8/2010).

Visualising the BeWeDō® framework as a new way of co-creating possibilities. Fieldnotes (28/11/2014).

The final BeWeDō® framework.

Participants at the Enspiral BeWeDō® Workshop Series, Wellington (8/7/2014). Photo: Mon Patel.

Three levels of tai no henko. Video: Takemusu Aikido Netherlands (2008).

Overhead view of tai no henko. Video: Mon Patel.

Medium two-shot of tai no henko. Video: Mon Patel.

The Wipster online video annotation tool. Video still.

The three phases of tai no henko and the associated Be, We, Dō concepts utilised as part of the BeWeDō® framework. Video: Mon Patel.

The walking exercise. Video: Mon Patel.

Mark Bradford facilitating the BeWeDō® movement practices experience between participants. Lifehack Labs BeWeDō® Workshop Series (5/9/2014). Photo: Mon Patel.

Participants engaging in BeWeDō® movement practices. Enspiral BeWeDō® Workshop Series (8/7/2014). Photo: Mon Patel.

Participants making connections between the BeWeDō® approach and their experiences during the Lifehack Labs BeWeDō® Workshop Series (5/9/2014). Video stills: Mon Patel.


Participants experiencing the metaphor of ‘Aikidō

101: Don’t be there’ during co-creation at the Enspiral BeWeDō® Workshop Series (9/7/2014). Photo: Mon Patel.

Participants experiencing the metaphor of ‘rubber band during the Enspiral BeWeDō® Workshop Series (8/7/2014). Video still: Mon Patel.

The BeWeDō® framework utilised Aikidō inspired movement practices. Lifehack Labs BeWeDō® Workshop Series (5/12/9/2014). Photo: Chelsea Robinson.


The BeWeDō® framework involves a respectful engagement with others. Enspiral BeWeDō® Workshop Series (9/7/2014). Video still: Mon Patel.


Offering your hand in tai no henko. Lifehack Labs BeWeDō® Workshop Series (12/9/2014). Photo: Mon Patel.


BeWeDō® involves the body. Enspiral BeWeDō® Workshop Series (9/7/2014). Photo: Mon Patel.

BeWeDō® movement practices changes the way participants relate to each other in co-creation. Lifehack
The three perspectives of co-creation in relation to value co-creation and the design development process. Adapted from Sanders and Stappers (2012, p. 31).

My research inquiry.
Participant observation and visual ethnography carried out during the research inquiry.
Semi-structured interviews carried out during the research inquiry.

Keiko metaphors.

The three phases of tai no henko.


List of tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Table 1.</td>
<td>The three perspectives of co-creation in relation to value co-creation and the design development process. Adapted from Sanders and Stappers (2012, p. 31).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Table 2.</td>
<td>My research inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Table 3.</td>
<td>Participant observation and visual ethnography carried out during the research inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Table 4.</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews carried out during the research inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>Table 5.</td>
<td>Keiko metaphors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163</td>
<td>Table 6.</td>
<td>The three phases of tai no henko.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>167</td>
<td>Table 7.</td>
<td>The BeWeDō® Workshop Series session 01.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
<td>Table 8.</td>
<td>The BeWeDō® Workshop Series session 02.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>Table 9.</td>
<td>BeWeDō® metaphors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aiki: For the founder of Aikidō Morihei Ueshiba (2010): "Aiki is the way we live and how we progress" (p. 65).

Aikidō: A Japanese martial art developed in the 1920s by Morihei Ueshiba.

Aikidoka: A practitioner of Aikidō.

Aikidō Shinryukan: A style of Aikikai.

Aikikai: The traditional style of Aikidō most closely associated with Morihei Ueshiba.

Awase: Harmonious blended movement with one’s training partner.

Ayumi Ashi: Basic (walking) step.

Bokken: Wooden practice sword.

Dan: An advanced Aikidō rank. A rank above kyu. Shodan is the first level; nidan the second; sandan the third; yodan the forth.

Dō: Path or way of life.

Dōjō: A place for enlightenment, understanding, and training.

Doshu: Title denoting the head of the Aikikai.

Gaku: Calligraphy.

Gasshuku: Japanese word describing an extended Aikidō training session where aikidoka come together for a limited time to learn collectively from each other.

Gi: The regular white training uniform worn in Aikidō.

Hakama: Divided skirt work over the gi by senior students.

Hanmi: The triangular stance used in Aikidō.
Irimi: An act or movement to enter (step) inward towards your partner.

Jiyu-waza: A form of free-style practice using a specific set of techniques at various speeds with multiple attackers.

Jo: A wooden practice staff.

Kamae: Posture or stance.

Keiko: Japanese word meaning to train in Aikidō with a focused mindset.

Ki: Spirit, mind, heart; energy. Word popularised in the Aikidō context by Sensei Koichi Tohei.

Kokyu-Ho: Aikidō techniques combining ‘breath power’ and timing.

Kyu: Class, level, grade or rank. A series of Aikidō rankings below Dan.

Ma-ai: Harmonious distance.

Musubi: The study of good communication.

Nage: Aikidoka who performs Aikidō techniques. The opposite is uke.

One-Point: Another word for what aikidoka refer to as their ‘center.’

O’Sensei: Great teacher.

Randori: A free-style practice where an aikidoka defends against multiple attackers who may attack using any techniques they desire.

Sabaki: Body movement.

Seiza: A formal Japanese kneeling position.

Sensei: Aikidō Instructor or teacher.

Shihan: The title given by the World Aikidō Headquarters to a master instructor or professor of Aikidō.

Shomen: Front, or focal point of the dōjō, where important symbols are placed or hung.

Shomenuchi: Empty hand strike to the front of the head.

Tai no henko: Basic body movement exercise that teaches aikidoka the basics for redirecting an attack.

Takemusu Aiki: For Morihei Ueshiba (2010), takemusu aiki meant the “boldest and most creative life possible” (p. 141).

Tantō: A Japanese knife.

Tenkan: A pivot turn or movement of 180 degrees often executed as part of a technique.

Tenshin: A sweeping body turn used in a technique.

Titami: A type of mat used as a flooring material in a traditional dōjō. These ranged from more traditional canvas-covered or uncovered rice-straw padding, through to wrestling mats and foam-rubber mats.

Uke: The aikidoka who initiates the attack and receives Aikidō techniques. The opposite is nage.

Ukemi: Methods of rolling, and somersaulting safely.

Unsoku: Foot movement.

Waza: Technique.