

# Intimate futures: bringing the body into futures work

Marcus Bussey

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**Abstract** It is argued in this paper that the intimate nature of language, as well as the intimacy of the senses, form important elements in the theory and practice of futures. Such elements tend to be sidelined as futurists pragmatically privilege the use of tools and techniques over the less tangible assets of relating, sensing and intuiting. Of interest in this paper is the power of intimacy to overcome the sense of separation that lies at the heart of the existential dissonance that characterises the modern ‘condition’. This is a decidedly phenomenological or even post-phenomenological position. It is argued, and then explored through two examples, that intimacy and the sensory experience of the world provide a platform for imagining, thinking and doing futures work in a more integrative and empowering way.

**Keywords** Post-phenomenology · Intimate futures · Language · Cross-cultural communication · Identity

The future is in us all, both genetically and mimetically. Therefore we are, usually without knowing it, future makers. In spite of this connection, the future is an elusive and intangible domain from which, paradoxically, we derive both anxiety and hope. These points act as anticipatory motifs within the cultural programming that shapes intelligibility and keeps us focused on the immediate pressures of our lives [1]. This paper seeks to contribute to the conversation on the cultural patterning that shapes how we understand and experience the world. It does so not by seeking to engage with the central themes in futures studies and the global problematique, such

as technological transcendence [2], descent pathways beyond post-industrial twilight [3], strategic positioning regarding climate change, global poverty, mass media and the array of violences associated with globalisation; rather it presents a case for engagement with an intimate space from which a ‘futures consciousness’ is always in the process of emergence.

Certainly consciousness is expressed intellectually, so what we think about the future does count. However, the ‘mind’ is not simply ‘in the head’; it is also in the body and both body and mind and the consciousness associated with them are deeply encultured/conditioned by the physical experiences and practices of each individual’s life. Monique Scheer, for instance, recently argued that the “body ... cannot be timeless; it contains history at multiple levels” [4, p. 201]. And just as it contains a past it also contains a future. Both past and future are intimately bound up in the bodily practices of the individual in a community of co-evolving pasts and futures. In this I am inclined towards what Phillip Payne calls a post-phenomenological understanding of lived relational and embodied experience [5]. From a futures perspective such an understanding evokes a sense of intimacy with the future that is deeply relational, embodied and woven together as sets of practices that lead from coagulations of past experiences/memories into coagulations of future images/anticipations.

So in this paper I make the case for exploring a broader and more intimate realm of futures work, one which accounts for the fact that consciousness is a whole of body matter and that futures work actually regularly engages with zones of meaning making that include the physicality of enculturation and sense-making. The core argument is that the future as a zone of possibility lies on our skin like gold dust, penetrates our senses and shapes the way we express/vocalise our past-present-future consciousness.

This paper develops this argument in stages. The first section sketches my lines of flight as I approached the realisation of the idea of intimate futures and its implications for

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M. Bussey (✉)  
Sustainability Research Centre, University of the Sunshine Coast,  
Queensland, Australia  
e-mail: mbussey@usc.edu.au

M. Bussey  
Faculty of Arts and Business, University of the Sunshine Coast,  
Locked Bag 4, Maroochydore, DC QLD 4558, Australia

my foresight work. The second section unpacks some aspects of the language-futures connect and moves on to explore the sensory as a domain of embodied futures work that we all acknowledge and work with in different ways. The third section links these reflections with practice through the presentation of two examples of approaches I have developed to activate the intimate futures in workshops.

### Lines of flight

The roots of my interest in this conversation lie in interactions I have had with people in many different settings. My attention has, over the years, been regularly drawn to the way we speak about the future, our current condition and the past. It has been challenged by a growing awareness that the language we speak is deeply individual, personal, intimate. Even when we speak the same language there is much scope for misunderstanding. When we begin to speak across, between and through other languages this scope for misunderstanding deepens. Yet I have also noticed that misunderstanding in and of itself is not really the problem.

When we wish for congruence between expression and reception we are not necessarily engaged in an actual conversation anyway. Thus while I am in many ways indebted to my early reading of Martin Buber's *I and Thou*, which suggests parity between the speaker and the listener when dialogue occurs [6], I am drawn more, nowadays, to the understandings of Emmanuel Levinas, who felt that communicative praxis involved interactive 'gropings' in which the *face* of the other was of greater importance than one's own vocalising self [7]. Judith Butler picks up this theme and amplifies it in her sensitive exploration of the *Precarious Life*. Butler explains that our goal should be:

... to hear the face as it speaks in something other than language [in order] to know the precariousness of life that is at stake...[and] to return ... to the human where we do not expect to find it, in its frailty and at the limits of its capacity to make sense [8, p. 151].

Such a line of flight led me to think about the limits of language and about all else that happens in human encounters. The embodied pedagogy of our humanness comes to the fore in this context [9]. Through the recognition of this embodied interactive field as a broad domain in which all human encounters are potentially pedagogic in nature, the link between sociality and identity formation becomes clear. In thinking this through I was drawn to suggest [10] a Causal Layered Pedagogy (CLP) informed by Sohail Inayatullah's Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) [11]. This kind of pedagogy links self and other in layered fields of being/becoming in which the narrowness of modern curricula is challenged, deepening both process and vision.

Butler's thoughts on the precariousness of life and on the limits we face in trying to grapple with the nature of our personal humanity is a salutary reminder that the language(s) we deploy, in all its rational power, does not have the necessary resilience to cope with contradictions, complexity and chaos. There is an inherently irrational/non-rational/supra-rational dimension of being that requires a relational space that affords us *the grace to explore* co-creativity and the possibilities it offers. This fact was brought home to me when I guest-edited a special issue of the journal *Social Alternatives* [12]. The theme was sustainability and I invited a number of colleagues from a range of backgrounds to submit papers on aspects of sustainability and sustainable development that were pertinent to their work and lives. A wide and diverse set of papers emerged and two things quickly became apparent. Firstly, that English, as the language of choice, inhibited the creativity and thinking of many of the contributors for whom English was not their first tongue. Secondly, that, when put together, the papers and commentaries generated creative spaces *between* the very artefacts that we call 'papers' and 'commentaries'.

I responded to the first insight by keeping some texts in their original language (accompanied by an English translation). Addressing the second required a holistic approach that incorporated thinking about the nature of language, of translation and of inter-linguistic space. For this I turned to Walter Benjamin who had turned a translator's eye on language and observed that there is:

In all languages and linguistic creations ... in addition to what can be conveyed something that cannot be communicated; depending on the context in which it appears, it is something that symbolizes or something symbolized [13, p. 169].

My thinking in this context was that there was something else going on: something extra-linguistic that took the individual works to another level of cohesion. This transposition involved an *energy of possibility* that intrigued me and also paralleled the experiences I had had in workshops involving participants from non-English speaking backgrounds. I have noticed that something special happens in workshops when participants switch to their mother tongues. This is so whether the people are fluent in English or have less facility. Our mother tongues trump the rational and the intelligible when it comes to exploring futures. An excitement enters the room and playfulness takes centre stage.

### Rethinking limits

My experiences with the journal and relating it to workshops conducted in Sweden, India, Taiwan, Holland, France,

Finland, Denmark and the Philippines *all pointed to something intangible going on* when the mother tongue gets involved. In part this ‘intangible’ relates to the nature of communication itself. Much more is happening when we interact than just speaking. One way to approach this fact was taken by Daniel Kahneman who adopted psychological categories to suggest that there are two cognitive ‘systems’ at work in our subjective processing and reacting [14]. System 1 is intuitive, immediate and ‘fast’; System 2 is methodical, rational, and ‘slow’.

The creative openness of futures work calls for System 1 responses to help with System 2 unpacking and analysis. Together they potentially generate alternatives that can lead to futures-oriented actions. This makes futures work personal as it brings in deep and generally unexplored elements of the self which inform our identity and shape meaning and coherence. System 1 can often be reactive and impulsive and set up the emotional responses that we then rationalise through System 2. Language, of course, is deeply meshed with the immediacy of our responses and with the nature of our identity. New ideas and practices always enter our awareness via System 2 and it is only through *deep and consistent practice* that they ever become part of the backdrop of consciousness and part of our System 1 personas.

This psychological reading of the human process can be augmented by tuning to, for instance, a Buddhist view, such as that offered by Thich Nhat Hanh [15]. For Hanh we ‘inter-are’ and this state involves ‘inter-being’. Through this shift from ‘are’ to ‘being’ Hanh links a state with a process. This insight allows us to understand the sociality of being and to identify the link between mother tongue and identity. It also brings an inter-civilisational dimension to the post-phenomenological stance that Payne [5] is taking. Language is a primary route, via inter-being, to community, and is core to our identity formation, our ‘inter-are’ state as part of a language community. The deeply personal nature of futures thinking comes to the fore in this context because it brings together reflexive critique, which draws on analysis, and an intimate futures zone, which is synthetic and subjective in nature. This interface between analysis (a System 2 activity) and synthesis (a System 1 activity) suggests a rethinking of the meaning of limits. Limits tend to threaten synthesis but when reframed as a dialogical process we can find possibilities for recreating culture and identity. Thus, when we experience limits to language and self as described above by Butler and Benjamin, we understand the limit not as a problematique but as a condition of possibility. In this way the limit itself has significance as a powerful liminal futures tool [16].

This awareness of limits is nothing new to facilitators and educators; we constantly face the challenge of communicating and developing, sharing and extending new memes with clients and students. Such limits lie at the heart of a range of futures and foresight innovations such as Forward Theatre [17], Anticipatory Action Research [18] [19], Causal

Layered Analysis [11] and Located Futures [20]. They set up contexts for ‘uncanny’ perceptions beyond the limits of standardised and disciplinary academic discourse [21]. The following section deals with some attempts on my part to work with the possibilities inherent to limits.

### The intimate and the sensory

**Intimate Futures** points to the linkages between context, identity and expression. Language is one way we express ourselves but of course it is not the only way. Human beings are creative and innovative and constantly searching for new possibilities in the world around them and also, and importantly, *in the world within them*. Scheer makes this point noting that:

...a bright line between nature and culture cannot be drawn on or in the body because human beings hardly leave anything about themselves or their environment untouched. Whatever physical apparatuses, functions, and strivings evolution and parentage may have imparted to a human organism, these cannot remain pristine after birth into a community [4, p. 201].

Such a perspective is echoed in indigenous understandings of the relationships between self and world. The embodied nature of inter-being – the gropings beyond the limits of language – is beautifully expressed by Australian Indigenous elder Bill Neidjie:

I feel with my body, feeling all these trees, all this country. When this blow you can feel it. Same for country ... you feel it, you can look, but feeling ... that make you [Cited in, 22].

Thich Nhat Hanh, Scheer and Neidjie, coming from different ontological traditions, all find their way to the same insight regarding the potentially limitless nature of being and offer in various forms a critique of the Western linguistic privileging of a ‘spoken-being’.

The deep subjectivity implied by the term Intimate Futures suggests that the future resides in each one of us as a unique expressive potential always in dialogue with, and frequently in rebellion against, the structures that shape our worlds. Intimacy implies the multiple so frequently suppressed by the singular. Deleuze and Guattari [23] rebelled against this singularity and suggested the rhizome as a metaphor and method for understanding the deeply subjective and complex worlds we inhabit. They challenged the hegemony of the conscious mind that plays its mono-rational games, sets rules and passes judgement. Their search was an attempt to escape from the trap of reason and to find a deeper rationality based on relational nets – their rhizome – that incorporate the non-

philosophical with the philosophical as a mode of ‘nonthinking thought’ [24, p. 109]. Their nonthinking is an intimate and embodied experience of being in the skin and also in relationship. Their critique of reason also points to Dator’s [25] second law of futures studies which invokes the ridiculous as a powerful critical category for interrogating our futures praxis. From this perspective, intimacy implies systems of relationships – the linguistic, historical, cultural, sexual, creative, sensual, organic spaces in which identity forms, performs and transforms on a moment by moment basis. This is a world of flux and surprise.

We bring this world into the futures workshop as the site where the embodied is engaged as a way of shaking up the cognitive limits of participants. For instance Peter Hayward and Joseph Voros brought their integral understanding to bear in developing the highly successful Sarkar Game [26] in which participants dramatise and then reflect on the varying psychological categories of the social world as described by Indian social theorist and mystic P. R. Sarkar. Inayatullah has also developed CLA into a game<sup>1</sup> in which participants engage in reflective role play as they unpack their contexts, identify the deep narratives that shape their structures and processes and seek to realise their potential. Similarly Meimei Song<sup>2</sup> has focused on the development of futures literacies in Taiwan through a range of embodied scenario workshops that lead participants to challenge dominant assumptions about the ‘real’. Jose Ramos [19] and Tony Stevenson [18] have both separately developed unique approaches to action learning that push limits and learning via anticipatory action learning cycles. To this end Stevenson [18, p. 418] has described a ‘holographic’ anticipatory action learning approach based on the recognition of ‘participative human agency’ as a key factor in shaping inclusive democratised futures.

Such futurists all have in common the recognition that human possibilities and creativity are limited when confined to the cognitive domains of language and analysis. Futurists are not the only ones, however, concerned with the strangle hold language, text and cognition have over us. Experiential educators such as David Orr [27] and David Jardine [28] have long pushed for holistic forms of pedagogy to extend learning. Coming at the problem from the other side of the coin, the intuitive, Oliver Markley [29] has argued that intuitional approaches to foresight enable participants to shift from linear-rational to holistic-intuitional responses. He aptly identified the problem with language and analysis, for both intuitional and embodied futures research, arising because:

...foresight methods based on rational/analytic modes of thinking are, in principle, not suitable for creative

exploration of transformational alternative futures because such thinking modes are more or less extrapolative of what has gone on before. [29, p. 8]

Similarly, some historians are exploring the sensory and emotional range available to researches into the past. For instance Vanessa Agnew [30] draws attention to the ‘general neglect’ of the affective domain in historical work. Illinois University is currently running a monograph series *Studies in Sensory History* with a range of embodied topics and themes all responding to this ‘general neglect’.<sup>3</sup> For Mark Smith, the series general editor,

“Writing the history of the senses isn’t, in fact, more difficult than writing non-sensory history. It’s just that we haven’t been looking for the evidence. And it’s not hard to find, even in seemingly dry official public documents” [cited in 31].

Sensory history, like intimate futures, brings life into the process of inquiry.<sup>4</sup> As Smith notes of sensory history, it is not so much a discipline “as a habit of historical inquiry, one that transcends discrete fields of inquiry and discipline” [cited in 31]. Such a proposition is equally true for intimate futures which is pragmatic, practice based and inclusive in nature.

Sensory Futures is one way we experience intimacy. It points to how our bodies themselves inform our futures sense. Sense is the operative word, as the world is mediated through our senses which provide much of the constant flow of information we process. Our consciousness, which is deeply shaped by sensory perception and associated memories, is in fact intimately sensual. It shapes what is accessible to us across time. As David Abram points out in his case for the role of the senses in shaping relational consciousness “phenomena can be hidden not just within the past or the future, but also in the very thickness of the present, itself – that there is an enigmatic, hidden dimension at the very heart of the sensible present, into which phenomena may withdraw and out of which they continually emerge [32, p. 222].

This folded dimension of consciousness can be found locked in a past-future space and is captured beautifully in the 2007 film *Ratatouille*, in which the austere and domineering restaurant critic Anton Ego (Fig. 1) is transformed after a mouthful of a simple peasant dish – ratatouille – which takes him back to his mother’s kitchen and his rural and idyllic childhood. Following this epiphany, he changes completely and embraces a new, much more relational future.

<sup>3</sup> See: [http://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/find\\_books.php?type=series&search=ssh](http://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/find_books.php?type=series&search=ssh)

<sup>4</sup> See also David Howe (2013) *The Expanding Field of Sensory Studies*, (An occasional paper of the Centre of Sensory Studies, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada). <http://www.sensorystudies.org/sensorial-investigations/the-expanding-field-of-sensory-studies/>

<sup>1</sup> Personal Communication October 20, 2014

<sup>2</sup> Personal Communication November 18, 2014





**Fig. 1** Anton Ego's Transformation. Pixar (2007), *Ratatouille*, co-written and directed by Brad Bird and Jan Pinkava

Intimate sensibility triggers changes that the conscious mind would resist. Following the transformation of Anton Ego, for instance, he loses credibility in the public eye but grows in authenticity in his own eyes. Bodily practices such as eating inform culture and identity, and are multiple in nature. He opts, quite 'irrationally', for a less confined and defined 'self', giving up prestige and distance (the ability to define as opposed to create). The action he takes can be later rationalised, as he does in the movie when he writes about his experience. Yet, as Eelco Runia [33] would argue, in historical disjunctions, such as that experienced by Ego, the deed very often, and quite counter-intuitively, precedes the reasoning and not the other way round. Thus the senses, the body, networks, a mob or a community or even a species can seize the moment and transform. Then the new is made the familiar through repetition of practices that establish the real as the 'new normal'. This repetition is the cult that lies at the heart of culture. This cult of repeated identity formation is captured theoretically in Bourdieu's concept of the *habitus* which is the embodiment of social capital in the biological individual [34, 35]. It also links up with Foucault's notion of biopolitics [36], particularly as it is developed by Agamben [37].

Such reflections offer a trajectory for the following personal experiences in intimate futures.

## Two examples

This section details the following two simple exemplars, both anecdotally drawn from my futures work, each indicative of an *intimate trajectory* in futures practice. It is acknowledged

that they are not rigorous but rather suggestive of intimate possibilities is conducting futures research and workshops.

1. Joint English and mother tongue presentations as they have been practiced in the Philippines, Sweden and Taiwan
2. The Futures Mirror, in which multi-sensory approaches are utilised to enable individuals to explore their own inner voices via voice dialogue [38] and touch aspects of the future senses denied in more formal and rational contexts

Of interest is the power of intimacy to release energy and open up individuals and groups to alternative futures. In each example, intimacy and the sensory experience of the world provide a platform for imagining, thinking about and doing futures work in a more integrative and empowering way. These reflections are the first expression of this growing awareness on my part.

### Example 1: bilingual/poly-lingual workshops

This example traces experiences around shifting languages and then notes problems facing all language use in cultural contexts.

A few years ago I began working with colleagues Ås Eliason Bjurström from University West and Miriam Sannum from Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan in Sweden [13]. These women, both Swedes, speak excellent English but I noticed that during what they call 'fika' (a coffee break or time out), when they would chat in Swedish, that the discussion was much more animated and there was a generally heightened level of energy in the room. Of course it is no surprise that this should be so. We are most at home, most in our skins, in our mother tongue. As a result we started encouraging every native Swedish speaker to speak Swedish whenever there was the opportunity – I told them it was not impolite to do so and that I could get a sense of what was going on and that I did not need to know the details of their conversations anyway. The result was that thinking was more flexible and that the sense of possibilities multiplied, with a noticeable increase in playfulness, innovation and humour. The question for me was how to leverage this insight. Over time this shifting between tongues became a part of our annual gatherings and I started to look for colleagues in other parts of the world who were comfortable with bridging the English-mother tongue gap.

In the Philippines I met with Shermion Cruz of North Western University who is working in the northern province of Ilocos. He and I discussed the possibility of running bilingual workshops. In his context, the issues were that English carries status and that a visiting professor was admired for his/her command of that language. The corollary of this was that the local tongues were deemed to be less worthy. Shermion explained that this was the result of colonial and neo-colonial

experiences. We had to walk a fine line between too great an informality, which would undermine the fact that he was seeking to promote futures work as a valid and sophisticated tool for thinking about alternative futures for the region, and an authoritative delivery which would stifle local imaginations and stymie his attempts to empower those attending the workshop.

We began formally enough and worked throughout the first morning in a traditional manner. There was a clear reserve in the room but it was all going well enough. Then Shermon gave a session (Fig. 2) just before lunch in which he began speaking in English and then quickly shifted into Ilocano. After a little surprise people began to respond and there was more laughter and engagement. This shift set the tone for the rest of the workshop. We moved comfortably between English and Ilocano and there was a clear upbeat feeling in the room and lots of fun; the outcomes were also of a high quality, with participants identifying networks and actions they were going to initiate. Beyond outcomes however it was the quality of the relationships that really shone. People relaxed and interacted much more effectively in their own language. Of course there was no control group to measure the increased effectiveness of the bilingual approach, but my intuition was telling me this was working. Shermon was certainly excited by the results. It made sense to us that when seeking to establish a futures-oriented culture at the local level that success would hinge on the use of the local language because of the higher, less constrained cultural creativity it would allow.

I 'tested' this again with my colleague Meimei Song from Tamkang University and her students in Taiwan; again, when she brought in the Mandarin, things came alive and engagement went up. The situation was made even more interesting because Ryota Ono for Iechi University in Nagoya, Japan, had joined us and his students spoke little English or Mandarin, whilst the Taiwanese students similarly spoke little Japanese! In this context we were all forced to step out of our own skins



**Fig. 2** Shermon giving his session in Ilocano

and into the skins of a broader collection of possibilities. This of course was the reverse of the mother tongue approach but again it opened up interesting learning possibilities. This poly-lingual experience affirmed that to *speak the future* into being did not involve the simple binary of mother tongue-English, but that the necessity of speaking between and across cultural barriers was still of great importance because it generated intercultural spaces from which an array of alternatives can emerge [cf 39].

Language is an important marker in all this, but what I was exploring was not a simple black and white condition. Sohail Inayatullah pushes this point by noting, in conversation with me, that there are times when mother tongue actually constrains creativity. For instance, in his work with Mandarin speaking students at Taiwan, he uses English to foster critique. He states that the use of Mandarin reinscribes the Confucian worldview which is acritical in nature.<sup>5</sup> Meimei Song confirms this but notes that accessing the cultural nuances in a spoken tongue brings both rewards and disadvantages.<sup>6</sup>

#### Example 2: the futures mirror

This workshop is inspired by voice dialogue as used by Sohail Inayatullah and developed by Hal and Sidra Stone [38]. It seeks to embody emotional dimensions for engaging futures action and reflection and to 'voice' them through a creative practice involving enactment and also monologue.

As a workshop this generates a lot of energy and insight. We begin with a reflection on how all of us have different identities that we wear as 'masks' through life. Some of these masks we can acknowledge readily while others are almost strangers to us. We are composite identities crafted through experience, habit, and cultural conditioning [40, 41]. To help people understand this I use the indigenous categories from Chinese, Indian and medieval European astrology and medicine as ways of ordering thinking about identity through cultural lenses. For instance, I first ran this exercise in Taiwan in 2010 and then again in 2013 (Fig. 3) and there I suggested that participants consider what the following categories, drawn from the Chinese zodiac, might look like if they were expressed as personalities:

- Metal 金
- Wood 木
- Water 水
- Earth 土
- Fire 火

<sup>5</sup> Email conversation 13/9/2014, following on from a face to face conversation 12/9/2014. He points to his 1996 paper with Paul Wildman as framing this issue.

<sup>6</sup> Personal Communication November 18, 2014

We discussed what each category might mean in an interpersonal context and then participants broke into pairs and took one element to ‘act out’ or represent for their partner. Enactment was followed by each of the pair noticing what had happened and affirming the other.<sup>7</sup> Then we moved into solo mask-making and took this interpersonal experience of enactment into a personal reflection on our own complex natures. Masks can be made with anything; the main thing is that participants work in silence and allow the mask to appear before them through the accidents and choices encountered in the creative process. This is messy, with each mask maker working according to their own inner dynamic. Some finish construction quickly while others are slow. When the mask is done they put it on and stand in silence before a mirror. They listen for what the mask is telling them. This is an intuitional space where the persona/voice of the mask is invited to speak from the silence. Each participant must be patient. When they get a ‘message’ from this mask-self they write it down and hang both mask and message on the wall (Fig. 3). Masks are usually anonymous. Eventually the wall is full and the task done; the participants relax and laugh, and sometimes cry.

What has been achieved? Well, a space has been created for disowned selves to be heard and honoured. No mask is trivial or superficial even if it appears to be clichéd in nature. Each one speaks to its owner, and when hung in a group becomes part of a *chorus of futures-oriented voices*. Some masks have messages for the future, but sometimes they address the past or the present. The temporal direction is unimportant in terms of the process but critical for the individual who created the mask. The narrative quality of each mask is unique and sends a message out into the world. The creator of the mask in turn is a little lighter with the mask outside of them but also a little more able to tune into their inner states and engage with these powerful embodied processes. In this way each participant enters an intimate space for reflecting on and articulating the affective domains of embodied being which have direct relationship with the processing of futures thinking.

## Conclusion

This paper is a sense making exploration of a domain of futures work we all recognise but are yet to fully appreciate. It makes the case that futures work is enriched when the intimate and sensory domains of language, embodied activity and community are evoked through futures experiences outside the standard ‘toolbox’. It seeks not to replace the toolbox but to evoke new categories for the transformative and mimetic work of culture-building to emerge as zones of intimate futures. Such futures take both practitioner and participant out of their comfort zones where conditioned identity can more effectively

<sup>7</sup> This work also draws on Inter Play: <http://www.interplayaus.com.au/>



**Fig. 3** Mask-Making Participants in Taiwan 2013

distance itself from process and thus disrupt the futures thinking and futures action necessary for society and culture to make the leap forward the planet so desperately needs.

Thomas Berry has pointed out that we are currently ‘between stories’ [42]; the old story of dominance is giving way to a new relational story. The cultural skills for expressing such a story are not yet fully formed, or even clear. As we grope towards such a condition of inter-being, a sense that reason has failed us grows. Of course reason is simply the application of rules to a given context, so to be more precise our anorexic and anthropocentric reasoning is failing us. Even the best of humanism is not enough as it privileges the mind over the rest: the conscious over the unconscious; the cultural over the natural, the textual over the oral, the intellect over the body. Intimate futures work creates a meaning space for a wider range of conscious behaviour and relationship to be explored. It is another small step towards a new co-creative story in which our connections and what we share in common, rather than our exceptionalism, are what define us.

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