3.2 Ideation with the Bereaved: The *Trauerspiel* Workshop

> Sometimes there is a little bit more to do, sometimes less. But the involvement never stops and won't ever stop in the future. And that's nice.
>
> *Anna/*Trauerspie*l participant*

PREPARATIONS

On a hot July morning, I met the four participants in the self-help group's community space, located close to Vienna's city centre. Besides regular meet-ups for mourning parents, this centre hosts pre- and postnatal courses and playgroups for parents with their children. This showed in the playful interior, accessories, and toys at our disposal. For the four-hour workshop, I had set up a room beforehand.

The first thing the participants would notice when was a white blanket spread out in the middle of the room. It contained 30 random objects, including toys, everyday practical objects, and musical instruments. The blanket was encircled by sitting pillows, and nine cards with hand-drawn 'key' stickers were arranged face down next to the blanket (fig. 17). A table on the side was covered with another white blanket. Hidden under the cover was a selection of art and craft materials, including paper, oil crayons, stickers, textiles, buttons, threads, and Lego pieces.

This setup was supposed to encourage curiosity: What was the point of the objects on the ground? What was under the white cover? Using sitting pillows instead of regular chairs invited an out-of-the-ordinary perspective on space, making space for the spontaneous and unexpected.

Warming up to symbolic thinking

After a general welcome, the participants were asked to take a seat, inspect the objects in front of them, and choose up to three objects used to introduce themselves. This was intended as a warm-up exercise introducing symbolic thinking. Besides attuning participants to object-based metaphoric communication, the exercise was supposed to help group bonding (Young 2007). The confines of the blanket expressed a playful invitation to insert oneself in a given symbolic context and appropriate it to accommodate preferred self-narratives.
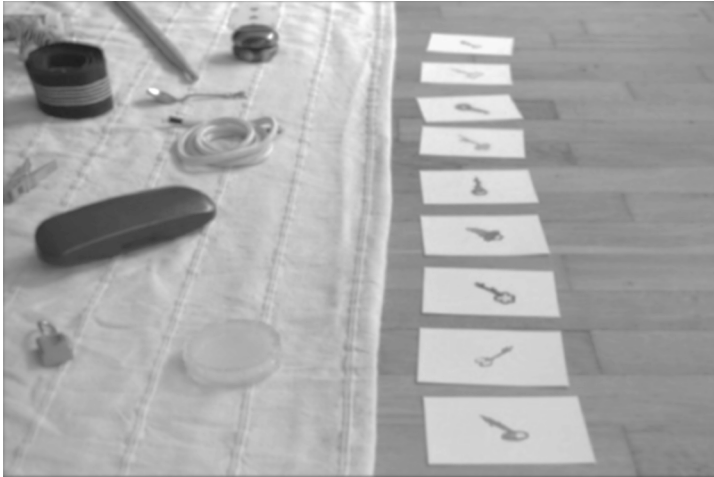
The direction and meaning of 'introduction' was left open to interpretation, yet the participants consistently chose mother-child narratives as most appropriate. This was also reflected in the objects the women selected. Marie[1] chose a tiger which "would fit nicely to my son", but which also represented the unforeseen confrontation with a two-fold loss situation: She was left by her partner during pregnancy, and shortly thereafter, lost her son as well: "I just had to find out of my situation; how to go on with life. From "it's soon gonna be three of us to: OK, I'm single again, lonely, child also gone". This situation required a change of perspective best represented by the spectacle case.

Anna stresses that the object she picked up, a tiny doll, represents the relationship to her child, rather than her grief. She describes this doll as something that can be carried around easily without revealing it to the outside world; something that is constantly there.

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1   The participants and their babies have been properly anonymised. However, the babies' assigned genders have been kept.

Figure 17: Setup used in the introductory phase of the Trauerspiel*: workshop. Symbolic objects helping introduction (left), 'key' cards initiating ideation (right)*

Source: author

It is important to her that the deceased son "appears as my child, and I introduce myself almost everywhere as mom of four children, not as mom of three children". She also chose a yo-yo – a toy consisting of a reel and a thread – describing that her occupation with the dead varies between closeness and distance. She compares this to the relationship she has with her two living children: "Sometimes there is a little bit more to do, sometimes less. But the involvement never stops and won't ever stop in the future. And that's nice. It's been ten years now."

Christina picked up three objects; an envelope containing basil seeds, because of her "connection to the garden", a spinning top, representing the "always recurring same" while "things go on", and a bottle of soap bubbles, which she considered an appropriate children's toy. It also stands for her dream of a third child, a dream she says that at some point had burst.

Finally, Sarah found the lighter the most appropriate to describe her responsibility as a midwife focusing on child loss. She emphasises her perspective as a companion or bystander, whose priority is on "seeing people, having time during counselling". She stresses warmth as the thing that needs to be cultivated in those situations.

The range of responses demonstrated the value of object-based association as a method to facilitate self-disclosure early on in the workshop. Figurative language enabled the group to bond quickly and intensely. The participants chose and related to their objects with ease and spontaneity, displaying a high amount of trust that the objects on the blanket had been prepared mindfully.

A GALAXY FOR GRIEF: METAPHORICAL MODELLING

After this introductory round, the metaphorical modelling exercise started. The participants were instructed to imagine taking their symbolic objects to a faraway planet, a planet inhabited by a child whose loss they had grieved as parents or bystanders. The expedition was identified as a personal mission, highlighting the participants' unique role as subject matter experts.

Attention was especially drawn on sensory qualities of their experience – what was there to see, hear, feel on the planets? The goal was to provoke associations on all sensory levels that gave a tangible quality to the abstract idea of bereaved motherhood. In the more specific wording of the task, focus was put on 'what is there' on the planet: The child, the participant, and everything else 'that is also there'.

This purpose of focusing on 'what is there' was twofold. On the one hand, it was supposed to root images of the griever-child relationship in the present moment. On the other hand, it was supposed to help this relationship gain a concrete ontological gestalt. The planet motif itself was chosen for several reasons. First, it suggested that an emotional complex like grief could be expressed in terms of a simple image;

countering one impossibility (representing grief) by another one (representing it through a planet) was supposed to liberate women "from the difficulty of the undertaking and encourage lateral thinking" (Andersen et al. 2003: 7).

Secondly, on the associative level, the image of the planet was supposed to enable a wide spectrum of associations, both towards the positive, negative, and ambiguous (i.e. ambiguous: space travel, astronomy, discovery, flora, fauna, space; dystopian: hostile life forms, apocalypse, adversary; positive: adventure, control, benevolent life forms, escape from Earth). The hope was that while the women would draw on the rich connotations of the planet metaphor, they would identify nuanced aspects of their situated grief experience and how it should be talked about (Rosenblatt/Bowman 2013, Lawley/Thompkins 2000).

At the same time, the shared metaphor of the planet was supposed to pave the way for observing similarities and differences across the representations. Another intention with the planet metaphor was the creation of a context for (covert) game design; a planet is confined in space and time, has a surface, and operates under certain conditions. These aspects are well-suited to become a milieu for systemic thinking without becoming too technical. The idea was to encourage game-designerly thinking without enforcing it on the participants. The women were supposed to choose for themselves how far they would go in thinking through the aesthetics, mechanics and dynamics of their planets.

A material element supporting this intention were the 'key cards', which were introduced as an optional tool for guiding imagination. In the task's narrative, they were presented as keys to 'enter the planet', marking the transition from workshop space to imagined planet space. Each participant picked up a card containing an ambiguous term. These terms, some of them borrowed from game design, were supposed to additionally inspire systemic thinking: They included 'goal', 'time', 'gestalt', 'space', and 'progress'.

Next, the participants were asked to visualise their planets by closing their eyes or focusing on a point in front of them. The art table cover was lifted, and the participants were asked to start crafting their images, using as many of the materials as they found appropriate. They were encouraged to follow their associations and create whatever they liked. They were also given the option to create multiple planets or redo their planets if they weren't satisfied. This was a task focused on individual crafting and with little to no interaction between the participants. The focus was on "poiesis" (Levine 2014) led by their idiosyncratic choices of material.

The metaphorical modelling task was carried out in two phases, moving from a broad towards a more specific direction (i.e. Stepakoff 2014): The three initial foci – child, participant and environment ('everything else') – served as entry points for sketching out a rough foundation of the planet.

When all participants had settled on a material form to represent them, a more particular block of questions was introduced: What laws and procedures could the women identify on their planets? Was there something that couldn't be done? What role, if any, did grief play on their planet? This set of questions invited the women to incidentally define interreactive elements for their planets, coming up with rules and mechanics. This was supposed to invite a transition from a static towards a dynamic model with a possibility space; a game system.
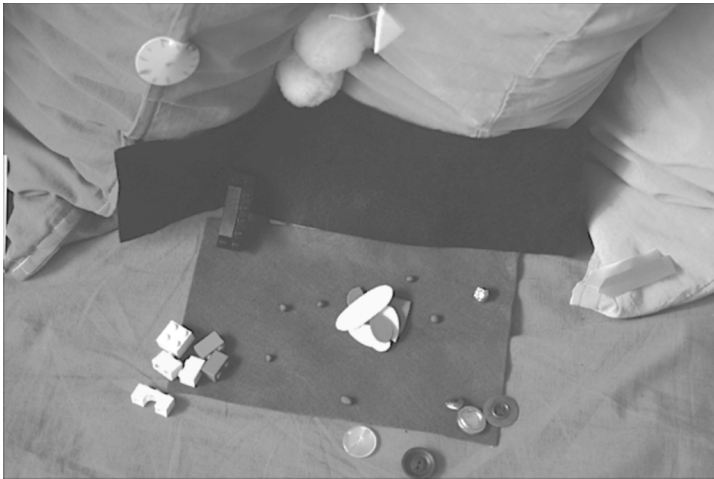
The floor gallery

During a coffee break, the art works resulting from this exercise were arranged into a 'gallery' on the workshop floor. When re-entering the room after the break, the participants found their works ready to be looked at in the new light of a shared 'galaxy'. They were asked to examine each work closely and respectfully, before we sat down to discuss each work in detail.

Similar to Stepakoff's "graphopoetic process" (2014) the goal was not to critique the models or distil an inherent 'true' meaning hiding inside. Rather, the invitation was to acknowledge particularly interesting

aspects and observe features particularly resonating with their own experience of loss, grief, and motherhood. They were also encouraged to ask questions of the artist. This was supposed to engage artists-onlookers in a personal discussion about motives, backgrounds, and associations evoked by the planets.

The women displayed great enthusiasm in both solitary crafting and collective sharing. It was noticeable that after a phase of withdrawal and creation, they were eager to share their creations and become mindful observers of each other's metaphorical landscapes. The 'impossible' task to express emotion through a planet concluded in a discussion on the love- and loss-related themes embodied in their models.

Figure 18: Results of the Trauerspiel *workshop, Sarah's planet*

Source: author

The Fireplace

Sarah chose to address her feelings during a stillbirth she assisted as a midwife. When the death of baby Jenny had been confirmed during the 34th week of pregnancy, Sarah encouraged the parents to consciously

attend their baby's birth and to spend some time with her. The model that Sarah created focuses on the atmosphere during the first moments with the stillborn Jenny, held in her mother's arms.

Sarah reports that the first image she saw when she received the task was a sparkling flame, "moving between Heaven and Earth". To model it, Sarah integrated materials from the table into the workshop space itself, composing a three-dimensional structure out of pillows, threads, foam rubber, textiles, buttons, and post-it arrows (fig. 18). A red and yellow foam rubber arrangement marks the centre of the image; the fireside. The yellow triangular rubber piece dangling from the pillow indicates the campfire's dynamism; around the fire she imagines the scene's protagonists – mother, father, Jenny and herself.

Christina observes that the baby is missing from the scene, and Sarah responds that she chose not to represent any people in the scene. Instead, the focus is on the atmosphere, an atmosphere whose particularities slowly emerged from the initial image of the fireside. "They were somehow already included in it but came out step by step".

There are two materials immediately noticed by the observers; the buttons and the Lego pieces loosely scattered around the fire. Sarah explains that the Lego pieces are debris-like shards ("Bruchstücke"). Their pointy, fragmented nature stands for the confusing aspects threatening to overwhelm the parents in a situation like this. The black Lego piece leaning against the felt night-sky horizon appears particularly intimidating. Anna points to the golden rose which "certainly has a special meaning, too". Sarah responds that it belongs to the "treasures" ("Schätze"), moments of unexpected bliss and beauty that can also be discovered in the situation.

Beauty and threat coexist on the planet, but how they are seen by the parents is an altogether different story. Father and mother share a space at the campfire, but since they occupy different positions in space, and since the flames illuminate the environment in dynamic ways, their perspectives on the world differ.

The spatial language of the campfire allows Sarah to shed light on a potential source of marital and relationship conflict after child loss: Both

parents occupy the same challenging space, but their gaze on the situation, and their view of Jenny diverge. Sarah observes, for instance, that "the father saw more shards, while the mother saw more treasures". This dissonance, the clash of perspectives on a shared experience as intimate as becoming bereaved parents, imposes an additional burden, evoking Stroebe and Schut's notion of "secondary loss" (1999).

Sarah is very particular about including elements providing help and support. The red pellets on the ground stand for "all things nourishing", which she also identifies as her midwife responsibilities. A focus on the 'corporeal basics' is needed, to help parents survive. Another need, expressed through the very setting – a moon-lit night on the field – is a comforting space. Asked why she chose a rectangular, sharply cut-out felt piece to represent the ground, Sarah responds that imposing limits was not intended. On a second thought, she asserts that confines are needed to create a safe space. The environment is simultaneously expansive and cosy, confined and liberating.

Another source of comfort on the planet is the principle of timelessness and non-intentionality expressed through the handless clock. The space is not subject to temporal order, or any order which is not conducive to the parents' immediate wellbeing. The skill required to cultivate this wellbeing is an attitude of being in the moment and letting go of control. This skill of giving space to *what is*, or as Sarah calls it "putting being in the centre", instead of focusing on what should be, is a skill which, which society fails to provide. Sarah identifies this as something she has learned from her midwife experience.

The fireside planet is full of movement and development: On the micro level, the flames, as well as the full moon and the clouds (wedged between two pillows) are constantly moving. This dynamism has effects on the ground: Shards, treasures, and nourishment are illuminated and concealed dynamically; new perspectives on 'what is' are possible. The couple can stand up, roam the field, and find new orientation. The arrows are imagined more dynamically than they first appear in the model; they can twist and turn. Last but not least, the clock's hands can be reattached, a temporal order reinstated. All of these developments are hypothetical

and not immediately visible from the outset, however. The most important thing, for now, is 'putting being in the centre', taking in what the flames dynamically expose to be true, and practicing self- care.

The Riverside

As Marie had shared in the introduction, she experienced the loss of her son Jan during late pregnancy eight years before she attended the workshop. Unlike Sarah, she does not reconstruct the event from her past, but reflects on the current situation as a bereaved mother using the metaphor of a river separating two Lego tigers from a Lego sheep.

Sarah immediately notes that "for me this is really sappy, and due to the river – I am interpreting this as a river – everything is really soaked and fresh". Anna adds that the place is "paradisiac." It is a place where "all you need is there, and I also see this green meadow and the river, and the animals that seem to get along well". For Anna, the path also looks like a boardgame.

Christina is most focused on the separation between the animals. She asks why the sheep keeps a "safety distance" from the tigers. Eager to respond, Marie explains: "This is my great-grandmother and this is my son, Jan", pointing at the Lego tigers. The adult tiger is the one she initially chose for her introduction. In the planet model it has gained a new meaning to stand for her great-grandmother. "She was the first person who died that I was very attached to", which is why Marie chooses her as the protective figure taking care of Jan. Together, the tigers live in a house whose "windows are wide open. Every moment, someone could come and join them".

Marie elaborates that her first association was "green" due to her love for Ireland whose landscapes are "constantly green, unlike here [in Austria]". She suspects that she projected her "favourite holiday destination on the planet" and continues to associate: "And I'm the sheep. Ireland – sheep – I am clearly in the observer role". While the sheep is located "offside; not where the action is", as Marie puts it, she is still all but absent. Her gaze rests on the tigers playing on the other

side, actively and patiently indulging in the spectacle, where the meadow is adorned with button flowers and balloons.

Marie brings up the topic of grief, explaining that in her model it is expressed through the river, or more particularly, "tears swept away by the river". She points out that the river has undergone a change from a state back then when it consisted purely of tears to a state in which it calmly purls along. The three paper drops remind us of this tearful past, but "the river changed. Grief changes".

Figure 19: Results of the Trauerspiel *workshop, Marie's planet*

Source: author

While Marie suggests that times of acute sadness have passed, the river still remains, maintaining a spatial separation between the two riversides. What, then, is the purpose of the sheep on the meadow, as it is standing here, now? According to Marie, it is to be present, as a mindful observer, but theoretically, it could decide to wade through the river at any time. Paradoxically, this is what the sheep desires, and yet what it refrains from doing. It is complacent where it is. "I believe that the sheep looks totally grounded", Christina seconds.

During the closing discussion, the river as a symbol re-emerges: Sarah identifies similarities to the Greek mythological river Styx which divides the realm of the living from the realm of the dead. Marie's river signifies a transformation, expressed by "changing one's shape" from sheep into a tiger, or "the yellow gestalt", as Anna adds. This is clearly a symbol for suicide, an option which the sheep ponders while complacently observing the tigers. On the one hand there is the promise to reconnect with the dead, on the other hand, as Christina points out, it is far from certain whether and how such a reunion will happen.

The tiger gestalt conjures up diverse associations: Christina describes it as a "power animal", and Sarah mentions the lioness ("Löwenmama"), a fiercely protective mother figure[2]. While the lion used to stand for herself in the introduction, Marie reassigns the role of protection to her great-grandmother; the one who can take care of Jan where he is now.

Another association is the lion/sheep dichotomy. In a sheep world, lions exist as a potential danger, as predators. Marie points out that the sheep might be scared of the tigers due to the fear of being devoured. However, the women agree that attraction outweighs worry, and that there are other reasons to preliminarily resist the temptation of crossing the river. Belonging to a flock turns out to be important; there are family and friends on the side of the sheep – albeit not represented – who compel her to stay.

Marie points out that "the river is equally beautiful on both sides" and the sheep "would just like to observe" the tigers instead of rushing into the river. For Sarah, this pleasure of observing is also characterised by an aspect of yearning. It is a yearning, however, which appears to be pleasant, just as if the sheep "waved over to a couple of friends over

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2   There are associations to the "lioness-mother" ("Löwenmutter") which among the German-speaking participants has a colloquial meaning of a protective mother who is ready to fight. The German Duden dictionary establishes a link between "fight" (kämpfen) and the lioness mother: http://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/kaempfen.

there". For Anna, both the river and the path on the other side have a certain direction: The river flows towards the future, indicating a time to come in which the path to the welcoming house will be walked.

The World within a World

Christina's loss experience is the most recent. Over a year ago, she experienced the still birth of her son Marc at 34 weeks pregnant. Her planet model is an intense engagement with the desire to reconnect to Marc and imagines an alternative in which the "dream bubble" of life with three children can become reality.

Figure 20: Results of the Trauerspiel *workshop, Christina's planet*

Source: author

Sarah first notices how refreshing, "fun", and animated Christina's planet is. "That it should be", responds Christina, since the first image she saw was a meadow, whose features Christina describes in great detail. "It wasn't a trimmed English lawn but a forest-countryside meadow; a farmer's meadow". These features are important, since one of the meadow's central affordances is to "hide in it", and to "simply

relax". All Christina hears on the planet is the laughter of her two living children who joyfully roam the planet without constraints. All the while, Christina holds Marc in her arms, and happily tries to catch up with her children, following either and none of the multiple paths that emerge but lead nowhere specific.

"What are the pins and the button?", asks Marie, noting the two safety pins fixing two big, black buttons into place. Christina explains that the safety pins are "only used for fixing" ("Montage") of the buttons. The buttons themselves stand for a number of abysmal craters which – to Christina's surprise and dismay – are also scattered around the planet. She admits that her first reaction to encountering a crater was fear and shock: "What if something happened to my living children? What if they fall?". However, moments later, she realises that on *her* planet, no such thing can happen to her children. The safety pin literally 'fixes' reality, imposing the law that no family member on the planet shall be negatively affected by a crater.

Christina mentions that the word on her 'key'card – 'goal' – did not matter to her since "there are no goals on this planet, simply roaming and lying down in the grass. And enjoyment". During discussion, she repeats the importance of goallessness several times, indicating that achieving goallessness may, in fact, be the goal.

"The one thing that I notice, somehow, for me it's such a world inside a world", observes Sarah, pointing to the double layers of paper and felt at the foundation of the planet. Her association is that the paper is "more real" than the felt, and that "from that reality something spills over, which is however not dangerous". This resonates with Christina, who admits that "reality of course doesn't look like this. But that (felt) is the ideal planet" from where a small part of "reality" was visible. "In this case reality was the sky".

From the comfortable, unthreatening confines of the ideal planet, however, there is no particular desire in facing that part of the sky. When I asked Christina what she saw when she looked up from the planet, Christina said: "Well, only clouds and birds... a sunny day. No grey clouds, but rather friendly. You wanted to snuggle into the clouds."

Christina mentions the weather conditions more generally, which were due to change ("sometimes it snows"), but none of these affected their mood or feeling of calmness and aliveness. "Our mood", she says, "is independent of the weather".

Overall, the symbols used by Christina underscore the central mission of a protective, sheltering planet; the meadow and its high grass which offers an excellent hiding space, the custom-tailored crater physics preventing accidents, the felt ground covering the harsh reality of the paper ground, and the detachment from potentially uncomfortable weather conditions. Thus equipped, the planet offers a rich 'world inside a world', where inhabitants and visitors can go about, carelessly enjoying the many attractions and activities. Although this might not be what reality looks like, the space invites Christina to celebrate the presence of her three children. "Grief", Christina says, "does not exist here".

The Cave

Anna also lost her third child, but well over ten years have passed since the event. Nevertheless, the question of her son's place in the family system continues to matter. In her model, which she already calls "my game", this is explored through the image of a cave.

The first question comes from Marie, who wants to know who the protagonists in the scene are. Anna explains that "it was totally clear to me that in my game... you need to bring people," which in the model are herself, her three living children, her husband, and a good friend who was important for her during the acute phase of grief. Together, these characters appear in a "cave, dark, but comfortable, tight and cuddly". Inside this cave is another, smaller cave where Jacob lives. This small inner cave can be accessed and left at will by all characters, but one rule which the planet imposes is that Jacob stays in his cave.

The cave, as Anna explains, is grief itself; the protagonists can enter or leave it, depending on their mood or character. Anna compares this to the back-and-forth of the yo-yo toy which she chose in the beginning. "Sometimes one enters the inner cave, or the outer one, sometimes one

exists completely". However, there is a collective task which needs to be mastered through cooperative effort of all family members and friends present. "Jacob needs to reach a certain size to be safe", and his growth can be facilitated by feeding and holding him. Once Jacob has grown strong enough to survive in the inner cave, the family's work is done and they will fly away in a spaceship; the goal of Anna's game.

In this scenario, shape and form are important. Anna is the only participant who includes the 'key' card as important design element (see fig. 21). She reports that the term 'gestalt' personally resonated with her because Jacob was born with a physical difference. In the game, it was important for Anna that all her children had the same blob shape, indicating the equal status of all her children, irrespective of whether they lived.

Figure 21: Results of the Trauerspiel *workshop, Anna's planet*

Source: author

Marie observes the distinction between adult shapes (square) and the blob-formed children. The appearance of these colourful, different-

shaped characters reminds Anna of the French cartoon characters from the animated series *Barbapapa* (1973-) by Annette Tison and Talus Taylor. Their main ability is wilful shapeshifting. Like the *Barbabpapas*, Anna's characters have the ability to transform as they wish, enabling them to interact with their environment in different ways. Another implication is that like the *Barbapapas*, Anna's characters are social, friendly, and family-oriented. This emphasises that the task of overcoming acute grief, rather than something depressing and lonely, is a social activity, fostering family cohesion.

Like in the other planets, friendliness was also reflected in the atmosphere of the planet, which Anna occasionally calls "island", too. Marie is fascinated by the feathers, which stand for the bird songs that are audible from different parts of the cave system. However, these sounds are as flexible and customisable as is the lighting of the scene. Adding to the pleasant shape-shifting of the protagonists, players should be empowered to select soundscapes and lighting according to their tastes.

Sarah mentions that "the eyes are one thing that I especially note", due to their clarity and orientation. There is a certain perceptivity, "not even the children are turning away", but everyone seems to look in the same direction, seems to be focused on something. She also observes the clear structure of the inner cave which stands out in terms of both colour and texture. The material makes her think of qualities like "making a nest, making it warm, soft, ready to cuddle in".

One point of discussion concerned the question of farewell, and how the family were to complete their task and leave the planet. Was the spaceship something to be built by the player? Did the player have to find parts of the spaceship? It was clear that the spaceship was a reward for mastery; it represented overcoming, and the end of acute grief, but this mission of overcoming was connected to the family's co-operation as a team. "It is important that everyone enters the spaceship at the same time", explains Anna. However, the type, difficulty, and pace of tasks accomplished by different family members varies, and some

protagonists might be already done while others still need to stay in the inner cave.

For Anna, respect for diverging coping styles is precisely the point. What matters is collective support, and as Sarah recommends "maybe the ones outside can assist the ones inside". This resonates with Anna and her idea that "feeding and caring" Jacob can be achieved in different ways. What matters is the reunion in the end, when the family meets at the spaceship.

DISCUSSION

The kind of metaphors that emerged during the workshop grounded the group discussion in concrete images, mechanics, and rules. In what follows, I will focus on the particular metaphors that were used to make something unknown (attachment, loss, grief) tangible via something known (the planet terrains). In Lakoff/Johnson's (1980) terms, the women used the source domain of the planets to make the target domain of the mother-child bond speakable. I will first review the way the women used materials and architecture to describe their inner emotional processes. Then I will look at similarities and differences in their attachment and grief metaphors.

Emotional Terrains

Looking at the various planet terrains, what immediately stands out is the choice of soft, comfortable, and warming materials. This indicates that the women's inner representations of the mother-child bond is in terms of a welcoming and accommodating space.

All women chose felt to model at least parts of their planet's surface. Felt is a material which is pleasant to touch and walk on; in everyday usage, it occurs in the context of protecting and warming (clothes), padding (furniture), and dampening (piano keys). On the planets, felt creates a protective 'foundation' on which the loss event and its aftermath can be safely engaged. In Christina's 'world inside a world'

planet, this foundation is shaky: The felt has a double protective function, covering a threatening paper ground which stands for an overwhelming reality.

The architecture of each planet gives a sense of structure and order, even if this order is intentionally missing in some cases. The architectural aspects of the fireside and the crater planet, for instance, afford free roaming and uncontrolled exploration, but also give less direction than planets whose architecture is neatly designed. Such 'messy' planets respond to a recent experience (Christina), or the immediate aftermath of loss (Sarah), while the more systematic architectures reflect on an experience that had happened some time ago.

If we look at the landmarks characterising each planet, the 'messy' planets contain a collage of scattered materials whose main purpose is to 'put being in the centre'. There are nourishing, exciting elements that can be experienced by the protagonist(s) in their own time: soap bubbles, fauna/flora, shards/treasures. The fireside as a landmark creates flexibility through dichotomies: It sheds light and shadow, it moves between Heaven (up), and Earth (down); it therefore articulates both hope and despair, love and separation. The main affordance of this place is to 'sit through' this ambivalence, and to face it by giving it attention, following the movements of the flames.

On the world within a world, there is no landmark that characterises the 'centre' of the image. However, there are the strong symbols of the high grass, the craters, and the sailboat which characterise the emotional affordances on the planet. First, the high grass exists almost everywhere on the planet and comes with the double function of being soft – embedding the reunited mother-child connection – and being an excellent hiding place. The grass is a protection against the antagonist of the sky (reality), it adds a protective layer to the planet's surface, much like hair protecting the skin.

The craters, on the other hand, are reminiscent of possible dangers that exist outside of the planet: Christina mentions that where there are craters there is no grass. Where there are craters, the landscape is exposed. It is connected to fears, which, through the absence of grass,

are fears of facing reality. This is where Christina introduces custom-tailored crater rules defying gravity, which prevents her children from falling. The sailboat has a similar purpose as a feature reinforcing comfort in the light of danger: Its function is to be hopped on and float in an undetermined direction, while, as Sarah observes, the sails are filled. The boat is moving, but the purpose of this movement is enjoyment rather than arriving somewhere. Everything on the planet, then, serves as 'safety features' disarming potential fears related to another child loss.

Marie's river introduces a clear boundary between two distinct spaces, the realm of the living and the realm of the dead. It is both a natural formation and related to magical, transformative properties: Going through it is risky; it stands for the unknown transition from living to dead. The river brings to attention the theme of separation and yearning. It splits the planet in two halves, both of which are desirable and welcoming, but one of which would mean leaving the other side forever. The purpose of this environment is to negotiate feelings of separation in the light of one's own death: The yearning for 'the other side' is a wish to reconnect with the lost child. On the other hand, following this wish is risky; it involves entering unknown waters and changing one's form forever.

The architectural element of the cave introduces a different regulation of space between the living and the dead. Unlike in the river model, the living can move back and forth between the space of the dead (inner cave) and the living; they are responsible for managing Jacob's survival in the inner cave. Like at the riverside of the dead, Jacob is confined in a certain space, yet this space is more personal and can be accessed without risk. It is more akin to a nursery than a realm of the dead. When the family has left the planet, it is a place where Jacob can live forever.

Weather, on all planets, was used to characterise emotions on the planets. Christina was most particular about the varieties of weather which, however, did not affect the moods or activities of the family. She went into much detail about sunshine, snow, and wind, which all served

the purpose of creating variety, rather than being an annoyance. Agency is detached from weather states.

A different take on meteorology is used in the cave planet, where players can select lighting and sounds themselves, exerting full control over the kind of atmosphere they find appropriate. Marie characterises the weather on her planet as more stable, likening it to the weather of her favourite holiday destination. It is fascinating and pleasant to her how little variance there is between seasons.

In Sarah's night scenario, meteorology plays a role in the way clouds and the moon move across the sky and add to the ambivalent lighting/shadow atmosphere. Overall, the kinds of weather repeat the emotional themes of each planet: Marie's 'holiday' weather expresses yearning, Christina's detachment from weather utters the wish to defy reality, Sarah's night sky adds to an ambivalent being in the moment, and Anna's selectable weather indicates the wish to handle emotions on a pragmatic level.

Attachment Metaphors

On the conceptual level, one prominent attachment symbol was *relationship as looking/observation*. On the fireside planet, engaging in relationships is expressed through the act of noticing treasures and shards around the fireside. In the riverside metaphor, the sheep's main occupation is displaying interest in the activities on the other side. Observation means cultivating a relationship with the deceased.

This metaphor highlights the desire to continue bonds with the dead, but from a position that is rooted elsewhere. While there is some interaction with the baby, feeding and holding it, the look is the central interactive modality occurring on all planets. Something that is looked at can be engaged and identified with, but that cannot be changed. However, there are different ways of looking at the facts of life: There are shards and treasures (fireside), there is the loving attention of the lioness, but there is also danger (river).

Secondly, a recurring image is *relationship as feeding*: In the cave model, the baby needs to be fed in order to grow and survive. This is in

line with Umphrey and Cacciatore's observation that bereaved couples often conceptualise their relationship metaphorically as something that grows (2014: 2). Here, instead of the conjugal relationship, the metaphor applies to the family-child relationship, and the way it needs to be nurtured by the whole family system to sustain itself. The task is to find out what food is appropriate and who can provide it in the given constellation. Relationship-as-feeding highlights that everyone needs to be fed, and that there are different sensitivities around what kind of food this should be.

In the fireside model, 'the nourishing' is more abstractly included as red pellets on the floor. It suggests that nourishment is simply available for those who pick it up. The question of nourishment also emerges in the sheep model; sheep and grazing are closely connected, albeit with a stronger association to self-care. Feeding oneself through grazing does not only stress the feeling of complacency; it also has a communal aspect. Grazing with one's flock, i.e. sharing a meal with friends and family.

Thirdly, the metaphor *relationship as collaboration* appears in reference to bereaved family members and friends. It features maybe most prominently in Anna's imperative to solve a collective task in order to 'master' acute grief. Relationship as collaboration stresses the notion of work and action, as well as the often-overlooked fact that grief does not exist in isolation but as part of a social system. In the cave model, collaboration also highlights the difficulty of learning about one's role in a fluent network of interrelations. It also sheds light on the existence of complementary or potentially conflicting grief styles. To collaborate means to explore what works and what doesn't work in a specific social context, and sometimes against one's immediate interests.

The fireside model shows that relationship as collaboration also faces the risk of failure. A shared trauma may be faced from different perspectives, requiring negotiation. There is the possibility that the parents part ways due to their inability to collaborate and accept each other's points of view. On the ideal utopian shelter planet, this uncomfortable realisation is unwelcome; Christina stresses how little

she had to "care about other's views"; part of the planet's purpose is to offer escape from social pressure.

In Christina's and Anna's models, relationship was also expressed through the metaphor of *proximity*. When we look at the way baby and mother are arranged in Christina's planet, they take an overlapping space, the baby attached to her in the most literal way: Attachment is a matter of sharing the same physical space. In the cave model, physical proximity to the baby is a requirement for feeding and holding the baby, and thereby getting closer to the goal of making him grow. The difference between these planets, then, is that in Christina's model the contact to the baby is sufficient. There is no further action required than to hold and 'feel' him.

In the cave, getting close to the baby is not necessarily a task everyone needs to carry out. There is more focus on the negotiation of space in terms of figuring out a balance between proximity and distance to the child, according to the abilities and needs of everyone involved. Nevertheless, both planets share a maternal yearning for establishing and maintaining physical contact with the child, regardless of everyone else's wishes. Proximity and contact are also introduced on the sheep/tiger planet, where they also serve as metaphors for care. However, the river disallows physical contact between mother and child. The loss event introduces a cesura (the river) between them, which changes the relationship from a matter of proximity towards a matter of looking. This change indicates that the relationship does not stop; it merely transforms. Physical proximity as relationship continues to matter on both sides of the river: The sheep is part of a social circle, a flock of sheep; the dead son is in the custody of the great-grandmother, a new caretaker.

Metaphors for Loss and Grief

When it comes to loss and grief, the metaphors used in the models contain motion, orientation and setting. Motion is a strong indicator of power and agency; the loss of motion, in several planets, expresses a loss of agency and action. In the fireside model, the flame moves, while both

characters in the scene, the shards and treasures, as well as time itself, are still. It is the loss situation itself that sheds light, and therefore determines the possible perspectives on the world. Since the fire's movements are organic, random, and unpredictable, so are the perspectives imposed on the parents. The latter will have to face and accept what they see before they can start moving and actively negotiate what to do with their situation.

In the riverside planet, the river both stands for grief and is the central object in motion. In contrast to a flame in motion, a river in motion has a direction; it goes somewhere, indicating a beginning and an end, as well as a journey between them. However, the metaphor is not to travel on the river, as in other frequently used relationship metaphors (Umphrey and Cacciatore 2014), but to contemplate its movement, origin, and the question of what would happen if one waded through it, crossed it.

What fireside and riverside have in common, then, is that the realm of the living is characterised by stillness, while action stands for being or becoming dead. In fact, the tigers on the other side playfully move about, while the role of the sheep is one of a physically passive onlooker only mentally participating in the activities on the other side. On the cave and shelter planets, the contrast between movement and stillness are reversed; it is the bereaved who engage in movement, while the dead are the passive beneficiaries of action.

On the world inside a world, movement is used to literally hide from loss, represented by the threatening sky of reality. Swift movements through the planet's high grass are required to escape this threat and achieve the goal of comfort through 'hiding'. On the cave planet, action is goal-led, coming most close to the grief work imperative discussed in a previous chapter.

Orientation plays a role on all planets, either as a possibility in the near future (fireside), as the direction of one's gaze (sheep planet), as a feature of architecture (in/out orientations in the cave model), or as something that was explicitly avoided (world inside a world). Orientation is consistently used as a metaphor to express intentionality;

a force that did not matter in environments which were dedicated to being in the moment (fireside, world inside a world). Orientation is connected with the need to face loss and deal with it through grief. This is why on Christina's planet, orientation is not yet speakable, while in the fireside model it is an explicit possibility.

In both the sheep and the cave planet, orientation is fully realised as a devoted gaze or action towards the deceased. How is a sense of orientation (or the possibility thereof) materially expressed? In the fireside and the cave model, arrows are used to indicate that direction and structure are possible or existing. In the sheep model, a clarity of perception and orientation are expressed by the positioning of the protagonist; the sheep's body faces the tigers. Here, the physical posture of the sheep indicates the direction of interest and with it a certain intention. In the cave model, interest and direction are coupled with action. The architectural structure of the cave facilitates a certain protagonist behaviour. Different directions can be found depending on the family members' needs, intentions, and the ways they can shift shapes. These needs and intentions are to be learned by finding out what direction is appropriate for every character in the game.

IMPLICATIONS FOR GAME DESIGN

These emotional landscapes point to implications for game design, in their conception of time, actions, and aesthetics. A commonality on all planets is the notion of timelessness. All models express the wish to spend as much time as possible with the deceased child: some women expressed a feeling of 'time standing still'. On the level of game design, this invites a contemplative atmosphere, excluding by default fast-paced dynamics, and time-based challenges.

This does not mean that action and challenge should not play a role. All planets feature certain tasks that need to be carried out; a purpose, and by implication a certain goal (paradoxically, even goallessness is a goal). The many relationship metaphors materialised on the planets have something in common: They all revolve around being with, nourishing,

and caring for the child. Whether it is paying attention through looking, being close, holding, or feeding; these activities express the wish for action with and around the dead child.

There is some understanding that grief as the processing of loss comes with a nourishing quality, and with an agency and intention directed towards the wellbeing of self and others. In terms of game design, this points to exploration and puzzle mechanics, and a strong focus on atmospheric elements, rather than kinetic, skill-based challenges.

Another commonality is that the child, though always in the centre of attention, does not have agency. As little tiger and baby in the cave, the child is confined in its place; it can sometimes be carried, but not walk itself. It does not have its own perspective. From a game design angle, the protagonist of the game should hence be the mother rather than the child. Her abilities are widely expressed as those of a caretaker able to hold, feed, give shelter, and even shape-shift to fulfil the child's needs. This suggests that the child takes the role of a dependent NPC receiving attention.

In terms of aesthetics, the planets were consistently beautiful with threatening elements (shards, craters) smoothly integrated in a appealing environment. The women were somewhat specific when describing the planets' soundscapes as mantric, full of laughter, and bird-tweeting. For game design, this suggests that some care needs to be invested in the design of visual and auditory features, and the creation of a positive, sensual atmosphere creating a digital comforting 'nest' for the deceased.