

**THINK
CLEARLY**



Annual Report 2014



**Always give from the
heart**

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Intentions & Introduction

2014 has been a year of personal transformation. To a degree where I have felt that my former self was completely foreign. On the surface there are many things that are the same. I still live with my wife and son in Brooklyn New York. My wife and most of my friends still can't really explain what it is that I do for a living. And my wardrobe is still dominated by two colors that my 3rd grade arts teacher would insist are not actually colors but merely degrees of light: white and black. But I feel like a new man. I might never be able to convey this feeling precisely, but this year's report will at least give you an idea of what happened.

I have two intentions when I write my annual report.

First of all I want to take time to reflect on what has happened in my life in the past year. What have I learned? How can I grow and be a better man in the year to come? I want to go beyond the events and discover what those events really meant. How did they feel? The insights that can only be realized with clarity of hindsight. This helps me get a clearer perspective and allows me to grow. I also take this time as a chance to look ahead and set clear intentions for myself and how I approach the coming year.

Second, I want this report to give permission to others to do something similar. I have met too many people who feel that spending time reflecting on their past seems like a self-indulgent luxury. I believe it is a crucial tool for personal growth and development. Every year I am delighted to hear from readers who found my stories to be inspiring. But the best responses I get are from those people who didn't bother reading about me because they were inspired and felt compelled to write their own report in some form or another.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

HOW CAN YOU
TAKE YOURSELF
TO REACH A
PERFORMANCE WHO
CAN BRING THE
AND BELIEVE THE
ATTITUDE CAREER
& A GOAL?

AND WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU
AFTER YOU'VE DONE IT?
HOW ARE YOU DIFFERENT
YOUR BODY AND SPIRIT?
HOW CAN YOU ACHIEVE
GROWTH? AND BECOMING
AN EMPTY VESSEL.

WHO DO I WANT TO BE?

INCORPORATED
I'M SCARED
NOW DOING GOOD THINGS
I'M SCARED

$E + R = O$

EVENTS
RESPONSES
OUTCOMES

I CAN BE A VICTIM
OF MY OWN LIFE
AND THE THINGS
THAT HAPPEN TO ME.
FEEL SORRY FOR
MYSELF.

BUT I CAN ALSO
DIFFERENT RESP
THE EVENTS AND
A DIFFERENT REALITY

SEP 16 2014 CB

FRIDAY

CUS AND GOALS

GUESTS
- DESIGN
- FACILITATE

BLUEPRINT
- PLAN
- HELP?

9 2014 WH

0 RUNNING BEHIND

1 SURFING CHAOS

I GET TO PICK MY OWN REALITY
IT FEELS MOST LIKE A BEL
FOCUS ON THE FACTS
WHEN SURFING, YOU
WATER ANYWAY
BUT JUST



Create your own annual report

Instead of reading about my life you could also make your own annual report about your life in the past 12 months. Here's how you can do it in five steps.

You will need five sheets of paper (or five pages in your favorite notebook), a good pen and a great cup of coffee (optional).

Step 1: what happened? Make a timeline of the past 12 months and add the primary things that happened this year. Travel, important milestones, career changes, family. You can use your journals from the year, your calendar, Twitter and Facebook feeds and whatever else that might help you. You don't need to write anything about it right now. Just get the facts laid out. If you count less than 10 things, then you are probably being a little too strict about what counts as a significant. If you have more than 30 things, leave out the least important.

Step 2: who were in my life? On a new page: Make a map of your people. Start anywhere and draw a little stick figure and give it a name for each person that was significant in your life this year. There might be a group of your closest friends. A group of your co-workers. Who were the new people that came into your life? As in step 1, try to just focus on the facts.

Step 3: how did it feel? On a new page: With the facts out, now it's time to go a little deeper. Pick one of the elements from step 1 and try to remember a little bit more about what happened and how it felt. How did it feel when it happened and how does it feel now, with a little bit of time in between? Big challenges might have felt super scary when you were in it, but now that you look back on it, it actually feels great. Try to capture both feelings. Repeat for at least three other events from step 1.

Step 4: what have I learned? On a new page: Try to make a list of the five most important things you've learned or discovered in the past year. How did you discover it? What allowed you to capture it as a learning? How has it changed your view on life, the world or whatever it relates to?

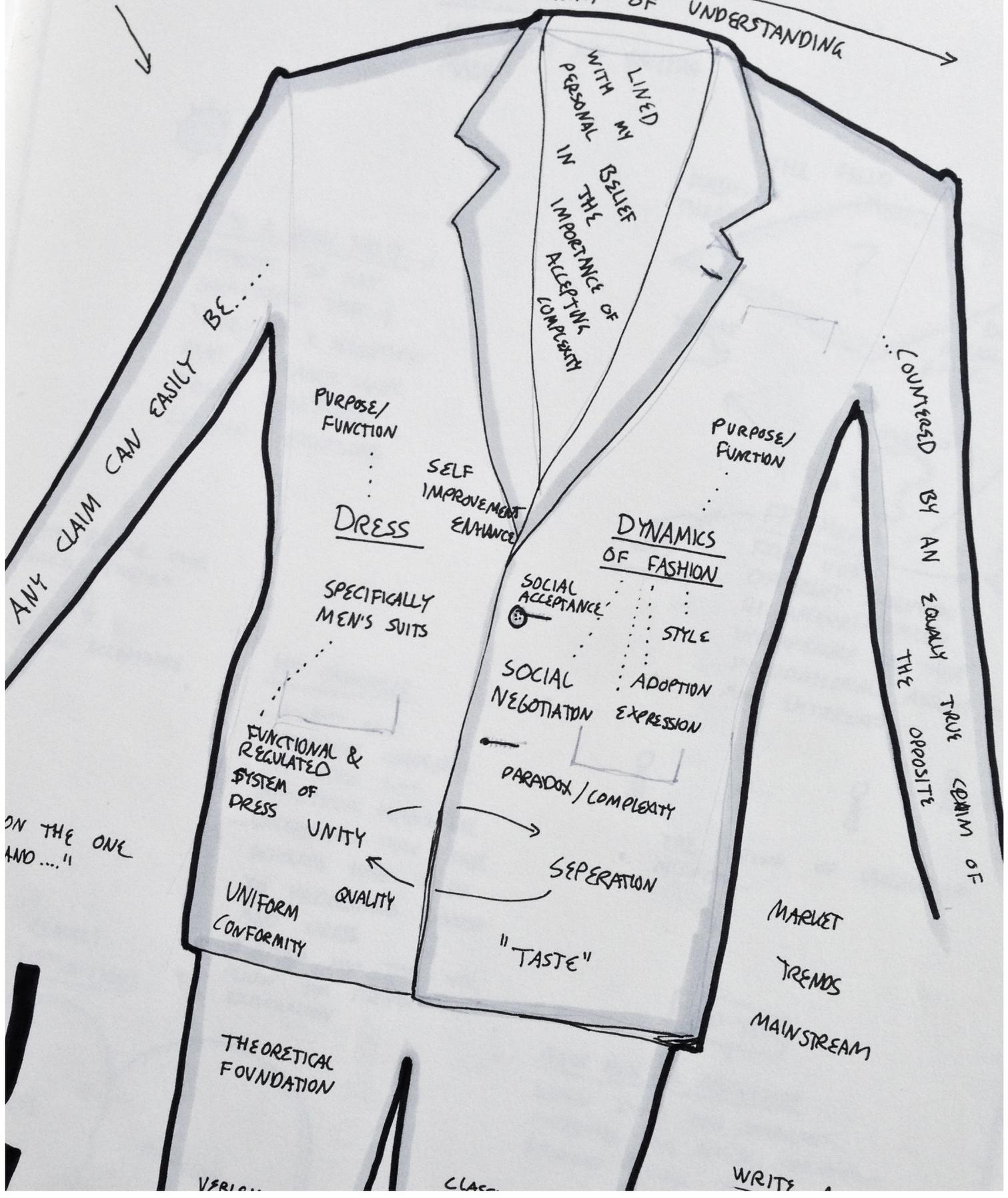
Step 5: Look ahead. On the last page: With 2014 over, the last step is to look ahead for 2015. You can make this quite complicated but actually try to not overthink it: just draw the three most important people, two concrete things you really want to do, and one word that describes a good attitude. Don't think about it. Grab a pen and see what comes out.

I also highly recommend my friend Chris's approach to redesigning your new year's resolutions. Read it here and be inspired:

<http://bit.ly/1DvYIzd>

THE PURPOSE OF MY PAPER IS TO BROADEN THE SPECTRUM OF UNDERSTANDING

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES



ON THE ONE AND"

VERI...

CLAS...

WRITE

Fashion

My past life as a scholar of fashion theory came back to visit me when a man named Alan Victor reached out to me. Alan Victor is President and third generation head of Jack Victor, a Canadian manufacturer of men's suits. He had read one of the papers I had written six years ago while I was still a student, and which I had published on my own website – the magic of the Internet. He wanted me to write a similar article for the upcoming centennial book about Jack Victor.

Luckily I had long ago convinced my father to bring most of my old books from back then, so they were ready for me when I needed them. When I was first reading all those books in 2006-2008 I would have loved to get such a request. But I didn't. It happened in 2014.

What I mainly take away from this, is that it reminds me of something I truly believe, but often forget, which is that things take time. There is rarely instant success. This means that I can't understand the full implications of what I'm doing right now. Some of it may not come to fruition until six years from now. Maybe more. Maybe a lot more. That's why it's so important for me to do something I believe in, because some of it will come back eventually.



Portrait from article in danish newspaper
April 2013

Letting go of control

I was never anything close to a celebrity, but in my life before moving to New York I was in that semi-public-figure space. Consistently appearing in danish mainstream media once or twice a year, in interviews and occasionally on television to speak about my most recent project, fashion or entrepreneurship in general. I've learned my lessons, feeling misrepresented and having quotes taken out of context, and I have developed ways to minimize the risk, to control my own story and to make sure that I am promoting my own projects in the right way.

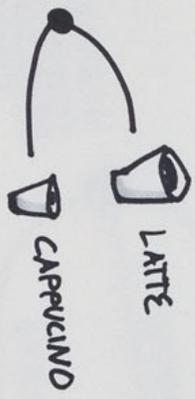
This year, while on vacation in Denmark, I did another small portrait for the business section of a danish newspaper, but what made this different was how I felt in the process. When I left the interview I felt peaceful. With my life established in New York I no longer needed to sell anything. I didn't have that inner pr-strategist thinking about how to best spin this into an opportunity for myself or my ego worrying about how I might appear to others. I felt that I had done my part: I had showed up and honestly shared myself with the journalist. While telling it to her, it was my story. But after saying goodbye, I no longer felt that ownership. It was now her story to tell. And her job to tell it the way it made sense to her. Her job to tell it in a way that would make sense to her readers. Even if I would no longer recognize myself in it. It was her story now. I let it go.

As I type this, it seems so obvious that this is how it should always be. But it hasn't been, as I have been caught up in a self-promotion agenda, which I wasn't fully aware of until this.

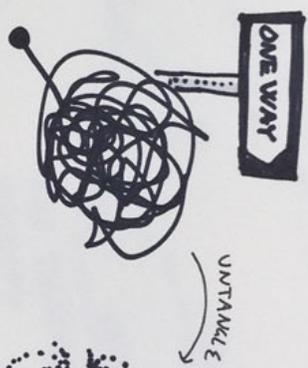
The interview is in written in danish. You can find a copy of it here: <http://bit.ly/14tIAE7>

THINK
CLEARLY

**SIMPLE
DECISION**
IS EASY TO RECOGNIZE.
THE CONSEQUENCES OF
A BAD DECISION ARE LOW.



**COMPLEX
DECISION**
CAN BE HARD TO
RECOGNIZE WHEN IT
IS ALL TANGLED
UP IN ORGANIZATIONAL
AND LOOPS.



- ① RECOGNIZE
- ② REFLECT
- ③ UNTANGLE
- ④ DISCUSS



JUNE 4 2014 #MARCACF





**Simon crossing a
bridge**

Goodbye stranger-friend

In the summer of 2014 one of my dear friends Simon died suddenly of a heart attack, weeks before he would have turned 30.

I first met Simon in the fall of 2006 at a small gathering of roughly 20 young students from different universities and business schools. We were strangers, and it was clear to me that we had wildly different opinions and beliefs about the world, but I also had a feelings that we somehow understood and respected each other despite these differences. In the following years our friendship grew into something really special. Before this I had always gravitated towards people I could agree with. I had also always felt a bit misunderstood, as if the people I knew didn't quite understand me, even if we had known each other for a long time. Beneath our differences, Simon and I both saw in each other an uncompromising commitment to live our lives our own way without having anyone else tell us what to think or do or believe. I think meeting Simon was one of the first times where I had this experience: meeting a stranger and within hours feeling that we understand each other better than some people I have known my entire life.

He wasn't too concerned with being liked by anyone. I also think he was an extremely demanding boss who would sometimes push people way too far. I disagree with him on many of his strong opinions and some of the things he did. But I still deeply respect him for his uncompromising commitment to living his life to the fullest, in his own particular way, and I will absolutely miss him.



Wisdom Hackers salon in New York

15 years ago my mother died from cancer. I still remember her, but my memories are faded. This year I wanted to reconnect with her somehow. I wanted to write something about her, which would force me to reconnect with people who knew her when she was alive. My aunt (my mother's sister), some of her school friends, colleagues etc. But I didn't know how. Was it a book? An article? And how could I make myself accountable to actually make it happen? When I mentioned the idea to my dear friend Alexa, she suggested that it could be part of Wisdom Hackers, a new project that she was working on, but it would have to be more clear how it could be relevant for others: what is the burning question? For me the question was about parenting in my generation of millennials.

The final text is not ready for publication yet, but we did a salon in NYC where I spoke about it. An audio recording from the evening is available here: <http://bit.ly/1yyHAcY>

This year I baked loaf # 285. Read more
about why I bake in Mindful Matter:
<http://bit.ly/1s3ttKD>



Learning about learning about learning online

Towards the end of 2013 I began to think about how I might be able to reach more people with my think clearly-work, than the small handful of personal clients that I met with in person. I was deeply sceptical of the idea of scaling it up as I feared that some of the personal and unique would get lost. But I also didn't want to let my fear prevent me from at least experimenting. Out of these reflections came the think clearly newsletter (launched in 2013) and an online video-based course on how to think clearly with pen and paper. In early 2014 I also launched a video based ebook to teach the same fundamental techniques using an iPad and the Paper-app by FiftyThree.

Some of my friends have been incredible succesful with their online courses. One friend in particular created the number one bestselling class on Skillshare (in 2012). I had very high expectations and I was of course disappointed. None of my courses did particularly well. I had somehow convinced myself that given the popularity of the iPad and the Paper-app, I would easily sell 1.000 ebooks. I had forgotten that I don't believe in instant success, and in the early summer I was ready to just give up and go back to purely offline work. They had each sold only around 150.



Meta — A photo of an iPad playing a video on an iPad

Over the summer I went to Buenos Aires to participate in an innovation conference and to give a talk at Coca-Cola Latin America. That was when I met Alfredo from Recife in Brazil, one of the other participants. One night we were walking through the city. He told me that he had taken my online class and said it had profoundly changed his life! I was speechless for a moment. How was this even possible? I think that was the moment where my disappointment and skepticism began to evaporate.

In a world where it is so easy to quantify (how many “likes” did my recent post on Facebook get? What was the open rate on my newsletter?) I need to constantly remind myself of Alfredo. Behind the numbers are actual real humans with lives. And even if my recent article about intentions was only read by one person, that one person could be like Alfredo. That’s why I decided to draw one little figure of every one of my newsletter subscribers.

My other mistake was that I kept asking myself: what will this give me? How much money can I make if I sell 1000 books? This kept me trapped in a feeling of not getting enough. Not getting enough help (why weren’t people more helpful in pushing my book to their friends?). Not getting enough money. All this “Not enough” caused only frustration. The real question I need to ask myself is: what can I give? How can I best give it to the most people?

(as of this writing I have made the content of both classes available for free on my own site. You can still buy the ebook on iTunes if you want to have it for offline viewing)



Alfredo, Kalsoom, myself and Tia

W
EARLY

SUBSCRIBERS

ROUGHLY 1800 PEOPLE SUBSCRIBE TO MY NEWSLETTER. THAT SEEMS TO LIVE A LOT OF PEOPLE, HOWEVER, IT HAS SOMEHOW ALSO BECOME NORMAL. I HAVE GOTTEN USED TO IT. LAST NIGHT I TAUGHT A CLASS AT THE HOLSTEE WORKSHOP AND SEVERAL OF THE PEOPLE WHO CAME, HAD HEARD ABOUT IT THROUGH MY NEWSLETTER. IT WAS SO AMAZING TO SEE THEIR FACES. TO MEET THEM IN REAL LIFE. TO BE REMINDED THAT 1800 REAL PEOPLE EXIST OUT THERE IN THE WORLD. TO HELP ME REMEMBER THIS, I WANT TO DRAW THEM.

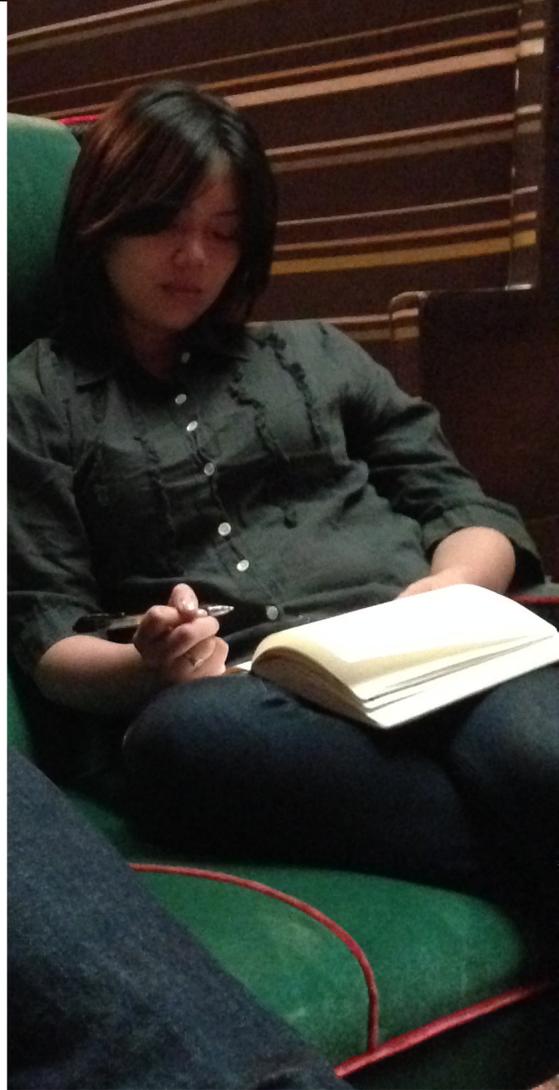
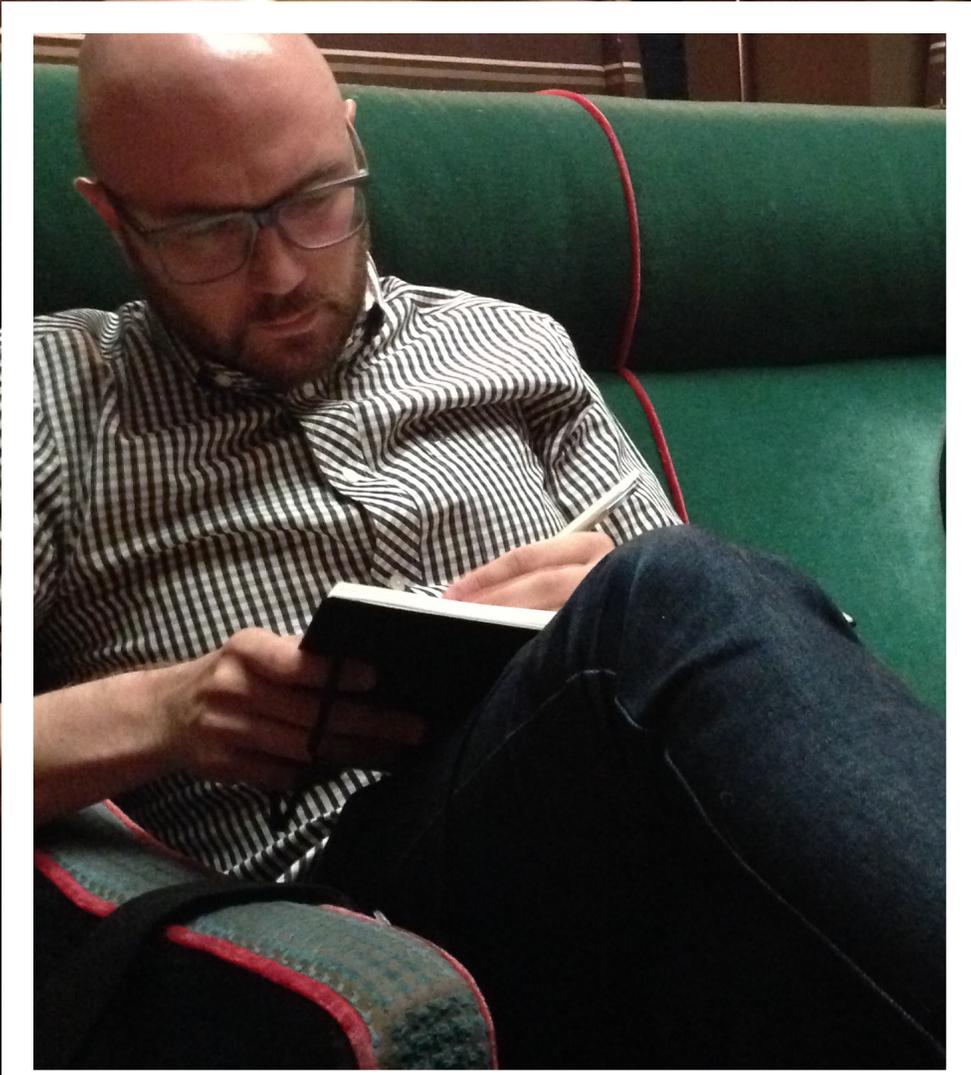


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Teaching

In the past I have often given talks and lectures to groups of people. I spoke to a group of grad students at Pratt about making creative choices and I gave a crash course in personal reflection and visioning for a group of summer students at Enstitute, but what was most exciting was when my friend Ivan invited me to visit his class. Ivan teaches an elective course on entrepreneurship at Avenues, a high school in Chelsea. What I presented was probably some of the most crazy stuff I have ever taught to a group. In fact the theme of the presentation was “how to be crazy in a good way.” It was an absolutely amazing experience for me. The questions they asked were all coming from a place of genuine interest. They challenged me back. They were critical yet open.

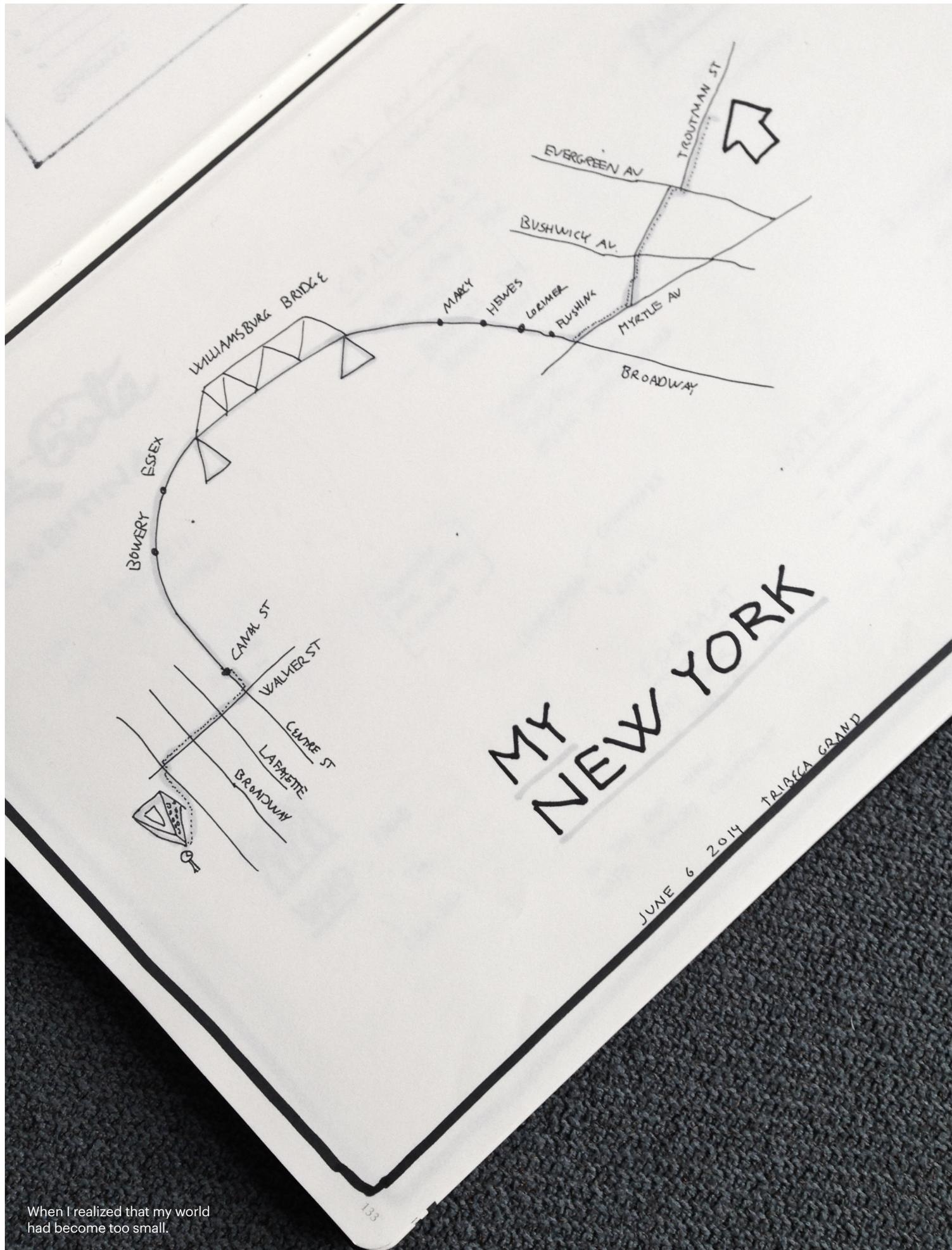
This year I also tried a new format where I invited a small group of five friends to join me for four early morning sessions, spread out over a month. Compared to all the one-off classes with large groups, and the ongoing one to one coaching sessions I’ve done, this turned out to be a really interesting in-between. The ongoing nature allowed for much deeper exploration than what people can do in just one session, but the most interesting thing was to see how all the participants learned from and inspired each other.



Group reflection practice

This year I also tried a new format where I invited a small group of five friends to join me for four early morning sessions, spread out over a month.

I have very successfully managed to create my own little microcosm where I only go to places I enjoy and spend time with people I love. This isolation and detachment allowed me to think in different ways, and to avoid a lot of frustration. However, in early 2014 it also began to feel limiting. I wasn't exposed to new thinking, new ideas and new people. **I knew that it was time to begin opening up my world again.**



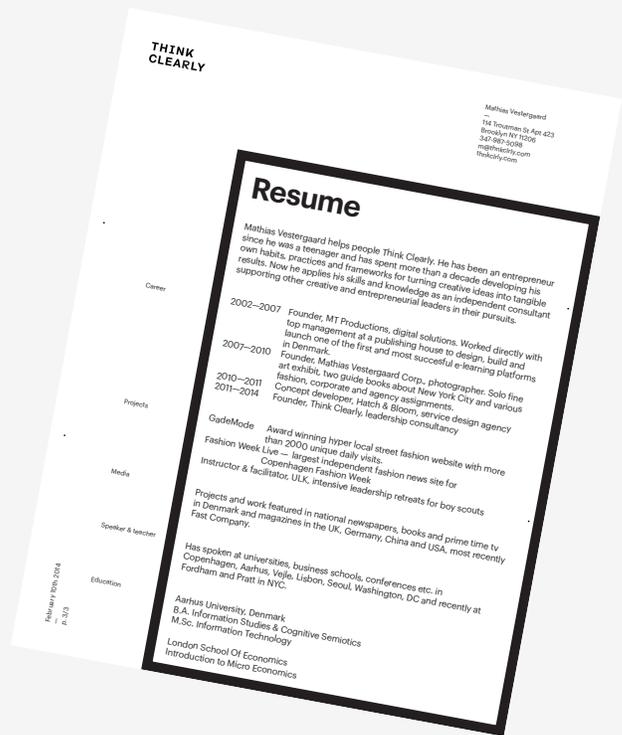
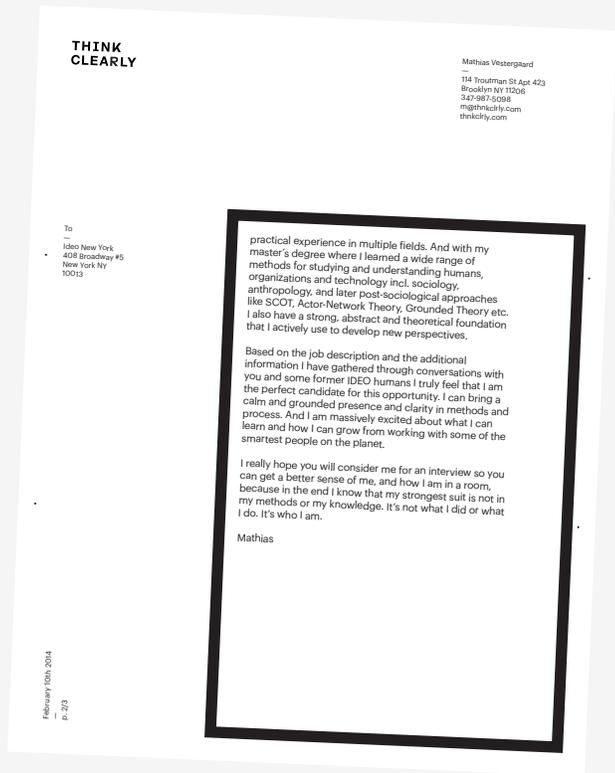
MY NEW YORK

JUNE 6 2014 TRAJECA GRAND

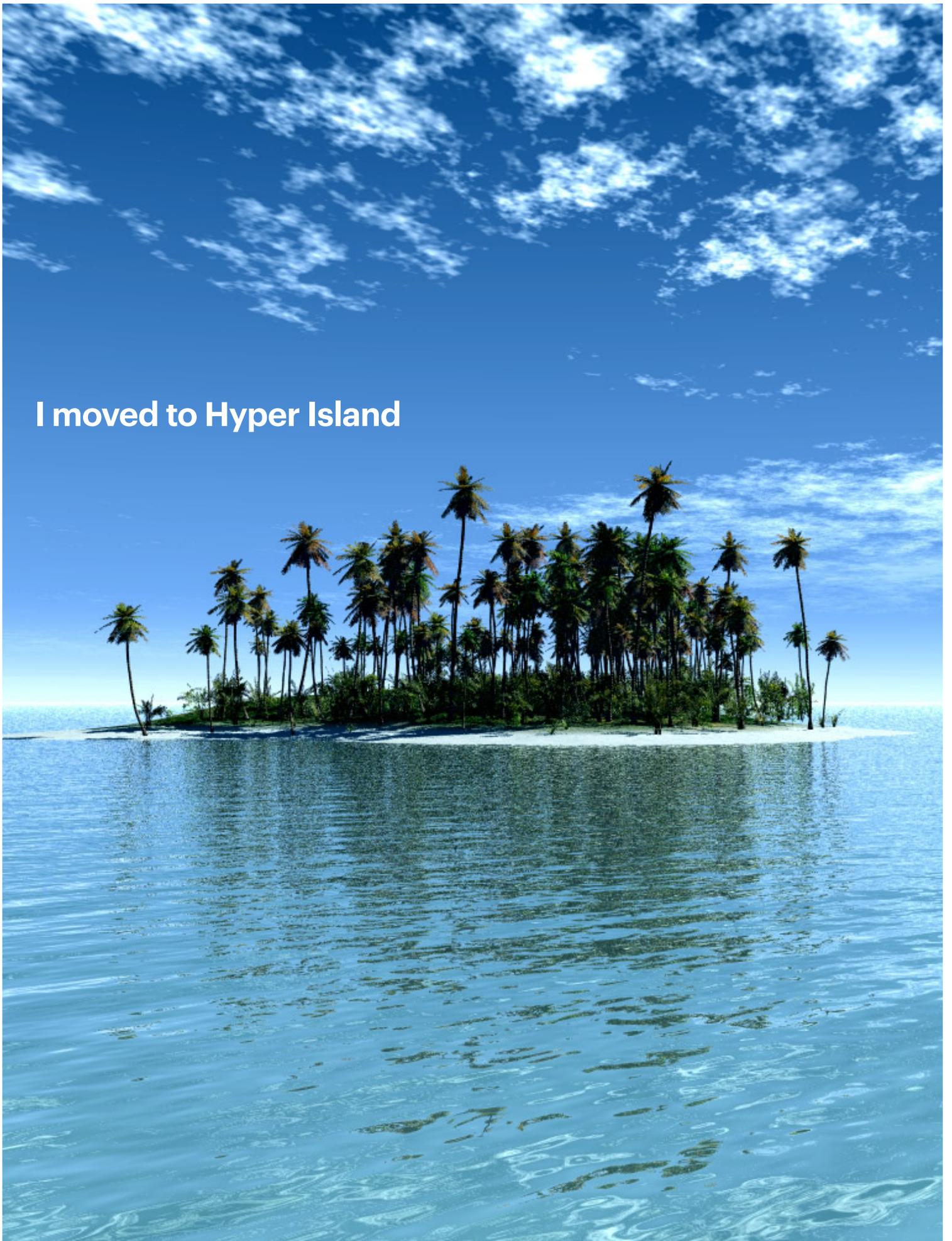
When I realized that my world had become too small.

One of the first signs that I was beginning to open up my world again to new opportunities, was when I randomly stumbled on a job listing for a job as Business Development Lead at IDEO New York. I wasn't looking for a job, but when I read the posting it felt like it had been written exactly for me.

Looking back, it seems less like a great fit, which is probably also why I didn't end up getting the job, but I have included here a copy of my job application, as this was the first job application I have ever written, where it felt completely right.



I moved to Hyper Island



New job

2014 was the year where I got a full time job: I am working as a Learning Designer at Hyper Island. Yes, that's a first for me. And as I write this, I am still employed which means that I managed to keep the job for four full months.

It feels like I had to both transform myself in order to be considered employable and get a job. Then I had to transform myself again to work in a job. And then one more time, but that one is not over yet so I still can't say exactly how or why. I just know it's happening again.

Instead of writing long essays about how I transformed I have included two examples of things I wrote in the year. One is an article about how to do email in a more mindful way, written in the early spring when I was still in my tiny little world.

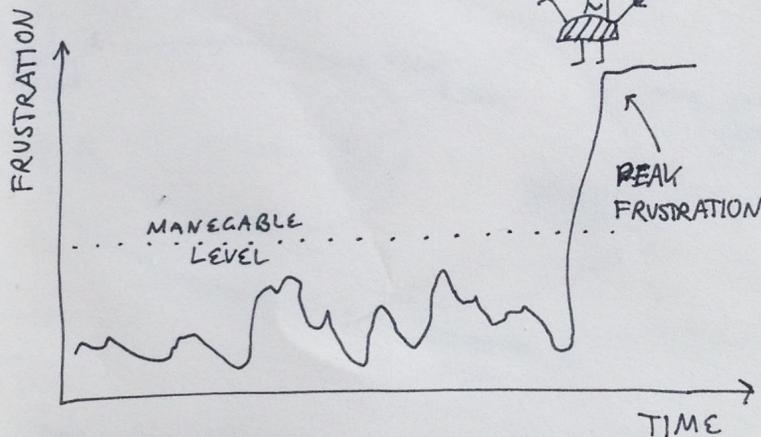
It's available here: <http://bit.ly/1AqZTix>

The other is a short newsletter about how to handle moments of peak frustration, written in the first months after I started working. See next page. Read and compare.

THINK CLEARLY

HANDWRITTEN
GOODNESS
ISSUE #305

HELLO AMAZING!
SOME PEOPLE REALLY
KNOW HOW TO PUSH
MY BUTTONS AND I
END UP HERE.

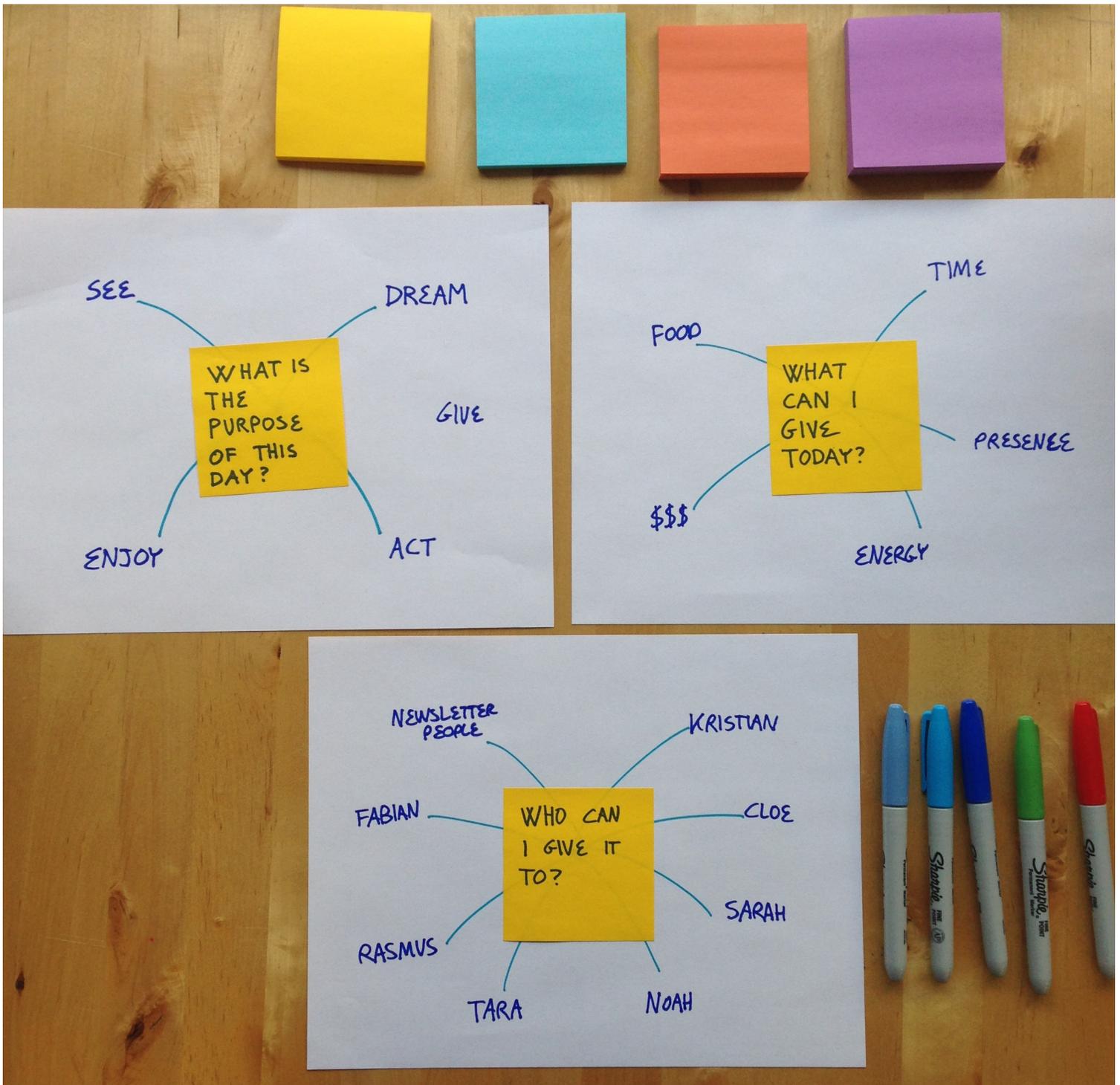


ONE OF
MY BUTTONS

I HATE BEING FRUSTRATED
LIKE THAT. I SHUT DOWN AND
MY MIND SPIN INTO A LOOP
OF ANGER. IT CAN TAKE ME
HOURS TO GET BACK OUT. BUT
THEN I ALSO REALIZE THAT I'M
ACTUALLY INTERESTED IN PRACTICING
COMING BACK DOWN AGAIN —
AND THUS I CAN ACTUALLY
FIND THOSE PEOPLE (WHO PUSH
MY BUTTONS) QUITE USEFUL.
WHO PUSHES YOUR BUTTONS?

NOV 25 2014

WITH LOVE. MATHIAS



An interface to my mind.



Books I read*

After reading my report from last year, someone suggested I have a look at *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, and what an amazing children's book that any adult with a good imagination will enjoy. I love getting suggestions like this, so keep them coming. In the parenting genre I also enjoyed the first chapters of *The Whole Brain Child*, however, the rest will have to wait until Noah is a bit older.

In the business book genre I read two recent ones and a classic: Simon Sinek's latest book, *Leaders Eat Last* (from 2013) is a winding tale of how extraordinary things can happen when humans are truly united around a shared purpose. Taking his inspiration from the military and combining it with the biochemical functions of the brain, the book feels like a manifesto to remind us what it actually means to lead something and someone forward. If you want to step up your leadership, this is a good primer. Dave Gray's book *The Connected Company* (from 2012) is more of a practical guide on how to think about and design organizational structures that are sufficiently flexible and agile to adapt to how the world is changing. I found his writing to be enjoyable and it's a useful and handy collection of many of the management ideas of this Internet-driven age. If you want to rethink your business, this is a good place to start. Peter Senge's *The Fifth Discipline* is one of the real business classics. Originally published in 1990 it feels as relevant today as it probably was back then. The writing is not as enjoyable as the other two, but the content is strong. I particularly found the concepts of personal mastery, creative tension, shared vision and systems thinking to be incredibly useful. The best part about this book is that most of the ideas don't depend on my position in the organizational structure: I can bring a lot of these ideas with me to Hyper Island in small ways.

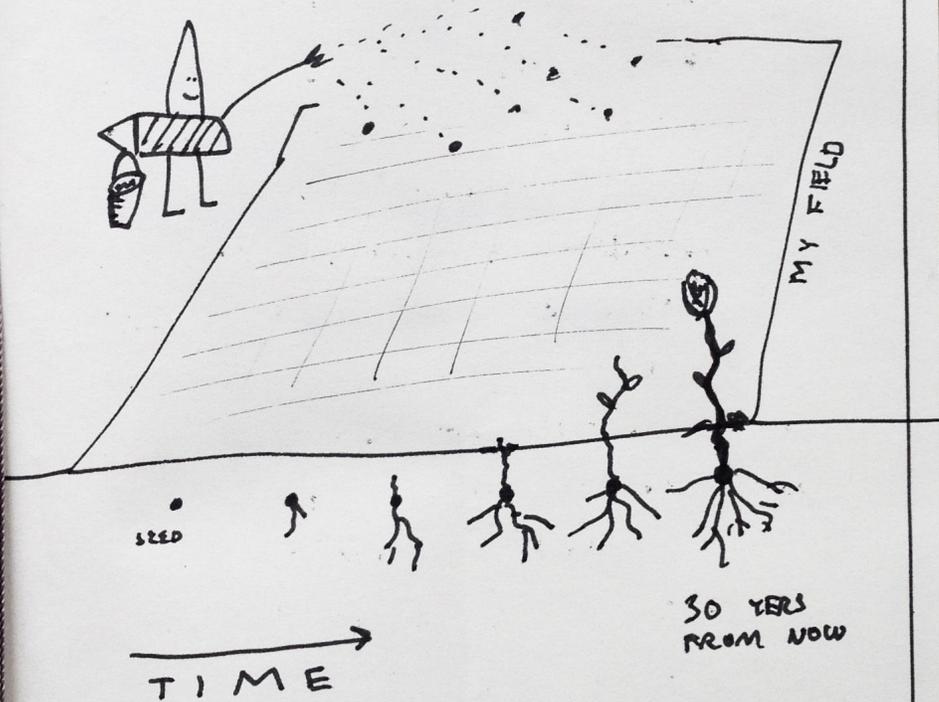
As someone who is mostly self-taught in facilitation I found it really helpful to read Dale Hunter's classic *The art of facilitation*. She put into words a lot of experiences I have already had, but not been able to articulate. If you are interested in facilitation it might be a good place to start, but I also think it can easily feel quite wishywashy and abstract if you haven't had a chance to practice.

As part of writing the the article on fashion theory, I also re-read a few of my old books, mainly *The Psychology of clothes* by JC Flugel, *The Empire of Fashion* by Gilles Lipovetsky and *The Language of fashion* by Roland Barthes. There are lots of books about clothes and fashion, but I have consistently found these three to be illuminating. They all reference a lot of the other literature in the field so they are also great starting point for anyone who wants to go deeper.

* some of which I didn't finish but still enjoyed

2015

LOOK
AHEAD

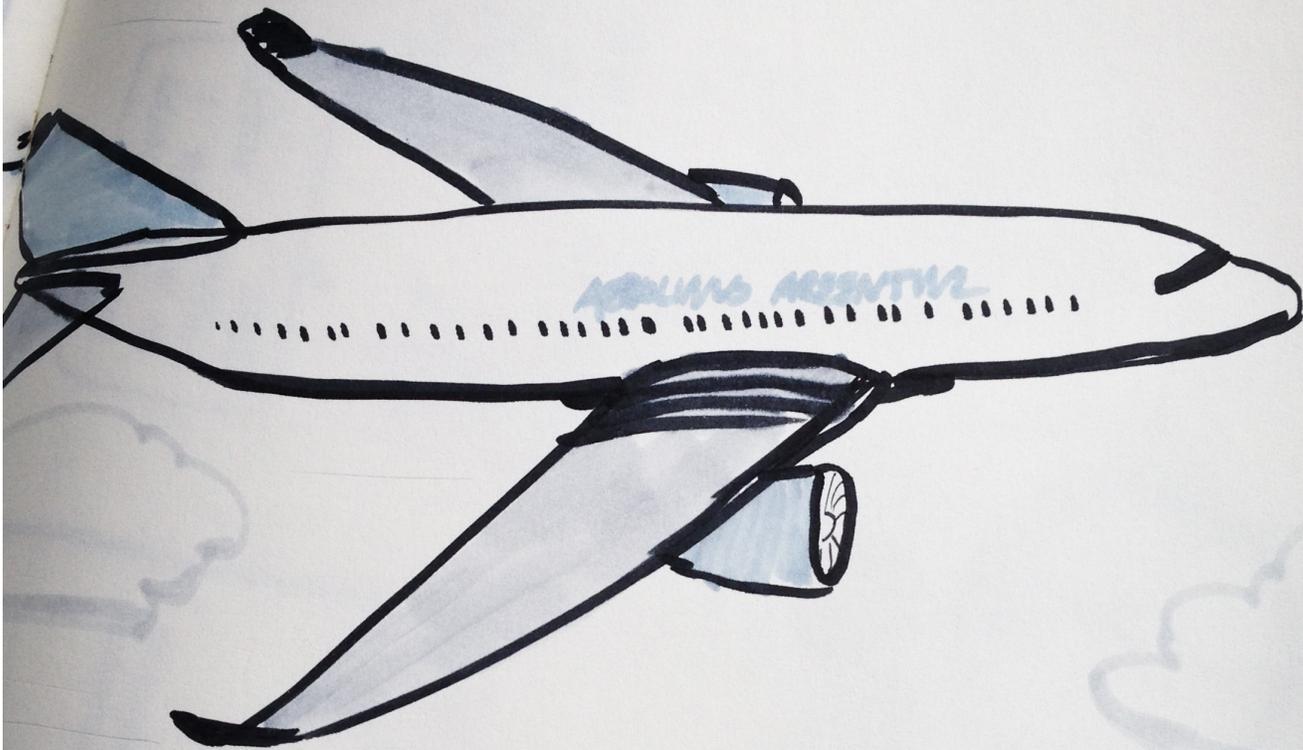


PATIENTLY SEED THE FIELD
AND NURTURE WITH WATER.
ALLOW TIME TO WORK FOR
ME. NOT NEED TO REAP.
ALLOW SEEDS TO TAKE
ROOT AND GROW. INSIDE
ME AND INSIDE OTHERS.

KEEP WRITING IF I FEEL
LIKE IT. MAKE NEWSLETTERS.
SPEED DOESN'T MATTER NOW
OUTPUT QUANTITY DOESN'T.
FOCUS, DIRECTION, CONSIDER
DOES. IT WILL BE A
GREAT YEAR.

DEC 31 2014 CB

THINK
CLEARLY



Should I

TRAVEL TO A PART OF THE WORLD I HAVE
NEVER SEEN BEFORE?

ON BUSINESS CLASS IN AN
A330-300 AIRCRAFT?

AND THINK OUT WITH A SUIT AND
BOXERS? WHEN THE UNIVERSE IS

EXPERIENCE:

- LISBON - SO WORTH IT!
- OMAHA REBELS - DAVE IS WORTH IT
- LONDON TEXAS

In 2015 I want to fly a lot more on airplanes



**Thank you for being part
of my life.**

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