



Photo and work by Josephine Sassu (2023) from her week with the Connecting Wool project in Japan. The puzzle of felting lies in its almost self-explanatory power and importance to those who have worked with it, and the challenge of transferring the lessons learned to other design areas.

If our current understanding and practice of the '[social contract](#)' comes with drugs and strings—empty promises and false leads—can the screening for occasions to *complete* tasks we intercept, facilitate a framing of encounters that manifest *real* collective action? This question follows logically if we accept that human being defines at the *rim* of culture and physics, *before* society. *Cultural physics* is the dawn of humanity featuring e.g. in the Epos of [Kalevala](#), where there is no social order, but where roots of society in a variety of designs are laid out in a poetic language.

The challenge of screening the real possibilities of collective action—cleansed from social constructs—has hatched visions ranging from *anarchism* to *liberalism*, at the opposite ends of the political spectrum. The possibility of politics without society, as it were: where collective action is hinged on generative processes that result from the [consummation](#) of transactions. Surely, *generative* processes picking up from *outcomes*, rather *than* from promises and leads. In sum, a way of dealing among humans where collective action is only generated from completion. Nothing else. As an experiment.

Rather than delving into the short-circuitry of counterposed ideologies, it may instead be asked whether the dynamics in the Fluxus movement, explored by [Chris Thompson](#) (2011), proposing *felting* as an active model of collective action without promises nor leads, but only based on the *hit-and-impact*—in this sense, communication—of *art-work*: a generative process of communicative interaction that is *not* pre-ordered.



Japanes GoBan: a table for playing a game called Go. It is a game for two. Black (slate) against white (shell), whoever has more empty space wins the game. The grid has value as there is *nothing* on it.

*Things do not happen because they are important, they are important because they happen.* Which means that every end point is a new starting point. An ethical contract and a tactical drill.

Michel de Certeau (1984) made a well articulated distinction between *strategy* and *tactics*: while strategy is articulated from the *enclosure* of a stronghold—with la fund of resources and an aim *beyond* the immediate horizon—tactics are determined by *drills*, carried out immersively in *open* fields, with *no* apparent function other than creating a *shift* of perspective, and thereby to come up with creative options. What Certeau does not do in his gaming ploy, however, is to distinguish between *tactics* and *operations* (as is commonly done in business literature).

A way of understanding the [Japanese Go-game](#) is commonly to distinguish between three phases: the opening game, the middle game and the end game. While the opening game is characterised by strategically scattered pieces on the playing-board, the middle game develops through working one's way with a *pattern* developing: this is the *operational* phase of the game. The end-game resembles *neither* the opening *nor* the middle game, but is pledged to squeezing out points *against all odds*. In the same sense, tactics are squeezed out between strategy and operations.

An alternative is going into the tactical mode from the start, and then letting it branch unto strategy and operations (i.e., what we commonly call *decisions*). That is, we start—in some sense—with *meditation*: tactical operations with a drill disposed to *intercept* weak signals, when they start to pile up as the odd ends of *action*, *image* and *object* (all in the making) are *about* to be completed, and their state of *convergence* may be assessed/monitored. The *responsibility* of caring for outcomes, triggers an *ability to respond*. Hypothesis: perhaps we do *not* need more than this.

With the [precision](#) that everything else is *derived* from it. If we proceed in this way we can take care of our environment *and* fellow human being, departing from the same basic protocol. Starting with strategy (the *top-down* approach) will *not* do that job. *Neither* will starting with operations (the *bottom-up* approach). Tactics is the *only* middle-out approach that defines *from* strategy and operations (which leads to confusion), but can also *branch* out to them (which leads to decision or empowerment in this tensional field). Which is why *active models* are likely to also be tactical.

Activity-based processes are therefore likely the best vehicles for tactical [concertation](#), that can lead up to *collective action*: with the understanding that processes like this are *generative*, and are *not* built in a regular sense. When our students coming back from partaking of the week with the [Connecting Wool](#) project in Japan, it appears that it is with an imminent sense of this difference. That there is something about the activity, its imaginary and the created objects which is self-organised, empowering, articulating an emotionally clear sense of *self* (and also satisfaction).

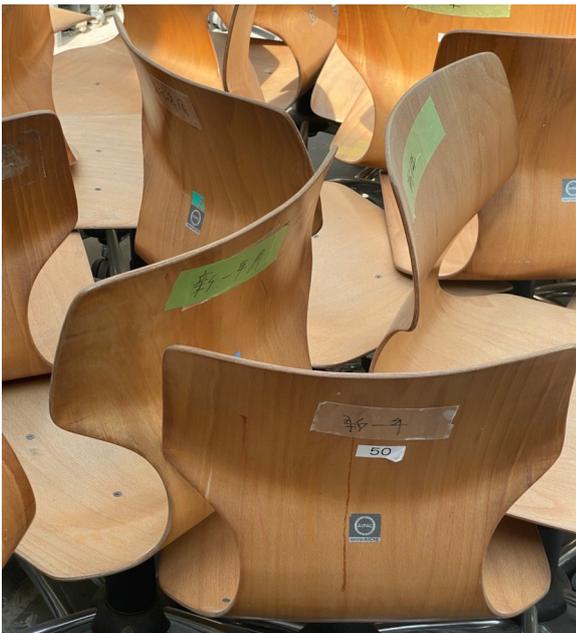


Photo: Josephine Sassu (2023). An example of how a *stop* in one work (*recto*) becomes a *start* in another. Things do not happen because they are important, but important because they happen.

The question is *where to take it from here*, without losing everything that has been won? The bit of writing and *afterwork* they have been doing for the theory course, upon coming back to Norway? This is not likely the end of the story: rather it is that kind of *turning point* (trope) from where the understanding is locked to a *collective experience*, to become an *active model* that can help to monitor/define design in *other* areas. That is, *felting*—as a joint activity, imagery and creation—can yield a theoretical understanding of other things: a tactical understanding, even of tactics itself.

The question raised here is whether this transition can be facilitated by some verbalising. In the sense of the MA students who embarked on the week in Japan with the Connecting Wool project, it is too early to tell. However, from the reports I have been receiving from them, after the trip, it appears that there is a transitional logic in *felting*: how it is *done*, and how it communicates *laterally* to actions, images and outcomes reverberating it elsewhere.