

welcome
to the

a load off your mind

science communication laundromat!

laundromat.makinggood.design

barriers

motivations

cyclical

impact

inclusivity

messages

audiences

Vocabulary

power!

theory-informed
‘practice-able’
reflexive

Take a spin in the science communication laundromat, a set of tools to help embed ideas from public engagement with science (PES) theory into research, to help scientist-communicators build capacity for successful science communication.

These tools – a zine workbook, worksheets, facilitator notes, and even a template for a cardboard washing machine to do the exercises on – are available to use and adapt at laundromat.makinggood.design under a creative commons licence¹. The website is aimed primarily at people who would like to use the tools to deliver and facilitate their own laundromat.

what is a scicomm laundromat?

In short, it is a workshop model (developed using design methodologies and practices) incorporating a series of exercises to help scientists/researchers think about their scicomm or public engagement in a reflexive way, in order to improve it. Improve it in the sense of being more purposeful, inclusive, more clearly designed for the people the communication is aimed at, and with a better sense of potential challenges and motivations. Key to this is making the theory ‘practice-able’². The laundromat is usually delivered as a residential retreat over two or three days, but can also be done as shorter sessions, or online.

why a laundromat?

We had been playing with an installation where a lo-fi, playful cardboard laundromat was a repository for thoughts on ‘airing the dirty laundry’ of various disciplines at conferences, drawing on a lot of metaphors: cleaning up, ironing out, pressing on... We had also been working with scientist-communicators to help them develop reflexive, thoughtful, audience-centric science communication via design-led workshops. When we brought the two workstreams together, the metaphors just kept washing over us! The never-ending cycle that is laundry was especially resonant when thinking about public engagement practice as something that requires regular attention to ‘refresh’ it. You can find out more about this in our paper, linked below.

¹ free to use and adapt

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² what’s ‘practice-able’?

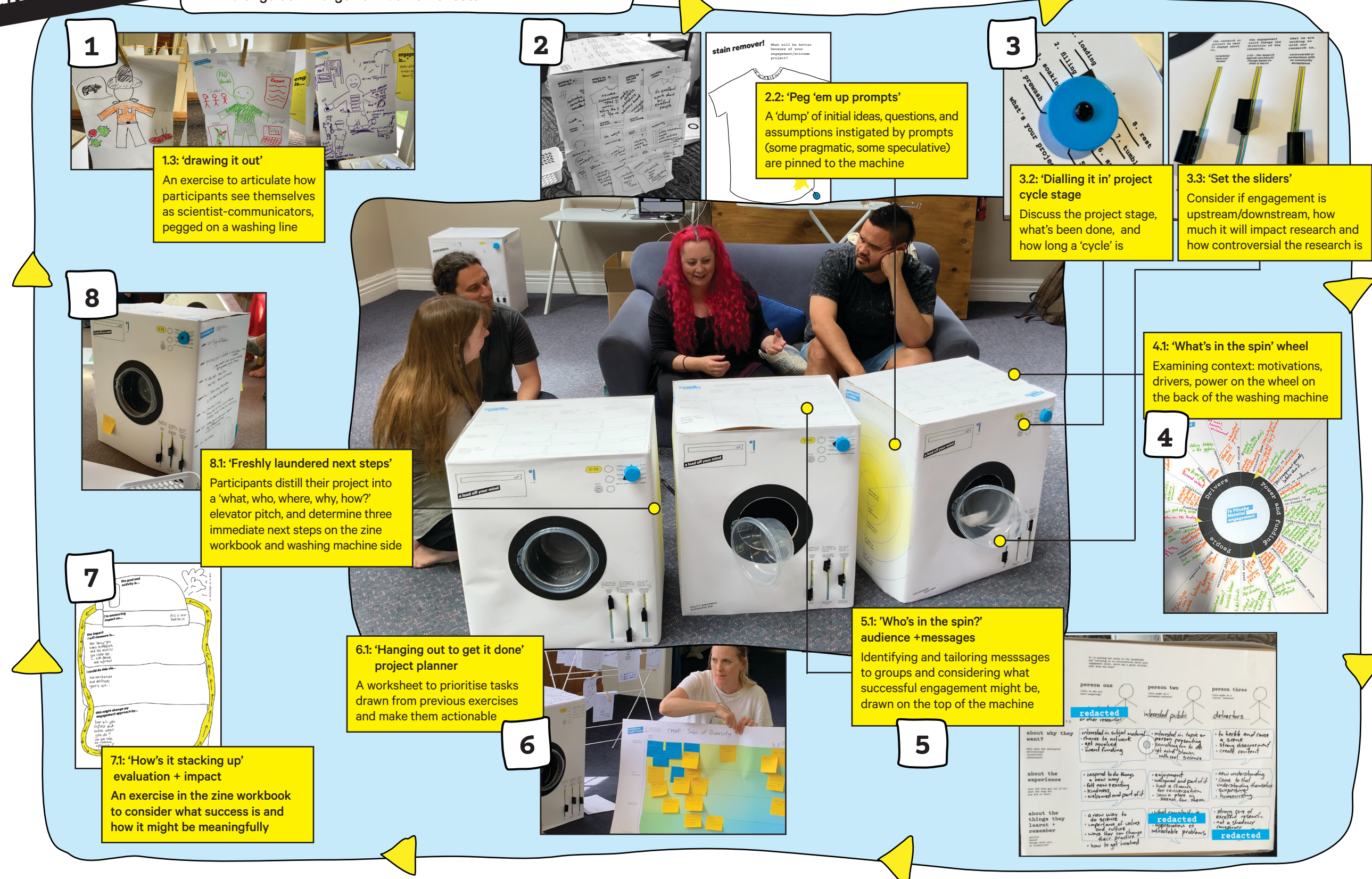
If *practicable* means ‘able to be put into practice’, but also brings to mind words like feasible, actionable or viable, we decided that we meant something more than this. We wanted to aid participants in absorbing and incorporating theoretical ideas from PES into their own practice. A key part of the theoretical ideas from our perspective was a reflexive disposition, so this incorporation of theory would enable them to reflexively shape their practice, whatever that may be. We wrote more about this in JCOM in 2022: paper linked below.



The zine workbook contains all the steps for the participants to work through

the laundromat cycle

All stages of the process are covered in the zine workbook. The washing machine and other props support the process, alongside A1 large-format worksheets



1

GATHER UP THE LAUNDRY PILE



This stage includes *Setting the cycle survey*, to gather expectations, expertise, backgrounds, project information etc; *Name tag*: finding out about you, an inclusive icebreaker; and *Drawing it out*: you and your engagement, a drawing task to help participants position themselves and think reflexively about their research and their engagement practice (and what engagement means).

2

SORT THE LAUNDRY



This stage includes *Scicomm 101* and *Get it on the garments* peg 'em up prompts. The purpose is to background how scicomm and engagement are framed in some literature to build shared understanding and to discuss how others understand key terms. Then, prompt sheets are used to draw out a sense of where the engagement project is at, and to document assumptions we might question later.

3

CHOOSE THE SETTINGS



This stage includes connected tasks *What's on the box?*; *Set the cycle length*; and *Set the sliders*. The purpose is to build on 2.2: *Peg 'em up prompts* to help think about the projects further. It enables discussion about the purpose of scicomm for participants' specific research project and where it fits in a research project: upstream, downstream, and how much engagement can vary the research. It also considers social licence.

4

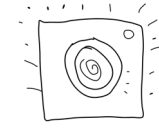
SOAK + SPIN



This stage draws on a tool called the engagement wheel first proposed by Salmon & Roop (2019). Its purpose is to help participants get to grips with and articulate some of their different scicomm drivers and objectives. It is an opportunity to become more transparent and explicit about where the power lies; all the goals of an activity (including ones that aren't usually overtly declared); and what 'success' looks like.

5

RINSE + WRING



This stage has two parts: *What's in the spin?* audiences + messages, and *What *is* the spin?* messages rinse out. Through a scenario where audiences (primary, secondary, 'secret') are 'overheard' in a laundromat explaining why they took part in the proposed engagement; what they thought about the experience; and what they learnt we map who the audiences are; what we want them to know; and how we could connect with them. In essence, making sure we are centering the engagement on them and their needs.

6

GET IT DRIED



This stage is *Hanging out to get it done*. In essence it is a project planner. Participants have 'hung out' with their thoughts for a while. The wheel might have shifted dirt that wasn't visible before; the levers might have challenged when participants are engaging and how the engagement might in turn shape their research. Stage 6 considers what the gentle agitation has brought to the surface and translates the content it into tangible tasks and priorities, so the previous exercises become relevant, practical, and actionable.

7

FOLD + PRESS



This stage is called *How's it stacking up?* It asks: what are the measures of success for this engagement project? What metrics are there that you could count, measure or survey, or observe more informally? And how can you evaluate impact both on audiences and on yourself and the other team members? This is documented in the zine workbook.

8

READY TO WEAR



This stage comprises *Freshly laundered next steps*; an exercise to shake out the whole experience to get it down to an 'elevator pitch' (or a capsule wardrobe!). The point is to articulate where the project is at, and vitally, to distill and summarise next steps so the participants feel that they have a plan when they leave. Where stages 6 and 7 cover the longer-term plan in detail, this exercise is a quick distillation, and the 'note to self' you need when you get back to the office and need a quick recap to catalyse momentum.

FIND OUT MORE...



Visit our 'a load off your mind' science communication laundromat website: laundromat.makinggood.design



Read our paper: Bailey, J., Salmon, R., & Horst, M. (2022). The 'Engagement Incubator': Using design to stimulate reflexivity about public engagement with science. *Journal of Science Communication*, 21(04), A01. doi.org/10.22323/2.21040201

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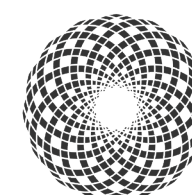
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Te Pūnaha Matatini
Complexity is at our heart