

Making Sense/zines: Reflecting on positionality

REITSMA Lizette

School of Arts and Communication, Malmö University, Sweden

Lizette.reitsma@mau.se

We have to be conscious about our own situatedness in the ecologies for and with which we design, but also invite for critical reviewing it. In order to do so, to become conscious and to critically review, I believe something needs to trigger and intervene. This paper is a personal account of sense-making and tool shaping, to support critical reflecting on my own positionality. I introduce my two tools: Graphical Peeling and Sensing/Zining, which rely both on 'layouting' to provide space for reflection. I am not a graphical designer, rather this way of working seems to help unbalance my very personal understandings, assumptions and experiences and provides a space where I can go in dialogue with myself and my experiences. By bringing together experiences, designs made and notes from research and reading, I am working through the material in different ways. I go deeper into the context with each layer I am adding, rethinking the situations that occurred and providing an opportunity to stop, think and be critical. Through this paper I do not necessarily aim for others to use those tools specifically, but rather emphasise the importance to allow for personal, creative, designerly journeys of sense-making, and decolonisation.

Reflective spaces; making; positioning; decolonisation

1. Introduction

This paper is a personal account of sense-making and tool shaping. I am a design researcher who has been working with different (indigenous) communities and questions about how to invite for dialogue between ontologies. In this kind of work, it is of major importance never to assume understanding (fully) and to not value any way of being with, of or on the earth over another. In my work and understanding of it, I have to look critically at who I am, how I relate and my positionality as well as at my attitudes towards not knowing. This is important especially since I am a designer who grew up, has been rooted and educated within the modernist hegemony. I studied Industrial Design in the Netherlands, and we were trained to be the design expert, to take the lead in design processes. During my PhD, I focused on

whether and in which ways it is possible to work as an external designer with indigenous communities in a way that was respectful towards the community and their knowledge system. It felt like I had to unlearn many attitudes that I had acquired before. For me, my PhD was such a relearning of becoming a designer and lose ego. I became and am becoming much humbler about what design can do, and what I can bring into a space. In this process, I have developed my own tools to relearn and I am still developing tools to further my re-learning. This sense-making and tool shaping is besides an analytical, therefore also a personal decolonising journey. As Escobar (2018) highlights: *'Our ontological stances about what the world is, what we are, and how we come to know the world define our being, our doing, and our knowing—our historicity.'* We thus have to be conscious about our own situatedness in the ecologies for and with which we design, but also invite for critical reviewing this situatedness. However, in order to do so, to become conscious and to critically review, something needs to trigger and intervene. The tools I create have that function. This paper is a messy account of making sense of decolonial sensemaking, still in the process of transformation.

2. Background

In the following sections I describe how I understand becoming conscious and critically reviewing especially in the process towards decolonisation. In my education, Schön's reflection-in-action (1983) has been central. Critically looking towards this practice in detail, helped me to look beyond, to search for alternative ways of thinking about becoming aware.

2.1. Decolonisation

Decolonisation is involved with undoing colonial differences provoked by ideologies of the superiority and privilege of Western thought and approaches (Stein *et al.*, 2021). And, as Vazquez (2017) states: *'it is the struggle for the possibility of an ethical life on and with earth'*. As he introduces, firstly it is about uncovering modernity's way of worlding as a deception - as it un-worlds, rather than worlds. Then it is about understanding how modernity un-worlds and how it erases relational worlds. Lastly, it about thinking decolonial as a way to practice radical hope towards ethical live with the earth. As colonialism is a systemic problem, no one is unaffected or innocent of complicity (Stein *et al.*, 2021). Colonial patterns are embedded in our minds, bodies, relationships and institutions. This affects our whole life, both personally and professionally. We can, if we work towards decolonising design therefore never disconnect from our personal lives. It is everyone's responsibility to mitigate the consequences of this system and work towards its deconstruction (Stein *et al.*, 2021). But how we do this work, specifically, as individuals, is depended on our positionality and our context within the system as we are not all equally tied up in harm, nor equally positioned to intervene. It is thus a very personal journey, which is often difficult, slow, uncomfortable, unpredictable and even painful, as it involves processes of unlearning colonial desires and practices and to learn to be and relate differently. In order to keep working towards decolonising ourselves, especially when the journey gets tough, we need to find ways to continue, to motivate ourselves, because having the possibility to stop, is also a form of privilege that we have to counteract (Stein *et al.*, 2021). There is no end-state, it is or should be an ever-continuing process, as Cam Willett suggests (in Kovach, 2009, p.85) *'I just deconstruct everything, my mind is less, I wouldn't say its decolonised, but it's certainly a lot less colonised than it was.'*

2.2. Becoming conscious of coloniality

Your experience is what you agree to tend to. When the patterns of your attention have changed, you render your reality differently (Odell, 2020). You begin to move and act in a different kind of world. But, as attention has an inclination towards fleetingness (James, 1890), it requires training, especially to see what normally is outside of your attention. This training and directing attention relate to *conscientização*

(becoming conscious, from Portuguese), which was introduced by Paolo Freire (1970). *Conscientização* is about getting to know one's position and action in the world by acting - in which becoming aware is inseparable from action. For Freire, *conscientização* – the active becoming aware - and the resulting liberation of freeing ourselves from oppressive structures, can only happen through practicing interconnected critical reflection and action (Freire, 1970). I consider this related to what Kovach (2006) expresses: *'establishing a hyper-consciousness which pervades all aspects of our being, through which we create a heightened sense of responsibility that can be associated with the political nature of our work, be it research or otherwise.'* It might feel as if Schön's reflection-in-action (1983) is closely related, but unlike Schön's reflection-in-action, which is without a direction (Tan, 2020), *conscientização* has a goal, towards liberation. *Conscientização* encourages the practitioner to question one's values, which Schön urges to stay away from (Tan, 2020). Furthermore, *conscientização* is about 're-considering' through the 'considerations' of others, your own previous 'considerations.' (Freire, 1970, P.85), which is not the case in Schön's reflection-in-action. Reflection-in-action has namely been criticised as practicing 'self-protective individualism'. In such a practice, the learner is not stimulated to work against self-conscious, often defensive dimensions of reflection-in-action, such as selecting a particular strategy that enable the learner to retain control of a situation (Tan, 2020). Furthermore, Schön's reflection-in-action has at its foundation that the learner comes to know the world primarily through thinking about it: *'converting experiences into mental maps of an outside world'* (Yanow & Tsousak, 2009, p. 1343). I consider becoming conscious as a process of sense-making. Dervin introduced sense-making (2003) which states that we make sense of complicated ideas by doing them, rather than studying them abstractly. It is a learning, and it relies on and is subjectively dependant on the entire summation of knowledge, emotions, and prior experiences in the learner (Dervin, 2003). This is affective work, especially in decolonising work, where we have to acknowledge, analyse and take responsibility for our often uncomfortable, embodied and emotional responses to the tensions, conflicts and tensions that arise (Stein *et al.* 2021). 'It matters, what matters we use to think other matters with' (Haraway 2016). This is made concrete in the work of Kovach (2009, p.50):

'I elected to record my thoughts in a journal during the course of the research. Unlike field notes, which I understand to be recordings of observations made during field study, this journal captured reflections on thoughts, relationships, dreams, anxieties, and aspirations in a holistic manner that related (if at times only tangentially) to my research. It offered a means for tracing personal analysis and discoveries of the research that were emerging in narrative. It became a tool for making meaning and showed evidence of process and content.'

It is about inviting for Feeling/Thinking - *Sentipensar*, which is about acting with the heart, using the head (Fals-Borda, Mompox y Loba in Botero Gómez, 2019). It questions the sharp separation that capitalist modernity establishes between mind and body, humans and nature, reason and emotion, secular and sacred and life and death (Botero Gómez, 2019).

2.3. Reflexivity & Diffraction

Critical self-reflection in the meaning-making process of one's work is often referred to as reflexivity and is often utilised in work that is referenced relational (Kovach, 2009). But, as D'Amico-Samuels (2010, p.75) stated about reflexivity:

'it will take more than thinking about thinking to make object and subject fuse; the control reflexive anthropologists retain to collect, select, edit, transform, publish, and build careers from the words of those they meet in the field is not obliterated or explored by claiming to produce dialogic texts of revealing personal experiences.'

Similarly, Haraway states (1997), *'Reflexivity has been recommended as a critical practice, but my suspicion is that reflexivity, like reflection, only displaces the same elsewhere'*. And, as Barad (2014) highlights, reflexivity holds objects of investigation at a distance. As an alternative to reflexivity, Haraway and Barad therefore suggested diffraction as metaphor for – simply put – thinking things through. Unlike reflection, diffraction is a critical practice of engagement, to understand the world from within. It is 'a form of affirmative engagement' thereby creating new 'patterns of understanding-becoming' (Barad, 2014). Through what Barad (2007) calls intra-action, the emphasis in diffraction lays on material experiences, in which material objects and encounters are produced and reshaped. It has a performative dimension in that it is involved with the production of the world, instead of an objective and neutral description of it. In diffractive practices researcher and researched are thus entangled, rather than the researched object being considered from a distance, in isolation. As Barad (2014, p.181-82) says:

'There is no 'I' that exists outside of the diffraction pattern, observing it, telling its story. In an important sense, this story in its ongoing (re)patterning is (re)(con)figuring me. 'I' am neither outside nor inside; 'I' am of the diffraction pattern. Or rather, this 'I' that is not 'me' alone and never was, that is always already multiply dispersed and diffracted throughout spacetime (mattering)...in its ongoing being-becoming is of the diffraction pattern.'

2.4. Practicing readiness and Response-abilities

As designers/researchers we need *conscientização* at different aspects of our (working) lives. The obvious being when we work with people, to understand the dynamics of the interactions in those situations. But also, when we engage with reading, when we are in dialogue with other researchers, when we listen to seminars.

2.4.1. Response-abilities

We learn in relation to others - knowing is a process of 'self-in-relation' (Graveline, 1998, p.52). Haraway (2016) refers to response-able ways of engaging with the world. Murris and Bozalek (2019) suggest that this response-able engaging can also be applied to reading. Response-able reading could be seen as a form of co-becoming with the texts, authors, readers, or through reading one text through another (or oeuvre). This is in contrast with understanding each text as separate and distanced from each other or against each other. This relates to what Freire (2001, Chapter 2, p. 9 (Ebook)) points out:

'Really reading involves a kind of relationship with the text which offers itself to me and to which I give myself and through the fundamental comprehension of which I undergo the process of becoming a subject. While reading, I'm not just a captive of the mind of the text as if it were simply a product of its author. This is a vitiated form of reading that has nothing to do with thinking or teaching correctly.'

Texts that we engage with are multidirectional, as they are always already in conversation with other texts and texts that never have been written (Murris & Bozalek, 2019)

2.4.2. Practices of Readiness

Akama and Light (2018) introduce the notion of practices of readiness. As you cannot be prepared for everything that happens in situ, you need to practice readiness, which is a state of openness to what emerges and to be responsive in regards to what shows up. In readying, we have to draw on who we are and what we are doing in situ. This is in line with Kovach's preparation of the researcher (2009), a process which is unique to each individual, and has to be done by the researcher in conjunction with her world (both inner and outer). Practicing readiness (Akama & Light, 2018) is about developing a sensitivity towards understanding how deep undercurrents of personal history and experiences can

surface. By practicing this, we begin to understand our practice better which impacts the level of sensitivity we can practice in relation to others in the design process. In this way, we are able to approach uncertainty with more resilience than formal methods tend to do. Akama and Light (2018) offer the descriptive concepts *punctuation* and *poise* to highlight immaterial features of the practice and as sensitizing tools to help others consider what readiness in their practice might mean to them. In this, punctuation is about developing a consciousness of working with and immersing in the flow, gaps and rhythms of change. Poise stresses characteristics of self-awareness, of being firmly placed and a contemplation of how one is and acts.

3. Methods

Making sense through making takes a central role in my practice through research through design. Both as a mediating role between me and the people I work with and in the analytical, individual phases of my work. In the mediating phases design and making are entrance points for dialogue to uncover, for example, common grounds, tensions and shared interests (Reitsma *et al.*, 2014). This part of research through design is quite commonly written about. However, to my knowing, how design can support the analytical, personal and reflective phases in research is less vocalised. In these phases, design and making can facilitate internal processes of reflection, understanding and critically looking. It helps to unbalance my very personal understandings, assumptions and experiences and provides a space where I can go in dialogue with myself and my experiences. In this paper I introduce two tools I shaped for providing a reflective space: *Graphical Peeling* and *Sensing/Zining*. Both ways can be understood as virtual worlds, as introduced by Schön (1983), that are needed in order to obtain rigour in reflection-in-action. This virtual world is meant to be leisurely examined. The virtual world aims to provide a space to slow down in order to create time for insights to arise. Within this virtual world, all moves are reversible, so mistakes do not have consequences.

3.1. Case 1: Graphical peeling

Graphical Peeling became a tool to support my reflective learning towards becoming a designer who is respectful both to the community she works with and their indigenous worldview (Sheehan, 2011). It is about truly understanding what happened in interaction with the community I was working with.

3.1.1 Context

I had just finished a series of co-creative encounters with an indigenous community (the Penan community of Long Lamai (Borneo, Malaysia)) and I wanted to understand the dynamics of these encounters in order to get a better understanding whether these encounters were respectful to the needs and knowledge system of the community. I needed to know the power dynamics at different moments in the process, and how I responded to the contributions of the community. It was not that I only afterwards started reflecting on this, but more to really look critically at the processes that took place, to learn from and to also ready myself for future work. In the encounters, the aim was to create an exhibition together for other surrounding communities to learn about this specific community and its culture. We created a website and two exhibits that were connected to the website. The exhibits were placed in the community to show the type of interaction that was taking place on the website in a tangible form. One of them was a musical instrument, which played every time the website was visited. The second was a light installation that started glowing whenever there were new posts on the website.

3.1.2 Process

The *Graphical Peeling* tool provided a virtual world that supported organising and finding patterns. It was a messy process, in which there was no predetermined approach, but rather a process that was

shaped while doing. The starting points for exploration and sense-making were written diaries and visual diaries that I had shaped throughout the process. The written diaries I coded, which resulted in code tables. From those I made timelines (See Figure 1a). The visual diaries became annotated portfolios that also were structured as timelines (See Figure 1b). From there I made different pattern sheets (See Figure 1c&d), which focused on different aspects of the interactions, for example the type of design participation that was central in our interactions (based on Lee's design participation (2008)) or who was the initiator at which point. On those pattern sheets, I looked separately at each of the different design processes (each of the exhibits having its own process) for each of the different encounters. What I learned from the pattern sheets I then added to the timelines and to the other pattern sheets. And from there I created new pattern sheets with different focus points. In the end, I shaped recommendations for myself about what to do different, or what to keep doing. It was an iterative process in which I was, through lay outing, making graphs, and shaping timelines, peeling off layers of my experiences (for example, who was involved? Who directed the process? Whose ideas were this? What was the nature of these ideas? When was an idea shared? How did I respond? What happened then?), going deeper and deeper with each round of virtual worlding – 'peeling' - working through the data and reworking it over and over again. In this way, I was, paradoxically, adding graphic layers to untangle layers in my own understanding. Through this process I relearned to become a designer, with a different attitude towards designing. The reflections led to an understanding of dynamics of a respectful design space (Reitsma *et al.*, 2019) but also to attitudes that are important to adopt in such a space. These attitudes still guide my practice.

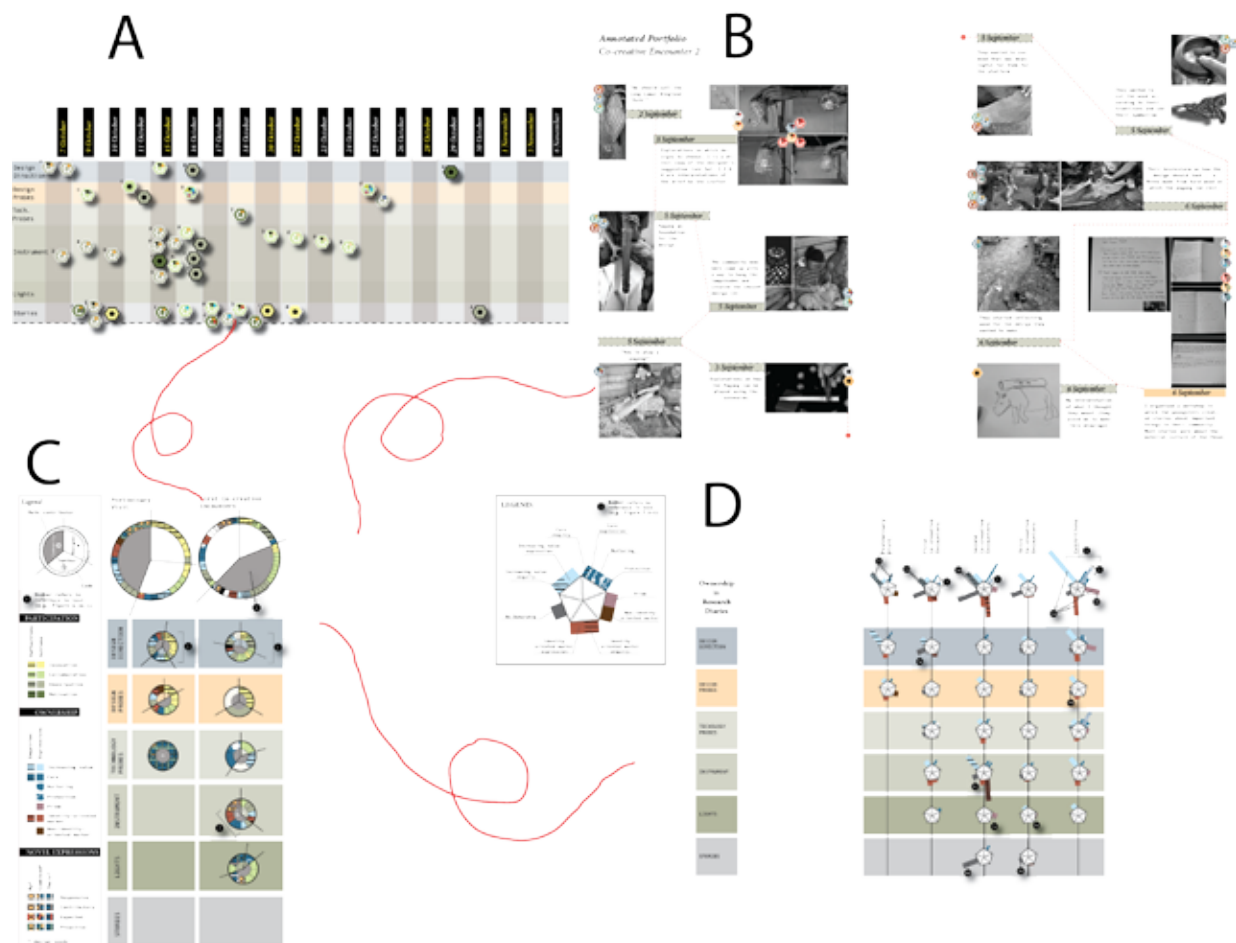


Figure 1. Graphical Peeling a) Timeline, b) Annotated Portfolio, c) Pattern Sheet & d) Another Pattern Sheet

3.1.3 Example of an iteration

To make the process a bit more concrete, I present here an iteration: This iteration started after I had created timelines from the code tables and the research diaries. I was checking whether there were no mistakes (involving counting the different codes, checking whether they were coded correctly and checking whether they were on the correct date etc.). Through this process I discovered that the design participation codes could be divided in actions and reflections. This made me dive into what this meant for the process. I then distinguished within the timeline, code tables and research diaries between actions and reflections. From this process I learned that in the first encounter my reflections changed at some point from innovative to emancipatory (following Lee's type of design participation (2008)). I then compared the diaries and the timeline and asked myself what was causing this change. I learned that it was connected to a situation during which I walked into a meeting of the Elder women. Through the way they responded I realised that I made a mistake and that I needed to be patient, to follow the pace of the community and let them lead. It seemed like me walking into that meeting needed to happen in order for me to start reflecting more critically on what it was that I was doing. However, I was not satisfied with the depth of this reflection and therefore I asked myself the question: Why did I not reflect in this way before? With this question I went through the material in order to discover how I was feeling around this time. I found the answers in the record of Skype conversations I had during that time. In those written conversations with my partner and mother I keep mentioning that I find it difficult to slow down after having worked so hard to finish everything on time before going to the community. This made me reflect on what the consequences were of not being able to slow down mean for my interactions with the community. You could say, I had a lack of poise.

3.1.4 Analysis

Graphical peeling as a tool was extremely helpful for me to understand and uncover power relations in the design process. Through the process I learned for example that the two exhibit pieces were designed through two very different processes, of which I would call one Respectful and the other not (read more about this in Reitsma *et al.* (2019)). In the process that was not Respectful, I was taking the lead, both visible through the design participation types but also by staying in charge of the ideation process. The other process was completely different as the community took charge of the process and put me in service of it. The end result was a design that was laden with meaning to them, and that I did not fully understand. The reflections about this were not just a mirror to see what happened and being aware of the different power structures that were at play but rather a way to transform those understandings and to transform them into new attitudes that still guide my practice. It is not just that I did the work, left and analysed how I was working. In the community I was mentored by one of the community members and in the preparation beforehand I was mentored by another researcher who had been working with this community. This already changed how I was working, as I was working. Those interactions are of great importance and cannot be replaced by such a method as Graphical Peeling but should be performed alongside such a process.

The field 'notes', visual diaries and other material (such as the Skype conversations) were like the journal that Kovach (2006) introduced (see above) in that they contained not neutral observations but rather emotions, thoughts, doubts, descriptions of different situations and interactions: Self-in-relation.

What was really important for the tool was that I really had the time to dwell and dwell and dwell some more. This slowing down helped me to deepen my understanding. This abundance of time helped me to embrace the messiness of the process that helped to dive deeper and deeper and to uncover unexpected realisations. I see this process as a process of readying, in which I was able to invite for more poise and punctuation into my practice.

3.2. Case 2: About Sense/zining.

Sense/zining became a tool for me to start thinking things through. To make connections, to let different readings and conversations be in dialogue with each other. I choose the format of a Zine, which are magazines that are crafted, non-commercial, amateur texts which are *“Chaotic, disturbing, uncomfortable, sensual, complex, loud, confrontive, humorous, and often a pointed and acerbic critique of mainstream culture and contemporary life”* (Congdon & Blandy, 2005). A sub-genre in Zine culture is the perzine or personal zine, which focuses on the personal experiences of the creator. As Poletti (2008) argues, through perzines, zines represent attempts to creatively (re)construct and represent the self on the page. I was inspired by *perzining* as a process of synthesis based on readings, conversations and experiences I had. I felt like I needed to shape a reflective space to come back to, that would enable me to follow threads, and see patterns and highlight interesting things that came up. The tangible format of a printed magazine, therefore became important.

3.2.1 Context

The sensing/zines came about as a tool to get all the information that I had obtained from an intensive semester of reading, listening, talking, conversing, doodling and exploring in relation to Pluriversal Design out of my head, onto paper and to make sense of it. With having had a break in my work on design with Indigenous cultures, I felt I needed a solid grounding again. I decided to craft a magazine, with all my thoughts in it, created in InDesign and printed. Not for anyone else but me. So, the first Sense/Zine I created, I created over half a year, in which I got back into working with questions about plurality. The second Sense/Zine, which also was shaped over the course of half a year was shaped in parallel with an initiative that brought different people together to support each other in decolonising ourselves and our practices by taking a practical approach towards it, together. I am currently working on my third Sense/Zine and it is shaping alongside my daily practice as a researcher and lecturer.

3.2.2 Process

Whenever I read something, or have conversations, hear a poem, see an art piece that I consider fitting inside the scope of the Sense/Zine I find a way to add it to the Zine. I give it form in InDesign through layouting. In the beginning of the making process of each volume, I explore different formats, so that each volume is somehow consistent in style. That way, I feel it is a whole, my whole story of that half-a-year. This design guide is not very strict, I can freestyle, but it gives me a bit of grounding so that I can deeper engage with the actual content. Then I start to add highlights, things that are standing out, extracting key words adding different layers to engage with what is there. In doing so, I start to reiterate the different understandings I have obtained, and also become able to connect more concretely between texts, experiences and interactions. This helps me to somehow uncover new meanings, things that I missed before. I add my thoughts although it is not necessarily to add my opinion to it, as I often just do not have one (yet). My voice, I format differently. When I have a volume compiled, I go through it again and bring everything together, make it into a whole. It is not just for the purpose of making a finished whole, but also as a way to again go through my own understandings. I, again, add these to the Zine where appropriate. Then I send it for print. This is when I start a new Sense/Zine. When the print arrives, I go through it again, adding notes, thoughts, drawings, highlighting, striking through. It is not something I do just ones, but can keep doing. From here new questions arise, new reflections, that I all can bring with me again in the Zine volume that I am working on currently, or I can let it rest as part of the Zine that triggered it.

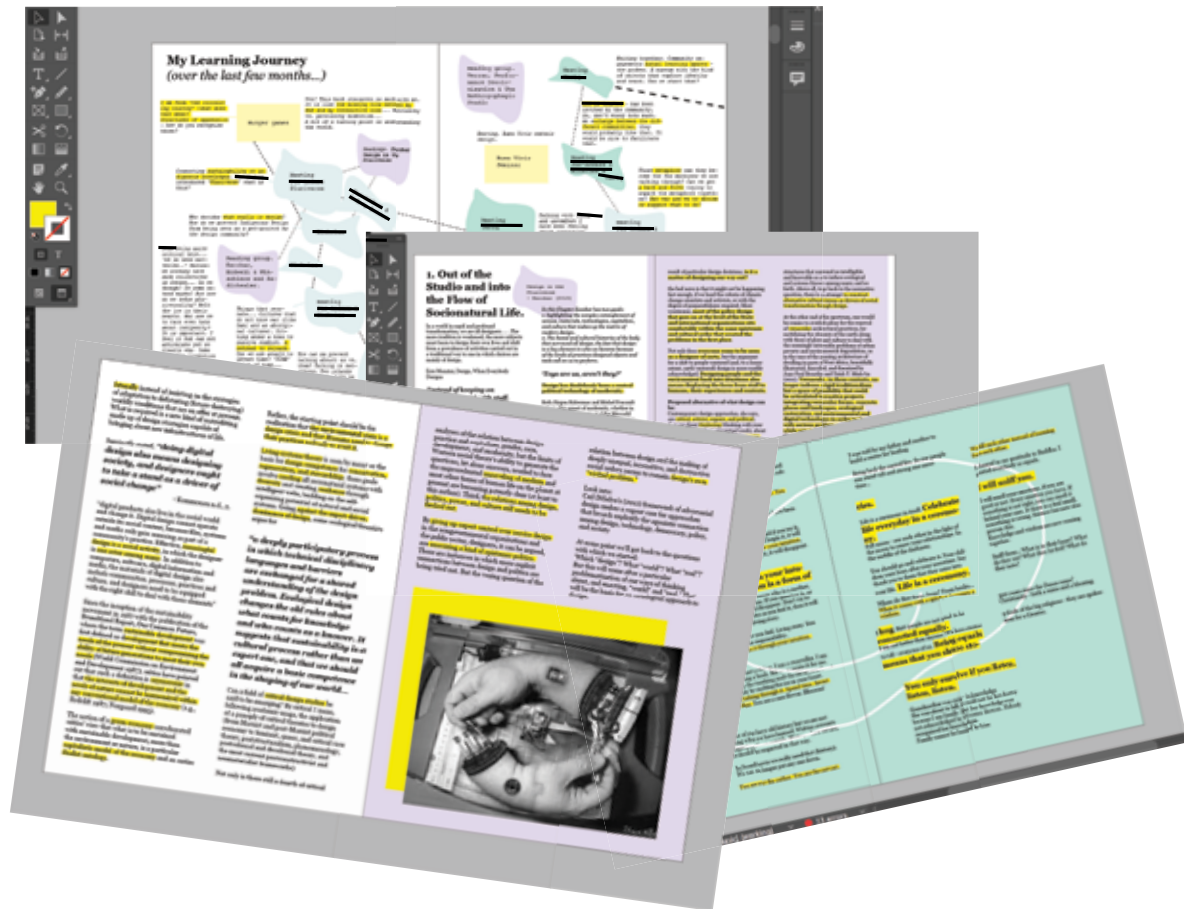


Figure 2. The first Sense/Zine in progress (in InDesign)

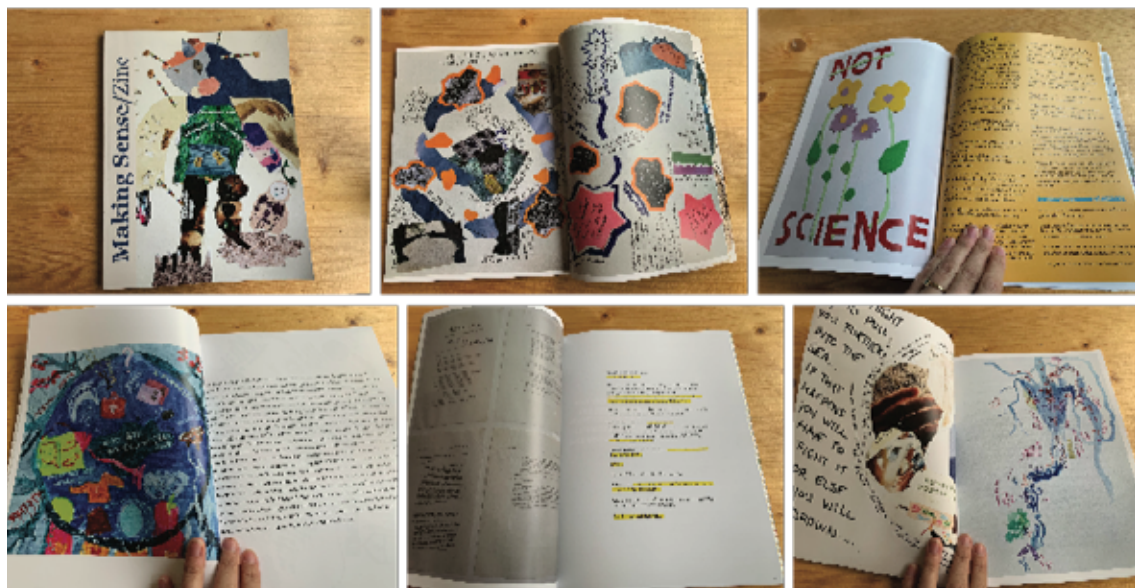


Figure 3. The second Sense/Zine is less focused on words.

3.2.3 Anecdotes

In order to help understand what the Zine does for me, I highlight here three instances that came up through the Zining process.

After I had finished my first Zine and had started my second, I went through the one I had printed. I dove into thinking through what I had produced, opening new questions and different thoughts. On one of the pages there is a sigh of relieve: *'I am a little less afraid... I realise I am learning... It is a process, and I will never be perfect, but through this, and through what I made I realise I am more open now to learn... To feel less alone in the process and more supported because I can see others who are thinking through similar issues as I do...'*

When I compare the first zine with the second, there is a big difference. In the first one (see Figure 2) I am strongly holding on to the books that I read. Precisely quoting, typing out what each author says. The second (see Figure 3) has less of that (though still quite a bit), as I have been engaging in other formats of making sense and summarising such as collaging and painting. Thereby, I am moving away from the digital and more in the tangible space. This move has done a lot already in preparing the material, as through creating a collage for example, I already have to grasp meaning through that process.

I was writing a grant application after printing the first Zine. It was a development grant and I was struggling to find my footing in accordance with the call. The call was framed from a modernist development perspective and I felt that I could not write in that same way, let alone 'perform' the research as such. Then I went through the Zine and by looking through it, I felt supported in feeling uncomfortable and decided to rather than adhere to how the call was written, take the values that I had been working through in the Zine and before and stay true to those. I do not know whether I was successful in obtaining funding, but this situation showed me, concretely, the backpack I have been developing for myself.

3.2.4 'Analysis'

When I submitted the abstract for this paper in April, I had just finished my first Sense/Zine. Now, while writing this paper, I finished my second and started my third. In between, talking about it and through actually using it, I am starting to understand better what it is that I have been developing for myself. But it is a method that seems to be transforming with me, so I do not fully understand yet what it will be in time. It started for me as a way to find grounding. And I realised after the first that it had worked for me in that way, I had gotten less afraid, less overwhelmed to become open towards working on decolonising my understandings of myself and my practice. The zines have become a safe space for me, where it is okay to make mistakes. To make them and then have the opportunity to come back to them - rethink through them. The Zines do not have to be perfect both in content and in looks, but rather something I will enjoy working through, again and again.

The process takes place in parallel with my practice, which means that it is always there and always growing with me. In the process there are different moments to revisit what I have already thought through. In this way it opens up for diffraction – by leaving space open (literally in the formatting), I invite for going in dialogue again and again with the zine. Building on what is already there through the processes of Zining, interacting with others and reading new work. I keep it open in that I do not have to make conclusions but rather open up for new questions and explorations.

Making a Zine takes quite some time, especially creating the content, and I can, for example, only attend to a certain number of readings. Maybe this is in line with Freire's (2001) point that if we truly want to engage with our readings and establish a relationship, we can only engage in a few.

I feel that through finding different formats for content making I enable myself to lose control. With less words, more making, I lose control a bit. I think that this is important in order to truly engage in decolonial journeys. I started working more intuitively, less in my reasoning brain space, but more in my emotional heart space. This shift shows a change in me, embracing my own making skills in order to express my thinking. I was afraid I would forget if I did not use the exact words I was reading or hearing. I was not confident that I understood well enough. But, understanding comes also with connecting to the heart, in line with *Sentipensar*.

4. Discussion & Conclusion

In this paper I introduced two tools I use in order to become conscious of my positionality and to attempt to decolonising myself and my practice. I am aware of my very privileged position to have the time and space to dive into my own practice to the extent I do. I am also aware that this time is not available for everyone. In sharing this, however, I do not necessarily aim for others to use Sensing/Zining or Graphical Peeling specifically, but rather emphasise the importance to allow for personal, creative, designerly journeys of sense-making, decolonisation and as Haraway (2016) phrases it: 'staying with the trouble', in the discourse of design research. Most often we hide these parts of our practices, but I think it is important to open up to each other and to support everyone's personal journeys (in line with the point that Akama and Light make (2018)). Whatever form of practicing *conscientização* fits in with the realities we face, I believe we should try to share, for others to get inspiration from, to sensitise how we can understand *conscientização* in our own realities, but also to realise that we are trying to do the work and that we are not alone.

I believe it is important that the tools connect not just to my work life, but to my whole being. They question who I am or want to be as a person, in my profession but also in my life in general. We cannot disconnect who we are as designers from who we are as people. In the zines, my private life, private conversations merge with my professional work. Both are needed in my personal journey. I am not a Graphical Designer, yet I use graphic methods to make sense. I think this works for me, because I am not fully fluent, and thus have space to make errors or where I am not satisfied with the end result. This I can then revisit, thereby inviting for reworking it naturally. I am also still curious about what I can make. Graphical Design in this sense gives me the opportunity to explore further and stay motivated.

D'Amico-Samuels (2010) has stated that if we reflect in isolation, we end up in a cycle, realising our position, but not truly transforming. I acknowledge that in the tools I have shaped, the reflections are indeed very personal and that in that way my reflective space has a risk to just acknowledge my position without critically engaging with it and transforming it. However, for me this space is just one of my reflective spaces. Through the engagements I am part of, I do also take part in communal reflective spaces, where my understandings are challenged, where I get new perspectives. But then I need a space to ground again. To re-listen to what I've heard and to think things through. Maybe this is a skill that I yet need to develop - to process in conversation. But for me, the Sense/Zining and the Graphical Peeling, in the editing, the planning, the content making, the summarising, the reading, the reacting is a space that forces me to stay with the trouble for just a bit longer. Maybe in order to support our personal journeys to decolonise ourselves, we need a reflective ecology, in which some spaces are individual, and others are with others. We will need sparring partners in order to tip ourselves out of our comfort zone from time to time, but also a space to catch our breaths again. Maybe in such an ecology we need the individual space to be something that we enjoy doing. To keep us going.

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About the Author:

Lizette Reitsma is a design researcher who has been working with different (indigenous) communities, in Malaysia, the Netherlands, South Africa, Sweden, Scotland, and with questions about how to invite for dialogue between ontologies. Her focus in her research is on sustainability, cultural heritage preservation and social change. Making sense through making takes a central role in her practice through research through design. Both as a mediating role between her and the people she works with and in the analytical, individual phases of her work. In her work and understanding of it, she has to look critical at who she is, how she relates and her positionality. This is important especially since she is a designer who grew up in the Netherlands (a country with a colonising past), and has been rooted and educated within the modernist hegemony. So, the sense-making and tool shaping as presented here, is besides an analytical, also a decolonising journey.