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Decolonising Design Education: Assembling Caring Futures

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Decolonising Design Education: Assembling Caring Futures

**By
Layla Gharib**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Sheffield Hallam University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2025

Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.

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Abstract

This thesis explores how Decolonising Design Education can be enacted as a practice of condition-making rather than surface diversification. Grounded in practice-as-research, it introduces *Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying* (ASC), a methodology that braids speculative design, participatory facilitation and qualitative interviewing to co-produce knowledge. Unlike approaches where artefacts merely prompt discussion, ASC treats artefacts as epistemic infrastructures that organise participation, making temporal, affective and relational registers tangible. Through speculative workshops and interviews with design educators and students in UK higher education, the study explores how Eurocentrism continues to structure curricula, assessment and pedagogy, while also foregrounding the possibilities of decolonial practice for structural transformation.

From these encounters, the research develops a change/collapse analytic, distinguishing between aspects of design education that can be reconfigured through sustained effort and logics so entangled with coloniality that they must be dismantled. Synthesising these insights, the thesis proposes a Decolonial Design Framework articulated as six commitments: refusal, plural epistemologies, care and horizontality, values-based reciprocal assessment, institutional accountability, and imagination as method. It argues that Decolonising Design Education is not an endpoint but an ongoing, relational practice of world-making that redesigns the conditions under which knowledge is produced, recognised and sustained. The study contributes both to theoretical discourse and to the collective labour of building caring, plural futures, emphasising that decolonisation requires critique *and* imaginative tools for rethinking design education.

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This work is dedicated to older me – *are you still dreaming?*

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Chapter 1

1. Introduction & Situating the Study

***“To be truly visionary we have to root our imagination in our concrete reality while simultaneously imagining possibilities beyond that reality.”
(hooks, 2014, p.110)***

This study begins from that challenge. To decolonise design education and assemble alternatives, we must first confront the realities of how it has been shaped, whose voices it has centred and whose practices it has marginalised. In the UK, design education has been profoundly structured by colonial histories and Eurocentric epistemologies where these frameworks have continued to determine what has long counted as knowledge, whose aesthetics have been celebrated and which futures have been legitimised.

I write from an intersectional position as a Muslim woman shaped by my father’s Iraqi Turkmen roots and my mother’s British heritage. Carrying both lineages means moving through the world with privilege in some spaces and marginalisation in others. My British identity affords me forms of ease such as access to education, cultural legibility in Western institutions and the ability to be read as belonging in spaces that often exclude. My Turkmen heritage, by contrast, ties me to a community that has long been marginalised in Iraq. Often described as the country’s third-largest ethnic group, Turkmen trace their presence in Mesopotamia to the Seljuk and Ottoman periods, their identities remain deeply tied to land, ancestry and cultural survival amid histories of displacement and erasure. For me, this inheritance is carried most vividly in language. I speak a tongue I cannot read or write, but often think and dream in. Each time I return to Iraq, I hear the Turkmen language spoken less and less, reduced to brief exchanges with only a few remaining in my family and a handful of older shopkeepers in the furthest corners of the Hawleri bazaars. There is an irony in the fact that I write about my Turkmen ancestors in English, a language they never spoke. That irony reveals a tension, that English affords me the privilege of legibility in Western academia, but it also mirrors the silencing of my ancestral language.

This contradiction resonates with my experience of design education in the UK. Just as English is privileged in academic knowledge-making, Eurocentric “design languages” dominate curricula. The Bauhaus aesthetic. Swiss grid systems and Eurocentric styles are positioned as the grammar of design that is legitimised and rewarded, while other ways of seeing, making and expressing

are left unspoken, undervalued or erased. To succeed in design school, I learned to contort my own design voice into these dominant forms. As Jones (2022, p. 143) describes, design students often begin fluent in their own vernaculars but soon realise their voices “have no place in design school.” They must learn to twist their vocabularies into shapes that feel alien in order to be heard. To contort, by definition, is to twist unnaturally into a different shape or form. That description resonates deeply with my own story. During this study, I have kept a research journal, to document my feelings towards the research, my emotions and the tensions and in a journal entry from November 2021, shortly after I began this study I wrote:

“Beginning this research has felt quite heavy, which I expected on some level but not as intensely as I have felt on a personal, human level. I’m starting to face aspects of my own design education that up until this point haven’t served me. And these aren’t always locatable pinpoint moments but rather feelings I have felt. Bringing ourselves into our work is something we’re encouraged to do, I know this because I’ve been given briefs that specifically asked us to do just that.

However, I never really brought myself into my work, not the part of me that didn’t fit into the Western ideal anyway. For example, when undertaking my master’s and was given a project to explore somewhere that felt like home, I chose my British half instead of my Turkmen half. The opportunity was there but the conditions and content of what I had been exposed to up until that point made it a scary, confusing prospect. I had never been presented with work by Middle Eastern designers; I was taught left aligned Swiss gridding systems. I still feel most comfortable with that aesthetic. The Bauhaus aesthetic is so engraved in my ways of doing and designing that I feared exploring new aesthetics wouldn’t be taken seriously. So, this study, whilst exploring the bigger structures at play is also dedicated to each of those moments where I held back parts of myself. I’m learning to forgive myself for holding back.

I sometimes think well, perhaps if I had been braver, perhaps if I had just taken that leap into allowing my other ways of thinking to be seen, perhaps then I could have made work that truly felt like it aligned with me. But I’m now learning that the structures within design education need to create the time, space and conditions for that bravery and that wasn’t my responsibility as a design student.”

Research journal entry: 24.11.21

These reflections do not sit outside the research but inside it, they are reminders that decolonisation must be embodied, accountable and attentive to the lived realities of those navigating systems built on exclusion. As Underhill-Sem (2020) argues, feminist decolonial scholars approach positionality as an embodied pivot from which knowledge-making materialises. Beginning here is therefore not indulgence but method, by situating myself first, I resist the fiction of neutrality and affirm that this research is accountable to lived bodies, histories and communities. My experience is only one thread in a much wider fabric and the challenges I faced as a student were not isolated moments of personal hesitation, they are symptoms of how design education in the UK has been historically constructed.

With that being said, it is also important to acknowledge that Western design education has not gone unexamined. Across art and design pedagogy, there is a substantial body of scholarship that has interrogated studio practices, assessment regimes and the dynamics of critique. Studies have traced how power circulates, how students are socialised into disciplinary norms and how reflection functions as a central yet contested mode of learning (Anthony, 1991; Webster, 2007; Hokanson, 2012; Orr & Shreeve, 2018). This literature renders Western design education as internally complex and riven with tensions rather than a static or monolithic paradigm. Recognising this work is important for situating the present study, however, the focus here is not to provide a comprehensive account of the internal debates and reformist traditions within Western pedagogy.

To do so would risk recentring Eurocentric frameworks and diluting the space given to the perspectives of educators and students of colour who remain underrepresented in both scholarship and institutions. My intention is not to deny the insights of this field, but to acknowledge it while deliberately shifting the centre of gravity away from how Western design education has narrated itself and toward the lived realities of those navigating and resisting its exclusions. This positional choice is itself methodological, as Tuck and Yang (2014) remind us, decolonial work requires refusing the tendency to return always to the settler or dominant paradigm as the primary reference point. This study recentres the field of vision by foregrounding the knowledge, practices and imaginaries of educators and students of colour, together with their peers who are differently positioned but equally shaped by these structures. It situates itself in dialogue with pedagogical scholarship but does not tend to it as its main object. Instead, it proceeds to analyse the colonial foundations of UK design education, tracing how those entanglements continue to structure institutions,

curricula and pedagogy before turning to the speculative practices through which alternative futures might be assembled. With this orientation established, the next section turns to the colonial foundations of UK design education, tracing how its entanglements with empire and Eurocentric epistemologies have long shaped what is seen, valued and legitimised.

1.1 Colonial Foundations of UK Design Education

To understand the exclusions that continue to shape design education in the UK, it is necessary to trace its historical formation. The emergence of design as a distinct field was never neutral, from its beginnings, it was entangled with empire, industrial capitalism and the production of difference between coloniser and colonised. As Akkach (2003) and Lees-Maffei & Sandino (2004) observe, design history has often functioned as a legitimising narrative for modernity, situating European and later North American practices as universal while rendering others peripheral. A pivotal institutional moment was the establishment of the British Department of Science and Art (DSA) in 1837. The DSA sought to strengthen Britain's industrial competitiveness but as Ansari et al. (2018) argue, its ambitions extended far beyond pedagogy. The DSA worked to stabilise capitalist-colonial relations of power by constructing a sharp division between the designer and the artisan. Designers, positioned within European centres of knowledge, were associated with progress and rationality, while artisans, often located in colonised geographies, were cast as traditional, static and inferior. This binary legitimised European design as universal while subordinating non-European practices as mere craft (Abdulla et al., 2018).

The consequences of this division remain visible, as Barringer (1998) observes, colonial-era institutions mediated the display and framing of craft and material culture in ways that reinforced imperial hierarchies and marginalised non-European practices. Likewise, Scotford (1991) shows that in graphic design history a canon has emerged that privileges certain European modernist forms (such as Bauhaus aesthetics and Swiss grid systems), leaving many other traditions such as Indigenous weaving, calligraphy and textile systems at the margins, often treated as decorative rather than theory-grounded knowledge. To decolonise design education, therefore, requires more than diversifying reading lists or adding new case studies, it means interrogating the categories through which design has historically been divided and recognising how those categories continue to uphold racialised and hierarchical ways of knowing, making and valuing. These historical divisions, first institutionalised in the

nineteenth century, have not disappeared; they manifest differently across the disciplines that make up contemporary design education. Graphic Design, Fashion, Product Design, Interior Design and Illustration each carry distinct histories, materials and pedagogical traditions, yet they are bound by shared legacies of Eurocentrism and canonisation. To understand what it means to decolonise design education in the UK today, it is necessary to acknowledge both the nuances of each discipline and the common frameworks that structure what is seen and valued.

In Graphic Design, Bauhaus modernism and Swiss grid systems remain dominant reference points, shaping curricula that marginalise other typographic and visual traditions (Scotford, 1991). In fashion, European haute couture continues to be positioned as the pinnacle of innovation, while non-Western dress systems are often framed as ethnographic or exotic. As Ahmed (2019, p. 26) notes, this reflects the “continued reproduction and entrenchment of a binary ... between ideas about a ‘modern’ West and a ‘traditional’ non-West.” In product design, functionalist paradigms rooted in industrial modernism are often privileged, obscuring Indigenous or craft-based approaches that prioritise community, reciprocity and sustainability (Akama, Hagen, & Whaanga-Schollum, 2019). In interior design, modernist spatial aesthetics continue to dominate, while vernacular and diasporic domestic practices are often marginalised. Rashdan and Ashour (2024) argue that globalisation and standardised modern interior norms tend to erode local identity and heritage and that heritage-inspired strategies are essential to preserve vernacular spatial practices and domestic aesthetics. Even Illustration, often associated with experimentation, continues to be tethered to Western art-historical lineages, with non-European visual languages rarely granted equal standing (Gray, Metwally, & Moffat, 2021).

Despite these differences, the underlying logics are consistent with each field reproducing hierarchies of knowledge that elevate Euro-American traditions as universal while marginalising others. As Tejada (2018, para. 3) argues, design history has been “monopolised and myopic,” constructing a canon that excludes plural practices. Abdulla (2022) extends the critique of design’s canon by observing that design thinking and education are increasingly implicated in shaping not just objects or images, but also systems of practice, behaviours and cultural norms and that many of these interventions continue to derive from Western paradigms, sidelining alternative knowledge systems. This broadening of design’s scope only intensifies the urgency of decolonisation. The frameworks for disrupting these hierarchies are therefore necessarily

shared through the unsettling of Eurocentric categories of value, questioning the universality of Western models and creating space for pluriversal knowledge and practices (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Tunstall, 2023). While the pathways may differ in Fashion or Interior Design compared with Graphic or Product Design, the structural project of decolonisation links them together as part of a collective struggle.

1.2 Scope and Purpose

This study is not limited to identifying gaps within curricula, nor is it satisfied with surface-level gestures of inclusion. Its scope is structural and cultural, examining the value systems, institutional logics and epistemological hierarchies that shape design education in the UK and exploring how these might be reimagined through decolonial praxis. As Ahmed (2012) argues in her critique of institutional diversity work, critique on its own is insufficient; without practices that actively build alternatives, critique can be absorbed into and reproduce the very systems it seeks to dismantle. Here, decolonisation is framed not only as activism, the work of making visible structures of exclusion but also as actionism, a commitment to proposing and experimenting with alternative frameworks, practices and futures. This dual orientation shapes the study's methodological choice as a practice-led research design that mobilises speculative and participatory methods not only to analyse but to do. Rather than treating practice as illustration or outcome, this study positions practice as epistemic, as a way of generating knowledge that could not emerge through text or theory alone (Nelson, 2013; Candy & Edmonds, 2018). Speculative storytelling, co-design workshops and performative artefacts are therefore central, both as sites of inquiry and as modes of theorisation. They stage encounters in which students, educators and communities imagine otherwise worlds together, making visible both the persistence of colonial structures and the possibilities of alternative futures.

The purpose of this study is thus threefold: to critically analyse the colonial foundations of design education in the UK; to articulate the difference between decolonisation and diversification; and to co-create speculative imaginaries that can inform practical transformations in the present. In doing so, the study contributes both to the theoretical discourse on decolonial design education and to the practical, collective labour of building caring futures. Building on this purpose, the study sets out a series of aims, objectives, and research questions that together frame its theoretical orientation, methodological commitments, and practical contributions.

1.2.1 Aims

- To analyse how Eurocentrism continues to shape UK design education – tracing its historical foundations, curricular legacies and lived effects for educators and students of colour.
- To differentiate decolonising design education from surface-level diversification – demonstrating how tokenism and performative diversity work sustain colonial structures, while decolonial practice requires structural, epistemic and relational transformation.
- To mobilise speculative and participatory practice to envision and assemble caring, plural futures for design education – generating frameworks that translate critique into actionable orientations for change.

1.2.2 Objectives

- To conduct participatory, co-design workshops that reimagine design education beyond existing institutional structures.
- To create speculative methods of practice that create spaces for decolonised futures for design education to be imagined.
- To generate practical proposals and frameworks for decolonial action within design education.

1.2.3 Research Questions

1. How can speculative, participatory practice create actionable pathways toward decolonising design education?
2. How can bringing the past, present, and future of design education into dialogue reframe decolonisation as both diagnostic and generative?
3. In what ways can practice-based methodologies, including speculative storytelling and participatory workshops, enact and materialise decolonial possibilities for design education?

Together, these aims, objectives, and research questions frame the study as both critique and proposition moving beyond identifying exclusions toward actively imagining and assembling otherwise possibilities. Returning to hooks' (2014) call to root imagination in the concrete while reaching beyond it, this research positions the decolonisation of design education as both a confrontation with history and an opening toward futures that are more caring, accountable and pluriversal. In setting out this agenda, the introduction has established the embodied positionality from which the study is written, traced the colonial genealogies that continue to shape design education and outlined the structural and disciplinary logics that sustain exclusion. What follows is an inquiry that is not only analytical but speculative and collective, working toward conditions in which design education might be reassembled otherwise towards a decolonised reality.

1.3 Thesis Overview

This thesis investigates how decolonising design education can be enacted as a practice of condition-making rather than as surface diversification. It is grounded in practice-as-research and a methodology I later term as Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying, an approach braiding speculative design, participatory facilitation and qualitative interviewing to co-produce knowledge with participants. Chapter 2 lays the methodological foundations (desire-based research; utopia and hope as method; participatory design; ethics of care) and details recruitment, ethics, and the reflexive thematic approach used to analyse multimodal materials. Chapters 3 and 4 present the creative practice at the core of the study: Chapter 3 documents A Letter from a Decolonised Future workshop with postgraduate students; Chapter 4 analyses semi-structured, speculative interviews with six UK design educators of colour, introduced through the Maker Majlis induction pack. Across these chapters, speculative artefacts operate not as prompts but as epistemic infrastructures that stage encounters where critique and imagination are held together.

Chapters 5 and 6 synthesise and extend these practices. Chapter 5 offers a discussion organised around the analytic frame of what can change and what must collapse, clarifying where curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment can be structurally reconfigured, and where tokenism, non-performativity, and censorship demand refusal rather than reform. Here, Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying is articulated as a methodological innovation, showing how designed artefacts and speculative encounters enact decolonial pedagogy by

materialising both critique and possibility. Chapter 6 consolidates the study's contributions and proposes a decolonial design framework articulated as six commitments (refusal; plural epistemologies; care and horizontality; values-based, reciprocal assessment; institutional accountability; imagination as method), alongside implications, limits, and directions for further work. Bringing together these strands, the thesis argues that decolonising design education is an ongoing, relational practice of world-making—one that redesigns the conditions under which knowledge is produced, recognised, and sustained.

1.4 To Decolonise, To Future, To Care: A Literature Review

Decolonial theorists argue that coloniality continues to shape knowledge production across disciplines, including design education (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Tunstall, 2023). Within design studies, this is evident in the persistence of a Eurocentric canon that privileges European and American histories and aesthetics, while rendering alternative traditions peripheral or invisible (Tejada, 2018; Schultz et al., 2018). In a UK context, these legacies are particularly pronounced, from the establishment of formal art and design programmes within nineteenth-century universities through to the continuing influence of the Bauhaus model, curricula has tended to foreground European contributions while overlooking or marginalising Indigenous and non-Western traditions. Scholars highlight how this selective canonisation has produced a narrow and exclusionary narrative of design history, what Tejada (2018, para.3) describes as “monopolized” and “myopic,” privileging the work of white, male, Euro-American designers. While celebrated for its innovations, the Bauhaus legacy has also reinforced Eurocentric values and aesthetics at the expense of more pluralistic design systems (Schultz et al., 2018; Scotford, 1991). As a result, the epistemological foundations of UK design education remain closely tied to colonial and imperial structures of knowledge production.

In recent years, calls to interrogate and transform the epistemological and institutional foundations of design education have intensified. Decolonial scholarship foregrounds the persistence of colonial logics and the need to dismantle, rather than reform, Eurocentric dominance (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Tunstall, 2023; Smith, 2021). Within design studies, this has spurred critiques of curricula, pedagogy and institutional practices that reproduce exclusionary norms (de Almeida & Tejada, 2021; Abdulla, 2018), echoing wider campaigns for curriculum diversification and structural equity in UK universities. Global research also explores alternatives that move beyond critique,

including speculative and participatory approaches that mobilise imagination as resistance and world-building (Candy & Kornet, 2017; Jennings, 2022), alongside justice-oriented frameworks centring care, accountability and repair (Rizvi, 2023; Costanza-Chock, 2020).

This chapter reviews these debates through three strands: to decolonise, which critiques the Eurocentric canon and calls for epistemic justice; to future, which examines speculative and participatory practices for envisioning plural possibilities; and to care, which positions relational ethics as central to decolonial work. Together these strands map critical debates and generative alternatives in contemporary design education. The review has four purposes: to map colonial legacies in design education; to synthesise emerging work on speculation and care; to identify convergences and unresolved tensions; and to highlight gaps in the literature. While scholarship increasingly advocates for decolonisation, imagination and care (Abdulla, 2018; Tunstall, 2023; Schultz et al., 2018;), much of this work has emerged from broader theoretical discussions and practice-based reflections across international contexts. Comparatively little empirical research has examined how these frameworks are enacted within UK design schools specifically. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates how participatory speculative design might contribute to decolonial, care-based futures in UK university programmes.

1.4.1 To Decolonise

Given the enduring influence of colonial and Eurocentric knowledge systems on design education, it is essential to first define what is meant by decolonisation in this context. Within a wider context, decolonisation is commonly defined as the undoing of colonial rule, particularly the political independence of formerly colonised nations (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). While this definition emphasises the withdrawal of colonial powers, scholars have expanded its meaning within education to encompass the dismantling of colonial structures of knowledge and power. Jouwe et al. (2018, p.133) define it as “a critique of the hegemony of Western imperialist thinking and its continuation in our current day institutionalised lives”, highlighting its role in exposing the persistence of colonial logics within educational systems.

While more encompassing definitions of decolonisation emphasise the withdrawal of colonial powers, educational scholars have redefined it as an epistemic project: dismantling the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge.

Abdulla (2018) has been particularly influential in applying this perspective to design education. In her thesis *Design Otherwise*, she demonstrates how Arab design curricula have been shaped by an epistemic dependency on European and American frameworks, leading to the reproduction of colonial hierarchies of knowledge. For Abdulla, decolonisation must therefore involve rethinking the epistemological foundations of design, moving beyond additive inclusion to the development of pedagogies grounded in local histories and cultural contexts. Her work illustrates the broader principle that decolonisation is epistemic as well as political, it requires reconfiguring what counts as knowledge, whose traditions are legitimised and whose futures are imagined. Her work, while grounded in Arab curricula, has been influential in framing debates within UK design education, where similar dependencies on Euro-American epistemologies remain evident. Abdulla (2018) has been particularly influential in shaping this study. Her articulation of decolonisation as an epistemic project, as one that demands a move beyond additive inclusion toward pedagogies grounded in local histories and contexts, clarified for me that decolonisation is not a matter of substitution but of structural reconfiguration. My own practice builds on this provocation by extending her call to move beyond additive inclusion into the domain of methodological experimentation, testing how speculative artefacts and facilitated encounters might operate as infrastructures for enacting otherwise pedagogies within UK design education.

Much of this scholarship is deeply indebted to feminist critique; intersectional feminist thinkers have long foregrounded how race, gender and coloniality intersect in shaping education. bell hooks (1994, p.12) argued that the classroom can be “the most radical space of possibility,” insisting on embodied and relational pedagogies. Sara Ahmed’s *On Being Included* (2012) exposed how diversity discourse often displaces the burden of transformation onto racialised and gendered bodies. Futuress (Futuress, n.d.), formerly Depatriarchise Design, an online community group, continues this lineage, positioning feminist praxis as inseparable from decolonial critique. These interventions remind us that the struggle to decolonise design education cannot be understood apart from feminist efforts to dismantle patriarchal and Eurocentric epistemologies.

Other scholars reinforce this view, Mignolo and Walsh (2018) insist that decolonisation cannot be universalised but must be situated in specific historical and geographical contexts; they describe this as a process of delinking from colonial epistemologies to enable pluriversality, the coexistence of multiple epistemic traditions. Tunstall (2023) sharpens this in a design context by

framing decolonisation as putting Indigenous first, foregrounding knowledge systems that have been marginalised or erased by colonialism. Tejada (2018, para. 3) likewise critiques the dominance of Euro-American narratives in design history, describing it as “fractured, incomplete and biased..that has advanced a particular, narrow set of ideas and values, at the expense of many people and their beliefs, values and cultural systems.” Tejada (2018, para. 3) goes on to write that the history of which this has left us with is “a canon, which is narrow, not inclusive, not diverse, not open and not fully engaging with a wholly multidimensional, diverse set of ideas.”

In the UK, these debates intersect with a higher education sector that has been profoundly shaped by the legacies of empire, Bhambra, Gebrial and Nişancioğlu’s (2018) influential collection *Decolonising the University* argues that British universities remain structured by imperial histories, which continue to shape curricula, disciplinary boundaries and institutional cultures. Arday and Mirza (2018) make a similar point in *Dismantling Race in Higher Education*, emphasising that racialised inequalities in UK universities cannot be addressed through surface-level reform. Ahmed’s *On Being Included* (2012) provides a further critique of institutional diversity policies, showing how discourses of inclusion often obscure rather than dismantle systemic racism and colonial power. These UK-based interventions highlight that decolonisation is not synonymous with diversification or inclusion; it is a call to interrogate and transform the epistemic and institutional structures of British higher education. These critiques of higher education provide an essential backdrop for understanding the challenges facing design programmes, where Eurocentric canons and institutional inertia remain particularly embedded.

This distinction is particularly salient in design, while UK universities increasingly foreground commitments to equity, diversity and inclusion, global scholarship such as Shahjahan, Estera, Surla & Edwards (2022) indicates many institutions remain at early stages of decolonial engagement where they are recognising inequality without yet disrupting dominant epistemic systems or making space for genuine alternatives. Tuck and Yang’s (2012, p.3) claim that “decolonisation is not a metaphor” has become a crucial warning against conflating decolonisation with EDI initiatives, noting that without structural and epistemic transformation such efforts risk becoming performative. Schaar and Rittner (2022, p.313) similarly describe many institutional diversity strategies as “another smokescreen” that deflects attention from systemic change. For this study, these critiques establish the ground on which my interventions are positioned, rather than evaluating or extending existing EDI policies (see

Appendix A.3), my concern is with designing speculative and participatory practices that materialise epistemic alternatives. In this sense, the thesis aligns with calls to distinguish decolonisation from diversification while contributing methodological experiments that test how design education might be reconfigured at infrastructural, pedagogical and relational levels.

Despite these critiques, examples from outside the UK suggest the potential of decolonial practice in design education. Abdulla (2018) highlights efforts to develop locally centred curricula in Jordan, while Tunstall (2023) documents Indigenous hire clusters and design pedagogies in Canada. These demonstrate how decolonisation can be embedded within design programmes through contextually grounded approaches that foreground epistemic justice. In the UK, much of the momentum for decolonising higher education has come from grassroots activism. Campaigns such as Rhodes Must Fall Oxford and the National Union of Students' (NUS) Why Is My Curriculum White? have been central in foregrounding how curricula across disciplines reproduce racialised exclusions and colonial hierarchies of knowledge (Bhambra, Gebrial & Nişancioğlu, 2018; Liyanage, 2018). These interventions suggest that while universities increasingly invoke decolonisation at the policy level, its practical momentum has often been generated by activist and localised pedagogical practices.

Within the arts and design sector, the Decolonising the Arts Curriculum project at University of the Arts London (UAL, 2018) found that curricula continued to centre European and North American traditions, with non-Western perspectives often framed as supplementary rather than integral. Further suggesting that while UK universities increasingly foreground equity, diversity, and inclusion, many interventions remain limited in scope. For instance, Goldsmiths' Liberate Our Library (Goldsmiths, 2019) initiative includes diversifying library collections, de-centring Whiteness in knowledge management and reworking reading lists to include marginalised voices. However, examples of substantive restructuring in design pedagogy or assessment remain scarce. Global scholarship such as Shahjahan, Estera, Surla, & Edwards (2022), Tuck & Yang (2012), and Schaar & Rittner (2022) warn that recognising inequality alone does not suffice: without epistemic and structural transformation, decolonial ambition risks becoming rhetorical rather than realised.

Although explicitly decolonial scholarship in UK design education is scarce, adjacent critical work has begun to unsettle dominant narratives. Buckley's feminist histories, for example, reveal how women were excluded from

canonical accounts of design and highlight the gendered biases of design discourse (Buckley, 1986). Clarke's research in design anthropology similarly demonstrates how design practices are entangled with wider cultural and social systems, offering critical perspectives that trouble universalising accounts of the field (Clarke, 2011). Likewise, Julier's analyses of design's cultural and economic entanglements (2000) and Maguire and Woodham's account of post-war British design politics in *Design and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain* (1997) foreground how structures of power shape design discourse. These contributions do not explicitly frame themselves as decolonial, yet they show that questions of exclusion, power and knowledge production have long been present in UK design scholarship.

By contrast, disciplines such as sociology and literary studies have developed more sustained decolonial traditions. Steinmetz's *The Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought* (2023), for instance, demonstrates how foundational sociological theories were shaped by imperial contexts, while Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) shows how postcolonial literary scholarship has interrogated issues of canon, resistance and voice for decades. In comparison, design education in the UK remains comparatively underexamined, with relatively few empirical or theoretical studies that address its colonial entanglements. While Abdulla's (2018) analysis of Arab curricula has been taken up in wider design debates to highlight epistemic dependency on Euro-American frameworks, there is limited equivalent scholarship grounded in UK institutions. Where research does exist, it often takes the form of institutional reports or activist interventions (UAL, 2018) rather than sustained empirical or theoretical analysis. Taken together, the literature positions decolonisation in design education as a project of epistemic and institutional transformation—dismantling Eurocentric canons, legitimising alternative epistemologies and resisting the dilution of decolonisation into diversity discourse. Yet in UK design education, such critiques are rarely translated into systematic curricular or pedagogical change, leaving a gap between theoretical critique and institutional transformation. This sets the stage for the role of imagination and futuring as without envisioning what alternatives might look like, decolonial critique risks remaining diagnostic rather than generative. With this framing, this is where I position this study, as a particularly relevant practice-led research approach that enables imagination to be operationalised through methods of making, storytelling and speculative world-building.

1.4.2 To Future

To future, in the context of decolonial design scholarship, is to imagine and enact alternative possibilities for education that move beyond entrenched paradigms of what design is, who it serves and how it is valued. Scholars highlight how design values are shaped through a canon of predominantly European and American male designers, which continues to determine what is taught, assessed and legitimised in design schools (Khandwala, 2019). Decolonising the curriculum is therefore not only about dismantling Eurocentric narratives but also about cultivating the capacity to imagine otherwise. As Manathunga (2018) demonstrates through scholarship emerging from the Global South, which interrogates dominant Western understandings of time, place and knowledge, curriculum decolonisation involves questioning who frames knowledge, as well as when and where it is produced. In this framing, epistemic location becomes a site for the creative reimagining of curricula beyond the assumptions of Western universalism. This literature positions imagination as central to decolonisation, enabling design education to envision different institutional forms, pedagogies and relationships. Yet while the theoretical significance of imagination is well established, its translation into the specific context of design schools, particularly within the UK, remains underexplored. Some scholars have begun to bridge this gap by framing speculation as an educational method. Markussen and Knutz (2013), for example, conceptualise design fiction as a mode of inquiry that can open critical reflection within teaching contexts. Yet such interventions remain scattered, underscoring the need for more sustained analysis of how speculative practices might reshape institutional structures of design education.

Scholars have developed a variety of futures-oriented approaches in design that use speculation to question the present and open up alternative possibilities. Critical design, for example, frames artefacts as provocations that expose the assumptions embedded in everyday technologies (Malpass, 2017). Design fiction extends this by using narrative and storytelling to situate speculative artefacts within plausible social contexts (Bleecker, 2009). Futures studies and participatory foresight methods similarly highlight design's role in anticipating change and experimenting with alternatives (Candy & Dunagan, 2017). Across these traditions, design is positioned not only as a practice of making but also as a mode of inquiry that enables collective reflection on what kinds of futures are desirable, possible or contestable.

Among these approaches, speculative design has been particularly influential in shaping debates about how design can provoke reflection on alternative futures. Dunne and Raby's *Speculative Everything* (2013) popularised the practice as a means of questioning dominant technological narratives and opening up space for critical debate. However, its Eurocentric orientation has drawn significant critique. Martins (2014) argues that speculative design privileges Western aesthetics and imaginaries, neglecting the situated knowledges of marginalised communities. Rosner (2018) similarly critiques speculative traditions for reinscribing whiteness and failing to grapple with colonial histories, thereby limiting their capacity to support decolonial transformation. These interventions highlight a central tension in the literature: speculation can be a powerful tool for imagining otherwise, but when detached from histories of power it risks reproducing the very exclusions it claims to challenge. For design education, this raises the question of how speculative practices might be reconfigured to support genuinely decolonial pedagogies rather than reproduce existing hierarchies.

Beyond critiques of speculative design's Eurocentrism, other strands of scholarship foreground culturally specific futurisms as decolonial alternatives. Afrofuturism, for example, resists linear historical narratives of progress by centring Black diasporic experience and reimagining liberated futures through art, technology and storytelling. As Eshun (2003) argues, Afrofuturism rewrites science fiction as counter-futures that challenge the erasure of Blackness from dominant technological imaginaries, while Womack (2013) highlights its role in reclaiming cultural survival and projecting alternative modes of existence. Indigenous Futurisms, articulated by Dillon (2012), similarly refuse settler-colonial timelines of disappearance, envisioning survivance and continuity in futures where Indigenous presence is asserted both politically and cosmologically. These imaginaries confront colonial logics directly by reclaiming temporalities that dominant Western paradigms have denied. Crip Futurism, emerging from disability justice scholarship, challenges ableist assumptions embedded in speculative visions of progress. Kafer (2013) argues that dominant imaginaries equate "the future" with cure or elimination of disability, whereas crip temporalities foreground interdependence, access and collective flourishing as alternative visions of futurity.

Feminist speculative traditions further expand what it means to imagine otherwise, science fiction by writers such as Ursula K. Le Guin (1969; 1974), Octavia Butler (1993; 2000), and Marge Piercy (1976) used narrative to interrogate gendered hierarchies, explore interdependence and unsettle

patriarchal logics of progress. Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) and *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) positioned speculative storytelling as a feminist science practice, collapsing boundaries between human and nonhuman, past and future. Within design research, Bardzell and Bardzell (2011) argue for feminist speculative design methods that embed care and critique into world-building. These feminist interventions show that futures are not neutral; they are contested terrains shaped by patriarchy as much as coloniality and imagining otherwise requires dismantling both.

My engagement with speculative methods is shaped not only by disciplinary debates but also by personal and cultural inheritance. Within Iraqi Turkmen traditions, oral storytelling has long functioned as a mode of sustaining knowledge, embedding histories, cosmologies and survival strategies within narrative form. These practices do not announce themselves as "futures work," yet they perform similar functions: preserving continuity under conditions of rupture and projecting alternative possibilities beyond dominant structures. In this sense, speculation resonates with me less as an imported academic technique than as an extension of familiar cultural logics of imagination and survival. This orientation also shapes why I am drawn to feminist speculative traditions, where writers such as Butler and Le Guin, and theorists like Haraway, have framed speculation as a means of unsettling hierarchies of gender, power and knowledge. For me, their work finds a strong echo in the speculative inheritances I carry, the traditions where imagination is already entangled with care, community and resistance. Approaching speculation in this way situates my research in a dialogue between feminist and decolonial genealogies while foregrounding that imagining otherwise is not only a theoretical method but also a lived, inherited practice.

These futurisms expand what is possible in design by offering epistemologies that are non-normative, embodied and culturally specific. They challenge speculative design's tendency toward universalisation by insisting that futures are always situated and contested. Amstel (2024) reinforces this by arguing that futures only become decolonial when they are co-created with communities historically excluded from institutional power. Udoewa (2022) takes this further in his call for Radical Participatory Design, critiquing extractive forms of participation and advocating instead for approaches grounded in relational ethics and shared authority. Together, these literatures push the discussion of design futures beyond abstraction toward a plural, justice-oriented practice of imagining otherwise. Yet within design education there remains limited empirical research into how speculative and participatory approaches are operationalised

in curricula, pedagogy or institutional structures. Much of the work remains either theoretical or situated in practice-led examples, without sustained engagement with design schools as sites of decolonial transformation.

In response to this gap, scholars emphasise that futuring must be understood not as prediction or trendspotting but as a critical and ethical practice. Jain (2017) argues that futuring involves creating tools that connect our present selves with future selves, thereby enabling active participation in shaping futures we collectively desire. Candy and Dunagan (2017) similarly frame speculative practice as political, mobilising imagination to interrogate dominant trajectories and open space for alternatives. Across this work, futuring is positioned as requiring imagination, care, criticality and collaboration. Within decolonial design scholarship in particular, it is increasingly described as a practice of ethical world-building: historically accountable, collectively generated, and future-facing (Parris, 2022; Bardzell & Bardzell 2018). These accounts ask not only what we want design to do, but who it should serve and how the conditions for such futures might be created.

Futuring, then, emerges in the literature as both a political and pedagogical act, as an invitation to reimagine institutions that are not only more inclusive but radically restructured to serve multiple ways of knowing and being. In design education, however, speculative methods are more often confined to isolated projects or individual courses, rather than embedded as sustained pedagogical practice. This raises questions about how futuring might function not only as critique but as a core methodology within design schools. It is precisely this question that my research takes up. By staging speculative workshops, curating conferences and developing storytelling artefacts, my practice investigates how futuring can operate not as occasional enrichment but as an infrastructural, participatory and decolonial method of reimaging design education. In doing so, this thesis responds to the gap in the literature by offering an empirically grounded account of how speculative and participatory practices can work to materialise otherwise realities.

1.4.3 To Care

Care has emerged as a central concern within decolonial design scholarship, framed not as sentiment but as a methodological and pedagogical commitment. If coloniality is rooted in extraction, exploitation, and epistemic violence, then decolonisation requires acts of nurture, repair and relational accountability (Rizvi, 2016; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Tronto's influential work on the ethics of care (1993; 2013) defines care as a political practice of attentiveness and responsibility, highlighting its role in unsettling hierarchies of power. Within design research, Bardzell (2010) extends these insights to propose a feminist ethics of care, arguing that attentiveness, responsiveness and relationality can reshape both design methods and pedagogy. Together, these interventions position care not as peripheral but as infrastructural, the condition for ethical and decolonial knowledge production.

Design justice literature has further developed this perspective, explicitly linking care to questions of pedagogy and participation. Costanza-Chock's *Design Justice* (2020) frames care as accountability, requiring designers and educators to centre the voices and needs of historically marginalised communities, while resisting extractive practices of participation. Similarly, Akama et al. (2019) draw from Indigenous design practices to emphasise care as relational accountability, showing how design education might move beyond technocentric or product-oriented models toward reciprocal, situated and culturally specific pedagogies. These examples demonstrate that to care in design is not an optional ethic but a necessary method for cultivating just and plural futures.

At the institutional level, however, scholars remain critical of how care is unevenly enacted in higher education. Ahmed (2012) demonstrates how diversity and inclusion policies often function performatively, signalling care without disrupting structural inequities. Williams (2022, p. 507) captures the exhaustion of staff and students working within institutions that "don't care about us can't care for us, and won't carry us", foregrounding the affective toll of institutional passivity. Within design schools, these critiques resonate with reports that commitments to equity or inclusion often fail to extend to curricular reform or assessment practices (UAL, 2018). The gap between institutional rhetoric and lived experience underscores the urgency of embedding care not only discursively but structurally in design education.

Pedagogically, care reshapes how relationships within the classroom are understood, rather than hierarchical models where authority flows one way, from

educator to student, care-based approaches foreground reciprocity, vulnerability and mutual learning. Davis and Paim (2021) argue that care must be seen as an embodied, continuous practice, constantly renewed to meet the shifting needs of communities. This has particular resonance in design schools, where students often experience alienation from curricula that privilege Eurocentric canons and competitive individualism. To embed care in pedagogy is to create conditions of safety, collaboration and mutual recognition that enable alternative epistemologies to flourish. Examples from design research provide models for this shift. The Design Justice Network (Costanza-Chock, 2020) offers participatory frameworks that centre co-authorship, accessibility, and anti-oppression, approaches that suggest how care can be translated into design education as both methodology and pedagogy, guiding not only research practice but also classroom relations, assessment and institutional governance. Yet within the UK, empirical studies of how care is operationalised in design curricula remain limited, with most interventions appearing in activist projects or localised initiatives rather than sustained scholarly analysis.

Care must also be understood materially and bodily, decolonial and feminist scholars emphasise how empire shaped and disciplined colonised bodies (Fanon, 1967; Mbembe, 2003), and how pedagogy can either reproduce or resist such bodily hierarchies. Karen Barad's (2007) theory of material entanglement and Braidotti's (2013) feminist posthumanism both insist that knowledge is never disembodied; it is always enacted through bodies, spaces and matter. Within design education, this highlights that to care is not only a discourse but a spatial and embodied practice: reconfiguring classrooms, workshops and studio relations so that multiple heritages, ways of sitting, touching and sensing are legitimised. Bringing the body back in resists Cartesian dualism (the separation of mind and body) associated with Descartes (1996/1641) and makes visible how power relations materialise in design education itself. As bell hooks insists, "To restore the mind/body connection we must return to the body. We must return to the place where we began, to the body that was disregarded in the classroom, to the voice that could not be heard" (hooks, 1994, p. 191).

This section positions care as foundational to decolonial design, presenting it as a continuous, relational and embodied practice that resists extractive models of knowledge and the performativity of institutional reform. Within design education, centring care is not simply about empathy or inclusion but about restructuring relationships of power, responsibility and accountability. This study builds on that scholarship by exploring how participatory speculative design can

act as a methodology of care, embedding reciprocity, consent and co-creation into the institutional spaces of UK universities. To care, in this sense, is to design with accountability and hope, grounding imagination in relationships that are not only innovative but just, not only future-facing but reparative.

1.4.4 Summarising the Literature

To summarise, the three strands of literature reviewed here – *To Decolonise*, *To Future*, and *To Care* – offer distinct yet interconnected perspectives for rethinking design education. Each strand foregrounds different priorities such as critiques of Eurocentric canons and institutions; explorations of imagination and speculation as tools for reconfiguring education; and arguments for care, accountability and relational ethics as the foundations of just pedagogy. While they arise from separate bodies of scholarship, they also overlap in significant ways and reveals that efforts to decolonise require not only critique but also imaginative tools for rethinking what design education could become; futuring, without care, risks reproducing colonial exclusions; and care, without imagination, risks being reduced to reformist gestures. As a collective, these bodies of literature suggest that decolonial design scholarship is strongest when structural critique, speculative possibility and relational accountability are held in tension with one another.

For this study, these insights are not only conceptual but methodological, they have shaped the research design by foregrounding speculative and participatory practice as ways of operationalising care, imagination and critique within institutional contexts. Therefore, to decolonise, to future, and to care function not only as organising themes for the literature but also as methodological orientations for this thesis, guiding the development of the participatory encounters that formulate this study. It is in this review that a continuing gap is also exposed, that being that while theoretical and critical debates are expanding, there is limited empirical research into how decolonial principles are enacted within UK design education. It is precisely this gap that motivates the present study, which contributes by offering an empirically grounded, practice-based account of how speculative and participatory methods might reconfigure the conditions of design education towards more just and plural futures.

Chapter 2

2. Research Methodology

This chapter sets out the methodological foundations of the study and situates it within a practice-as-research paradigm. Here, design practice is not ancillary to research but a primary mode of knowledge production in which inquiry proceeds through the staging of encounters, the making of artefacts and the facilitation of collaborative speculation. This stance aligns with feminist and decolonial epistemologies that refuse the separation of theory from lived practice, insisting on research that is situated, accountable and relational (Haraway, 1988).

The chapter is organised into: (2.1) methodological orientations; (2.2) operationalisation and ethics; (2.3) speculative storytelling artefacts; (2.4) positionality; (2.5) analytic approach; (2.6) method summary. Taken together, these sections establish the chapter's scaffolding that presents how speculative storytelling artefacts operate not merely as prompts but as epistemic infrastructures; how facilitation functions as a design intervention; and how analysis is treated as a speculative and reflexive act. Methodologically, the chapter anchors one of the thesis's central claims, that decolonising design education requires methods as imaginative, accountable and relational as the futures they seek to assemble.

2.1 Methodological Orientations

This study is situated within practice-as-research, where my design practice is both the site and the mode of knowledge production. In this tradition, practice is not ancillary to research but a form of knowledge in itself (Barrett & Bolt, 2007; Nelson, 2013). This position resonates with feminist and decolonial scholars who challenge the separation of theory from lived practice: Haraway's (1988) call for situated knowledges, hooks' (1994) insistence on bringing the whole self into pedagogy and Tuhiwai Smith's (2021) demand for accountable, community-centred research. My own practice takes shape through the role of design facilitation, where I present a body of practice that builds and stages encounters (through conditions, prompts, and settings) that invite participants to imagine otherwise. These interventions, introduced more fully in later chapters, are not neutral methods of data collection but creative practices in their own right. In line with Puig de la Bellacasa's (2017) framing of care as method and Tunstall's (2023) argument for decolonial design, I treat facilitation as design intervention, a mode of making knowledge rather than merely gathering it. For this reason, the discussion that follows sets out the methodological orientations and analytic

strategies that scaffold the study, while distinguishing these from the creative practice itself, presented in later chapters. The orientations of desire-based research, utopia and hope, participatory design and ethics of care provide the theoretical and ethical grounding. Analysis, outlined later in this chapter, draws on reflexive thematic methods supported by NVivo. While this involves textualisation, I remain attentive to the multimodal character of the materials generated such as stories, performances, artefacts, gestures and atmospheres. To treat them purely as text would flatten their speculative and embodied qualities. Following arts-based and decolonial scholars (Leavy, 2015; Tuck & Yang, 2014; Smith, 2021), I approach thematic analysis as one tool among others, recognising that knowledge also resides in relational, affective and imaginative registers. The practice at the heart of this thesis consists of designed encounters and artefacts, letters from alternative realities, speculative workshops and speculative interviews, discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. The role of this chapter is therefore not to narrate those interventions but to outline the orientations, analytic strategies and ethical frameworks that underpinned their enactment. The next section begins with desire-based research, situating the project against damage-centred accounts (Tuck, 2009) and toward imagination, possibility and care.

2.1.1 Desire Based Research

Much research on marginalised communities within education and the arts has focused on documenting inequality, exclusion and harm. This work has been crucial in exposing the persistence of colonial and racialised structures, yet it carries risks. Eve Tuck (2009) has been especially influential in identifying the limitations of what she terms damage-centred research. She offers a more applied definition of damage-centred research, centring it as research that operates, even benevolently, from a theory of change that establishes harm or injury in order to achieve reparation (2009, p. 413). While motivated by critique, such approaches often frame communities as depleted, ruined and hopeless (2009), inadvertently reinforcing deficit perspectives that reduce people to their injuries.

In design education, a damage-centred lens might only expose Eurocentric failures such as the absence of non-Western designers, hierarchical teaching or the invisibility of marginalised students. While vital, this risks reducing communities to victims rather than knowledge-makers. Tuck (2009) instead advances a desire-based framework that holds trauma alongside aspiration.

Desire, she writes, is collective and temporal, tied to “the not yet and the not anymore” (p. 417). It shifts focus from what is broken to what is valued and envisioned, situating knowledge across past, present, and future. Research, then, must capture not only harm but also resilience, creativity and hope. This insistence resonates with the speculative design traditions I mobilise in this study. Speculative artefacts, whether letters, prompts, or workshops, open space for participants to imagine otherwise. Yet whereas Eurocentric traditions of speculative design (Dunne & Raby, 2013) have often abstracted speculation from histories of power or the producing futures that float free of colonial and racialised realities, I situate speculation within decolonial frames where it is accountable to exclusion but oriented towards possibility (Martins, 2014; Schultz et al., 2018). This methodological positioning is central to my contribution: desire becomes the bridge that holds critique and imagination together, ensuring that speculation does not erase harm but also does not collapse communities into it.

Desire, in this sense, is inseparable from healing but healing understood as a political and collective practice rather than a sentimental gesture. As Leo (2022, p. 266) reminds us, “healing in the absence of political analysis is not healing, it is placating... True, sustainable healing is about finding justice in organizational decision making and power sharing.” This reframing resonates with hooks’ (1990) insistence that when marginalised voices break silences, the act itself becomes one of defiance and renewal, opening possibilities for transformation. My research builds on that principle by designing encounters where participants are not only witnesses to exclusion but also agents of imagination and assemblers of futures. In this way, I extend Tuck’s call for desire-based research into the domain of design education, offering a practice-led framework where speculation is reconfigured, not as detached provocation, but as accountable world-making grounded in care, justice, resilience and the pluriversal futures communities already imagine.

2.1.2 Utopia & Hope as Method

If desire-based research resists reducing communities to narratives of damage, then utopia and hope offer complementary methodological orientations for imagining alternatives. Rather than treating utopia as a detailed plan for a perfect society, Levitas (2013) reconceptualises it as a critical and imaginative practice, suggesting that utopia can be understood as a way of reshaping our desires, encouraging us to want differently and as a speculative method for

reflecting on the distance between present realities and possible futures. In this sense, utopia is less about prescribing fixed outcomes and more about keeping open the possibility of alternatives. Hope plays a parallel role in shaping transformative research and practice, in *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch (1986) conceptualises hope as anticipatory, as a forward-looking orientation that influences how people act in the present. For him, hope is not naive optimism but a form of critical consciousness that keeps attention on what might be possible beyond existing conditions. Freire (1994) makes a similar claim in *Pedagogy of Hope*, describing hope as a fundamental human need for those engaged in struggles for liberation, where he stresses that hope must be critical and active, an orientation that fuels commitment to change rather than passive waiting for it to occur.

Feminist and decolonial scholars emphasise the need for forms of hope that are critical and grounded. Lear (2006), writing about the Crow Nation after cultural devastation, describes radical hope as a forward-looking orientation that reaches toward a future good even when the frameworks for understanding that future no longer exist. Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) similarly connects hope to practices of care, underscoring its necessity for acting responsibly in conditions of uncertainty. At the same time, Berlant (2011) cautions against what she terms cruel optimism, the attachments to ideals or promises that obscure the social and political conditions that make those aspirations unattainable. Bloch (1986) adds a further distinction between abstract utopias, which remain detached fantasies and concrete utopias, which are grounded in collective possibility and therefore hold the potential to sustain transformation. In the context of this study, hope and utopia were not abstract ideals but methodological commitments. Workshops were staged as spaces of speculative world-building where critique and desire could coexist, where participation was not about producing consensus deliverables but about sustaining plural, situated futures. This reframes participation itself as no longer consultation or optimisation but an education of desire, a process of imagining otherwise with and through participants.

2.1.3 Participatory Design

Having situated this study within desire, utopia, and radical hope, I now turn to participatory design (PD) as the methodological container through which these orientations were enacted. Participatory design provides the structural form of this research, through a series of workshops, collaborative encounters and

co-created artefacts. Desire and hope set the epistemological ground whereas participatory design provides the methodological scaffolding through which participants could gather, tell stories, and imagine futures otherwise. Participatory design is often narrated within design scholarship as emerging in Scandinavia in the 1970s, linked to union-led struggles over workplace technologies (Bjerknes, Ehn & Kyng, 1987; Schuler & Namioka, 1993). This genealogy is widely cited but it is also profoundly Eurocentric, to locate the origin of participation in European labour movements is to reproduce a colonial erasure, overlooking the fact that collective practices of decision-making, shared authority and world-making have long been embedded in Indigenous and marginalised communities across the globe. Participation did not begin in Scandinavian workshops, it has been central to human survival and flourishing for since the beginning of time.

Indigenous communities have long sustained knowledge through oral storytelling and communal gatherings, where stories function as theory, method and governance, carrying ecological memory and values for collective life (Smith, 2021; Wilson, 2008; Simpson, 2017; Kimmerer, 2013). Read through a design lens, these are “world-making” practices in Escobar’s sense, situated techniques for maintaining socio-ecological relations rather than cultural ornament (Escobar, 2018; Ingold, 2000). Ancient Mesopotamian irrigation systems and South Asian community-based medical traditions such as Ayurveda likewise exemplify collective, distributed forms of knowledge and infrastructure (Jacobsen & Adams, 1958; Adams, 1981; Mays, 2010; Jain, 1995; Wujastyk, 2003; Kalla & Joshi, 2004). Together, these cases show participatory logics have deep, plural genealogies across settings. Acknowledging these histories is not about retroactively labelling all collective practice as participatory design or collapsing cultural specificity, but about resisting the colonial tendency to legitimise participation only when codified in Euro-American scholarship. Scandinavian PD, itself shaped by Participatory Action Research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Fals-Borda, 1987), often struggled to meet its activist commitments within institutional constraints. Narrating PD as beginning in Scandinavia thus both erases pluriversal genealogies and obscures tensions between PAR’s radical ideals and PD’s institutionalisation.

My study situates itself within this contested inheritance by engaging participatory design as a decolonial method, attentive to its pluriversal genealogies and to iteration as a constitutive mode of knowledge-making. Iteration here is not linear refinement but, following Binder, Brandt & Gregory (2008) and Schön (1983), a cycle of reflection-in-action where frictions, relations

and possibilities surface. In practice-as-research (Nelson, 2013), each act of making and facilitating is both generative and analytic, sustaining conditions for speculation. This framing affirms participation as an ongoing struggle for epistemic justice, foregrounding relational accountability, plurality and care (Akama et al., 2019; Costanza-Chock, 2020). Rather than collaboration in service of predefined problems, decolonial participatory design recognises participants as theorists of their own conditions, with storytelling and speculation as legitimate knowledge practices. From this perspective, the workshops were designed not around institutional deliverables but as iterative spaces of rehearsal, where artefacts acted as provocations. Success was measured not in consensus but in plurality, contradiction and imagination. Care and reciprocity were embedded in every stage; participation was not contingent on disclosing harm but framed as hopeful infrastructure where imagination became resistance. In this way, participatory design shifts from extractive collaboration toward pluriversal world-building, assembling alternatives through care, speculation and epistemic justice.

2.2 Operationalising the Methodology & Ethical Considerations

Having outlined the methodological orientations and analytic strategies, I now turn to how these were enacted in practice. In practice-based research, theory is materialised through encounters, artefacts and settings (Barrett & Bolt, 2007; Nelson, 2013). In this thesis, practice takes the form of design facilitation, staging conditions through which participants could critique the present and imagine otherwise. Two primary modes structured the inquiry, first, the Letter from a Decolonised Future workshop with MA Design students, where a speculative letter provoked both critique and vision. Second, six speculative interviews with UK design educators of colour, using the Maker Majlis induction pack as prompt, shifting testimony into collaborative world-making. Across both modes, facilitation was the practice itself: encounters designed to generate critique, imagination and knowledge in relation. Because these interventions were encounters rather than neutral methods, recruitment and ethics were integral, shaping who engaged, on what terms, and with what possibilities. Each mode required its own situated approach.

For the Letter from a Decolonised Future workshop, participants were recruited through an open invitation to the MA Design cohort at Sheffield Hallam University. My prior experience as a student offered useful contextual insight into its interdisciplinary and internationally diverse ethos, though I was

not teaching on the programme at the time. Ethical approval was secured (Ethics Review ID: ER45124097) via the university's portal, with information sheets, consent forms and documentation outlining aims, forms of recording (photographs, sketches, fieldnotes) and the voluntary nature of participation. Twenty-eight students registered, with seventeen attending on the day. Originally planned as two sessions, the workshop was consolidated into one and extended from two to three hours at participants' request. The speculative interviews employed purposive and snowball sampling to engage educators of colour often marginalised within UK HE design. This ensured information-rich participation (Patton, 2002) and built trust within small, underrepresented networks (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Noy, 2008). Ethical approval was secured (Ethics Review ID: ER63907354), with consent procedures emphasising reciprocity and agency. Interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom to reduce barriers and align with commitments to care. The Maker Majlis pack acted both as a speculative method and ethical device, shifting focus from recounting harm to imagining otherwise.

In parallel, I also curated two departmental conferences (Re(writing) & Re(righting) and Brave Spaces). While not treated here as strands of data collection, they represent enactments of my positionality within institutional space. These events extended my facilitation practice into a live university setting, where speculative and care-based approaches could be tested within the rhythms of the academy. Their significance lies in how they demonstrate positionality as method, explored further in **Section 2.4** on researcher positionality. Thus, workshops and interviews are presented as the primary practice modes, while the conferences illustrate how my positionality shaped institutional interventions. Across these sites, speculative storytelling artefacts did not simply support encounters, they were the practice, constituting the central method of design research.

2.3 Speculative Storytelling Artefacts as Design Practice

Speculative storytelling artefacts were the core of my design practice in this study, as contributions that were not merely introduced as supplementary prompts or as decorative tools to support research encounters but as the very means by which practice-as-research was enacted. In staging the workshops and interviews, my practice materialised in the design of artefacts that could hold stories, surface exclusions and open possibilities. These artefacts were not simply vehicles for gathering accounts, they were the practice itself, through

which the methodological orientations of desire, utopia, hope and participatory design were translated into tangible encounters.

In design research, artefacts have long structured encounters as provocations rather than finished products. Gaver, Dunne and Pacenti's (1999) cultural probes, for instance, elicited fragments and associations that inspired dialogue rather than standardised data. Speculative design extended this by embedding artefacts in narrative: Bleecker's (2009) things that tell stories, Kirby's (2010) diegetic prototypes, and Dunne and Raby's (2013) speculative objects all prompted reflection on possible futures. Candy and Dunagan's (2017) experiential futures further immersed participants, enabling them to sense and inhabit alternatives. My practice resonates with these traditions but departs from their Eurocentric tendency to detach speculation from context. Following critiques of speculative design's whiteness (Martins, 2014; Rosner, 2018), I treat artefacts as decolonial storytelling devices, as tools that not only provoke but also hold paradoxical temporalities and create infrastructures where stories of exclusion, survival and possibility can be voiced together. Storytelling provided the epistemological ground for this reframing. Smith (2021) describes storytelling as both a practice and a way of knowing, a means of transmitting values and understandings across generations. Tuck and Ree (2013) similarly argue that stories should not be seen as separate from theory but as theory in themselves, taking this perspective, artefacts in this study were treated as speculative storytelling devices, not only as tools for narration but also as means of theorising and reimagining. This aligns with epistemologies that emphasise knowledge as situated, embodied, and shaped by emotion (Haraway, 1988; Jaggar, 1989; Ahmed, 2004).

The Letter from a Decolonised Future workshop exemplifies this approach, the central storytelling artefact was a speculative letter written from an imagined future where design education had been decolonised. It was itself a design practice outcome, crafted through a targeted analysis of critiques in design education and refracted into speculative narrative. Rather than presenting structural barriers in abstract form, the letter transposed them into an imagined future, inviting participants to respond effectively and critically. The letter acted as what Candy and Kornet (2019) would call an experiential scenario, but its distinctive contribution lay in its decolonial grounding with its foregrounding of the persistence of coloniality in design education while opening the space to articulate alternative futures. Participants did not simply supply data; they engaged with the artefact as co-storytellers, extending, contesting and reimagining the narrative.

The speculative interviews with design educators of colour further illustrate how artefacts operated as my practice. The induction pack for the fictional school *Maker Majlis* was not simply a prop but the core of the encounter. As a speculative storytelling artefact, it invited participants to situate their reflections within an imagined institutional future, shifting the interview from extraction to collaboration. Participants annotated, critiqued and extended the induction pack, embedding their own experiences and desires into the speculative frame. In this way, the induction pack functioned simultaneously as prompt, world and stage, transforming the interview into a co-designed act of storytelling. Across these sites, speculative storytelling artefacts enacted orientations of desire, hope and care. Desire, in Tuck's (2009) sense, resists collapsing participants into damage, holding both pain and possibility. Artefacts created space for critique while foregrounding imagination. Hope and utopia, following Bloch (1986) and Levitas (2013), enabled participants to dream forward while rooted in struggle. Care, after Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) and Tronto (1993, 2013), shaped the artefacts as relational encounters rather than extractive tools. Ethics were integral: by clarifying use, enabling non-extractive participation (annotation, drawing, narration), and positioning participants as co-theorisers, the artefacts enacted relational accountability (Akama et al., 2019; Costanza-Chock, 2020). They facilitated dialogic knowledge (Collins, 2000) validated through resonance, and acted as resistance, as hooks (1990) argues, breaking silence opens transformation. Students voiced exclusions; educators of colour envisioned futures beyond Eurocentrism. The artefacts became counter-archives, recording experiences absent from curricula while enacting counter-futures.

In this way, my practice responds to critiques that speculative design reduces to abstraction. Afrofuturism (Eshun, 2003; Womack, 2013), Indigenous Futurisms (Dillon, 2012) and Crip Futurism (Kafer, 2013) show speculation can be decolonial when accountable to exclusion and survivance. My approach follows this trajectory, embedding artefacts in a pluriversal methodology where futures remain tethered to past and present. *The Letter From a Decolonised Future and Maker Majlis* induction pack were staged interventions holding paradox, surfacing exclusions, addressing struggles whilst rehearsing futures. Thus, speculative storytelling artefacts functioned as infrastructures of world-making rather than research tools. By holding past, present and future in play, they extended speculative design and storytelling traditions. Their methodological weight lies in enabling collective reflection and imagination accountable to history yet oriented toward possibility, constituting a central contribution of this study to design research and decolonial practice-as-research.

2.4 Researcher Positionality

My positionality as a researcher requires careful consideration, particularly in relation to the institutional, personal and embodied contexts in which this project unfolded. The research was shaped by my long-standing affiliation with Sheffield Hallam University, the institution where I completed my undergraduate and master's degrees and where I subsequently undertook this doctoral work. This embeddedness meant that I carried into the research a nuanced understanding of the institutional culture, pedagogical practices and demographic profile of students and staff. Such familiarity offered certain advantages such as the ability to design and facilitate encounters that were attuned to institutional rhythms and to the interdisciplinary, international composition of the MA Design cohort. Yet this same proximity also raised ethical and methodological questions about neutrality, power and the politics of insider research.

My positionality is also shaped by my heritage and identity, this lived complexity informs the lens I bring to the research. I am attentive to questions of decoloniality not only as an intellectual concern but because the legacies of colonialism are inscribed in my family history and linguistic inheritance. The marginalisation of Turkmen culture and language in Iraq, and my own experience of navigating UK design education shaped by Eurocentric frameworks, mean that I approach this study with a personal as well as scholarly commitment to reimagining what counts as knowledge, voice and belonging. Following scholars such as Haraway (1988), hooks (1994) and Tuhiwai Smith (2021), I recognise that knowledge-making is always embodied, situated and accountable. Scholars of qualitative and feminist research have long problematised the notion of the detached, neutral researcher, instead emphasising reflexivity and situatedness (Haraway, 1988; Pillow, 2003; England, 1994). Insider research, where the researcher has prior or ongoing ties to the field, has been recognised as both productive and problematic, as Merton (1972) and later Chavez (2008) observe, insider status can generate trust, ease of access and deeper contextual insight, however, it also risks assumptions of shared understanding, blurring of professional/personal boundaries and difficulties in maintaining analytic distance. My position at Sheffield Hallam exemplifies these tensions, while I was not teaching on the MA Design programme at the time of the Letter from a Decolonised Future workshop, my prior experience as a student meant I was already familiar with its structure, interdisciplinary ethos and demographic diversity. This insider knowledge undoubtedly shaped my approach, yet I worked to ensure that prior

assumptions did not dictate the framing or interpretation of the work. I did so by maintaining a reflexive journal that documented my own positional investments, by structuring workshops and interviews so that participants could direct the pace and form of engagement and by adopting an inductive approach to analysis that foregrounded participants' categories and metaphors rather than my own. The speculative artefacts I designed further acted as provocations that unsettled my familiarity, enabling contributions to emerge that exceeded or contradicted my prior understandings. In this way, insider proximity was not erased but continually made accountable through reflexive and methodological strategies.

Importantly, my research did not remain confined to Sheffield Hallam with the later stage of the project incorporating six speculative interviews with design educators of colour, extending my study well beyond a single institutional context. Recruitment here followed purposive and snowballing approaches, drawing on professional networks, social media and referrals, resulting in a geographically and institutionally diverse set of participants across the UK. This shift was significant, whereas the earlier components of the research were embedded in a familiar institutional ecology, the interviews positioned me as an outsider engaging with educators whose experiences and contexts differed from my own. This juxtaposition underscores the fluidity of positionality, I was simultaneously insider and outsider, depending on the site of research and the participants involved.

My positionality was not only expressed through reflexive accounts or theoretical framing but also enacted in live institutional space. This was most visible in the two departmental conferences I curated, Re(writing) & Re(righting) and Brave Spaces. Emerging directly from my embeddedness at Sheffield Hallam, these gatherings extended my role from participant-observer to convener, enabling me to materialise commitments to care, accountability and speculative practice at the scale of institutional culture. Rather than functioning simply as research encounters, the conferences staged conditions where staff, students and invited contributors came together under curated themes that unsettled exclusions and opened possibilities for design education. Their significance lay less in the production of data than in the creation of atmospheres of plurality, collective reflection and redistribution of authority, disrupting the hierarchies of conventional academic conferencing.

Fig. 1 Facilitating Re(writing) & Re(Righting) Conference



Fig. 2. Facilitating Brave Spaces Conference



In this sense, the conferences can be understood as extensions of my insider positionality, as moments where institutional familiarity allowed me to convene spaces that tested decolonial facilitation within the rhythms of the academy itself. They demonstrate that positionality is not only a stance articulated in text but a practice enacted in situ, where researcher embeddedness becomes generative of institutional space-making. Documented in ***A Creative Journal on Facilitating Encounters*** (submitted as an accompanying journal artefact alongside this thesis), these interventions illustrate how positionality can operate as method, producing knowledge not only about design education but also about how institutions themselves can be reconfigured through speculative and care-based practice. Crucially, these enactments also made visible the entangled nature of my role as researcher, insider, and convener, highlighting the need to treat positionality not as a fixed standpoint but as an ongoing, negotiated practice.

Throughout the project, I have therefore understood positionality not as a static label but as an ongoing practice of reflexivity. Following England's (1994) insistence that research is a profoundly political activity, I sought to remain accountable to participants and to the communities with which I worked. My embeddedness at Sheffield Hallam was never neutral; it was part of the methodological fabric of the project. At the same time, my commitment was to ensure that participants, whether students, staff or external educators, were not instrumentalised as data sources but engaged as co-thinkers and co-theorisers. This required attentiveness to power, clarity of purpose and a willingness to be unsettled by the relational dynamics of insider/outsider research. In sum, my positionality was one of entanglement, I recognise that I am both shaped by and critical of the institution within which parts of this research unfolded. I am both participant in and observer of the educational structures I interrogate. Equally, I am both insider and outsider to the cultural and epistemic frameworks that shaped this study, drawing on my Turkmen and British heritage as a resource for thinking otherwise. Acknowledging this entanglement is not a methodological weakness but, as feminist and decolonial scholars argue (hooks, 1994; Tuhiwai Smith, 2021), a necessary condition for accountable research. It is through these entangled, reflexive practices that this study situates itself: neither outside nor entirely inside but always negotiating the ethical complexities.

Fig. 3. Facilitating Brave Spaces Conference



2.5 Analytic Approach

The analysis of the workshop and interview material followed Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) six-phase framework for reflexive thematic analysis, supported by NVivo for the organisation and coding of material. NVivo was introduced following the completion of the workshops and interviews, when a substantial body of multimodal material had been generated, including interview transcripts, photographs of artefacts, collaborative drawings and reflexive fieldnotes. The software provided a practical environment for organising and revisiting these diverse materials during the coding process. Codes were generated inductively through close engagement with the material and then organised within NVivo, allowing excerpts, images and reflections to be grouped and compared across participants. This supported the tracing of recurring motifs, tensions and speculative orientations across the dataset, which informed the subsequent development of themes. While NVivo assisted in managing the complexity of the material, interpretive decisions remained grounded in reflexive thematic analysis and in my ongoing engagement with participants' contributions. In keeping with the decolonial commitments of the project, the software was therefore used as an organisational support rather than as a mechanism that determined the analytic structure, allowing themes to remain provisional and relational rather than fixed classifications.

While the phases of familiarisation, coding, theme development, review, definition and write-up provided a shared structure across the project, their enactment was adapted in response to the different forms of material produced. For the Letter from a Decolonised Future workshop, analysis began with familiarisation through repeated engagement with photographs, annotated prompting cards, collaborative drawings, written reflections and reflexive fieldnotes. This step attended not only to discursive content but also to atmosphere, affective tone and embodied gestures. Coding was then carried out inductively in NVivo, identifying recurring motifs and metaphors. These were subsequently grouped in the construction of themes, forming broader constellations of meaning that reflected participants' speculative orientations. During the reviewing stage, I deliberately resisted analytic closure, keeping themes open as prompts for speculation rather than final categories, echoing Dinerstein's (2015) framing of utopian method as negation and anticipation, defining and naming themes therefore involved foregrounding their speculative quality. Finally, in the write-up, themes were integrated into analytic narratives that emphasised plurality and contradiction rather than synthesising toward a singular model of decolonised design education.

For the speculative interviews with design educators of colour, the six phases took a different inflection, familiarisation involved immersion primarily in interview transcripts alongside reflexive notes that captured the dynamics of each encounter. Coding proceeded line by line in NVivo, primarily inductive but sensitised by concepts from decolonial theory, including care and epistemic justice. In constructing themes, codes were iteratively refined and clustered through cycles of memo-writing and comparison across participants. Reviewing themes required attention to both conceptual coherence and relational resonance, ensuring that they reflected participants' situated perspectives without collapsing them into homogenised categories. Defining and naming involved framing themes as speculative orientations that were grounded in lived experience but open to possibility. Finally, in the write-up, themes were positioned as scaffolds for later findings chapters rather than definitive classifications. In keeping with the decolonial commitments of the project, themes are presented not as stable categories but as openings for imagining alternative trajectories toward a decolonised future for design education.

2.6 Method Summary

This chapter on methodology has situated the project within practice-as-research and set out the orientations, ethical framings and analytic strategies through which it is enacted. I have framed my practice as design facilitation, where encounters are carefully staged through speculative storytelling artefacts. These artefacts are not adjuncts to data collection but the practice itself, they materialise desire, hope, participatory commitments and ethics of care in the very conditions of participation. Recruitment and ethics were therefore integrated into design, not appended as procedure; they shaped who could be present, on what terms and with what protections, while my own positionality as both insider and outsider across sites was treated as an ongoing reflexive commitment rather than a static descriptor.

Analytically, I adopted reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019) supported by NVivo, adapting its phases to the different kinds of material produced. For workshop artefacts and fieldnotes, the emphasis fell on atmospheres, gestures and speculative metaphors; for interviews, line-by-line coding and theory-sensitised theme development. Across both, themes are presented as speculative constellations rather than fixed classifications, consistent with a decolonial orientation that keeps critique and possibility in productive tension.

Methodologically, the chapter advances a clear contribution, speculative storytelling artefacts operate as infrastructures of encounter that hold paradoxical temporalities through the surfacing of past exclusions, addressing present struggles and enabling futures to be collectively assembled. These orientations lay the groundwork for what I later name Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying: a methodological assemblage that integrates artefact, speculation, and facilitation as a practice of decolonial design research. This is a practice-based method that produces knowledge by staging conditions for world-making, rather than solely extracting accounts for later interpretation; It extends speculative design by embedding accountability to history and care and extends storytelling by recognising participants' narratives as theory-bearing, situated knowledge. The chapters that follow turn to the practice itself. I first introduce the staged encounters, workshops, speculative interviews and the artefacts that organised them as creative practice. I then develop the analysis built from those encounters, showing how the methodological commitments articulated here shape the findings that follow.

Chapter 3

3. Creative Practice as Condition Making

This chapter marks the first of two that present the creative practice at the heart of this study. As outlined in Chapter 2, my practice takes shape through facilitation and speculative storytelling artefacts, staged across a series of designed encounters. To present this work with clarity and depth, the practice is divided across two chapters. Chapter 3 focuses on interventions situated within my institutional context, Sheffield Hallam University, most centrally the Letter from a Decolonised Future student workshop, supported by artefacts such as prompting cards. The emphasis here is on collective encounters embedded within institutional rhythms, where speculation functioned as a means to surface critique and possibility in relation to curriculum, pedagogy and departmental culture. Chapter 4 then shifts the focus outward and expands in scope. It documents the Maker Majlis speculative interviews with design educators of colour across the UK. These longer-form, dialogic encounters, framed by a speculative artefact, an induction pack for a fictional design school (Maker Majlis) extend the exploration of decolonial design education beyond a single institutional setting.

Together, Chapters 3 and 4 form the core of my practice-as-research, whilst distinct in setting, scale and participants, they are connected by a methodological commitment to speculative storytelling artefacts as infrastructures for world-making. Building on the methodological scaffolding outlined earlier, these chapters turn from orientations to practice. The focus is on the making of the storytelling artefacts, the staging of encounters and the analysis of what these generated. These interventions were not neutral methods of data collection; they were acts of world-making, where speculative storytelling artefacts and care-based facilitation reconfigured who speaks, how authority circulates and what counts as knowledge. Across these outputs, I treat imagination as epistemic labour. As argued in Chapter 2, speculative artefacts are not decorative prompts or teaching aids but infrastructures through which participants articulated critique and generated situated propositions for learning otherwise.

In this sense, the practice advances a claim central to this thesis that decolonial design research must move not only through the crucial work of diagnosing Eurocentrism and diversifying reference lists, work already underway in many programmes but also through designing the conditions of possibility (Escobar, 2018) in which multiple epistemologies can take root and futures can be

collectively assembled. Attending to exclusions in citation, hiring and representation remains vital; my contribution complements, rather than cancels, those efforts by showing how pedagogical encounters, assessment ecologies and spatial arrangements can also be redesigned. The speculative infrastructures developed here examine the past, disrupt the supposed inevitability of the present and hold open spaces for collective speculation. These artefacts and encounters do not simply illustrate theory; they co-produce it with participants, translating critique into dialogic, imaginative practice. The practice unfolded across three interrelated strands:

- Letter-led workshop (*A Letter from a Decolonised Future*), piloted with educators and refined with postgraduate students, where a speculative artefact staged collective critique and imagination.
- Supporting artefacts and inventories (prompting cards), developed to scaffold discussion while foregrounding plurality and care.
- Speculative interviews (*Maker Majlis*), facilitated with design educators of colour, where a fictional induction pack from a decolonised design school prompted structural reimagining of design education.

The through-line across these strands is temporal, acknowledging that each was designed to hold paradoxical temporalities and in doing so allowed for the surfacing of past exclusions, the addressing of present struggles and the assembling of possible futures. This orientation is both diagnostic and generative, answering Martins' (2014) and Rosner's (2018) critiques of abstract, Eurocentric speculation by situating futures in accountable histories and aligning with Noel's (2020) pluriversal pedagogy by sustaining plurality rather than prescribing a model.

3.1 On Form & Presentation

The analysis that follows across the next two chapters (3 & 4) does not separate “findings” from “discussion” into discrete sections. Instead, participants’ accounts and my analytic framing are woven together. This is intentional: to treat participants’ sketches, provocations and speculative proposals as raw data to be later theorised risks reproducing extractive hierarchies in which the researcher’s voice holds analytic authority. In contrast, I approach participants as co-theorists, whose contributions actively shape the conceptual ground. The writing therefore adopts a braided form, where discussion unfolds alongside the accounts themselves. This orientation is consistent with decolonial commitments to reciprocity, situatedness, and resisting the compartmentalisation of knowledge into researcher-driven categories. At the same time, a more consolidated discussion of the impacts of these creative practice findings is reserved for Chapter 5. There, participants’ accounts are drawn together more systematically to formulate a framework of actionable entry points into decolonising design education. In this way, the following chapters sustain the immediacy of participants’ speculative contributions while also preparing the ground for a more nuanced synthesis later in the thesis.

3.2 A Letter from a Decolonised Future

The first speculative artefact developed in this study was *A Letter from a Decolonised Future*. Choosing the form of a letter was both methodological and epistemological, unlike reports or manifestos, letters carry a tone of intimacy and relationality. Feminist and decolonial thinkers have long mobilised letters as political and epistemic forms, for example Anzaldúa (1987) wrote letters as bridging texts, carrying marginal voices into relation with others; whereas Ahmed (2017) reframes the institutional complaint as a kind of letter, an act that traces how power circulates and makes visible the mechanics of exclusion. Complaint-letters, for Ahmed, are not only records of grievance but also refusals and an artefact that demands for accountability and attempts to transform the conditions under which we live and work. Often written to someone, letters have a certain expectation of response and provide an opportunity to fold temporalities together by speaking from another time into the present. In this way, the letter is never neutral, it is a device of intimacy, solidarity, and critique. Building on these traditions, the *Letter from a Decolonised Future* was designed as a speculative letter sent backwards in time, authored by a fictional design

educator located in a decolonised future, addressed to the present-day design school. It voiced provocations not as abstract ideals but as demands that traced current exclusions while gesturing towards alternative trajectories. Its purpose was not to prescribe a singular future but to stage an imaginative condition in which participants could recognise barriers and speculate otherwise.

The content of the letter emerged from a targeted review of decolonial, feminist, and design education literature. I identified five recurring barriers to decolonisation:

1. The coloniality of assessment and measurement (Ahmed, 2012; Abdulla, 2018).
2. The spatial and temporal disciplining of learning (Ahmed, 2006; Bremner & Rodgers, 2013).
3. The persistence of the myth of good design and epistemic dependency (hooks, 1994; Abdulla, 2018).
4. The dominance of Eurocentric curricula and hiring practices (Tejada, 2018; Tunstall, 2023).
5. The segmentation of design into rigid disciplinary silos (Bremner & Rodgers, 2013; Noel, 2020).

Rather than reproduce these critiques diagnostically, the letter refracted them into speculative provocations. First, it critiqued assessment as a colonial technology of classification (Ahmed, 2012; Abdulla, 2018; Tejada, 2018), reimagining pedagogy through the provocation “We no longer assess students ... Care is the answer”, echoing hooks’ (1994) vision of education as freedom. Second, it unsettled the spatial and temporal disciplining of classrooms, which privilege certain bodies and knowledges (Ahmed, 2006; Bremner & Rodgers, 2013), asking “Is it a comfortable room? Who is comfortable? Our classrooms extend into the city, into kitchens, into streets.” Third, it challenged the “myth of good design” for enforcing Eurocentric aesthetics (Abdulla, 2018; Khandwala, 2019), declaring “Good design never existed...students bring their histories as practice,” aligning with Mignolo and Walsh’s (2018) call for pluriversality. Fourth, it highlighted the persistence of Eurocentric curricula and hiring despite diversification agendas (Tejada, 2018; Tunstall, 2023), proposing “What if we used no references from white, cis, male, able-bodied designers?” as a structural reset. Finally, it rejected rigid disciplinary silos that reproduce

capitalist logics (Bremner & Rodgers, 2013; Noel, 2020), imagining instead that “disciplines are dead...our building is free-flowing,” where pedagogy becomes porous, hybrid and collective. These examples provide a snapshot of how critiques identified in the literature were re-articulated through the speculative letter. This is not an exhaustive mapping of the 40-text corpus but an illustrative example of how theory was translated into narrative provocation (see Appendix 4.1 for the full mapping of literature that informed the letter).

In refracting critiques into speculative form, the letter sought not only to name barriers but to inhabit them differently. This shift from diagnosis to speculation is significant as it allowed exclusions to be rendered not as fixed obstacles but as prompts for imagining otherwise. By situating critique within a future voice, the letter staged an encounter where demands could be heard as both refusals of the present and invitations to reconfigure design education. In this sense, the letter operated as a hinge between theory and practice, as a way of carrying insights from feminist and decolonial scholarship into a narrative form capable of unsettling participants and opening collective speculation. These provocations exemplify the methodological stance of this study: that speculative artefacts are not decorative prompts but epistemic infrastructures (Escobar, 2018; Tunstall, 2023), designed to move participants from passive recognition of barriers toward active world-making.

By embedding these critiques in the voice of a future interlocutor, the letter became both speculative artefact and designed condition, its form inviting participants into dialogue rather than consumption, embodying what Anzaldúa (1987) describes as the relationality of correspondence. In this way, *A Letter from a Decolonised Future* functioned as a hinge, carrying forward critiques of coloniality in design education while staging the imaginative labour of otherwise futures.

3.2.1 Materiality and Design of the Artefact

Formally, the letter was produced as a sealed and stamped correspondence authored by a fictional design educator situated in a decolonised future. The tactility of paper, the embossed seal and the embodied act of opening were designed to emphasise arrival, producing a minor dislocation, an uncanny sense of receiving communication from another time. Unlike speculative design fictions that showcase a designer’s authored future, this artefact was crafted to facilitate collective speculation, in this way it staged conditions for world-building

rather than offering a closed narrative. In this sense, *A Letter from a Decolonised Future* exemplifies desire-based research (Tuck, 2009), it does not dictate outcomes but invites relational imagination. As Adah Parris (2022, p. 350) reminds us, the storyteller's role is "not to tell you how to think, but to give you questions to think upon." The material staging also worked to suspend disbelief, creating just enough plausibility for participants to engage the fiction as if it were real (Candy & Dunagan, 2017). Positioned between past critique and future possibility, the letter acted as a temporal hinge, a reminder that decolonisation is not only about diagnosing the present or fantasising about the future, but about holding these temporalities together in dialogue (see Appendix 4.3 to read the letter).

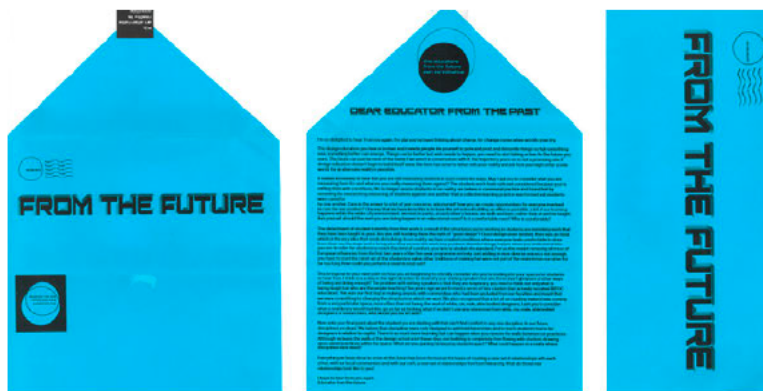


Fig. 4. A Letter from a Decolonised Future

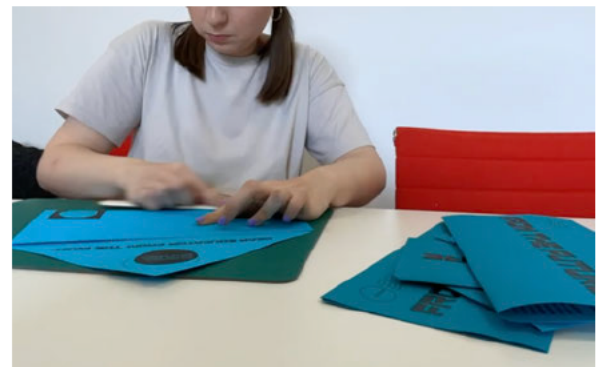


Fig. 5. Making the Letter

3.2.2 Pilot Workshop

The first iteration of the workshop *A Letter from a Decolonised Future* took place in June 2022 during a teaching and learning conference at Sheffield Hallam University. I approached this pilot not as a data-gathering exercise but as an experiment in practice, an opportunity to test whether the speculative letter could genuinely create and sustain imaginative space for others. Because the aim was exploratory rather than analytic, I did not seek ethical approval at this stage; my focus was on rehearsing the form, observing how people engaged and reflecting on my role as facilitator. Before beginning, I explained to participants that I would take photographs of the session to document my

developing design practice and that the images would support the unfolding of my PhD but would not be used to capture or represent the substance of their conversations, everyone accepted these terms and no one raised any objections.

Eight design educators entered a studio arranged into table clusters, each with a sealed, stamped envelope. The tactility mattered: the weight of paper, the pause before tearing, the amplified rustle in the quiet room. I framed the session as a future pen-pal initiative, inviting participants to imagine correspondence with a design educator in a decolonised future. As the first letter was read aloud, disbelief softened into curiosity, and for a moment the usual academic tempo gave way to speculation.



Fig. 6. Pilot Workshop of A Letter from a Decolonised Future

When groups were asked to translate the letters into present interventions, energy shifted again. Despite the clustered tables, many defaulted to individual notetaking and bullet points, slipping back into familiar academic modes. I realised the letter could dislodge participants from the present but not fully sustain collaborative world-building. Time constraints compounded this; after less than an hour, conversations were cut short, prompting regret from participants that they were only just getting somewhere. The compression of conference time clashed with the slow, vulnerable labour of collective dreaming. As Hansteen-Izora (2021, para.8) writes, “dreaming is a form of time travel... rooted in the past, nurtured in the present, and looking towards possibilities in the future.” The space had been opened, but not held long enough.

Looking back, I understand this pilot not as a failed attempt at research but as a rehearsal in condition-making. In design terms, it exemplified iteration, understood here not as optimisation but as an epistemic and relational practice (Binder, Brandt & Gregory, 2008). The letter proved effective in suspending disbelief and making futures tangible, but the workshop also revealed the infrastructural adjustments required: expanded time, additional scaffolding and a facilitation design capable of sustaining collaboration rather than defaulting to individualisation. In this sense, iteration itself functioned as a mode of analysis, where the act of testing and adjusting revealed what was necessary to sustain imaginative labour collectively. These lessons directly shaped the refined workshop that followed with postgraduate students, where I introduced prompting cards, reconfigured the room into circular layouts and extended the duration to allow collective speculation to unfold more fully. Among these adjustments, the most significant was the introduction of prompting cards, each combining a critical question with a speculative scenario. Their purpose was to counter the drift into individualised work by anchoring discussion in shared provocations, extending speculation collaboratively rather than privately.

3.3 A Letter from a Decolonised Future - Student Focused Workshop



Fig. 7. A Letter from a Decolonised Future – Student Workshop

Building on the insights from the pilot, a second iteration of *A Letter from a Decolonised Future* was designed and facilitated with postgraduate design students at Sheffield Hallam University. Unlike the exploratory pilot, this workshop was conducted with full ethical approval, since it sought to generate

empirical material through participant engagement. Seventeen postgraduate students took part, drawn from disciplines including Graphic Design, Illustration, Product Design, Fashion and Interior Design. The cohort was deliberately diverse, comprising both home and international students with educational experiences across varied cultural contexts. This shift from educators to students was intentional, while educators traditionally hold institutional authority, this workshop provided an opportunity for students to also act as active agents of change towards a decolonised design education. Recent scholarship highlights the role of students in challenging Eurocentric curricula and generating alternative pedagogical practices (Takhar, 2023), therefore the workshop sought to be a space for that to continue. Inviting students into this speculative encounter recognised that decolonial inquiry is not the burden of minoritised groups alone but a collective responsibility, ethical approval ensured that participation was voluntary, transparent and non-extractive, with detailed information sheets outlining the aims of the workshop, the use of documentation, and the right to withdraw at any stage.

3.3.1 Spatial Configuration and Facilitation Design

The refined workshop retained the *Letter from a Decolonised Future* as its grounding artefact but expanded the ecology of tools and spatial arrangements to support collaboration. Central to this redesign was a deliberate shift away from hierarchical classroom formats, the studio was transformed into a large circular formation that filled the entire room, echoing traditions of collective decision-making where authority is dispersed (hooks, 1994; Boal, 1979). At the centre, low tables were placed directly on the floor, creating a communal surface for drawing, annotating, and speculative sketching.

Fig. 8. A Letter from a Decolonised Future – Student Workshop



Participants sat together on the floor around these tables, disrupting Western norms of classroom comfort and hierarchy. As Baumgarten & Neidhardt's *Teaching Design Conversations* (2020) demonstrates, reconfigured learning spaces can act as infrastructures for alternative epistemic relations.

This theatrical, immersive arrangement, reminiscent of Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) and visualised in Sophie Demay's *Circles of Power* (2020), encouraged participants to face one another directly, fostering a sense of immediacy and collectivity. To sustain this orientation, I introduced a second artefact: a set of triangular prompting cards designed to extend the letter. Each card drew directly on themes refracted through the letter such as assessment, hierarchy, curricula, care and translated them into a paired question and speculative scenario. For example: "Are you still teaching the myth of good design?" was followed by "Propose a future where the concept of good design has been dispelled. What would that look like? What interventions were made to arrive there?"



Fig. 9 – 10. A Letter from a Decolonised Future – Student Workshop

The cards thus functioned as mediators between text and action, enabling participants to carry the speculative energy of the letter into more tangible forms of imagining. Rather than allowing the discussion to fragment into individual note-taking (as in the pilot), the cards scaffolded collaborative engagement by giving groups shared provocations to debate, annotate, and redesign. In this sense, they echo the function of cultural probes (Gaver, Dunne, & Pacenti, 1999) but with a key distinction: instead of generating inspirational fragments for the researcher, the cards redistributed authorship by inviting participants to co-produce interventions. Their design aligns with Candy's (2010) notion of experiential scenarios, making futures inhabitable in the present through small, graspable artefacts (See Appendix 4.4).

By grounding speculation in relational prompts, the cards also enacted what Akama, Hagen, and Whaanga-Schollum (2019) describe as scaffolds for relation: design devices that create conditions for dialogue without foreclosing plurality. They ensured that critique and imagination unfolded side by side, sustaining what Hansteen-Izora (2021) calls the vulnerability of dream-sharing. In this way, the combination of circular space and prompting cards reconfigured the workshop's rhythm: from consultation toward co-creation, from abstraction toward situated, plural proposals.

3.3.2 Documentation and Method



Fig. 11. A Letter from a Decolonised Future – Student Workshop

The workshops produced diverse outputs including, written responses, drawings, annotated cards, scratch notes, and reflexive fieldnotes treated not as neutral data but as extensions of participants' epistemic labour. As outlined in the methodology, documentation was guided by relational accountability rather than extraction (Akama et al., 2019). With prior consent, photographs captured collaborative dynamics rather than conversation content, while artefacts such as sketches and notes were collected and catalogued and supplemented by scratch notes I made during the workshops, noting down key phrases and clarifications when participants explained the sketches, annotations, or proposals they were generating. In these moments, I asked for brief elaborations such as "Can you tell me more about what this watering can means here?" and recorded their replies verbatim. Immediately after each workshop, I drafted fieldnotes as reflexive journals, capturing impressions of atmosphere and affective dynamics.

Analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework of reflexive thematic analysis but adapted to the decolonial and speculative orientation of this study. While the full framework was introduced in the previous chapter, here I emphasise how it was enacted in relation to the workshops:

- Immersion involved revisiting notes, images and artefacts to re-enter the atmosphere of the sessions, noting affective tone, silence and gesture as well as spoken content.
- Generating codes identified recurring motifs, values, and metaphors (e.g., nourishment, hybridity, collectivity, repair), while resisting the urge to collapse them into predetermined categories.
- Constructing themes grouped codes into broader constellations, reflecting orientations such as reimagining hierarchy, reconfiguring disciplinary boundaries and designing for embodied difference.
- Speculative synthesis extended Braun and Clarke's model by keeping themes open as prompts rather than closing them into definitive findings. This approach resonates with Dinerstein's (2015) framing of utopian method as negation and anticipation, treating analysis itself as a speculative practice.
- Reflexive interrogation traced how my positionality shaped interpretation and guarded against over-claiming or instrumentalising participants' visions.

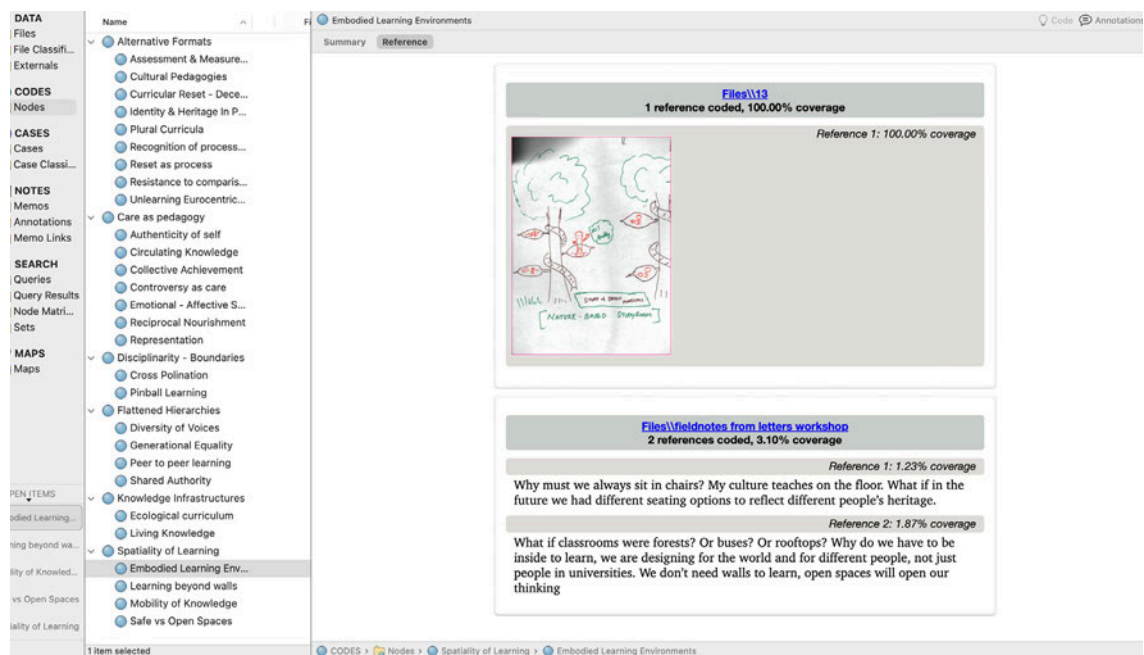


Fig. 12. Nvivo Coding

Analysis foregrounded the simultaneity of harm and hope. Proposals emerged from experiences of exclusion, being contorted into Eurocentric aesthetics, disciplinary silos and hierarchies, yet were consistently accompanied by gestures toward otherwise futures. This reflects Tuck's (2009) desire-based framework, acknowledging damage without collapsing voices into deficit. Rather than offering a singular blueprint of a decolonised school, the analysis traced multiple futures, treating plurality as both methodological strength and political imperative (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Noel, 2020). Themes were presented as constellations of possibility, functioning as what Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) calls matters of care: unfinished, situated, and demanding of attention. The workshop documentation and analysis thus served two purposes: first, showing how speculative storytelling artefacts elicit visions that are both critical and imaginative, grounded in lived experience yet oriented toward transformation; and second, reinforcing the methodological claim that decolonial design research must treat participants' contributions not as consumable data but as theoretical interventions capable of reshaping how design education is imagined and enacted.

3.4 Analysis and Findings - *A Letter From a Decolonised Future*

Having described the design and facilitation of the workshops, I now turn to the analysis of what they generated. The speculative activities produced a rich body of material: annotated prompt cards, collaborative sketches, floor-based drawings, scratch notes, and group discussions. These were not treated as neutral data to be extracted, but as situated expressions of participants' epistemic labour, as contributions that materialise critique and imagination in forms both visual and textual. Following the commitments outlined in the methodology, my task was not to reduce these outputs to neat categories but to engage them as theoretical contributions in their own right, recognising their partiality, plurality, and speculative intent. The analytic process combined deductive and inductive strategies. Deductive themes were carried forward from the literature review and from the critiques refracted through *A Letter from a Decolonised Future*, including assessment, care, spatiality, identity and heritage, curricula, and disciplinarity. At the same time, inductive coding allowed participant-generated metaphors and sketches to reshape the analytic framework. In NVivo, this iterative process consolidated around six parent themes, each outlined and populated on the next page by a set of child codes that captured the nuances of participants' contributions.

1. Alternative Formats of Learning

- Assessment and measurement
- Cultural pedagogies
- Curricular reset (decentring Europe)
- Identity and heritage in practice
- Plural curricula
- Recognition of process and failure
- Reset as process
- Resistance to comparison
- Unlearning Eurocentric myths

2. Care as Pedagogy

- Authenticity of self
- Circulating knowledge
- Collective achievement
- Controversy as care
- Emotional/affective support
- Reciprocal nourishment
- Representation

3. Disciplinarity and Boundaries

- Cross-pollination
- Pinball learning

4. Flattened Hierarchies

- Diversity of voices
- Generational equality
- Peer-to-peer learning
- Shared authority

5. Knowledge Infrastructures

- Ecological curriculum
- Living knowledge

6. Spatiality of Learning

- Embodied learning environments
- Learning beyond walls
- Mobility of knowledge
- Safe vs. open spaces

These codes acted as analytic scaffolds: they enabled me to trace how participants' critiques and imaginaries both resonated with and extended beyond the existing literature. Together, they form what I refer to as thematic constellations, clusters of possibility that hold together without erasing difference, combining prefigured concerns with emergent participant visions. What follows is an extended discussion of each constellation, (***Alternative Forms of Learning, Care as Pedagogy, Disciplinarity and Boundaries, Flattened Hierarchies, Knowledge Infrastructures, Spatiality of Learning***), where I present them not as fixed categories but as speculative findings: situated proposals that expose the limits of the present and sustain the possibility of otherwise futures.

3.4.1 Alternative Formats of Learning

Questions about how learning is recognised kept circling back to assessment, not as a neutral mechanism but as a colonial technology that ranked, compared and ultimately decided who belonged. Participants were direct in their critiques: "Failure is part of learning ... even if it isn't successful, that should be rewarded as I am moving past the way I already know. Failure has value." This was written in group note making and in conversation the sentiment was expanded into a frustration with how design education narrows recognition to polished outcomes. For these students, the act of attempting something new, even if it failed, constituted wisdom. They linked this explicitly to cultural traditions where trying, failing, and learning are part of a longer cycle of growth and questioned why that cycle was erased within the university. Another line asked plainly: "Why must learning always be measured? What if assessment was about the journey, not the result?" Others went further still: "Grades are colonial, they rank us, compare us, and decide who belongs. What if assessment was about the care we give each other, not about marks on a paper?" Such interventions reframed the entire premise of assessment, shifting it from an individualised judgement of merit to a collective practice of care and responsibility.

projects where we all succeed or fail together.” This proposal generated animated discussions where participants imagined a design school where assessment was no longer an instrument of competition but a structure of interdependence, where students’ futures were bound to one another and where achievement was measured through the success of the group. The emphasis here was not on dissolving rigour but on redistributing accountability, reconfiguring it as something relational rather than comparative.

Cultural and educational traditions provided further grounding where one participant explained how, in her experience of learning in China, recognition came not through grades but through contributing knowledge to others: “For me being somebody from China, I have different kinds of knowledge and history that I can use to nourish other people’s points of view. I have a different position and that has value if we are thinking about decolonising our schools and our minds.” Another participant, from India, reflected on learning that took place through cooking, recipe sharing, and collective time, where evaluation was embedded in daily practices of care and reciprocity rather than formalised rubrics. These accounts framed assessment as relational accountability, tethered to what one contributes to collective life, rather than to abstracted metrics of individual success.

These critiques of assessment could not be disentangled from critiques of curriculum. As one student reflected, their entire exposure to design had been shaped through a Western perspective, “a lot of the time Swiss point of view”, which had become naturalised as the standard of professionalism. They admitted this made them comfortable with Swiss modernism, yet they recognised it as problematic, because it constrained their sense of what counted as good design. For them, a decolonised design school would have to begin by “disrupting that standard, from the very start.” The insight here was that assessment and curriculum collude, criteria of evaluation are not neutral but carry the weight of Eurocentric histories, encoding Western design traditions as benchmarks against which all others are judged. What participants demanded instead was a reset. With one participant arguing that the focus should instead be on the ability “to unlearn, to unbound, to reset, to build relationships and to care.” Another participant summarised it succinctly: “Reset is ongoing. You don’t arrive, you keep unlearning.” This emphasis reframed assessment not as an endpoint but as a continuous process of interrogation and reconfiguration, where the act of resetting itself becomes a pedagogical method.

Fig. 13. Participant Sketch

How to not be measured? We have been always compared against one another, against standards, etc. Each work is compared with the other. This could be avoided if we create just one single work with no second work to be compared to. The entire class, all the students could be working as one single group on one project, each contributing with their ideas and explorations to make the work better, to enhance it, which helps to communicate between disciplines, and finally be able to help in breaking the barriers between the disciplines.

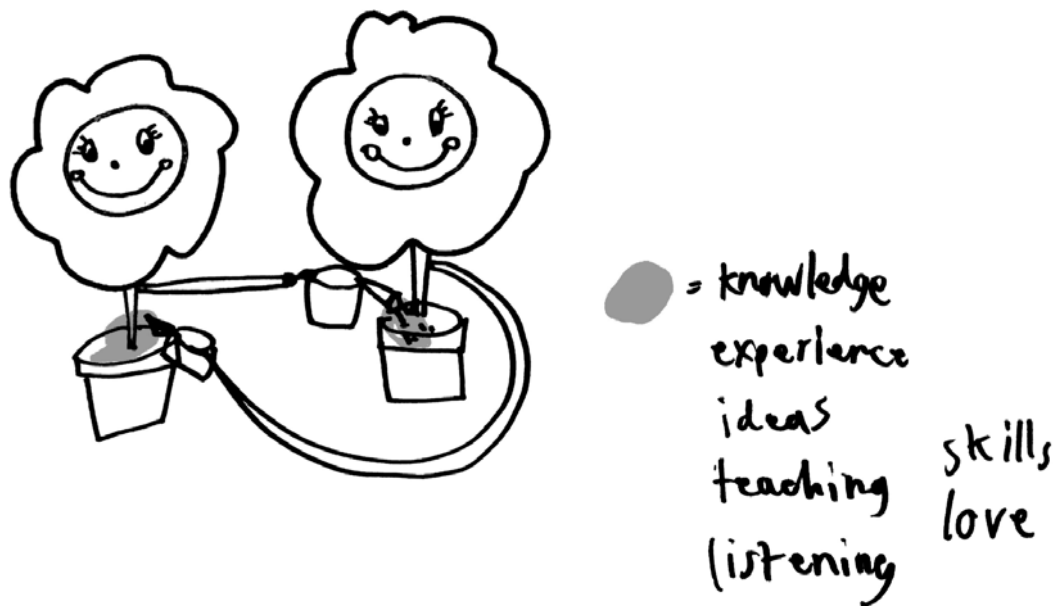
UNLEARNING
UNBOUNDING
RESET
RELATIONSHIPS
CARE

These reflections dismantled the taken-for-granted logics of assessment. They proposed futures where failure was valued as movement, where grades gave way to collective responsibility, where cultural traditions of accountability were re-centred, and where the Eurocentric canon was no longer the hidden ground of evaluation. What emerged was not a single model but an orientation: assessment as journey rather than judgement, as relation rather than competition, as ongoing reset rather than final outcome. Read against the field, participants' reframing of assessment as relational accountability rather than individualised ranking sits squarely with long-standing critiques of grades-as-sorting devices and the call to design assessment for learning rather than merely of learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Sambell, McDowell, & Montgomery, 2013). Their insistence that failure is movement echoes hooks' (1994) pedagogy of risk, becoming and collective growth, while pushing back on Eurocentric standards that universalise particular aesthetics as the measure of merit (Adamson, Riello, & Teasley, 2011). In a decolonial register, this is not a technical tweak but an epistemic shift, illustrating how moving from comparative measurement toward reciprocity aligns with decolonial arguments that modern assessment regimes reproduce hierarchies of value and legitimacy (Andreotti, 2011). This study extends that literature by naming the design-specific apparatuses through which such hierarchies are reproduced: projects calibrated to polish rather than risk or iteration (Anthony, 1991; Webster, 2007), learning cultures that privilege Euro-American visual languages as the benchmark of professionalism (Margolin, 2002; Abdulla, 2019), and rubrics that present inherited standards as neutral measures of quality (Sadler, 2009; McArthur, 2022).

3.4.2 Care as Pedagogy

If rethinking assessment challenged the technologies of recognition, then reimagining care was where participants began to reconstruct the very atmosphere of learning. Care surfaced in their writing, sketches, and discussions not as an optional add-on to pedagogy but as its infrastructure: the set of relations, practices, and commitments that could sustain education otherwise. One of the strongest metaphors for this came through repeated drawings and annotations of watering cans strapped to people's backs. The image suggested that teaching and learning could be like watering one another, with knowledge moving between bodies as nourishment. As one participant explained: "Knowledge is not owned, it moves, like water through flowers. That's a decolonised way of learning." Here, care was not a matter of kindness layered onto existing structures but a reorientation of pedagogy itself: from hoarding to circulation, from possession to reciprocity.

Fig. 14. Participant Sketch



This orientation also surfaced in participants' insistence on collective achievement, where one participant reflected "What if no one could succeed unless everyone did?" The group that authored it described the isolating effects of competition, where deadlines and grading made students hesitant to share ideas. They wanted instead a pedagogy where success was measured through what could be sustained together, echoing ecological images of interconnected roots, if one withers, all are affected.

Care was also tied to the redistribution of authority. Another card declared: “Students can be teachers too. Everyone has knowledge to share.” The provocation unsettled the asymmetry between staff and students, proposing instead a model of education where knowledge circulates laterally, with expertise moving between roles and across generations. In this framing, care was inseparable from recognition: acknowledging that everyone carries knowledge and that pedagogy must create conditions for it to be shared.

Disagreement emerged as another dimension of care. One participant stated bluntly: “Controversy drives progress. Debate is a form of care” and went on to describe their frustration with classrooms that valued harmony above critique, where difficult conversations about colonial legacies were avoided for fear of discomfort. For them, care was not the absence of tension but the capacity to sustain it. Debate was reframed as solidarity, an act of tending to difference rather than erasing it. The absence of care was felt most acutely in institutional rhythms. “Deadlines do not care about me as a human,” one participant observed, crystallising a broader frustration with how speed and efficiency were privileged over wellbeing. Participants proposed futures where timelines flexed, workloads were collectively negotiated, and cycles of rest were built into studio structures. In these visions, care became infrastructural, designed into the temporal and organisational fabric of education, rather than added as pastoral support after harm had already been done.

Representation was also named as a form of care. “If all the designers we study look nothing like me, how is that caring for my presence here?” one student asked. Recognition here was inseparable from visibility, requiring a curriculum that reflects the multiplicity of identities and heritages present in the classroom, not as add-ons but as epistemic ground. These reflections reframed care as pedagogy and politics at once. It was articulated as reciprocity (watering each other, knowledge as circulation), as collectivity (shared success and responsibility), as authenticity (making space for the whole self), as solidarity through disagreement (debate as care), as infrastructural redesign (timelines and rhythms that honour human needs) and as recognition (representation as presence). In this configuration, care is not peripheral but the architecture of education itself. To ask what a pedagogy of care might look like is to ask how we nourish each other, how we succeed together, how we argue without expulsion, how we make space for our whole selves and how we design systems that remember we are human.

Participants' "watering" metaphor situates care as an epistemic infrastructure rather than an add-on, a move that resonates with Noddings' (2013) ethics of care in education, where relation and attentiveness are positioned as the ground of pedagogy. It also echoes Tronto's (2013) theorisation of care as both practice and politics, as the ongoing labour of maintaining people, institutions and worlds. Recasting disagreement as a modality of care, where debate is understood as tending rather than tearing, aligns closely with Arao and Clemens' (2013) call for brave spaces, which frame discomfort and conflict as conditions of growth when scaffolded by accountability and reciprocity. Likewise, hooks' (1994) insistence that engaged pedagogy requires embodiment, vulnerability and risk is echoed in participants' demand for classrooms that sustain authenticity and collective responsibility. In design research, similar moves have been made, Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) positions matters of care as epistemic and political infrastructures, insisting that speculative and participatory practice can reconfigure whose knowledge is recognised. Akama and Light (2015) likewise argue that care in participatory design is not sentiment but a practice of responsibility and attentiveness that shapes both process and outcome. Participants' proposals for collective responsibility, relational assessment, and dialogic pedagogy translate these insights into concrete educational formats, extending care from an ethic into a curricular and institutional design principle.

This study's contribution lies in demonstrating how care can be designed into the temporal and infrastructural rhythms of education. Participants identified deadlines, accelerative timetables, and audit-driven logics as mechanisms through which care is structurally undermined. Their speculative interventions, flexed timelines, negotiated workloads and shared responsibility for collective flourishing extend existing theories by materialising care as a spatial-temporal design question. In doing so, they not only affirm care as central to decolonial pedagogy but also show how speculative storytelling can generate actionable proposals that reconfigure institutional structures around reciprocity and relation.

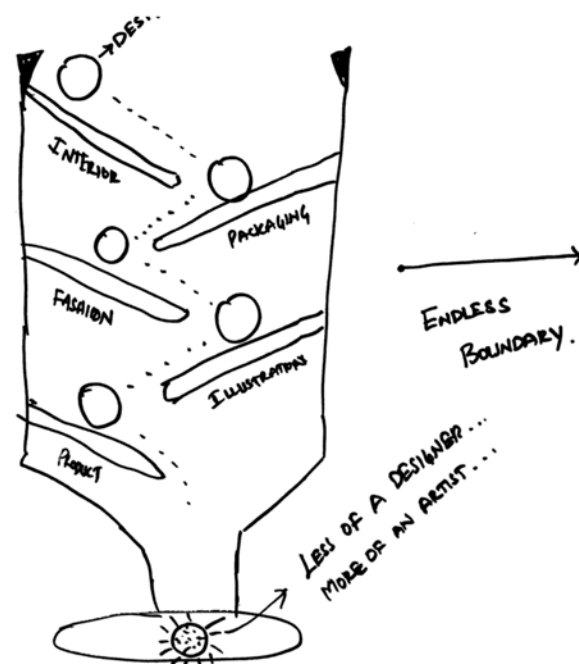
3.4.3 Disciplinarity and Boundaries

When participants described their experience of design education, they returned often to its divisions, the rigid separation of graphic, fashion, product, interiors, illustration. These categories were not taken for granted but identified as colonial inheritances, organisational habits that privilege certain practices

while marginalising others. Students argued that such boundaries restrict imagination, preventing movement across forms of knowledge and closing down the possibility of becoming more than one kind of practitioner.

One of the most vivid speculative sketches captured this frustration through the image of a giant pinball machine. Bumpers were labelled with different disciplines, and students imagined themselves bouncing between them, colliding, gathering traces of each field before emerging as something hybrid and unexpected. In discussion they described this as a pedagogy of ricochet: a refusal to be shaped by the linearity of a single course, and an embrace of getting “lost in good ways.” The pinball school was not chaos but possibility, a model of education as motion, encounter, and unpredictability.

Fig. 15. Participant Sketch



Another metaphor that surfaced repeatedly was cross-pollination where students described their most meaningful learning as taking place in the gaps: in studios shared across courses, in informal exchanges, in collaborative projects that blurred disciplinary lines. One participant compared this to pollen drifting between flowers, enriching both sides, creating new forms that could not exist otherwise. What they valued was not simply interdisciplinarity as an administrative gesture but the ecological exchange of ideas, where knowledge is alive and generative precisely because it moves between contexts.

Craft and embodied making also emerged as central to this constellation. Several participants reflected on the hierarchy that privileges technology-heavy or concept-driven design while diminishing slower, material, and community-rooted practices. One student wrote: “We look over craft and making and see it as less important than design. In a decolonised design school we need to return back to more craft-based working and understand that technology is not the only answer.” For them, weaving, woodworking or textile traditions were not nostalgic residues but vital methods of reclaiming knowledge disavowed by Eurocentric modernism. Craft was not opposed to design but constitutive of it, reminding the group that making with one’s hands, in relation to material and community, could be a site of epistemic renewal.

Together, these imaginaries unsettled the naturalisation of disciplines, the pinball school reframed learning as movement and ricochet, resisting the moulding of fixed identities. Cross-pollination positioned design not as a series of silos but as an ecology of relations. The call for craft displaced the hierarchy that equates modernity with progress, asserting embodied traditions as central rather than supplementary. What these visions held in common was an insistence on hybridity, porosity, and multiplicity describing a design education where students are not contained within labels but continually reshaped by collisions, exchanges, and encounters across traditions. This constellation raises a fundamental question: are disciplinary boundaries necessary, or are they simply inherited from colonial and modernist legacies? What if courses were not containers but contact zones? What if the very purpose of design education was not to fix identities as “graphic” or “fashion” designers but to cultivate the ability to move across ways of making, to inhabit hybridity, and to hold multiple epistemologies at once?

Participants’ metaphors and imaginaries directly challenge the modernist enclosure of disciplines, unsettling the assumption that design education must be divided into discrete silos; instead, they proposed models where knowledge moves unpredictably across practices and is enriched through contact. This vision resonates with Escobar’s (2018) call for pluriversal design, where knowledge is not contained within disciplinary categories but cultivated as an ecology of relations. It also aligns with Adamson, Riello, and Teasley’s (2011) global histories of design, which critique the Eurocentric narrowing of design narratives and instead emphasise the hybridities and entanglements of design practices across geographies and traditions. The reclamation of craft as foundational knowledge was particularly striking where participants framed weaving, woodworking and textile practices not as nostalgic or supplementary

but as epistemic resources central to design education. It also echoes Adamson's (2013) argument that craft is not a neutral category but a historical invention, one that has been strategically denigrated to uphold hierarchies within art, design and industry. Reading this in a decolonial register, participants' call to place craft at the centre of pedagogy affirms the need to pluralise epistemic legitimacy beyond the narrow canon of industrial modernism (Tunstall, 2023).

Framed against wider debates, the move from silo to ecology also reflects critiques of disciplinarity as a technology of power that narrows inquiry and reproduces social hierarchies (Bernstein, 2000). While these critiques are well established conceptually, what this study adds is a material and pedagogical dimension: through speculative sketches and proposals, students concretised what such alternatives might look like in practice. These designs transform critique into condition-making, offering tangible curricular and spatial infrastructures that can sustain hybridity, unpredictability and plural epistemologies. In this sense, participants extended the literature by showing how decolonising disciplinarity is not simply a matter of discursive critique but of re-designing the pedagogical environments in which categories are naturalised. Their proposals make clear that disciplinarity is not neutral organisation but a site of colonial inheritance and that to move toward pluriversality requires pedagogical architectures capable of sustaining hybridity, ecological relation and embodied forms of knowledge.

3.4.4 Flattened Hierarchies

Alongside critiques of disciplinary divisions, participants also questioned the hierarchies that structure everyday pedagogic relations. Who speaks, who decides, and who is recognised as holding authority were recurring concerns. Many felt that design education reproduced colonial patterns of power by positioning tutors as the sole arbiters of value and students as passive recipients. Rather than accepting this asymmetry as inevitable, participants imagined futures where authority circulates and knowledge flows more horizontally.

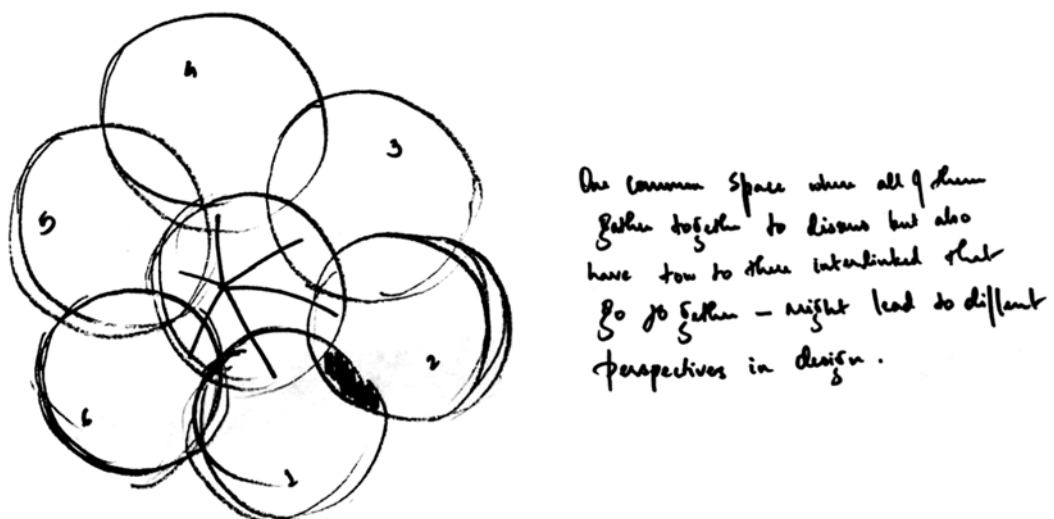
One participant made the provocation plain: "Students can be teachers too. Everyone has knowledge to share," unsettling the assumption that expertise moves only in one direction. In group discussion, students expanded on this idea by suggesting formats where facilitation rotates, where students' own

vernacular expertise, in software, languages, cultural traditions or community networks is recognised as equal to academic authority. This was not framed as reversing hierarchy but as creating conditions for mutual recognition, where everyone enters as both learner and teacher at different moments.

Hierarchy was also linked to the problem of representation. Several participants described their frustration at curricula that still began and ended with European traditions, observing that this narrowed who could speak with authority in the classroom. One noted that as a home student born in the UK most of their exposure to design had been “from a Western perspective, a lot of the time Swiss point of view,” which had come to feel naturalised as the professional standard. They acknowledged this had made them comfortable with that style, but insisted that a decolonised design school would need to “begin with disrupting that standard, from the very start.” What was being identified here was not only curricular imbalance but a hierarchy of voices, showing that Eurocentric design traditions still determined the parameters of what was legitimate, while other histories were tolerated as additions rather than foundations.

Proposals for alternative governance began to surface in response where participants imagined shared spaces in the school where criteria could be co-authored, where assessment rubrics were discussed openly and decisions rotated across staff and students. One sketched a circular forum, a commons at the centre of the school, where authority was distributed and collective decisions left visible traces. These suggestions pointed to a desire for accountability that is not imposed from above but generated in relation with one another.

Fig. 16. Participant Sketch



These reflections outlined a vision of flattened hierarchies in design education. Authority would not vanish but circulate: students and staff sharing roles as learners and teachers, decision-making embedded in commons rather than behind closed doors. In this model, hierarchy is no longer a static structure but a dynamic negotiation, attentive to whose voices are heard, whose traditions are centred, and how responsibility is distributed. This constellation suggests that decolonising design education requires more than diversifying content; it demands reworking the very relations of power that structure pedagogy. What if authority was not a fixed position but a shared practice? What if learning was sustained not by submission to hierarchy but by mutual recognition, collective governance, and the courage to hold disagreement as care?

Participants' insistence that "everyone has knowledge to share" extends Freire's (2000) vision of dialogic pedagogy, in which education is understood as a co-creation of knowledge rather than a one-way transmission from teacher to student. However, their proposals also remain attentive to the limits flagged by Ellsworth (1989), who argued that discourses of empowerment and dialogue can obscure the persistence of asymmetries if institutional structures of authority remain unchallenged. What students in this study articulated was precisely this gap, even as curricula diversify, Eurocentric traditions continue to set the ground rules for legitimacy, determining who can speak with authority and whose knowledge is treated as supplementary.

Where this study contributes is in moving from principle to mechanism, rather than stopping at critique, participants sketched tangible designs for redistributing authority, shared governance forums imagined as circular commons, rotating facilitation roles that recognise students' vernacular expertise and co-authored assessment rubrics that make criteria visible and negotiable. These speculative proposals begin to answer the literature's call for structural transformation, not at the abstract level of institutional policy but in the everyday rhythms of classrooms and departments. By embedding redistribution into the infrastructures of decision-making, assessment and curriculum design, participants demonstrated how flattening hierarchy can be enacted rather than merely invoked. As a whole, these findings triangulate with the critical pedagogical tradition while extending it, they affirm Freire's (2000) dialogic commitments and heed Ellsworth's (1989) warning about masked asymmetries while also offering concrete, practice-based mechanisms that situate redistribution of authority as a designed condition of decolonial pedagogy.

3.4.5 Knowledge Infrastructures

If curricula and hierarchies are the most visible architectures of design education, infrastructures are their quieter but no less powerful counterparts: the catalogues, libraries, formats and even the furniture that silently shape how knowledge is kept and circulated. Participants were quick to refuse the idea that these are neutral. Their sketches and notes treated infrastructures as active sites of epistemic struggle, places where authority is encoded and exclusion is naturalised.

One drawing paired chairs and scrolls with the blunt question: “Why must we always sit in chairs? Why must books be square?” What began as a provocation about furniture and format quickly unfolded into a critique of how design schools normalise certain ways of sitting, reading and learning while rendering others invisible. Participants described how desks fix bodies into upright postures and libraries privilege bound texts over oral, sonic or material forms. Against this, they proposed alternatives such as floor-seating studios, modular mats or libraries built not only from books but from scrolls, textiles and voices. A “listening library” might catalogue oral histories from communities; a “textile catalogue” could index stitches, motifs and patterns as legitimate repositories of knowledge. Infrastructures could connect students to recordings of elders’ stories, these were not presented as metaphors but as design specifications, grounded in lived epistemologies where knowledge is embodied, mobile and relational.

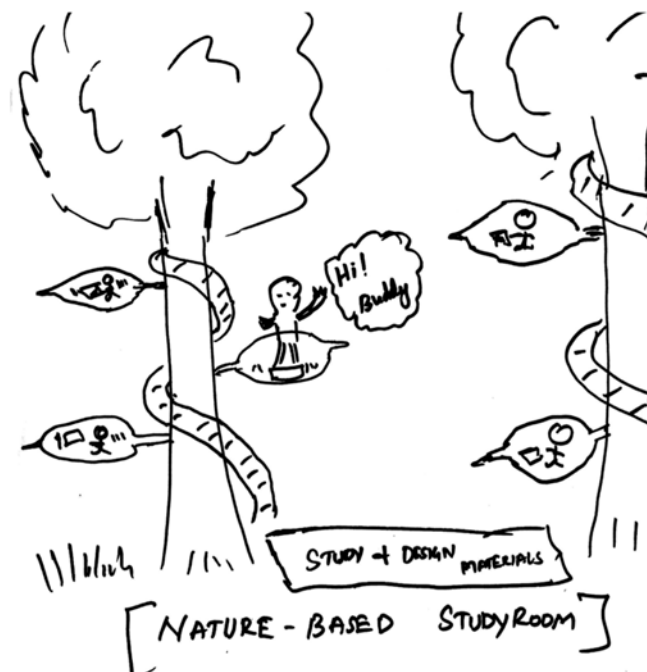
Fig. 17. Participant Sketch

library has different style of
seat (it's according to different
culture , history and tradition)
The book have many shapes
not only square.



Ecological imaginaries also recurred strongly. One participant suggested a study room in a tree, another a classroom by the sea. Notes read: “What if classrooms were forests? Or buses? Or rooftops? Begin with our surroundings, our local stories.” Here, knowledge was situated not in enclosed buildings but in relation to environments. Participants envisioned modules where students co-create archives with communities: documenting boat-building along coastlines, mapping seasonal calendars with local growers, or recording place-based stories that resist displacement. In these visions, the curriculum is ecological, requiring care and accountability, not an object to be stored on a shelf but a living archive that grows with its stewards.

Fig. 18. Participant Sketch



Cataloguing itself became a focus of critique. Students noted that most departmental reading lists reproduce a Eurocentric canon, defaulting to white, male, able-bodied designers. In response, they proposed “re-cataloguing days,” collective sessions where staff and students reorder lists by axes such as region, language, medium, or community relevance. The practice was imagined as pedagogical as much as administrative: a time to confront whose voices had been centred, to question what permissions are needed, and to consider who benefits from circulation. With one participant asking questions such as : “Who consents? Who benefits? How do we maintain this relationship?” Re-cataloguing, in this sense, was an act of responsibility rather than neutral organisation. Even furniture was reframed as epistemic. Several groups

suggested kitchens as learning spaces, not in the service of domestic nostalgia but as recognition that cooking involves memory, measurement, timing, and care. The kitchen became a metaphor for collective practice and also a concrete proposal for reorienting design education toward embodied, interdependent forms of making and knowing.

These reflections unsettle the assumption that infrastructures are mere background and instead reveal that chairs, catalogues and libraries are not supports for knowledge but sites where epistemic hierarchies are reproduced or undone. By redesigning them, participants asserted that knowledge can be re-situated as plural, embodied and accountable. This constellation makes a simple but radical claim that decolonising design education requires rethinking not only what is taught but how knowledge is kept, shared and legitimised. To redesign infrastructures is to reconfigure authority itself, shifting from static repositories to living systems of care, relation and ecological accountability. Participants' refusal to treat catalogues, formats, and even furniture as neutral supports resonates directly with Bowker and Star's (1999) classic argument that infrastructures are not background but active sites where classification systems enact and reproduce social order. What students recognised in their critiques of chairs, bound texts and reading lists is precisely the infrastructural work of epistemic discipline, the exploration of how everyday arrangements of space and knowledge quietly determine whose traditions are legible and whose remain invisible.

The speculative proposals that emerged, community archives, listening libraries, re-cataloguing days further braid these critiques with archival scholarship that has long argued for feminist and care-centred ethics of description. Caswell and Cifor (2016), for example, theorise a radical empathy for records that acknowledges the affective labour of stewardship and insists on accountability to the communities being represented. Similarly, community archives work foregrounds grassroots custodianship, positioning local practitioners as knowledge holders rather than as peripheral contributors to institutional collections (Flinn, 2011). Participants' insistence that oral histories, textile traditions, and embodied practices be catalogued as legitimate epistemic forms aligns squarely with this turn toward relational and community-based archival practice.

Where this study extends the literature is by specifying how these commitments can be operationalised through design. Oral histories embedded in walls, textile catalogues indexed through stitches and motifs or floor-seating studios that

unsettle the disciplining of the upright desk all exemplify how epistemic justice can be designed into interfaces and spaces, not only codified at the level of institutional policy. In this sense, participants materialised what Bowker and Star (1999) theorise that infrastructures are always choices and to redesign them is to redesign the epistemic order. By situating infrastructures as a contested site of decolonial intervention, these findings contribute a design-specific articulation of how cataloguing, space and material arrangements can be reconfigured as conditions for care and reparation.

3.4.6 Spatiality of Learning

When participants turned their attention to space, they emphasised that classrooms, studios and lecture halls are not neutral containers for learning but architectures that organise knowledge and authority. The question they posed was not only what should be taught, but where should learning take place, and how might different spaces transform its possibilities? One of the most vivid contributions displayed a concept for a school on wheels. The participant explained: “What if the design school wasn’t fixed to one space ... if we were meeting new people and seeing new cultures, we would be learning in more than one way.” Here mobility was framed not as logistics but as pedagogy, encounter itself became a method, refusing the idea that learning can be anchored to a single centre.

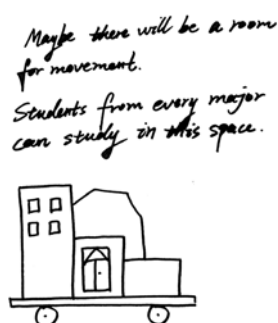


Fig. 19. Participant Sketch

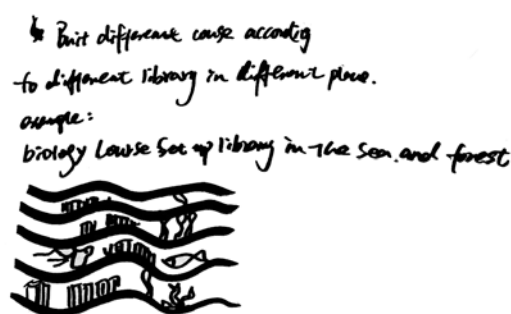


Fig. 20. Participant Sketch

Ecological settings were also imagined as classrooms. Forests, rooftops, and coastlines appeared across drawings and notes. One card in blue handwriting proposed: “What if the library was outside, in a forest or by the sea? The classes should begin with our surroundings, our local stories. That’s how knowledge exists in many cultures.” Another participant extended this vision:

“We should not just understand design as designers, we should learn other things, like biology, like the earth to understand how to design not just for humans but for the planet.” In these proposals, pedagogy was reframed as ecological relation where learning was situated in environments and attuned to more-than-human worlds.

These interventions reframed space itself as constitutive of pedagogy. A mobile classroom, a rooftop studio, a sea-edge library, a forest seminar, each disrupted the assumption that education must remain enclosed within institutional walls. What participants were articulating was not a simple change of scenery but a reconfiguration of where knowledge is held and with whom it must be in dialogue. This constellation therefore insists that decolonising design education means rethinking the very spaces in which it unfolds and opening them to mobility, embedding them in ecology and situating them in relation to local and planetary contexts. In these imaginaries, space is not background but pedagogy, not neutral but contested and always capable of being otherwise. Experiments in design education have similarly explored relocating learning beyond institutional infrastructures. For example, de Vet (2020) describes inviting students to live and learn together in a rural setting where shared meals, ecological encounters and everyday practices become part of the pedagogical environment.

Gruenewald (2003) argues that critical pedagogy of place requires not only embedding learning in local contexts but also recognising place as a site of cultural politics and ecological accountability. Participants’ insistence that design education must move into forests, kitchens and city streets exemplifies precisely this demand to re-situate curriculum in relation to lived environments rather than in abstraction from them. Equally, their proposals resonate with Ellsworth’s (2005) account of pedagogy as relational and embodied, where space is never neutral but an active medium that shapes how knowledge is produced and shared. The speculative sketches generated in this study, the mobile classrooms, ecological archives, community-linked studios, extend this theoretical ground into the specific registers of design education, showing how space itself can be re-imagined as curricular infrastructure. What Ellsworth (1989) theorises as places of learning, participants translated into architectural and organisational designs that relocate authority, shifting from institutional enclosures toward distributed, relational and ecological sites of knowledge-making.

In decolonial terms, this is not a superficial change of scenery but a structural

reorientation of epistemic authority by shifting classrooms into mobile and ecological environments, participants challenged the Eurocentric assumption that legitimate knowledge must be housed in fixed, institutional centres. Instead, they envisioned pedagogy as co-constituted with community, landscape and ecology, redistributing who can teach, what counts as knowledge and how

responsibility to place is enacted. This finding contributes to both decolonial and design education literature by specifying how spatial imaginaries can be mobilised as design practice, not merely metaphor. Where prior scholarship calls for attention to place, these workshops materialised place-conscious learning as speculative interventions demonstrating that design education can enact epistemic justice through the redesign of its very spatial conditions.

3.5 Constellations as Conditions of Possibility

Taken together, the six constellations do not resolve into a manual for a decolonised design school, nor should they, instead, they function as what Haraway (2016) might call conditions of staying with the trouble, a series of situated orientations that resist closure while insisting that design education can be otherwise. This refusal of prescriptiveness situates the findings in direct conversation with decolonial scholars who warn against reducing decolonisation to a toolkit or fix (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Bhabra, Gebrial, & Nişancioğlu, 2018). The constellations affirm this critique but extend it by materialising what an orientation-based approach looks like in practice, through speculative artefacts, sketches and collaborative imaginaries.

At stake here is an epistemic reorientation, where much of the literature on higher education reform has remained policy-driven, framing inclusion in terms of access and diversification (Mirza, 2017), participants in this study recast transformation at the infrastructural and relational levels. Their visions of assessment-as-reciprocity, care-as-pedagogy, and space-as-ecology exemplify what Santos (2014) calls epistemologies of the South: practices that generate knowledge from the ground of lived, plural traditions rather than assimilating them into Eurocentric categories. The contribution of the workshops lies not only in echoing these theoretical demands but in designing conditions where they could be rehearsed and felt. This methodological contribution resonates with design anthropology and speculative design scholarship that treat practice not as illustration of theory but as theory-in-the-making (Gunn, Otto, & Smith, 2013; Dunne & Raby, 2013). By treating artefacts as epistemic infrastructures, the

study demonstrates how speculative practice can move research beyond diagnosis toward generative orientations. Here, the workshop outputs are not data in a conventional sense but theoretical propositions, they embody Escobar's (2018) call for design for the pluriverse by staging what pluriversal education could feel like in its everyday infrastructures, from catalogues to kitchens.

Finally, the constellations foreground temporality as central to decolonial pedagogy. Participants' speculative gestures, resetting assessment, ricocheting across disciplines, building schools on wheels, kept the past, present, and future in constant dialogue. This aligns with Patel's (2016) insistence that decolonisation must account for colonialism as an ongoing relation, not a closed event and with Freire's (2000) framing of education as a practice of freedom always oriented toward unfinished futures. What the constellations add is a repertoire of design-specific practices that materialise this temporal openness, rendering futures not as endpoints but as provisional rehearsals, contingent and revisable. In sum, the constellations contribute to the field by offering conditions of possibility that are simultaneously diagnostic and generative. They confirm critiques of the limits of diversification, align with decolonial demands for structural and epistemic shifts and extend these debates by specifying design-led, speculative forms through which transformation can be staged. Rather than fixing what a decolonised design school is, they articulate how it might be continuously reassembled, through practices of refusal, care, reciprocity and imagination that resist being finalised.

3.5.1 Synthesising A Letter from a Decolonised Future

If the constellations articulated in the previous section capture how participants imagined otherwise pedagogies, then a synthesis of the workshop reveals how such imaginaries were first made possible. The letter operated less as a static provocation than as a hinge, it translated critical literature into speculative form and in turn enabled participants to generate new theories of learning that exceeded both the canon and the text itself. In this way, the letter exemplified the methodological contribution of this thesis, the treating of speculative artefacts not as illustrative prompts but as infrastructures for collective theorisation. This methodological hinge is crucial, where higher education research often positions artefacts as data to be analysed or as outputs to be consumed, the speculative letter functioned instead as a condition, setting the stage for reciprocity, relationality and imagination to emerge in practice.

This resonates with Escobar's (2018) call for design as a practice of pluriversal world-making, and with Gunn, Otto, and Smith's (2013) argument that design can generate theory-in-practice rather than merely applying it. What the workshops demonstrate is that speculative storytelling can open a shared temporality where critique and possibility are voiced together, a temporal dissonance that is at once diagnostic and generative.

Through this process, the letter crystallised the central insight of the study, that decolonisation in design education is not a matter of content substitution but of condition-making. By staging conversations where inherited exclusions could be named and futures rehearsed, the letter anchored the orientations that later in the study goes onto consolidate a proposition for a decolonial design framework, one that centres refusal, plurality, care, accountability, reciprocity and imagination. Thus, the synthesis of Letter from a Decolonised Future is offered as a demonstration of how speculative practice can reconfigure what counts as knowledge in educational research, making a case that futures are not only imagined in theory but performed through artefacts and encounters; and it positions those performances as methodological contributions in their own right.



Fig. 21. Workshop Photo



Fig. 22. Workshop Photo



Fig. 23. Workshop Photo

Chapter 4

4. Maker Majlis: Speculative Artefact Led Interviews with educators of colour

This chapter analyses semi-structured interviews with six design educators of colour working in UK higher education. Rooted in decolonial and relational methodology, the study first surfaces how Eurocentric curricula, institutional whiteness and tokenistic diversity work shape participants' everyday teaching realities. To move beyond critique, each interview incorporated a speculative prompt, in this case, an induction pack from a future decolonised design school named Maker Majlis. Using this speculative artefact as a way to facilitate this encounter, participants were invited to envision caring and culturally sovereign futures for design education. The dialogue therefore oscillated between lived experience and future possibility, foregrounding care, emotional labour, heritage and imagination as intertwined strategies of survival and resistance. By amplifying voices of those whose pedagogies and identities are shaped by colonial legacies, the chapter offers both a critique of present structures and an opening toward pluriversal, justice-oriented curricula, demonstrating speculative storytelling as a rigorous mode of co-producing knowledge and catalysing transformative, decolonised futures in design education.

The interviews were conceived as dialogic encounters rather than extractive instruments. Conducted online via video calls, they were designed to ensure accessibility and visibility for participants across a wide geographic range, reducing logistical barriers while still creating space for relational exchange. Each conversation was semi-structured, beginning with rapport building questions (See Appendix 5.2) that invited participants to reflect on professional practices, institutional encounters and the personal values that inform their teaching, while also experimenting with future-oriented propositions through the introduction of the Maker Majlis induction pack. Six participants contributed to the study, all holding academic posts within UK design programmes and self-identifying as racially and ethnically minoritised. Their roles spanned different levels within the academy, from senior to associate lecturers, and their professional experience varied accordingly. This diversity of position and tenure added depth to the accounts, illustrating how similar struggles reverberate across hierarchies and how institutional exclusions persist irrespective of career stage.

Recruitment combined purposive outreach with an open invitation circulated through my professional networks. This mixed approach, anchored in relational ethics, enabled participation on the basis of mutual interest, alignment with

resonances with their own pedagogical and institutional experiences. The speculative element was introduced digitally: the Maker Majlis induction pack was created as a designed digital artefact, specifically intended for online facilitation rather than physical distribution. Presented partway through each interview, it functioned as a prompt that could be shared on-screen or emailed in advance, opening space for participants to engage with it fluidly in the digital environment. Its fictional policies, pedagogies, and invitations served not as a fixed blueprint but as provocations that participants could extend, adapt, or resist. The shift to this speculative register marked a palpable change in many conversations: speech rhythms loosened, imagination took centre stage, and critique became braided with possibility.

The framing decision to work exclusively with educators of colour was intentional and justice-oriented: it foregrounded the expertise of those who live and work at the margins of institutional whiteness and whose pedagogies have been shaped in negotiation with colonial legacies. Within the interviews, reflexivity and openness were prioritised so that participants could articulate the complexities of their roles, the frictions they encounter and the strategies they employ. The introduction of the Maker Majlis artefact was not intended to resolve those tensions but to hold them differently—keeping contradiction visible while inviting participants to imagine futures beyond current institutional limits. This approach advances a methodological claim that by coupling qualitative interviewing with a designed speculative artefact, the study stages a co-productive method that keeps contradiction visible, allowing exhaustion to sit alongside hope, censorship alongside courage, and tokenised visibility alongside cultural sovereignty. In this sense, the interviews are not only sites of testimony but of theory-making, aligning with the desire-based orientation outlined in Chapter 2 (Tuck, 2009), which resists deficit framings by foregrounding the hopes, imaginations, and survivals articulated by participants. The speculative turn, introduced through the Maker Majlis induction pack, also resonates with utopian method (Dinerstein, 2015), where negation and anticipation sit side by side, and with participatory traditions of design research that treat artefacts as infrastructures for co-creation rather than prompts for extraction (Akama et al., 2019; Escobar, 2018). In bringing these strands together, the method exemplifies the epistemic stance of this thesis: decolonial storytelling as a relational and participatory practice through which critique and imagination can be braided into situated proposals for futures otherwise.

4.1 Storytelling Through Speculative Artefacts: The Maker Majlis Induction Pack

The speculative induction pack for *Maker Majlis* was designed not as a flight of fantasy but as a grounded exercise in world-building, drawing together decolonial literature, Indigenous epistemologies and the accumulated insights of conversations I held throughout this study. Across its components, the welcome letter, manifesto, values compass, the heart, and accountability cards, the pack offered participants a way to inhabit, however briefly, an alternative decolonised design school premised on relationality, justice and care (See Appendix 5.4 To view each artefact).



1. The Welcome Letter

The pack opened with a welcome letter situating participants in the imagined world of *Maker Majlis*. Framed in the tradition of the Arab Majlis, a gathering space for storytelling, knowledge exchange, and decision-making, the letter introduced the ethos of the school as communal, relational, and grounded in cultural sovereignty. Its tone echoed Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (2021) insistence that decolonial research must begin with listening and storytelling, while also drawing on Adrienne Maree Brown's (2019) notion of emergent strategy, where small gatherings and intimate conversations generate systemic change. The letter was not simply an invitation into a speculative institution, but an opening into a relational methodology, a reminder that decolonial futures begin with words of welcome and acts of gathering.

2. The Manifesto

Accompanying the letter was a manifesto collectively authored by imagined members of *Maker Majlis*. The manifesto foregrounded values of plurality, reciprocity and liberation, drawing inspiration from Harney and Moten's (2013) vision of study as a fugitive, collective practice that emerges in the breaks and margins of institutions. In resonance with Tlostanova and Mignolo's (2012) call to learn to unlearn, the manifesto refused universalising prescriptions in favour of situated commitments, to honour heritage, to nurture joy, to hold accountability as relational. Its speculative form amplified rather than diminished critique, echoing Million's (2013) argument that Indigenous feminist practices centre care and affect as political method, and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's (2017) insistence that freedom must be grounded in practices of reciprocity and land-based relationality. Collectively, these orientations positioned the manifesto not as abstract aspiration but as a situated declaration, a refusal of colonial universals and an affirmation that decolonial commitments must be lived, felt and voiced collectively.

3. The Values Compass

Rejecting assessment regimes rooted in hierarchy and competition, the induction pack proposed a values compass in place of grades. Each participant would inscribe their own values, informed by heritage, positionality, and lived commitments, onto the compass, creating a plural and dynamic orientation tool. This drew on critiques of neoliberal assessment frameworks (Shahjahan, 2014) and on Kennedy et al.'s (2022) work on respectful and reciprocal research practices, which position accountability as ethical relation rather than surveillance. The compass also echoed relational accountability as understood in Indigenous methodologies, where responsibility to community, relationships and shared values replaces hierarchical systems of evaluation (Wilson, 2008). Similar value-led approaches have also been articulated within design justice frameworks that foreground shared principles and community accountability rather than hierarchical evaluation structures (Costanza-Chock, 2020).

4. The Heart

At the centre of *Maker Majlis*, the induction pack described a "heart." This was imagined as the central hub of the school, a physical and affective gathering point where participants would come together to share stories, exchange knowledge, and sustain community. The heart extended the cultural lineage of

the *Majlis*, while resonating with hooks' (1994) vision of education as rooted in love and Le Grange's (2016) advocacy for slowing down education's neoliberal tempo to create intimacy and presence. Beyond metaphor, the heart reflected what I had heard repeatedly in conversations throughout this study, the desire for centralised spaces where care and collectivity are not peripheral but foundational. As such, the heart embodied the thesis' broader claim that decolonial design education must build not only new curricula but new centres, hubs where relationality itself becomes the infrastructure.

5. The Accountability Cards

Finally, the induction pack included a deck of accountability cards, each inscribed with questions intended to accompany participants in their design process. These questions did not measure compliance but invited ongoing reflexivity: Who do you design with? Who benefits? Who is excluded? What relations are you sustaining or breaking? The cards drew inspiration from Belarde-Lewis' (2024) articulation of Indigenous relational accountability and Wildcat's (2023) call to consider obligations to ancestors, land and future generations. As speculative artefacts, the cards refused the neutrality of institutional rubrics and instead materialised accountability as a practice of care, reciprocity and justice.

Together, these artefacts staged a speculative yet grounded encounter with a decolonised design school. They translated principles of storytelling, relationality, accountability and care into tangible forms, while crystallising the desires and frustrations I had been gathering in dialogue with educators, colleagues and students. The *Maker Majlis* induction pack did not prescribe a singular blueprint for the future but instead modelled how speculative storytelling can open a space between critique and possibility, where other pedagogical worlds might begin to be rehearsed. Importantly, this world was not only described but also enacted. I did not simply circulate the induction pack as a document; I performed it aloud in online meetings, almost as if reading from a script or staging a play. Each performance was carefully rehearsed, creating a ritualised repetition through which the *Majlis* became embodied rather than merely textual. As Conquergood (2002) reminds us, performance can function as a mode of knowledge production, producing embodied understanding rather than simply reporting it, while Schechner's (2006) notion of restored behaviour highlights how rehearsed actions acquire transformative force precisely through their repeatability. My readings of the induction pack created such a liminal space, in Turner's (1982) sense, where participants were invited to temporarily

inhabit a different social and pedagogical order. In this way, the presentation of *Maker Majlis* was not ancillary to the research but integral to its speculative method, in itself a performative intervention that staged the very world it sought to imagine.

4.2 Thematic Analysis

The analysis of the speculative interviews drew on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis, though with a distinctly decolonial inflection, as outlined in the methodology chapter. Interview transcripts and reflexive notes were imported into NVivo, which was used to support the process of systematic coding, organisation, and retrieval. Line-by-line inductive coding generated a large set of preliminary codes that were iteratively refined and clustered through memo-writing and comparison across participants. While NVivo enabled transparency and traceability in this process, the analysis remained attentive to the relational and affective dynamics of each encounter rather than treating data as detached "evidence." As I described in the methodology section, themes were not approached as fixed categories but as speculative constellations: interpretive orientations that emerged from the interplay between lived experience and the imaginative energies released through the *Maker Majlis prompt*. The aim was to hold together contradictions and overlaps rather than smooth them away, recognising that the tensions participants voiced are themselves instructive for thinking about decolonial design education.

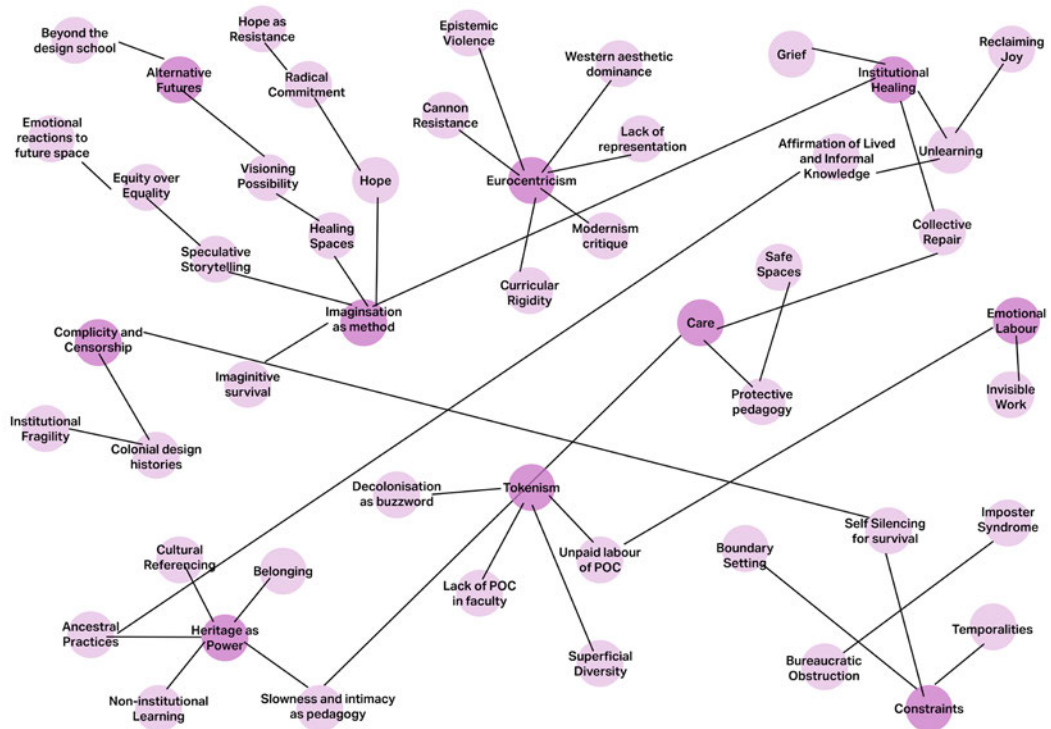
All participant names in this chapter are pseudonyms, reflecting an ethical commitment to confidentiality and to ensuring individuals cannot be identified. Roles and disciplines are described only in broad terms. Yet the fact that all participants in this strand were women is significant. As Lugones (2007) argues, coloniality is inseparable from gender, producing the "coloniality of gender" that imposed racial hierarchies while rigidifying binaries and subordinating women. These dynamics persist in higher education, where women—particularly women of colour—carry disproportionate burdens of care, diversity work and student support (Ahmed, 2012; Mirza, 2009). Participants' emphasis on care, reciprocity and relational pedagogies thus aligns with feminist and decolonial critiques that reframe knowledge as collective and interdependent (hooks, 1994; Tronto, 1993; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). That such visions emerged from an all-female group underscores how women in design education are often at the forefront of articulating decolonial futures while simultaneously bearing the weight of institutional exclusions.

Pseudonym	Job Role
Amina	Lecturer in Graphic Design
Zoya	Lecturer in Illustration
Elana	Lecturer in Graphic Design
Tulsi	Lecturer in Graphic Design
Lara	Lecturer in Illustration
Aisha	Lecturer in Graphic Design

Fig. 25. Pseudonym Table

In practice, the analytic process generated a wide constellation of codes, over fifty in total, that captured both structural and affective dimensions of participants' accounts. These ranged from highly systemic descriptors such as bureaucratic obstruction and Western aesthetic dominance to more intimate registers such as imposter syndrome, reclaiming joy, and slowness and intimacy as pedagogy. Rather than collapsing this complexity into neat categories, I treated codes as relational fragments that clustered together around broader orientations. Through iterative cycles of comparison, memo-writing and refinement, these clusters gradually coalesced into nine themes.

Importantly, these themes are presented here not as stable containers but as speculative constellations, each composed of multiple, sometimes contradictory, codes. For example, the theme of Care gathers protective pedagogy, affirmation of lived and informal knowledge, and the affective labour of simply showing up, while Complicity and Censorship entwines codes of bureaucratic obstruction, institutional fragility and epistemic violence. In this sense, the themes hold open rather than resolve tensions, foregrounding the contradictions participants articulated between critique and possibility, exhaustion and imagination, survival and transformation. To retain this granularity, I frame the themes as parent codes that encompass multiple child codes, each capturing specific dimensions, affective tones, or recurring experiences. For instance, Eurocentrism gathered together canon resistance, modernism critique, Western aesthetic dominance, and cultural referencing, while Care encompassed slow and intimate pedagogies, protective pedagogy, and affirmation of lived and informal knowledge. This parent/child framing resists collapsing difference into homogenised categories; the child codes remain visible as markers of the detail and weight of participants' accounts.



From this analytic process, ten parent themes emerged: ***Eurocentrism, Care, Tokenism, Emotional Labour, Complicity and Censorship, Heritage as Power, Constraints, Institutional Healing, and Imagination as Method.*** Each gathers multiple child codes and affective registers, and together they sketch the contradictory terrain of decolonising design education as lived by participants (See Appendix 5.6 for map of themes). They are not discrete or exhaustive categories, but overlapping orientations that reveal how systemic barriers, personal struggles, and speculative desires continually intertwine. The following sections trace these themes in turn, foregrounding participants’ voices and weaving them with relevant decolonial and feminist literature.

4.2.1 Eurocentrism

Eurocentrism surfaced in every interview as a systemic constraint embedded in the structures and cultures of design education. Participants repeatedly described how the discipline positions European traditions as the benchmark of excellence, relegating other aesthetic and epistemic traditions to the margins. As Elana reflected: “A lot of the fundamentals of design we get taught, or the idea of what we view as good design is sort of Swiss design or Eurocentric. And you look at those, and you put them on a pedestal, and that’s what you’re sort of taught as, that’s what’s acceptable, that’s what’s beautiful, and that’s what’s pleasing... textiles from Asia, or architecture from other parts of the world...”

they weren't good enough, because that's what I was taught, that they weren't good enough and that they were almost whimsical, and they were craft."

Her words illustrate what Mignolo (2009) terms the colonality of knowledge: the ways European epistemologies are universalised while others are rendered inferior. This Eurocentric lens did not simply shape what counted as design but created affective frictions, producing shame or self-doubt when participants' own cultural reference points were excluded. This sense of erasure was compounded by the absence of representation among staff. Amina described "never having been taught by a person of colour" and how this "added to that feeling of isolation, or having my voice, my creative voice, silenced." Here, Eurocentrism was experienced not only in the curriculum but in the embodiment of who holds authority in the classroom. Mbembe (2017) similarly argues that the persistence of Eurocentrism structures both pedagogy and institutional belonging and in turn sustains whiteness as the invisible norm.

Yet participants also highlighted moments of resistance and incremental change. Amina observed that while the design canon remains narrow, shifts in the curriculum were beginning to ripple through student practice: "And you can start to see it coming out now in the student work. And that is an impact of diversifying the design curriculum. Obviously, it's not where I would like it to be, but you can see the impact on the questions students are asking of themselves and in their work." This comment underscores how curricular transformation, however modest, alters the kinds of questions students feel authorised to ask. Similarly, Tulsi argued for a wholesale rethinking of how design history is taught: "History of design... that'd be the first thing. It'd be like a mandatory module... but specifically through different lenses, through different people, through different tools and techniques... because there's so much about how we categorise and what we include, also having to think about what we're excluding within that."

For Tulsi, the issue was not merely representation but the epistemic frameworks through which design is categorised as "good" or "bad." Her words echo critiques of how class, race, and power silently inform curricular boundaries (Shahjahan, 2014). At the institutional level, some participants emphasised the collective work required to unsettle Eurocentrism. Elana described her involvement in course revalidation: "I have seen a huge shift, and that shift hasn't happened because of one person. It's happened because of a team of people recognising that, and I think you have to be willing to recognise that within a team to implement those changes, and that starts from unlearning what

you know and starting to read other things that exist and how we can integrate that.”

This points to the tension between Eurocentrism’s persistence and its contestation: while deeply entrenched, it is not immutable. Change requires collaborative unlearning and sustained collective effort rather than tokenistic gestures. Finally, participants cautioned against the superficiality with which “decolonisation” is sometimes mobilised. As one put it, “They use decolonising design or other perspectives as a buzzword... but there’s nothing being done about it.” Such critiques echo broader concerns about the institutional co-option of decolonisation as branding, where the language of transformation circulates without structural commitment (Tuck & Yang, 2012). It is through these accounts that Eurocentricism is revealed as both a lived reality and a contested terrain, it operates as a powerful structuring force that shapes pedagogy, validation and belonging, but participants’ testimonies also point toward fissures: student curiosity, collective staff unlearning, and curricular redesign that begins to provincialise the Eurocentric canon. In this way, Eurocentrism is not only an obstacle but a site of possibility, where the push against exclusionary traditions opens fragile but important pathways toward epistemic justice.

4.2.2 Care

Across the interviews, care emerged not as an optional add-on to pedagogy but as a radical and necessary practice for resisting Eurocentric design education. This resonates with Tronto’s (1993, 2013) insistence that care is not sentiment but political practice, and with Puig de la Bellacasa’s (2017) call to treat care as an epistemic and methodological commitment. Participants consistently positioned care as a refusal of disembodied teaching, echoing hooks’ (1994) argument for engaged pedagogy that reclaims the body and the everyday in knowledge-making. Instead, they insisted on relational, horizontal and culturally grounded approaches that affirmed both themselves and their students. Ultimately revealing that care, in this framing, was multi-layered. It meant teaching protectively, recognising lived knowledge and practising collective repair, all of which became ways to resist the structural erasures of Eurocentric design education.

Lara described care through the principle of horizontal exchange, in contrast to the hierarchical logics often associated with traditional design education: “There is a connection between that and how I view pedagogy of design as something horizontal, something that’s exchanged and built on, and includes formal and

and informal forms of knowledge.” At one level, this emphasis on dialogue rather than transmission resonates with long-standing critiques of the banking model of education (Freire, 2000) and with traditions of experiential and reflective learning that position educators as facilitators rather than transmitters of knowledge (Dewey, 1997; Schön, 1985). Within design education, however, this facilitative stance has long been shown to sit in tension with assessment regimes that still cast the educator as arbiter of value, producing what Orr and Shreeve (2018) call the paradox of being alongside learners while simultaneously evaluating them. What is distinctive in Lara’s account is the way she reframes facilitation as a form of care as a protective pedagogy where the educator safeguards conditions of reciprocity and mutuality. Her elaboration where she reflects, “It’s more about like, okay, you have some knowledge. I have some knowledge. I’m going to facilitate the space for us to build on this and look at it together” highlights how care here functions not only as a mode of teaching but as a relational practice that affirms students as co-producers of knowledge. Read in this way, her practice not only echoes hooks’ (1994) insistence on teaching as a collective act of vulnerability and growth, but also extends feminist accounts of care as a methodological and pedagogical ethic (Tronto, 1993; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017) into the specific context of design education.

Aisha’s reflections extend this principle of care beyond the immediate classroom exchange to the politics of presence within the institution. For her, care was also about “showing up and being the face because it’s really easy to not be the face... knowing that you are the face of something, and that you’re well researched and well versed in decolonial pedagogy... because then you can bring it into conversations.” While Lara emphasises horizontality as a way of dismantling hierarchies between educator and student, Aisha underscores the importance of visibility as a counter to institutional erasure. Together, these accounts frame care as both relational and representational: it is about building mutuality in the classroom, but also about occupying space with integrity in order to reconfigure what knowledge and authority look like in design education.

Care was also articulated as a direct challenge to what participants saw as the exclusions of Eurocentric curricula. Lara described how the privileging of formal, philosophical knowledge obscures and devalues lived, cultural, and embodied forms: “Unfortunately, we call these things informal knowledge, or experiential knowledge, that is so disregarded that we’ve managed to create work that is isolated from the real world because of that obsession with the big philosophers. Without looking at intersections of experiences, like storytelling or community

work, we miss urgent ways of creating knowledge.” This critique exposes the epistemic violence embedded in Eurocentric frameworks, which mark certain forms of knowledge as valid while relegating others to the margins. By naming informal and experiential knowledge as essential, participants positioned care as an affirmation of lived knowledge, as a refusal to treat storytelling, ritual, or community practice as peripheral.

Others emphasised how care materialises in affirming students’ identities. Tulsi explained: “So for me, I think a big thing is supporting students to bring their sense of self into their work, and showing them that there is value in that. You don’t need to try to fit into something, but you can make your own.” Here, care operates as a practice of collective repair: enabling students to resist assimilation into predefined categories of “good design” and instead centre their own positionalities. This relational ethic positions students not as individuals who must conform, but as contributors to a shared and plural knowledge base.

Amina framed care as equipping students with the critical tools to interrogate the assumptions they had inherited: “My teaching philosophy is about really trying to push the students to question established norms and question their instincts towards a certain form of design, to question what they’ve been indoctrinated with and why that is.” This connects to Andreotti’s (2011) argument that decolonial pedagogy requires students to critically unlearn dominant assumptions, and to Davis and Paim’s (2021) call to treat care as an iterative, embodied practice that must continually be renewed. Care here becomes a way of safeguarding students from reproducing exclusionary frameworks, while also cultivating resilience and autonomy.

These reflections highlight care as more than kindness or empathy but rather as an ethic of survival, resistance and imagination. Participants described care as a pedagogical act of holding students in their full complexity, affirming forms of knowledge often dismissed and resisting the pressures of assimilation. In this sense, their accounts sit firmly within and extend feminist and decolonial scholarship that frames care as infrastructural to the work of justice (Tronto, 1993; Ahmed, 2012; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Care was thus positioned as central to the work of decolonising design education, not an add-on but a fundamental strategy for both sustaining educators of colour and transforming the possibilities of the classroom and the institutions they sit within.

4.2.3 Tokenism

Participants consistently described the experience of being positioned within institutions as symbols of diversity, rather than as agents empowered to enact substantive change. Tokenism appeared as a recurring dynamic through which institutions claimed progressiveness by employing racialised staff or referencing decolonisation, while continuing to operate within Eurocentric logics of design education. This produced not only frustration, but also a pervasive sense of being instrumentalised for institutional image-management rather than supported in meaningful pedagogical transformation.

Amina reflected on the structural level of this dynamic, noting that while diversification of staff was important, it did not in itself constitute decolonisation: “For me, obviously diversifying the staff team of any educational institution is really, really important. But decolonising is about introducing multiplicity into our conception of what design is, and really taking this Angela Davis conception of what radical means, like grasping something at the root and really getting to the root of what we conceive of as design, and asking ourselves what it means to design differently.” Here, Amina distinguishes between representation as a surface-level metric and transformation at the epistemic root of the discipline. Her insistence on multiplicity echoes articulation of radicality as a matter of grasping at the root, underscoring that without a restructuring of what counts as knowledge, the mere diversification of bodies within institutions risks reproducing the same colonial frameworks under the veneer of inclusion.

Aisha also pointed to how tokenism operates through narrow pipelines of visiting practitioners, noting that the same limited group is repeatedly brought into design schools: “I think that also the problem comes in the visiting practitioners on campus, and there is a default group of people who seem to be the go-to, to come in and talk about practice, and that is a problem, because that does talk to a Eurocentric narrative, not just in education, but I think, also in the way in which we work as designers in the real world.” This dynamic reproduces the Eurocentric canon under the guise of professionalisation, reducing diversification to an institutional checkbox rather than an epistemic shift.

Other participants described how this tokenistic dynamic was not only structural but also deeply personal in its impact on teaching and learning. Lara recounted troubling examples where students’ trauma-related or politically engaged work was exploited for institutional branding rather than supported as part of a

meaningful pedagogical context: “Another thing on the level of institution is when I see that students who work with those topics are almost like their traumas are exploited. It’s almost like, yeah, we want you to make work about this, but there is no environment where that has been supported. It happened that a student’s work that dealt with that (decolonisation) was advertised, because it sells, you know, the idea that they are inclusive but then the student failed.” This illustrates how institutions can commodify decolonial or trauma-centred work, extracting its symbolic capital for marketing purposes while neglecting the infrastructures of care that such work requires. The student’s ultimate failure, despite being showcased by the institution, becomes emblematic of what Sara Ahmed (2012) terms the non-performativity of diversity where inclusion is claimed but not enacted in practice.

Elana described a parallel dynamic in relation to the curriculum, observing how “decolonisation” was increasingly deployed as a buzzword within validation and accreditation processes: “In the last couple of years, there’s a rise in curriculums, in descriptions and curriculums, or, you know, people across HE trying to sell or advertise courses, and they use decolonising design or other perspectives as a buzzword, but it’s a buzzword to say, ‘Oh, we’re thinking about it,’ but there’s nothing that’s being done about it... It doesn’t mean having a week of cultural immersion. It doesn’t mean you look at a handful of these books, and it’s a checklist system that’s done. It’s a continuous process.” Her critique highlights how decolonisation is reduced to a marketable keyword, detached from the long-term, iterative and relational labour it actually requires. Elana’s account of an external quality assurance body recommending that terms such as “ethical,” “sustainable,” or “decolonising” be inserted into course documentation further revealed how the language of transformation becomes codified into bureaucratic compliance rather than lived institutional change.

Tokenism also manifested through pedagogical practice in ways that directly burdened racialised educators. Lara described how decolonisation was offloaded onto students without adequate support, in a way that exposed rather than enabled them: “I just started working as an educator, there was a unit course where students had to deal with the decolonisation... And then the teacher said, that’s great. You know, we’ll just let them define it themselves. So we’re not going to provide them with anything... These are first year students. They don’t even know what illustration is for you to let them. And I think this is very harmful, because people think that they are doing something collective, but actually, they’re writing on the paper that they’re doing something, but they’re not.” Here, tokenism operates pedagogically as an abdication of responsibility,

where “decolonisation” is invoked but neither scaffolded nor resourced. Students are left to grapple with complex histories and epistemologies without guidance, while institutions claim credit for engaging with decoloniality.

Aisha further reflected on how tokenism is compounded by precarity, particularly for associate lecturers: “You also are kind of dropped into situations. You’re kind of parachuted in and parachuted out, or, I say, parachute but, you know, kicked out as and when it suits the need of the department. So it’s not like you’re there consistently, and you’re able to kind of have an overview of what’s happening, so you can feed in with some great research and reflection based off of student feedback.” This precarious, inconsistent engagement undermines the possibility of sustained transformation, ensuring that racialised staff are positioned as temporary, interchangeable and ultimately disposable tokens rather than embedded agents of change.

These accounts illustrate tokenism as a mode of institutional performance that functions on multiple levels, in staff recruitment and placement, in the exploitation of student work, in the superficial use of buzzwords within curriculum validation and in pedagogical gestures that gesture toward decolonisation without substance. In each case, the labour of transformation is displaced either onto racialised educators, onto students, or onto the empty signifier of “diversity” rather than being owned and enacted by the institution.

In this sense, tokenism operates as both a shield and a trap: a shield that allows institutions to present themselves as progressive, and a trap that ensnares racialised educators and students in cycles of symbolic labour that rarely translate into structural change. Participants’ accounts reflect wider analyses in higher education, where scholars note that the language of diversity and decolonisation is frequently mobilised to perform reputational progress while leaving structural inequalities intact (Hylton, 2012; Joseph-Salisbury, Ashe, & Sang, 2020). As Ahmed and Swan (2006) argue, institutions often demonstrate diversity by instrumentalising racialised staff as visible symbols of inclusion, while withholding the resources or authority necessary to enact substantive change. Within design education, this reduction of decolonisation to branding exercises or buzzwords mirrors what Shilliam (2021) identifies as a broader neoliberal appropriation of decolonial discourse, a process that empties radical demands of their transformative potential. Against this backdrop, participants’ insistence on multiplicity, reciprocity and epistemic reorientation signals that decolonisation must exceed tokenism, demanding structural, pedagogical and institutional change.

4.2.4 Complicity and Censorship

Participants described a recurring paradox that while institutions increasingly frame themselves as committed to equity, inclusion and decolonisation, they simultaneously constrain the very practices they claim to support. This contradiction was most forcefully articulated in Lara's account, which exposed the ways in which inclusion is staged rhetorically but undermined in practice. She recalled being explicitly prevented from teaching Palestinian fiction or documentary work following the escalation of violence in Gaza: "I am employed to do all of that job. But then when the genocide against Palestine started, then I was told that I could not do that. I cannot teach any documentary work or history-based work... I said, okay, well, can I teach fiction, Palestinian fiction from the 60s? And they said, no, that's not allowed. And I was even threatened. I was even told, well, I'm just worried for your reputation." Here, the institution simultaneously employed her under the banner of decolonisation and silenced her when her teaching threatened institutional neutrality or political comfort. Such accounts reveal that censorship is not simply an individual act of suppression, but a systemic mechanism by which institutions protect themselves from accountability.

This contradiction extended beyond the classroom with Lara describing how meetings convened under the banner of "social climate and racial justice" at her institution ceased once the genocide in Gaza began: "We used to have... weekly or monthly meetings to speak about how we are implementing that. And then once the genocide started, those meetings stopped happening. And the conversations that I had there were very difficult, because the university is not privatised, but it's financed, and so that comes with a lot of interest in Zionism." Such silences are not accidental; they signal what Tuck and Yang (2012) call "settler moves to innocence," where institutions acknowledge colonial injustice only when it is safely historicised, never when it demands accountability in the present. Lara was clear about this temporal deferral: "There is an active resistance against dealing with colonialism as an event of the present. And I know for sure that in 10 years, they will deal with this history because its history, because it ended because it cannot threaten their position."

Complicity here is twofold: it is both the refusal to confront the colonial present and the active displacement of responsibility onto those already most burdened by it. As she put it, "racism is not my problem to fix," yet institutions routinely employ educators of colour to shoulder this work, while refusing to reckon with their own investments in colonial structures. This critique extended even to

financial practices: “A big proof of that is the investments the university keeps making. They’re all colonial. They all are directly contributing to colonialism and the killing of people. So the institution is not genuinely interested in decolonialism. It is interested in selling a product that looks good nowadays to students and they’re doing that through employing us, through one lecture a year or a term about decolonialism, through a book in a reference that nobody reads in a reading list that nobody reads.”

Other participants echoed this critique, albeit in different registers. Elana described how accrediting bodies demanded the inclusion of terms such as “decolonising” in validation documents as part of a checklist of buzzwords, without substantive engagement with their meaning: “You need to put these specific words in so when a student goes to check, or someone’s checking the quality or the validity of this, there are these key words. But that’s a sort of organic and holistic thing we’re doing, we don’t want to use it as a buzzword.” Such examples illustrate how institutions reframe decolonisation as compliance, reducing it to what Ahmed (2012) calls non-performativity: declarations that signal change without enacting it. Participants were acutely aware that institutional diversity work often functions as branding, a form of reputational management rather than structural transformation.

In sum, complicity and censorship operated across multiple levels, in the silencing of politically sensitive content, in the exploitation of staff and students’ trauma for institutional gain and in the bureaucratic reduction of decolonisation to empty signifiers. These accounts reveal how institutions reproduce colonial logics precisely through their attempts to appear progressive. As Lara reflected, “silence is equivalent to complicit contribution.” Far from being passive omissions, these silences are forms of active avoidance that protect institutional privilege while displacing responsibility onto those most harmed by it.

4.2.5 Heritage as Power

Across the interviews, heritage surfaced not as a nostalgic return to cultural origins but as a generative, insurgent resource for reimagining design education. Participants consistently articulated the reclaiming and revaluing of cultural, ancestral and embodied knowledge as central to their pedagogical practice. This emphasis was not about merely supplementing existing curricula with diverse examples but rather about disrupting the epistemological hierarchies that position Western traditions as universal and others as peripheral. In this sense, heritage was described as both a grounding force and

a critical intervention, a means of survival and resistance but also a strategy for reorienting the future of design. For some participants, the erasure of heritage was most palpable in its absence. Amina reflected on the structural invisibility of global South contributions: “There were seeds, but a lot of the work I did.. was realising that those books are in other parts of the library, and they’re under different categorisations and they’re not under graphic design and so there was just a massive lack of voices from the Global South in terms of contributing to thinking about what graphic design is like.” Here heritage is displaced not by explicit denial but through classificatory logics that marginalise non-Western contributions, relegating them to the elsewhere of library catalogues rather than situating them within the canon of design. Such practices echo Tuhiwai Smith’s (2021) critique of the institutional erasure of Indigenous knowledge systems, which are often hidden in plain sight yet rendered epistemically illegible.

By contrast, other participants foregrounded heritage as a living, embodied practice. Lara recounted a collective moment of intimacy: “We just sat like touching each other’s hair for like two hours, and it was so magical because it was about like cultural tradition and like touch... we created together... a real ultra feminist care-centred space.” This description illustrates how embodied and tactile traditions, often excluded from academic settings, can constitute the basis of radical pedagogical practice. Such practices resonate with Mignolo and Walsh’s (2018) call for epistemic disobedience, where knowledge emerges through ritual, embodied practice and collectivity rather than abstract theorisation. Heritage here is not representational; it becomes a methodology in itself, enacting alternative ways of knowing and teaching.

Elana similarly connected heritage to lineage and identity, tracing her pedagogical commitments to Indigenous cultural practices within her own community: “I actually come from an Indigenous tribe.. within that the arts is a huge part of it... a lot of the clothes, a lot of the jewellery, a lot of the tattoos, all told stories about nature and the harmony of how we live with nature and our Gods. So looking at that imagery was a huge part of my life and my childhood and being exposed to that.” Such accounts underscore that heritage is not reducible to cultural content to be inserted into curricula. Rather, it provides ontological and epistemological grounding for ways of being in the world. As Wilson (2008) argues, storytelling, ritual and intergenerational practice are central to relational knowledge paradigms, which stand in tension with Western traditions that privilege abstraction and universalism.

Other participants emphasised heritage as a politics of acknowledgment and citation. Tulsi described referencing itself as a feminist practice: “Even considering referencing is a feminist act, who you look at, where you’re getting your thoughts from, and who are you then, reinforcing... proper referencing citation is feminism.” Here heritage is not only cultural but epistemic, it is enacted through the politics of recognition, the conscious decision of who is cited, legitimised and sustained within design education. As Ahmed (2017) argues, citation is a feminist brick, a way of building intellectual houses that make space for marginalised voices. Tulsi’s framing positions citation as an act of heritage-making, one that resists the dominance of Eurocentric lineages by actively amplifying others.

At the level of pedagogy, heritage also became a framework for affirming students’ lived experience as legitimate and valuable knowledge. As Tulsi noted: “Encouraging the students to bring their sense of self into their work... their own lived experiences and the way that they navigate the world is hugely important and influential in their creative process.” Similarly, Amina reflected on her commitment to introducing warmth and informality in the classroom: “I think I’m really interested in introducing warmth into the classroom and kind of an informality or like a colloquialism that allows us to approach these big, serious topics and take them seriously, but also not feel intimidated by them... anything we can do to relieve that pressure and instil like fun into these topics, even if they’re really serious, is really important.”

These accounts demonstrate how heritage is mobilised not only through explicit cultural references but also through affective practices of teaching, through humour, warmth and affirmation of students’ identities. Such practices echo hooks’ (1994) conception of education as the practice of freedom, where joy and love are not secondary but essential to radical pedagogy. Yet participants also drew attention to the ways heritage continues to be systematically devalued. Lara critiqued the academic obsession with “big philosophers” at the expense of informal traditions: “We’ve managed to create work that is isolated from the real world because of that obsession with the big philosophers... without looking at... the informal heritage of storytelling.” This observation underscores how heritage is often dismissed as craft, folk, or informal, as categories that carry connotations of lesser value within Eurocentric hierarchies of knowledge. The recuperation of heritage as a site of power, then, directly challenges the colonial epistemic order by expanding what counts as design knowledge and by repositioning whose voices and practices define the discipline.

Heritage as Power emerges here not as an exercise in cultural nostalgia but as a transformative political and pedagogical orientation, it re-centres embodied, ancestral and relational knowledge as vital to decolonising design education, while simultaneously resisting their erasure by institutional structures. Heritage is insurgent, it disrupts Eurocentric epistemologies, unsettles dominant categories and insists upon culturally expansive and politically conscious ways of knowing. At the same time, participants acknowledged that heritage cannot, on its own, dismantle the systemic constraints of Eurocentrism, censorship and institutional fragility. Instead, it functions as both refuge and provocation, a way of sustaining educators and students in their struggle while demanding broader structural change.

4.2.6 Constraints

The theme of Constraints captures the systemic, interpersonal and affective barriers participants faced when attempting to enact meaningful pedagogical change. Across the interviews, participants emphasised that while they were motivated to reimagine design education, their efforts were consistently interrupted by institutional inertia, lack of support and structural limitations. These constraints were experienced at multiple levels, from the macro-logics of neoliberal higher education to the micro-politics of everyday teaching.

One recurring barrier was the commodification of higher education itself. Participants described how the marketisation of UK universities, coupled with escalating student fees, has reshaped the very purpose of education. These concerns resonate with a long-standing body of scholarship critiquing the neoliberalisation of higher education, where students are reframed as consumers and knowledge is reduced to a commodity (Barnett, 1990; Ball, 2003; Brown, 2011). Audit cultures and managerial logics have been shown to narrow academic labour into measurable outputs, eroding the time, trust and openness that more transformative pedagogies require (Naidoo, 2016). Against this backdrop, Amina argued that the conditions of late-stage capitalism actively “inhibit any kind of experimental thinking,” because students increasingly view their degrees as transactions and staff are overstretched to deliver employability-focused outcomes. “Everyone’s always overworking and overstretched,” she explained. “When you’re stretching yourself thin within the working day to just make the course run again, there’s not enough time or space to think about how we might decolonise, how we might do things differently.”

While such critiques of marketisation are well established in higher education research, participants' testimonies highlight the additional burdens they create for educators of colour engaged in decolonial practice. For these staff, already navigating racialised exclusions and the disproportionate demands of diversity work (Ahmed, 2012; Mirza, 2009), neoliberal reforms compound the difficulty of sustaining the relational, time-intensive practices that decolonial pedagogy demands. In this sense, the challenge is not only structural but intersectional with marketisation constraining the pedagogical possibilities of higher education in general, but doing so most acutely for those whose labour is already undervalued and overextended.

Several participants highlighted how this exhaustion was compounded by the lack of institutional commitment to structural transformation. Lara observed that many educators reproduce Eurocentric curricula while insisting they are already engaged in criticality or decolonisation. This defensiveness, she argued, makes genuine dialogue difficult: "They all believe that they're already doing decolonisation... and that makes that process even more difficult, because they feel very defensive around you, because like, okay, why are you being employed? Like we're already doing this." Her frustration was not only with the denial of Eurocentrism but with the insistence that no further work is necessary, a stance that effectively blocks change.

Constraints were also described in terms of pedagogical autonomy. Lara reflected on being explicitly prevented from teaching content related to Palestine, for her, these experiences crystallised the hypocrisy of being hired to decolonise while simultaneously being silenced when institutional reputations or political investments were at stake. This silencing was not merely administrative; it was affective, as she put it: "It makes me like, really have pain in my stomach, like it does, it really does to see my people, you know, getting hungry, getting killed because of Britain. That is the history. And then I come back, and then they're like, oh yeah, but you're making me feel uncomfortable when you talk about these things." Such testimonies underscore how institutional silence functions as complicity, preserving comfort for the majority while displacing the labour of confrontation onto racialised educators. Participants also critiqued bureaucratic and accreditation structures that reduced decolonisation to a checklist. Elana recounted a course validation meeting where external reviewers, unfamiliar with design education, urged her team to "just put in the word decolonising" alongside other buzzwords such as "sustainability" and "ethics." She expressed frustration at the hollowness of this process: "We don't want to use it as a buzzword... but they insisted, because

everyone has to put these specific words in.” This instrumentalisation empties decolonisation of its transformative potential, turning it into a branding exercise rather than a political project. It also illustrates what Tuck and Yang (2012) call “settler moves to innocence”, symbolic gestures that claim to address coloniality while leaving structures intact.

For some participants, these structural barriers created the sense that the university was simply not a viable site for decolonial work. As Amina reflected, “Some of the best spaces that I’ve found that offer an opportunity to think about what decolonisation looks like are outside the institution. They’re reading groups or community education groups or just friends, meeting for dinner and having a conversation. I think the institution is really not the ideal context to be thinking about decolonisation right now, because it’s just in a way designed... to prohibit that.” This recognition speaks to a broader dynamic where constraints within the academy push critical conversations into alternative, non-institutional spaces of solidarity and collective learning.

Through examining these constraints, it is illustrated how systemic pressures such as commodification, bureaucracy, censorship and precarity combine with the emotional exhaustion of extractive diversity work to inhibit meaningful transformation. Yet participants’ responses also pointed to the necessity of structural overhaul and argued that decolonisation cannot be added on top of already unsustainable workloads or reduced to token gestures but requires dismantling the very conditions that inhibit critical, collective and imaginative pedagogy.

4.2.7 Institutional Healing

If the theme of Constraints captured the exhaustion, overwork and structural barriers that prevent meaningful transformation, Institutional Healing emerged as its counterpoint. Participants did not only describe what was broken in design education; they also articulated what repair might feel like, and what kinds of conditions would be necessary for a different institutional life to become possible. Healing here was not imagined as therapeutic recovery in the individualised, neoliberal sense, but as a collective reorientation of pedagogy, temporality, and community.

Amina reflected on their teaching philosophy as a process of critical unlearning: “It’s about really trying to push the students to question established norms and

question their instincts towards a certain form of design, like question what they've been indoctrinated with and why that is." Such accounts foreground healing as inseparable from pedagogy: to open up conditions where students can interrogate inherited norms is also to repair the epistemic wounds caused by Eurocentrism. Rather than reproducing "what they've been indoctrinated with," healing was figured as the space to surface, question, and move beyond those inheritances. Participants also tied healing to the redistribution of institutional power and responsibility. Lara described the creation of a reading group co-organised by staff and students of colour when their department refused to support conversations about Palestine, Congo, and Sudan: "We invite students and staff from all over the faculty to have these conversations, and it's something open and accessible to all participants to shape together with us. That's also how we see it: a horizontal space for learning." Here, healing was enacted through collective structures that subverted institutional silencing and created conditions for horizontal learning. Such practices resonate with Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (2021) insistence that collective, relational practices of knowledge-making are themselves decolonial interventions against institutional erasure.

The speculative space of Maker Majlis often catalysed these visions. In imagining alternative pedagogical futures, participants returned again and again to motifs of community, intimacy, and shared pace. One imagined the Majlis as: "Somewhere where you'd heal and learn and grow and share, with such a strong sense of community that's led through creative practice and creative learning and making and doing." This emphasis on togetherness highlights what Le Grange (2016) calls the temporalities of decoloniality, an insistence on slowness, openness and embodiment in contrast to the accelerated rhythms of neoliberal higher education. As one participant put it: "Sit in a comfortable way that is intimate and is about sharing... We don't necessarily have that in the university environment at the moment... you don't have that kind of slightly slower pace." The connection between healing and temporality recurred throughout the interviews. For some, institutional healing meant refusing the urgency of productivity metrics and instead foregrounding practices of slowness, storytelling, and convivial presence. For others, it meant cultivating equity and dismantling hierarchies in how colleagues and students engage one another, Elana said: "There needs to be equity, not just in the way we teach, but in how we communicate with one another. We shouldn't be putting people on pedestals... we need to be more open to exchange, to testing, to experimenting."

Amina extended this vision beyond the formal boundaries of the institution, recalling projects where students worked with community and activist archives: “It was about whose voices are silenced in the archive, whose are heard and what we can learn about history in a more punky, less formal, institutional way.” Such initiatives blurred the lines between institutional learning and community-based practice, suggesting that healing might require precisely this divestment from institutional authority and the cultivation of other, more relational forms of knowledge-making.

Ultimately, participants framed institutional healing not as a soft add-on to critical pedagogy but as the necessary ground for decolonial work. Healing required honesty about institutional harm, slowness in the face of neoliberal acceleration, equity in relationships, and collectivity in knowledge-making. Echoing bell hooks (1994), who insisted that education can be a site of healing when rooted in love and justice, participants imagined what it would mean to build universities that could sustain rather than deplete. In this way, healing emerged not as nostalgia for a better past, but as a radical orientation toward futures in which institutions might yet become spaces of collective repair.

4.2.8 Emotional Labour

One of the most persistent threads across interviews was the emotional toll borne by educators of colour working within predominantly white design institutions. Participants described how the demand to “do the work” of decolonisation was often framed as an individual responsibility, creating exhaustion, frustration and in some cases deep grief. This resonates with Ahmed’s (2012) framing of diversity work as both the work of changing institutions and the work of surviving them. Lara captured this contradiction starkly: “I really wish for them to stop throwing this homework on me, because I’m exhausted of doing other people’s homework.” Here, emotional labour is not simply about managing classroom dynamics but about carrying the weight of historical and ongoing colonial violence into institutional spaces that simultaneously deny it. The metaphor of doing other people’s homework exemplifies the epistemic violence at play where educators of colour are tasked with fixing problems they did not create, under conditions designed to exhaust them.

Aisha illustrated how this burden is also reproduced in relation to racial disparities in student achievement: “The attainment gap between home students who are people of color and home students who are Caucasian or white... has

been quite large. So it means that home students of color are achieving much poorer grades... But what ends up happening in the higher education system is they turn to the faculty of colour and say, well, what more can you do? And actually, it's not really a what more can you do? It's what more can we all do? And how can we change the environment to make it an approachable space for those students? Because we're obviously not getting something that comes from the course leader... your remit... is limited because you're not contracted very well and you don't have that many hours." Her account foregrounds the structural nature of this burden where rather than confronting the systemic conditions that reproduce racial disparities, institutions displace responsibility onto under-supported, precariously employed staff of colour. In this way, emotional labour is compounded by employment precarity and by the refusal of leadership to recognise their own complicity.

Tulsi highlighted the way this manifests as tokenism, where students and staff alike are made to feel as though their presence is conditional, their value reducible to their identity rather than their contribution: "Am I just here because I'm brown? Am I just here because I'm ticking a box? ... It has its own sets of problems to then encourage that sort of like, 'oh yeah, we're so diverse.' And you're like, you're saying these things they don't align with the things that you're showing or that you're doing." Such accounts reveal how the burden of representation becomes another form of labour, one that undermines genuine belonging. This was echoed by Zoya, who described how simply living her religious and cultural practices became an unacknowledged form of labour: "Maybe just me living as I live... like me mentioning that I need to go pray, that also creates this thing in their head, like, okay, she prioritises her prayers. So you know, that needs to be built in... that hopefully teaches other parties that this is what we need to consider."

What Zoya framed as everyday life becomes pedagogical for others, a form of teaching through embodiment, yet without institutional recognition or support. For many, the burden was compounded by the performative nature of institutional responses to decolonisation. Lara was critical of being positioned as both symbol and solution: "You oppress me, and then you hire me to clean your oppression. So you do the oppression, and then you want me to do the labour of undoing the oppression, while you just sit and watch passively. And obviously that passive gaze, in itself, reproduces the oppression." Her account highlights how emotional labour is not only unpaid but also structurally unacknowledged, reinforcing what Puwar (2004) presents the condition of the space invader, where the racialised body is both hyper-visible and delegitimised.

Participants diverged, however, on the question of who should be doing this labour. Amina argued that while the work is taxing, it must be led by people with lived experience of colonisation: “I still think the work should be led by people of colour... we’re the only ones who know how it feels. But it’s the job of people who are not from minoritised backgrounds to like, research and understand and make space and help facilitate space for us to lead these conversations.” By contrast, Elana stressed the dangers of overburdening individuals: “We’ve been made to feel like a minority... but I don’t think we should be putting this pressure or getting people of specific backgrounds to be the ones that change this. It comes from all people of all walks of life.”

These positions reveal both the exhaustion of emotional labour and its paradoxical necessity, the knowledge borne of lived experience is invaluable, yet relying solely on it risks reproducing extractive dynamics. The theme of emotional labour therefore exposes the contradictory terrain of decolonising design education. On one hand, educators of colour are uniquely positioned to lead transformative practices; on the other, the expectation that they must bear this responsibility is itself a form of institutional violence. Emotional labour here is not incidental but structural, it is the condition through which institutions outsource decolonial change while maintaining their own stability.

These accounts of exhaustion, tokenism and precarity echo Ahmed’s (2012) critique of diversity work as institutional survival, Mirza’s (2009) and Rollock’s (2012) analyses of how staff of colour are tasked with carrying the burden of racial equity agendas, and Puwar’s (2004) description of the racialised body as a space invader within academia. What this study contributes is an extension of these critiques into the specific context of design education, where the aesthetic canon and pedagogical culture amplify the affective load where staff of colour are asked not only to diversify curricula but also to embody alternatives to Eurocentric traditions, often without authority or support. In this sense, participants’ reflections situate emotional labour as both structural and epistemic, revealing how the work of decolonising design schools is unevenly distributed and how it reproduces the very inequities it seeks to undo.

4.2.9 Imagination as Method

The theme of Imagination as Method captures the ways participants mobilised speculative practice not as escapist fantasy but as a radical, decolonial methodology. Through the Maker Majlis grounding, imagination became a space of methodical possibility whilst simultaneously articulating critique and rehearsing alternatives to the present. Rather than dismissing dreaming as utopian or impractical, participants positioned it as essential to survival, pedagogy, and collective transformation. As Amina reflected, Maker Majlis “feels exciting, it feels motivational, it feels sad all at the same time because it’s about the dream and the importance of the dream, and wanting the dream, but knowing how hard the journey is going to be to get the dream.” Elsewhere she noted the melancholy of feasibility of how such spaces “feel... unattainable... we’re stuck in this capitalist context where we measure everything by... resources.” Imagination here is cast as both longing and struggle: a clear-eyed recognition of constraint alongside the urgent necessity of vision. This orientation resonates with Adrienne Maree Brown’s (2019) emergent strategy, where speculative thinking is not detached from reality but a practice for cultivating futures otherwise foreclosed. Several participants underscored the importance of “having visions of the otherwise in order to have something to work towards” (Amina), situating imagination as strategic, embodied, and politically generative in the sense of Escobar’s (2018) designs for the pluriverse.

Importantly, participants noted that imaginative freedom is unevenly distributed across the academic field. Students were frequently seen as better positioned to think expansively precisely because they have not yet been fully habituated into institutional logics. “The students would love it... their imaginations are unlocked, but I think educators might find it difficult because they’ve been locked into these systems for so much longer,” Amina observed, implying a shift in educator posture from authority to facilitation. Aisha added another dimension here, reflecting on the rhythms of collective imagination: “Three years is too short. We kind of know that and see that, but you do want certain touch points to make sure that people are aligned and are progressing in a way in which they feel like they’re progressing. So in a way, there does need to be a kind of trajectory, but that trajectory needs to be outlined by the person, individually.” Her emphasis on participant-led trajectories foregrounds imagination as a temporal as well as a pedagogical practice as something requiring continuity, milestones, and the careful tending of communal bonds.

The *Maker Majlis* artefacts themselves exemplified this relational, speculative practice. Some participants envisioned entirely new structures of pedagogy, such as when Tulsi proposed a “travelling space... a hub that would collect stories and techniques from people... storytelling that can sometimes be lost.” Others imagined dismantling the logics of grading altogether: “Getting rid of any sort of grading system... would be hugely influential... instead making things that are genuinely authentic and guided by personal values” (Tulsi). Zoya similarly called for accountability practices aligned with meaning and purpose rather than “obsess[ion] over the rubrics,” while Elana reframed assessment around equity: “the things that you produce are being assessed... against what you’ve written down of your expectations.” These reimaginings directly challenged neoliberal metrics of accountability, offering instead values-based, community-oriented frameworks for design education.

Participants also connected imagination to cultural sovereignty and effective practice. For Lara, the very term *majlis* carried intimate resonances of Arabic cultural tradition, evoking “cooking practices,” “singing together,” and “celebration.” Such practices, often dismissed as informal within academia, were revalued as pedagogical methods, sites of collective joy, healing and knowledge-sharing. Tulsi stressed the undervalued importance of “shared storytelling and voices,” even reframing citation itself as a feminist act of epistemic alignment, asking who is amplified, and to what ends. Yet these speculative visions were not unproblematic. Lara asked difficult questions about access and responsibility: if a *majlis* is designed with those from colonised histories at its centre, “who is allowed to be in [it]... is it only to connect and feel heard... does that mean we continue to take on the responsibility of decolonialism?” She also warned that scale threatens intimacy: the setting “sounded like something intimate. And I think it should stay that way,” or risk losing the capacity to “listen to every single person.” Zoya, similarly attentive to condition-making, named the core difficulty: “establishing that safe space... if people are coming from... almost opposing point[s] of view.” Aisha extended this line of concern to the question of commitment: while she valued “the space to leave and enter as you want,” she also wondered, “how [does] the commitment come into play?”, raising the issue of how freedom and responsibility are balanced in sustaining collective spaces. These cautions refine imagination as a practice that must be carefully held, not merely invoked.

Finally, participants framed imagination as necessary discomfort. For Elana, speculative work invites a cultivated “rebelliousness... to question everything for the sake of questioning,” insisting that harmony alone does not yield

transformation; discomfort can be “positive,” a spur to inquiry instead of an endpoint. This aligns with and pushes forward Dunne and Raby’s (2013) account of speculative design as provocation—unsettling normative assumptions and rehearsing possibilities that resist assimilation to existing systems. Taken together, these accounts position imagination as both method and matter. Through the *Maker Majlis*, imagination became a collective, insurgent practice that unsettled Eurocentric epistemologies, foregrounded cultural heritage, and invited students and educators to dream otherwise. It is precisely through this interplay of hope, sadness, risk, continuity, and creativity that participants enacted what hooks (1994) describes as education as the practice of freedom: an opening into futures not yet realised, but already being rehearsed in the present.

4.3 Concluding *Maker Majlis* Insights

This chapter has examined how educators of colour working in UK design higher education experience, resist, and reimagine Eurocentric structures and whether speculative storytelling, operationalised through the *Maker Majlis* induction pack can function as a rigorous method for co-producing decolonial pedagogical knowledge. Returning to the study’s aims and research questions, three key syntheses emerge. First, the analysis demonstrates that Eurocentric structures are not abstract but are lived daily as organising forces within design education. Participants described how curricula, quality assurance rituals, practitioner pipelines, and institutional cultures continually reproduce a Eurocentric canon, determining what counts as design, who counts as an expert, and which narratives are rendered legitimate. These dynamics did not only shape knowledge but carried profound affective consequences such as burnout, self-silencing and the displacement of responsibility onto precariously employed staff of colour. In this sense, Eurocentrism, tokenism, censorship, institutional fragility and the burden of emotional labour cohere as overlapping mechanisms through which the system maintains its stability by redistributing its costs onto those least resourced to bear them.

Second, participants were not only critics of these conditions but also builders of alternative practices, across accounts, the pedagogical commitments to care, heritage and reciprocity emerged as counterpoints to institutional erasure. Educators mobilised care as a form of protective, horizontal pedagogy, reclaimed heritage as an insurgent epistemic resource and devised community-led infrastructures such as reading groups and activist archives. These interventions, though often small-scale and precariously held, nonetheless

pointed to enduring practices that reconfigure what counts as knowledge and whose voices are amplified. Decolonisation here was not figured as abstract aspiration but as work already being undertaken in fragments, work that requires recognition, resourcing and institutional protection if it is to move beyond the margins.

Third, the speculative method itself proved generative in distinct ways, the Maker Majlis artefacts provided a structured opening where critique could be braided with possibility, enabling participants to articulate values, rehearse alternative infrastructures and stage the tensions that accompany collective imagination. Imagination was not treated as escapism but as a necessary, embodied methodology, a practice of survival, of collective dreaming and of testing forms of pedagogy otherwise foreclosed within existing systems. At the same time, the speculative frame drew out cautions regarding scale, intimacy, access and responsibility. In this way, imagination functioned both as critique and rehearsal, as a means of holding ambivalence while furnishing tangible design moves that can be piloted within and beyond the academy. Methodologically, the chapter advances what I go on to term a practice of “Artefactual Speculative Co-storying” in the following discussion chapter of this thesis. The coupling of speculative artefacts, the holding of temporalities and the facilitated encounters that support participants abilities to articulate critique whilst assembling alternative possibilities,

Substantively, it reframes decolonisation as an infrastructural rather than representational project, building spaces of relational life, creating assessment practices grounded in values and reciprocity and reconfiguring institutional tempos around slowness, equity and care. Practically, the findings suggest clear implications for curriculum design, practitioner pipelines, assessment regimes and safeguarding political speech, each requiring systemic rather than symbolic reform. The study is not without limits. The sample was intentionally focused, documenting the perspectives of educators of colour in UK design higher education; its findings are analytically transferable but not statistically generalisable. Future work could pilot elements of the Maker Majlis induction pack within classrooms, extend participation to students, administrators and industry partners to test how values-based assessment and relational centres of learning travel across different disciplines and institutional contexts.

Taken together, the chapter demonstrates that decolonising design education requires more than diversification of personnel or insertion of keywords into curricula, it demands a restructuring of infrastructures, epistemologies and

pedagogical relations. By centering the voices of educators of colour, the analysis has surfaced both the systemic barriers that exhaust and the creative practices that sustain. Most importantly, it has shown that speculative imagination can operate not as utopian escape but as a grounded method for designing otherwise. In this sense, the research is grounded in its objectives, to document how Eurocentrism is reproduced, to surface existing decolonial practice and to demonstrate imagination as a viable methodology for world-building in design education. The outcome is not a prescriptive blueprint but a set of situated commitments that begin to chart plural, justice-oriented futures for the field.

Chapter 5

5. Co-Storying: Conditions, Constraints, and the Work of Otherwise

This discussion returns to the scope, aims and research questions outlined in Chapter 1 (1.2) to consider what the creative workshop practice (Chapter 3) and speculative interviews (Chapter 4) together reveal about the conditions for decolonising design education. The first aim, to analyse how Eurocentrism continues to shape UK design education is evidenced in the thematic constellations and interview accounts that exposed how curricula, assessment, and institutional logics remain tethered to colonial hierarchies. The second aim, to differentiate decolonising practice from surface-level diversification is sharpened by participants' testimony on tokenism, non-performativity and censorship, showing how inclusion agendas often stabilise rather than unsettle colonial structures. The third aim, to mobilise speculative and participatory practice to assemble caring, pluriversal futures is advanced through the artefacts and imaginaries that emerged across the study: values compasses, cross generational spaces, pinball schools, schools on wheels, and pedagogies of care.

Taken together, the findings illustrated across chapters 3 & 4, respond directly to the study's research questions, showing how speculative, participatory practice can operate as infrastructure for co-production (RQ1), generating actionable pathways toward decolonial transformation. They also demonstrate how bringing past, present and future into dialogue (RQ2) sustains both negation and anticipation, allowing critique to be held alongside possibility. Finally, they evidence how practice-based methodologies themselves (RQ3) can enact and materialise decolonial possibilities: not only illustrating theory but producing it in relation, with workshops and interviews functioning as epistemic laboratories where critique and imagination were braided into situated proposals. To synthesise these insights, this chapter adopts the analytic frame of what can change and what must collapse. This frame was not imposed retrospectively but emerged directly from the speculative workshops, artefacts, and interviews, in which participants distinguished between domains where reconfiguration appeared possible and domains so deeply entangled with colonial logics that reform risked reproducing the very harms it claimed to address. To make sense of these dynamics, it is necessary to pause and reflect on the methodological ground of the study itself. The analytic frame of change and collapse did not emerge in abstraction but through the very practices of inquiry that structured the research encounters. The speculative workshops and interviews were staged together. In this sense, the methodological contribution of the thesis

is inseparable from its analytic insights, the following section outlines this contribution, which I term Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying.

5.1 Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying

The speculative workshops and interviews in this study were not neutral tools for gathering testimony but infrastructures where critique and imagination were co-constituted. It is here that I locate the methodological contribution of this thesis, which I term Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying (ASC): a hybrid approach that braids together speculative design, qualitative interviewing, participatory facilitation and storytelling. While there have been contributions in futures research where variations of speculative co-storying have described dialogic forms of collective world-building, my contribution which I term, Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying extends this terrain by foregrounding the role of designed artefacts and facilitated performance in structuring imagination. Existing work has shown how speculation can support co-design by provoking reflection and opening discussion (Kinch et al., 2022) and how probes invite meaning-making through their material qualities (Knutz, Markussen, & Thomsen, 2018). My approach builds on these insights but continues to push the field: artefacts in this study did not simply prompt dialogue, they acted as epistemic infrastructures that organised participation and made temporal, relational and affective registers tangible. Letters, imaginary schools, and induction packs became speculative devices that enabled participants to hold critique and imagination together, rehearsing alternative futures while staying grounded in lived struggle. In this sense, Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying is both practice and contribution, acting as a methodological assemblage that integrates artefact, speculation and facilitation to treat participants not as data sources but as epistemic agents, co-creating situated theories and pluriversal imaginaries towards a decolonised design education. A mode of suspending disbelief long enough for participants to examine the past, inhabit the contradictions of the present and rehearse possible futures.

The form itself mattered, writing letters from imagined futures or co-constructing values compasses did more than generate data; they created spaces where critique and anticipation were braided together. In the Maker Majlis interviews, reading speculative scenarios aloud transformed the encounter into a performance: I was not just a facilitator but a co-storyteller, amplifying imaginaries often unspeakable within conventional academic formats. These dynamics illustrate how Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying fosters relational

knowledge-making, where insights emerge through reciprocal imagination rather than extraction. In this way, the approach directly responds to critiques of participatory design and qualitative interviewing. While participatory design is often celebrated as collaborative, it has been critiqued for its technocentric and institutional alignments (Simonsen & Robertson, 2012; Light & Akama, 2014). Similarly, qualitative interviews can reify researcher–participant hierarchies, casting participants as sources of testimony. By contrast, Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying unsettles these tendencies: imagination, play and narrative become methodological tools through which participants not only describe but also design, not only respond but actively reconfigure.

Crucially, speculation here did not operate as escapism. While a common critique is that speculative artefacts risk detachment from the lived realities of institutional struggle (Ward, 2019), Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying worked in the opposite direction. If utopianism imagines elsewhere, detached from the present, this method was grounded in lived struggle. The work of speculation was not to escape these conditions but to rehearse transformation from within them, holding critique and possibility together. This aligns with Maeckelbergh's (2011) account of prefiguration as practices that embody the future in the present, as well as Escobar's (2018) conception of pluriversal design as a practice of transition rather than utopian fantasy. Haraway's (1991) call to stay with the trouble also resonates here, Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying did not evade difficulty but stayed with it, working through contradiction and compromise without foreclosing imagination. These practices evidence that Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying is not merely a methodological novelty but an epistemic intervention. It produced knowledge otherwise inaccessible, knowledge situated in relation, attuned to both critique and imagination and oriented toward futures that resist capture by the neoliberal university. In this sense, Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying is not only a tool for researching decolonial design education but itself a mode of decolonial pedagogy, one that materialises other ways of knowing, imagining and relating.

What distinguishes Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying as a contribution is not only its conceptual grounding but its practical enactment. The approach can be understood as a sequence of moves: first, designing artefacts (such as letters from imagined futures or imaginary induction packs) that materialise tensions and possibilities in tangible form; second, staging encounters where these artefacts are introduced not as prompts for opinion but as shared devices that organise participation; third, facilitating performance, where reading aloud, asking questions, annotating or co-constructing extends the artefacts into

collective acts of storytelling; and finally, holding reflection where the researcher co-theorises with the participants proposals, not as data to be extracted but as situated knowledge and speculative propositions. This fourfold rhythm — artefact, encounter, performance, reflection — is what makes ASC a transferable method as it shows how design research can use artefacts not merely as provocations but as infrastructures for relational world-making, enabling participants to imagine, critique and rehearse futures together.

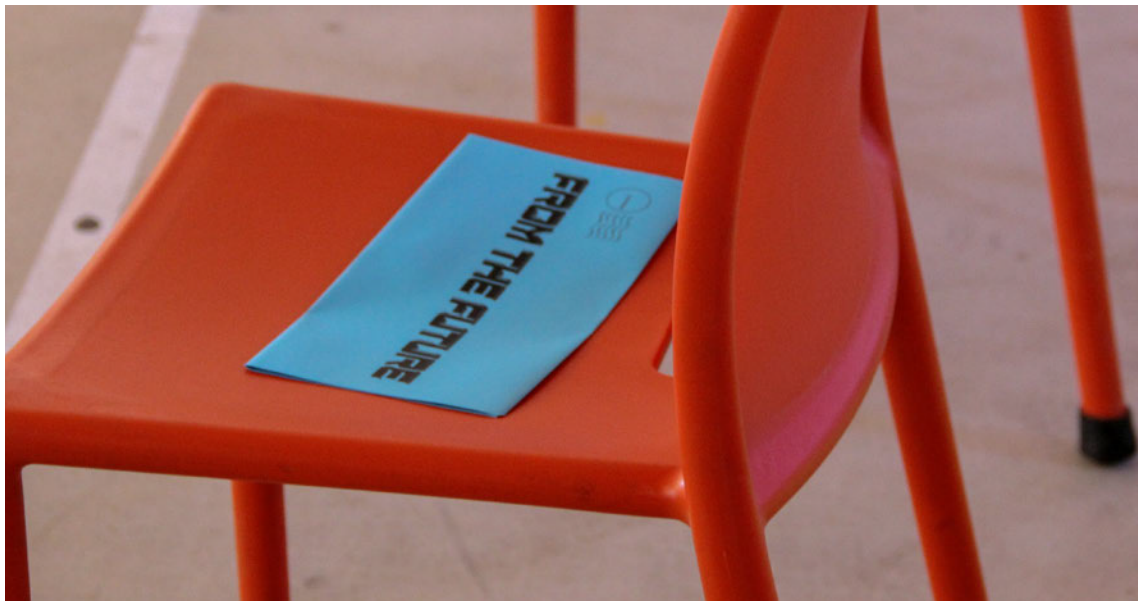


Fig. 27. Storytelling Artefact – Letter

In explicitly decolonial terms, Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying resists the extractive logics of conventional research and the epistemic hierarchies of Eurocentric design education. By treating artefacts as counter-archives, encounters as co-theorisation, performance as legitimate knowledge practice, and reflection as a mode of accountability, ASC unsettles the assumption that knowledge must be textual, neutral or authored by the researcher alone. Instead, it repositions participants as epistemic agents whose imaginaries, affective registers and cultural practices are recognised as theory-bearing in their own right. This is what makes ASC a decolonial contribution: it refuses the colonial division between data and theory, subject and object, method and pedagogy, and instead materialises research as a collective, situated, and pluriversal world-making practice.

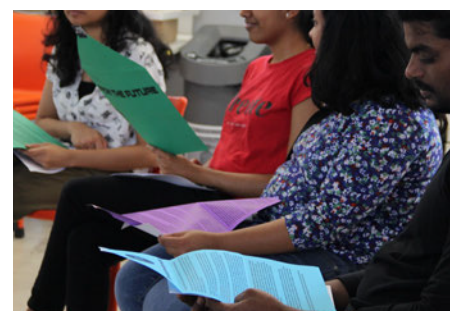
While Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying enabled propositions that conventional methods rarely surface, the findings are bounded by context. Participants were primarily design educators/students existing within UK higher education structures; experiences in further education, private academies,

or non-UK geographies may differ. The speculative format privileges people comfortable with narrative, drawing or performance; despite facilitation, those less at ease with these registers may be under-represented. However, the significance of Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying lies not only in its methodological novelty but in how it shaped the analytic horizon of this thesis. Because participants were invited to imagine otherwise through speculative forms, they were able to articulate both reconfigurations and refusals: identifying spaces where incremental change might take root and domains where only collapse could unsettle colonial logics. In other words, the very distinction between what can change and what must collapse emerged from the speculative method itself. Imagined infrastructures made visible the fragile openings of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment, while also naming the limits of reform where tokenism, censorship, and non-performativity continued to reproduce harm. The next section builds on this by synthesising participants situated proposals with the literature, using the frame of change and collapse to specify the conditions under which decolonial design education can be enacted.



Fig. 28. Storytelling Artefact – Maker Majlis Values Compass

Fig. 29. Storytelling Artefact – Letter



5.2 What Can Change, and What Must Collapse

The question of what can change and what must collapse is not only a strategic one but an ethical one, it asks us to distinguish between aspects of design education that might be reworked through sustained effort and those so entangled with colonial logics that any attempt at reform risks reproducing the very harms it claims to address. The speculative workshops, letters, artefacts and interviews brought this tension into sharp relief. Participants did not only name harms but produced situated theories, through annotated cards, metaphors of watering cans and pinball schools, proposals for alternative libraries and letters from imagined futures of what design education could yet become. These artefacts and testimonies revealed openings in curriculum, assessment and pedagogy where shifts were already being rehearsed, however tentatively, while also surfacing entrenched dynamics of tokenism, non-performativity and censorship that participants insisted could not simply be patched over but must be dismantled if meaningful transformation is to occur. In this sense, the analytic frame of what can change and what must collapse is not imposed retrospectively but emerges directly from the conditions of possibility surfaced in the findings.

Curriculum and pedagogy were repeatedly described as sites of struggle, carrying both genuine potential for reconfiguration and deep entanglement with Eurocentric norms. Participants spoke of the need to reconfigure design history modules so they were taught through different lenses and anchored in knowledge traditions long ignored by canonical accounts. Importantly, such calls do not emerge in a vacuum: feminist, postcolonial and critical pedagogical scholarship has long challenged the neutrality of the canon and sought to pluralise accounts of design history (Scotford, 1991). Yet, as participants highlighted, these interventions often remain vulnerable to containment within Eurocentric epistemic frames, where “inclusion” functions less as reorganisation than as supplementation. Too often, alternative knowledges are positioned at the margins, offered as elective modules, side notes, or token case studies rather than treated as constitutive to the field. In such configurations, non-Western design histories appear as a single lecture within a canon still anchored in European modernism, or Indigenous practices are framed as cultural context rather than theory-generating. Representation is thereby broadened, but the architecture of centrality and peripherality remains intact.

Participants’ imaginaries offered a counter to this containment by envisioning curricula where epistemic plurality was foundational rather than additive. They

described design histories taught through multiple lenses at once, listening libraries that elevated oral and material archives as theoretical sources, and a pedagogy of ongoing reset that refused the notion of a fixed canon. Such proposals did more than diversify content; they reconfigured the very architecture of curriculum, unsettling hierarchies of knowledge and building infrastructures in which diverse epistemologies function as constitutive grounds for design education. In this sense, participants' visions both resonate with and extend existing debates. They echo Mbembe's (2016) call to dismantle Eurocentric categories that present themselves as universal, while affirming Santos's (2018) insistence that epistemic justice requires recognising diverse knowledges as equally generative of theory. They align with Connell's (2019) call to reimagine universities as infrastructures for social justice, and with Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2020) insistence on re-centring knowledge traditions historically disavowed by colonialism. By materialising these arguments in speculative form, participants did not merely echo theory but generated situated proposals that signal how decolonisation requires more than diversification of canons: it demands structural reconfiguration of curriculum's epistemic architecture.

Assessment, too, was framed with ambivalence, positioned as both a site of long-standing critique and of speculative reimagination. For decades, educational research has challenged the dominance of judgment-based models, advancing dialogic, authentic, and developmental alternatives (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Sadler, 2009; Hughes, 2014; McArthur, 2022). These interventions have been significant in troubling the assumption that assessment is a neutral measure of merit, instead emphasising feedback, process, and learner agency. Yet participants argued that such reformist approaches often stop short of unsettling the deeper colonial logics in which assessment remains embedded, logics that secure institutional authority through comparison, standardisation, and the deficit-labelling of those who fall outside inherited norms. Against this backdrop, their speculative proposals did not reject earlier work but radicalised it. Collective assessment practices, co-authored rubrics, values compasses, and the recognition of failure as epistemic labour extended prior debates by reframing assessment less as a system of calibration and more as a relational infrastructure. Where assessment-for-learning or authentic assessment sought to improve alignment between learner and criteria, participants imagined accountability rooted in reciprocity, care, and collective flourishing. Failure, in this framing, was not evidence of deficit but movement, a generative space in which imagination and experimentation could take root. In this way, participants' visions both resonate with and re-situate existing

scholarship. They affirmed the value of efforts to render assessment more dialogic, but insisted that decolonising design education requires a further step: reconfiguring the very purposes of assessment so that it sustains pluriversal imagination rather than policing its limits. By embedding accountability in relation rather than hierarchy, their proposals transform assessment from a mechanism of institutional control into an infrastructure for epistemic justice.

Pedagogy and space emerged as equally fraught yet reconfigurable terrains. Within Western design education, studio-based learning is often celebrated as a more dialogic and social alternative to transmission models of pedagogy (Anthony, 1991; Webster, 2007). Scholarship has illuminated both its strengths and its limits, noting how the studio fosters collaboration but also entrenches hierarchies of expertise, valorises particular visual languages, and privileges modes of learning coded as Eurocentric (Lueth, 2008; Crowther, 2013). Participants' accounts acknowledged this history yet pressed beyond it, expanding the pedagogical imagination in ways that foregrounded cultural and embodied knowledge typically excluded from formal curricula. Cooking and recipe-sharing were positioned as legitimate design practices, oral traditions as repositories of design theory and craft as an epistemic method rather than a cultural ornament. In these proposals, pedagogy became not simply a mode of delivery but a site of epistemic reorganisation, where everyday practices of care and making could be recognised as theory-generating in their own right.

Similarly, participants destabilised the spatial assumptions that underpin design pedagogy. While the studio has long been theorised as the privileged site of legitimate learning, it also reproduces exclusions by disciplining bodies into particular arrangements of visibility, mobility, and authority. The speculative proposals of schools on wheels, rooftop classrooms, listening libraries reframed space not as a neutral container but as an active condition of epistemic justice. These visions resonate with hooks' (1994) insistence on education as a practice of freedom and Ellsworth's (2005) argument that pedagogy is always embodied and place-based, but they push further by rooting pedagogy in cultural and Indigenous epistemologies, where knowledge is inseparable from land, relation and practice. Taken together, these imaginaries extend existing pedagogical debates while also unsettling their Eurocentric frames. They signal that decolonising pedagogy is not a matter of replacing one teaching method with another, but of reconfiguring the conditions under which teaching and learning take place considering who teaches, where knowledge is located and how authority is shared. In this sense, pedagogy and space were not neutral backdrops but infrastructures of epistemic struggle, terrains where

participants rehearsed the possibility of learning otherwise.

Importantly, collapse was not understood as purely destructive. Some of the most generative spaces for decolonial practice were described as existing outside the university altogether in reading groups, activist archives or in community-led workshops where collective knowledge-making could flourish without being instrumentalised by managerial logics. These visions resonate with speculative workshop imaginaries of schools on wheels, rooftop classrooms or libraries built from oral and textile archives: pedagogical ecologies not bound by institutional walls. Such examples suggest that collapse can also be a condition of renewal, opening space for epistemic and pedagogical life beyond the neoliberal university. What can change, then, are curricula, assessment practices and pedagogical relations within the academy, though only when reconfigured structurally rather than reformed additively and what must collapse are the logics that commodify difference, displace responsibility and silence critique. The work of decolonising design education lies in navigating this uneven terrain, in the refusal of the lure of reform where it serves to stabilise colonial structures, while insisting on the possibility of change in the everyday practices of teaching, learning and collective imagination.

Taken together, these openings illuminate the conditions under which decolonial design education can be imagined and enacted. They show, in line with the first aim, how Eurocentrism continues to structure curricula, assessment and pedagogy, yet also how participants' speculative interventions generated situated proposals for reconfiguration. They clarify, in relation to the second aim, that decolonisation cannot be conflated with inclusionary gestures, however well-intentioned, that too often reproduce the very hierarchies they seek to unsettle. And they advance the third aim by demonstrating how speculative and participatory practice can operate as infrastructure for imagining otherwise, not only articulating critique but materialising futures of care, plurality and accountability. In doing so, the study responds directly to the research questions. It shows how speculative practice creates actionable pathways toward decolonisation (RQ1), how bringing past, present and future into dialogue sustains both negation and anticipation (RQ2), and how practice-based methods themselves enact decolonial possibility by producing knowledge in relation (RQ3). What can change, then, are the infrastructures of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy when reconfigured structurally rather than reformed additively. What must collapse are the logics of tokenism, appropriation and neutrality that stabilise colonial order. The task of decolonising design education, as these findings attest, lies in navigating this uneven terrain

and refusing reform where it protects colonial structures while insisting on the possibility of change in the everyday practices of teaching, learning and collective imagination.

5.3 Where Decolonial Practice Meets Institutional Constraint

Participants reminded us that most of their daily realities did not sit neatly at either pole of reconfiguration or collapse. Decolonial practice was rarely experienced as pure opening or outright foreclosure; rather, it unfolded in contradictory spaces where institutional invitations to decolonise collided with practices of containment, delay, and silencing. This is the messy middle ground, where universities enthusiastically adopt the rhetoric of inclusion while resisting the structural shifts that would make such rhetoric meaningful. In this terrain, participants located both their deepest frustrations and their most inventive tactics, fragile openings carved within constraint, moments of care and reciprocity sustained despite institutional inertia.

These contradictions surfaced most sharply in the act of teaching where participants described being hired to bring fresh perspectives and diversify curricula, yet quickly found themselves constrained by programmes still anchored in Eurocentric canons and by colleagues who treated their contributions as supplementary rather than central. Several reflected on the emotional and intellectual labour required to push against this inertia, recounting the paradox of being held up as symbols of progress while simultaneously silenced when their work unsettled dominant assumptions. The university appeared here as a double agent, as an enabler in providing a platform for critical pedagogy, yet an inhibitor in enclosing that pedagogy within bureaucratic and political limits. The consequences were not only professional but deeply affective. Participants spoke of exhaustion, grief, and frustration at being tasked with carrying the burden of decolonial labour alone, or of seeing students' critical projects celebrated in marketing materials but unsupported in practice.

Yet constraint did not preclude resistance evident in how participants described strategies for navigating these limits without capitulating to them. Some built parallel infrastructures and informal mentoring networks that operated alongside official structures but were less susceptible to co-option. This resonates with de Sousa Santos' (2007) notion of subaltern cosmopolitanism, the grassroots spaces of justice created within and against dominant systems. Others embedded reciprocity and care into everyday pedagogy, treating the classroom

itself as a microcosm of the futures they sought, even when broader institutional conditions remained hostile. These practices connect directly to the speculative workshops analysed in earlier chapters, where students too imagined classrooms as spaces of care, accountability and mutual recognition.

Decolonial practice inside universities is necessarily compromised, shaped by the need to navigate power, risk, and accountability. But compromise does not equate to defeat. Participants' accounts show that even within constraint there are fragile yet vital openings, moments where curricula can be rewritten, assessment reimaged and students encouraged to bring heritage and lived experience into design education. These openings matter precisely because they unsettle the hold of Eurocentrism from within. Lugones's (2003) concept of world-traveling is useful here: to practise decolonial pedagogy inside universities is to move between hostile and generative worlds, negotiating contradictions without allowing them to foreclose imagination. Crucially, these tensions were not only structural but rhetorical. Participants often found that the very possibility of practising decolonial pedagogy was shaped by how, where, and to whom it could be voiced. This underscores that decolonial practice is as much about cultivating conditions of speech and listening as it is about structural reform and that the politics of voice remain central to the struggle for epistemic justice.

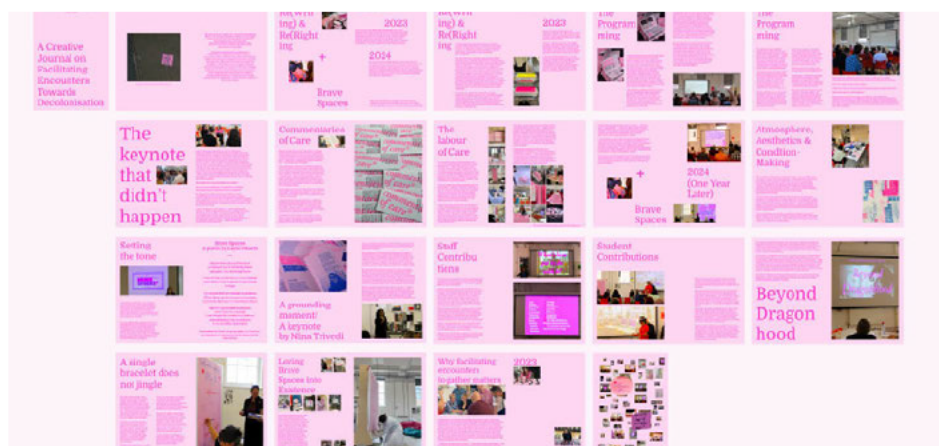
5.4 Why Facilitating Encounters to Imagine Otherwise Matters

The preceding sections have shown how participants located possibilities for change in curriculum, pedagogy and institutional structures, while also insisting that some logics must collapse if transformation is to be meaningful. Yet what emerged just as strongly was the recognition that decolonial practice cannot be confined to these categories alone. Alongside debates over reading lists, assessment frameworks and governance, participants pointed to the importance of the spaces in which people come together: reading groups, activist archives, informal mentoring circles and community workshops. These practices resist capture by institutional metrics but they nonetheless constitute vital infrastructures of knowledge-making, solidarity and imagination. They remind us that decolonisation is not only about reforming what exists but also about cultivating alternative conditions for encounter. It is in this wider sense that the practice described in Chapter 3 & 4 can be understood: not only through artefacts and texts but through staged encounters that unsettled institutional conventions. The curated conferences (*documented in an accompanying*

journal artefact alongside this thesis), the speculative workshops, the interviews with educators and the inventories designed to scaffold dialogue all worked as parallel experiments in condition-making. They tested how authority might be redistributed, how plurality could be sustained and how collective imagination might be resourced within a university context.

Decolonial scholarship has long emphasised that knowledge is produced in relation, in the act of gathering, in dialogue and in shared struggle (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Santos, 2014). Yet the neoliberal university constrains such conditions, compressing time into modular units, instrumentalising dialogue for audits and foreclosing genuine exchange under the demand for efficiency and polish. In this context, the act of convening, whether in a workshop, a reading group or a conference becomes both fragile and radical. To bring people together around questions of care, bravery or rewriting is already to resist accelerative and extractive logics. What matters here is less the outcomes of individual encounters, which are documented across the supporting artefacts, than the methodological and political significance of convening itself. Facilitating encounters enacted the thesis’s central claim: that decolonial design research must be concerned not only with analysis and representation but with designing the conditions under which alternative epistemologies can take root. Ultimately, these encounters are offered not as definitive models but as gestures, rehearsals of how gathering otherwise might look. They remind us that decolonisation is not only about changing what we teach but also about changing how we assemble, how we hold space and how we sustain plurality and disagreement in practice. In this light, convening belongs to the same horizon as the other practices traced here: neither a settled programme of change nor a total collapse but an unfinished practice of rehearsing worlds to come.

Fig. 30. Spreads from the Accompanying Thesis Artefact



5.5 Towards a framework

This chapter has shown that decolonising design education is neither a matter of adding new citations to old syllabi nor a rhetorical makeover of existing procedures, it is a structural, epistemic and relational project that asks us to redesign the very conditions under which knowledge is made, recognised and circulated. In doing so, the analysis directly advances the first aim of this thesis: to analyse how Eurocentrism continues to shape UK design education. Participants' accounts and speculative artefacts made visible how colonial modernity remains sedimented in curricular canons, assessment metrics and institutional rhythms. This echoes long-standing critiques that the coloniality of power naturalised European categories as universal (Quijano, 2000), producing what Mbembe (2016) describes as an epistemic enclosure that narrows what counts as credible knowledge. In the design domain, this enclosure appears as Western formalism masquerading as neutrality, what Costanza-Chock (2020) calls the default settings of design that privilege dominant norms while rendering other aesthetics and practices peripheral. This study exposes the lived consequences, educators of colour positioned as symbolic evidence of change while lacking decision power (Puwar, 2004), students coerced into reproducing canonical forms and staff sanctioned when contemporary colonial violences are named in the classroom.

Commitment to this diagnosis matters because it clarifies that the problem is not a deficit of examples but an architecture of authorisation. As de Sousa Santos (2014) argues, Eurocentrism operates not only by exclusion but by epistemicide, the killing of other ways of knowing by denying their conditions of legitimacy. That recognition prepares the ground for this thesis's second aim: to differentiate decolonising from surface-level diversification. The chapter has traced how "diversity" can function as a non-performative (Ahmed, 2012), policies and dashboards that promise transformation while absorbing critique into compliance rituals. Participants' descriptions of token hires, checklist decolonisation, and censorship, exemplify what Bhabra, Gebrial, and Nişancioğlu (2018) diagnose across UK HE as a turn to representation without a redistribution of power or a reckoning with colonial histories. Tuck and Yang's (2012) warning that decolonisation is not a metaphor is not a slogan here; it precisely names the slippage that participants encountered when structural questions were translated into managerial metrics. Decolonising, in this account, requires re-centring suppressed knowledge traditions (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020), pluralising the terms of theory (Connell, 2019), and remaking infrastructures so those pluralities can live (Escobar, 2018).

The chapter also advances the third aim, to mobilise speculative and participatory practice to assemble caring, plural futures by demonstrating that workshops and designed encounters did more than elicit opinion; they co-produced theory in practice. In line with Dunne and Raby (2013) and Escobar (2018), the artefacts functioned as epistemic infrastructures, acting as devices where critique and proposition could co-exist, enabling what Dinerstein (2015) calls utopian method: negation and anticipation at once. They also enacted design justice principles (Costanza-Chock, 2020), moving authority laterally and foregrounding care (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017) as a condition for knowledge. The findings respond directly to RQ1 of *How can speculative, participatory practice create actionable pathways toward decolonising design education?* by showing that such practice can materialise pathways, not blueprints: values-led assessment, commons-based governance, cross-pollinating studios, ecological/itinerant classrooms, and community-rooted archives. These are not hypotheticals; they are actionable orientations that either participants were already rehearsing or dreaming towards.

A second through-line addresses RQ2 of *Why bring past, present, and future into dialogue?* Participants insisted that histories of erasure and present censorship are inseparable from future possibility. Without historical reckoning, curricular resets risk reproducing the same canon under a different name (Mbembe, 2016; Smith, 2021). Without present protections such as academic freedom, material support and governance power, futures become marketing imagery rather than institutional commitments (Ahmed, 2012; Bhabra et al., 2018). And without prefigurative experimentation in the present, the future remains a metaphor rather than a method (Maekelbergh, 2011; Dinerstein, 2015). The analysis in this study therefore frames decolonising as a temporal practice: remembering (to refuse erasure), resisting (to shift present relations), and rehearsing (to prototype otherwise futures). Simpson (2017) and Kimmerer (2013) similarly ground transformation in situated, relational acts that bind knowledge to responsibility and care, precisely what the facilitated encounters in this study enacted.

Finally, this discussion has argued that spaces of gathering, from student circles to curated conferences are not ancillary but methodologically constitutive. In a sector that accelerates time, individualises merit and instrumentalises dialogue (Connell, 2019), to convene brave and listening spaces is already to reprogram institutional rhythms. This resonates with hooks' (1994) classroom as a location of possibility, with Freire's (2000) dialogic pedagogy of co-creation, and with Santos's (2014) call to build ecologies of knowledges in the face of

epistemicide. The encounters in this study did not aim to “fix” the university; they staged the conditions such as care, horizontality and plurality under which people could think and make together. That is why the chapter distinguishes what can change (curriculum, assessment, pedagogy, local governance practices) from what must collapse (logics that commodify difference, displace responsibility and silence critique). Where collapse is named, it is not only destructive but generative, clearing space for community archives, itinerant classrooms, and other pluriversal infrastructures to take root (Escobar, 2018; Santos, 2014).



Fig. 31. A Letter from a Decolonised Future – Student Workshop



Fig. 32. A Letter from a Decolonised Future – Student Workshop

Chapter 6

6. Concluding with a Framework, a Method and a Refusal

The preceding discussion traced the tensions of decolonial practice in design education: the fragile openings where curriculum and pedagogy can be reconfigured, the entrenched logics of tokenism and censorship that demand collapse and the speculative practices through which critique and imagination were braided together. This terrain of possibility and constraint makes clear that decolonisation cannot be captured by incremental reform or surface-level diversification; it requires methodological, epistemic and structural shifts that remain ongoing, provisional and relational. The task of this conclusion is to gather those insights and consider their implications. If the discussion chapter illuminated what participants revealed about the contradictions of working within and against Eurocentric institutions, the conclusion turns toward what this study offers to the field. It asks what forms of knowledge have been generated, what orientations emerge for educators and institutions and how speculative practice can extend the repertoire of decolonial methodologies.

This conclusion begins by crystallising those insights into a decolonial design framework, pulling together what emerged across workshops, interviews and speculative encounters not as a checklist of best practice but a constellation of commitments, a series of orientations that hold the tensions of decolonial work open between refusal and repair, critique and imagination, plurality and accountability. The framework is intentionally provisional, designed to travel across contexts while being reshaped by those who put it into practice. It anchors the chapter's wider argument, before turning to reflect on the methodological and empirical contributions of this research and to consider what remains painful, unresolved and urgent in the struggle for decolonising design education.

6.1 Designs for a Decolonial Design Framework

The analysis of the workshops has shown that decolonial work in design education cannot be captured by a checklist of best practice or simplified into a toolkit, what emerged instead was a series of orientations that hold the tensions of decolonial work open. To call this a framework is to acknowledge its provisional, situated and evolving character, not prescriptive or singular but a constellation of commitments that can shift and reshape across spaces.

This framework does not offer certainty, instead, it provides a structure for working with uncertainty, for asking what must collapse, what can be reconfigured, and what might be invented otherwise. It builds directly on the study's research questions, particularly how speculative design can serve as a method within decolonial inquiry and why it matters to bring past, present and future into dialogue. Each commitment distills both participant visions and the methodological contribution of speculative practice, offering the field of design education a set of actionable yet flexible orientations.

1. Decolonisation begins with refusal.

Not all structures can or should be reformed. Participants made clear that tokenistic gestures, extractive diversity initiatives and bureaucratic neutralities function as technologies of coloniality. A decolonial framework therefore begins with refusal: naming which practices must collapse and treating refusal not as disengagement but as an active method for opening otherwise. In research terms, this resonates with Tuck and Yang's (2014) call to refuse damage-centred framings, and in practice it affirms that sometimes the most generative work is in withholding consent to participate in colonial logics. Refusal also echoes Simpson's (2017) understanding of grounded resistance as a practice of protecting life against extractive logics. In the context of design education, refusal emerges as an epistemic tool: it clears space where alternative pedagogies and infrastructures can take root. As an actionable orientation, this commitment reframes refusal as method. It asks educators and institutions to distinguish between what can be repaired and what must collapse, recognising that generative futures sometimes begin not with addition but with refusal.

2. Curriculum must be re-rooted in plural epistemologies.

Curriculum was consistently described as the terrain where Eurocentric norms most visibly shape design education. Participants called not for supplementation but for re-rooting: treating Indigenous, diasporic and community-based epistemologies as constitutive rather than additive. A decolonial framework therefore insists that design history, methods and evaluation be grounded in plurality. This entails working with archives, oral traditions and community partnerships as legitimate epistemic sources and treating students not as consumers of canon but as co-participants in living knowledge systems. This insistence aligns with Santos's (2014) call for an ecology of knowledges, where different epistemologies coexist without being subsumed into Eurocentric

hierarchies. It also extends Mbembe's (2016) critique of epistemic enclosures by offering concrete curricular strategies for opening them: teaching design through community archives (Flinn, 2011), oral histories (Smith, 2021) or global design histories (Adamson, Riello, & Teasley, 2011). What emerged in this study is that such re-rooting is not only a matter of content but of epistemic authority, recognising students and educators as co-participants in living knowledge systems rather than consumers of a canon. As an orientation, this commitment calls for curriculum design that treats plurality as the ground, not the supplement. It requires educators to unsettle canonical categories and to embed legitimacy in ways of knowing that have historically been dismissed as craft, folk practice, or other.

3. Pedagogy is a practice of care and horizontality.

For participants, pedagogy was where they felt most agency within constrained institutions. Care emerged as a recurring theme, not as sentimentality but as infrastructure, as a way of creating atmospheres where authenticity could surface, disagreement could be sustained without punishment and responsibility was shared across roles. This was often enacted through practices of horizontality such as flattening hierarchies in studio critiques, co-creating workshop agendas or emphasising mutual accountability in classroom dialogue. This resonates with hooks' (1994) vision of the classroom as a location of possibility where collective imagination can flourish, and with Freire's (1970) insistence on dialogic pedagogy as a mode of co-theorisation rather than transmission. More recent work on care in higher education (Tronto, 2013; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017) frames it as an epistemic orientation, the conditions under which knowledge circulates and is sustained. In this study, speculative artefacts, materialised these commitments, showing how care and horizontality could be enacted rather than remaining abstract ideals. As an orientation, this commitment asks educators to treat pedagogy itself as a decolonial method, not simply a vehicle for knowledge delivery but a relational practice that foregrounds reciprocity, vulnerability and collective responsibility.

4. Assessment must be values-based and reciprocal.

Assessment was identified as one of the most entrenched residues of coloniality, producing hierarchies of belonging and competition that mirrored Eurocentric standards of legitimacy. Participants described frustration with rigid grading frameworks and proposed alternatives such as values compasses, co-authored rubrics and peer-accountability systems. These devices were not

about lowering standards but about shifting the measure of value, from conformity to canon toward fidelity to commitments and responsibility to community. This aligns with Boud and Falchikov's (2007) call for sustainable assessment that equips learners to evaluate themselves and others in ways that endure beyond formal education, as well as Sambell, McDowell, and Montgomery's (2013) emphasis on participatory and dialogic assessment design. It also echoes critiques of neoliberal metrics in higher education (Mountz et al., 2015; Berg & Seeber, 2016), which show how competitive, accelerative logics reproduce exclusion. As an actionable orientation, this commitment reframes assessment as reciprocity rather than ranking. It urges educators to co-design evaluative practices that honour values, commitments, and community accountability, resisting the colonial residues embedded in conventional grading systems.

5. Institutional structures must be accountable, not performative.

Participants repeatedly emphasised that curriculum and pedagogy, however imaginative, remained fragile without structural support. They described how universities celebrated critical work symbolically while withholding resources, authority or protection for those doing it. Diversity dashboards, equity committees and branding campaigns were cited as examples of non-performativity (Ahmed, 2012), where institutions promise transformation but stabilise the status quo. This study's findings echo Giroux's (2014) critique of neoliberal universities that adopt the language of social justice while intensifying existing hierarchies, and Maldonado-Torres' (2016) argument that coloniality persists in institutional logics of governance. Without accountability, redistribution of resources, governance power for equity bodies, secure contracts for staff of colour, decolonisation risks becoming another layer of unpaid labour. As an orientation, this commitment insists that institutions move beyond symbolic gestures. Accountability must be relational and material, embedding equity in decision-making structures, safeguarding dissent and resourcing decolonial work as core labour rather than voluntary add-on.

6. Imagination is method, not luxury.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that imagination is not an optional flourish but a rigorous decolonial method. Through speculative storytelling, sketching and world-building, participants articulated desires and rehearsed possibilities that conventional critique alone could not surface. The speculative mode enabled what Dinerstein (2015) calls

a utopian method, holding negation and anticipation together, refusing what is while rehearsing what could be. This resonates with Escobar's (2018) call for design to embrace pluriversality through world-making rather than problem-solving, and with Costanza-Chock's (2020) design justice framework, which positions imagination as central to collective liberation. In this study, speculative artefacts were not decorative but epistemic devices, they enabled participants to imagine otherwise in ways that were embodied, affective and relational. As an actionable orientation, this commitment places imagination at the heart of decolonial pedagogy and governance. It urges educators and institutions to cultivate speculative practice not as escapism but as a method for rehearsing futures otherwise and sustaining care and desire as conditions of knowledge.

These six commitments form the outline of a decolonial design framework. They are not steps to be followed but principles to be adapted, contested and expanded across contexts. They balance refusal with repair in a way that they make visible the paradoxes of decolonial practice; that it must be critical while remaining caring, plural while resisting co-option and imaginative while grounded in accountability. This framework is therefore both a research contribution and a pedagogical orientation. For the field of participatory design, it demonstrates how speculative practice can generate methodological innovations that move beyond extractive participation toward co-theorisation. For design education, it offers an evolving structure through which educators and students can reimagine curricula, pedagogy, assessment and institutional life in ways that challenge Eurocentric inheritances and nurture plural futures. Most of all, it affirms that decolonisation is not an endpoint but an ongoing practice of condition-making, an unfinished struggle that must remain alive in order to be transformative.

The contributions of this thesis are perhaps most clearly glimpsed in the interplay between its different modes of practice. The Maker Majlis speculative interviews, the Letter from a Decolonised Future workshop, and the facilitated conferences (*submitted as an accompanying journal artefact alongside this thesis*) each offered distinct but related ways of staging decolonial research. The interviews foregrounded critique and desire in intimate registers, positioning participants as co-theorists who could articulate both the weight of coloniality and the shape of alternatives. The workshops and interviews extended this by creating a shared imaginative space where participants could rehearse futures otherwise, giving form to the methodological claim that imagination is not a luxury but a rigorous practice of inquiry. The conferences, though analysed less closely within the thesis, echoed these same commitments at a collective scale.

They convened students, staff, and practitioners around questions of care, bravery, and rewriting, demonstrating how decolonial research can also take the form of condition-making: assembling atmospheres and facilitating encounters where critique and imagination can be voiced together.



Fig. 33. A Letter from a Decolonised Future – Student Workshop



Fig. 34. Storytelling Artefact – Maker Majlis Heart

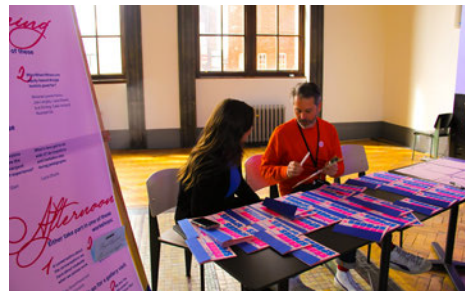


Fig. 35. Facilitating Brave Spaces Conference

Taken together, these practices do not prescribe a model of decolonial pedagogy but perform gestures toward it. They show that decolonising design education is not reducible to curriculum revision or policy reform but involves cultivating modes of relation, intimate, imaginative and collective, that unsettle inherited hierarchies and open space for plurality. In this sense, the framework proposed in this thesis is not abstracted from the research encounters but crystallised through them. Each practice, whether the speculative conversation, the co-written letter or the convened gatherings echoes the framework's commitments to refusal, plurality, care, accountability, reciprocity and imagination.

6.2 Knowledge Offerings

This thesis makes its contribution to knowledge across three interconnected registers: methodological, empirical and practical. Rather than treating these as discrete, it is more accurate to see them as braided together, each reinforcing and extending the others. The methodological innovation of speculative interviewing shaped the empirical accounts that were generated, those empirical insights in turn informed the articulation of a decolonial design framework that is intended not as prescription but as an orientation toward change.

The first and perhaps most distinctive contribution lies in the development and testing of a methodological approach that I describe as Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying. Throughout the thesis I have developed and tested this designed hybrid method in which artefacts, speculative prompts and facilitated performance operate as infrastructures that support collective reflection, critique and imagination. Rather than relying on conventional participatory or interview based models in which participants are primarily positioned as respondents to a set of questions, this approach seeks to create encounters where participants can engage more actively in shaping the direction of the discussion and the ideas that emerge from it. In this sense, the research was intentionally designed to create conditions for co-theorising, understood here not as shared authorship of the final theoretical text but as a collaborative process through which participants contribute interpretations, critiques and speculative visions of possible futures that inform the conceptual direction of the study.

Through the introduction of speculative prompts and artefactual interventions within the research encounters, participants were invited to move beyond simply recounting their experiences of existing institutional conditions and instead to reflect collectively on how those conditions might be reimaged. These moments of speculation created opportunities for participants to rehearse critique and possibility together, articulating tensions, aspirations and alternative imaginaries that informed how the research came to understand the present realities and future possibilities of design education. In this way, the conversations generated through Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying did not simply produce accounts of experience; they also opened a space where participants could collectively reflect on the structures shaping their work and imagine how those structures might be transformed.

The artefact led interviews and encounters in this study were therefore structured not simply as sites for gathering testimony, but as dialogic encounters

through which forms of co-theorising could emerge. Rather than positioning participants solely as respondents whose experiences would later be interpreted by the researcher, the conversations were designed to create space for reflection, critique and speculation to unfold collectively. The introduction of the Maker Majlis Induction Pack was central to enabling this shift when speaking to educators. Introduced partway through the facilitated conversation, it acted as a speculative prompt that moved the discussion from diagnostic reflection on institutional conditions toward a more imaginative exploration of what design education might otherwise become. This transition was often palpable within the interviews themselves. Participants' speech rhythms softened, moments of laughter and surprise surfaced, and the imaginative register created by the speculative prompt allowed heavy accounts of tokenism, censorship and exhaustion to be carried differently. In this sense, the speculative mode opened a space in which critique could be braided with possibility. Participants were able not only to reflect on the constraints shaping their experiences within institutions, but also to articulate desires, tensions and alternative visions for how curriculum, pedagogy and institutional structures might be reconfigured. Rather than remaining bound to the limitations of present-day institutional realities, the speculative prompt allowed participants to collectively rehearse how design education could be imagined and enacted otherwise.

Protecting participants' anonymity formed a central principle of the research design. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith reminds us, acts of protection within decolonising research can operate across many scales: "The scale of protecting can be as enormous as the Pacific Ocean or the Amazon rainforest, and as small as an infant. It can be as real as land and as abstract as a belief about the spiritual essence of the land" (Smith, 2012, p. 180). This framing recognises that protecting those who participate in research is not only a procedural matter but an ethical commitment embedded within decolonising methodologies. In this study, the educators participating were all people of colour working within higher education institutions where openly critiquing institutional structures could carry professional risks. Their contributions were therefore anonymised with consent so that participants could speak openly about their experiences while remaining protected within the institutional contexts they continue to navigate. Participants were informed of this approach through the participant information sheet provided during the consent process, which outlined that their contributions would be anonymised within the thesis, and during interviews participants occasionally sought reassurance that reflections would remain anonymised, highlighting the importance of creating a space in which they could speak openly while remaining protected.

This commitment to protection was enacted through the design of the research encounters themselves. Rather than positioning participants as sources of testimony to be gathered and analysed at a distance, the artefact-led encounters of Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying were structured as dialogic engagements in which participants could reflect, critique and imagine futures alongside the artefacts they encountered. Speculative prompts and artefacts were introduced not simply to elicit responses but to invite participants to actively shape the direction of the conversation, generating interpretations, critiques and possible futures for design education. In this way, co-theorising occurred through participants' engagement with the speculative artefacts and prompts, allowing them to contribute ideas and conceptual directions that informed how the research understands the present conditions and possible transformations of design education. These methodological and ethical choices positioned participants' contributions not as extractable accounts but as part of a collaborative process of reflection and imagination.

The methodological contribution is therefore twofold, firstly, Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying demonstrates how participatory design can be reoriented away from extraction and technocentric outputs and toward reciprocity, epistemic transformation and pluriversal world-building. Secondly, it shows how qualitative research can be animated through speculative artefacts so that interviews are not only sites of testimony but of collective imagination. This is transferable, the method can be adapted in other disciplines where researchers seek to hold critique and hope together, particularly in contexts marked by exclusionary or colonial logics.

Alongside this methodological advance, the thesis makes a substantive empirical contribution. Through speculative interviews with design educators of colour working in UK higher education, the study surfaces one of the first detailed accounts of how Eurocentric structures are endured, resisted and reimaged in design programmes in UK Higher Education. Participants spoke with clarity about the persistence of Eurocentric canons and aesthetic hierarchies, where European modernism continues to define what counts as "good design" and other traditions are relegated to categories of craft. They described the emotional and professional consequences of this erasure, including shame, isolation and the constant demand to translate their practices into Eurocentric forms. These accounts extend the critical literature on curriculum and canon by providing clear descriptions of how colonial epistemologies continue to shape everyday teaching and belonging.

Yet the empirical contribution is not only diagnostic, the interviews also illuminated how educators of colour are already building otherwise practices, often in precarious or marginalised conditions. Care was consistently described as a radical pedagogical orientation, protective, horizontal and attentive to lived knowledge. Heritage was mobilised not nostalgically but as an insurgent resource, grounding pedagogy in ancestral, embodied and community traditions. Imagination emerged as both method and survival strategy, enabling educators to sustain themselves and their students in hostile environments. At the same time, the study documents the burdens of tokenism and emotional labour, the ways in which diversity agendas instrumentalise staff of colour for reputational gain while withholding real power and the structural censorship that silences politically sensitive teaching on contemporary colonial violence. Together these findings provide a textured and effectively rich account of the contradictions of working at the intersection of decolonial commitment and institutional constraint.

The third dimension of contribution is practical and theoretical, the articulation of a decolonial design framework. Rather than offering a checklist of best practice, the framework crystallises the orientations that emerged across workshops, interviews and speculative exercises. It holds together refusal and repair, critique and imagination, immediate action and long-term structural transformation. The framework is organised around six commitments. First, it begins with refusal, recognising that some institutional logics such as tokenism, bureaucratic co-option and enforced neutrality cannot be reformed but must be named and dismantled. Second, it insists that curriculum be re-rooted in plural epistemologies, treating Indigenous, diasporic and community-based traditions as foundational rather than supplemental. Third, it frames pedagogy as a practice of care and horizontality, affirming lived experience and cultivating dialogic and relational classrooms. Fourth, it calls for assessment to be reimagined around values and reciprocity rather than conformity to inherited rubrics. Fifth, it demands institutional accountability rather than performativity, requiring the redistribution of resources, secure positions for staff of colour, and protection of political speech. Finally, it positions imagination not as luxury but as method, recognising speculative practice as a rigorous means of articulating desires and rehearsing otherwise. The contribution here lies in providing design educators and institutions with a framework that is at once grounded in lived experience and open to adaptation. It resists the reduction of decolonisation to managerial toolkits or surface diversity, insisting instead on orientations that can travel across contexts while remaining unfinished and contested. In doing so, the framework bridges the empirical and methodological contributions, it

translates the insights of speculative interviewing into principles that can guide action, while also evidencing the generative potential of imagination as method.

Through this framing, the contributions of this thesis can be summarised in three claims. Methodologically, it advances Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying as a decolonial speculative extension of participatory design. Empirically, it provides an in-depth account of educators of colour's lived realities in UK design education, documenting both the persistence of Eurocentrism and the counter-practices of care, heritage, refusal and imagination. Practically and theoretically, it offers a decolonial design framework that provides orientations for transforming curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and institutional structures. These contributions extend the field of participatory and design research, enrich decolonial scholarship, and provide actionable entry points for educators and institutions committed to change.

6.3 What Has Been Illuminated

This thesis set out with three aims: to critically analyse and challenge Eurocentrism within UK higher education design programmes; to articulate how decolonising design education differs from the more common but limited project of diversification; and to imagine and assemble more equitable, caring futures for design education. The research questions asked how speculative design practice might operate as a method within decolonial inquiry and why it is important to bring past, present, and future into dialogue when rethinking education. What has been illuminated is, first, the persistence of Eurocentrism as a structuring force. Across curricula, pedagogy and institutional life, colonial residues remain deeply embedded. The canon of European modernism continues to be presented as universal, assessment practices reproduce competitive hierarchies tied to Western standards and institutional logics often reduce decolonisation to branding, buzzwords or censored forms of inclusion. These findings confirm that diversification alone, such as adding more names or examples without disturbing the underlying architectures, cannot undo the coloniality of design education.

Simultaneously, the study illuminated how these structures are not total, nor uncontested, through speculative workshops and interviews, participants articulated counter-practices that foreground care, reciprocity and refusal. They imagined curricula rooted in plural epistemologies, pedagogies oriented around collective responsibility, assessment practices grounded in values and accountability rather than grades and spatial arrangements that move beyond the classroom walls. These interventions demonstrate that decolonisation is not only critique but also world-making, a process of designing conditions under which many epistemologies can co-exist and flourish.

Methodologically, the study has shown that speculative practice enables this dual movement of critique and imagination. Through devices such as A Letter from a Decolonised Future and the Maker Majlis induction pack, interviews and workshops became spaces where participants could theorise, not only testify. What was illuminated is that imagination is not a luxury, but a rigorous method, a method that creates room to rehearse futures otherwise, while holding past and present in view. Finally, the thesis has illuminated decolonisation as an ongoing practice rather than a destination. Participants insisted that refusal, unlearning and reset are continual processes, never complete. The work is unfinished, and must remain so if it is to resist co-option, in this sense, the contribution of the study is not a finished model but an orientation, a way of

thinking, teaching and designing that insists on accountability, plurality and care, while refusing to stabilise colonial logics through surface reform.

6.4 What Remains Painful, Unresolved and Urgent

While this thesis has illuminated openings for change, it has also confronted what remains painful, unresolved and urgent in the struggle to decolonise design education. The testimonies of participants revealed with clarity that the costs of decolonial practice are disproportionately borne by educators of colour, who are consistently tasked with carrying the labour of transformation without structural recognition or support. This burden is not only professional but also affective, manifesting in exhaustion, frustration, and grief. The non-performativity of institutional diversity work, where declarations of change fail to materialise in material redistribution, means that staff and students often feel complicit in systems that refuse to shift (Ahmed, 2012). Among the most painful accounts were moments of censorship and enforced neutrality, where participants were explicitly warned against teaching Palestinian fiction or addressing contemporary colonial violence. These silences reveal the narrow limits of academic freedom under neoliberal governance, where reputational management takes precedence over justice. They also expose a temporal displacement in which colonialism is tolerated as a historical object of study but resisted as a present condition, a manoeuvre that protects institutional comfort while evading accountability. This echoes Lara's reflection in the speculative Maker Majlis interviews: "there is an active resistance against dealing with colonialism as an event of the present. And I know, I know for sure that in 10 years, they will deal with this history because it's history, because it ended, because it cannot threaten their position." Her observation presents the temporal politics at play that colonialism becomes permissible only once it is safely consigned to the past, rather than confronted as an ongoing structure.

To decolonise design education therefore requires first recognising colonialism as a continuing struggle. Recognising that this is not work a single study can resolve, nor an agenda that a university can briefly highlight and then move on from once it loses institutional currency. The trajectory of this project itself illustrates this precarity; it was funded at a time when decolonisation was strategically foregrounded, yet by the conclusion of the research, the institutional appetite had waned. Such shifts reveal the fragility of university commitments, underscoring the need to treat decolonisation not as a passing priority but as a sustained and unfinished project that resists co-option into

the temporal cycles of policy fashion and reputational management. What remains unresolved, then, is how to enact decolonial practice in spaces where institutional structures are actively hostile to it. Many participants described creating parallel infrastructures such as reading groups, community workshops and activist archives that sustained otherwise practices at the margins of the university. These initiatives echo what Maeckelbergh (2011) calls prefigurative politics: small-scale enactments of alternative futures that resist dominant institutional logics. Yet such spaces remain precarious, vulnerable to exhaustion and reliant on unpaid labour, disproportionately carried by educators of colour. The central question of sustainability therefore looms large, how can these practices be protected and resourced without being absorbed or diluted through institutional co-option? Equally unresolved is the challenge of translation across power. As Giroux (2014) warns, critical pedagogies are often neutralised when reframed in the language of market logics. Tailoring decolonial commitments into discourses of innovation or employability may open doors to institutional uptake, but it risks hollowing out their radical edge, reducing refusal and accountability to palatable performance. The danger of co-option is thus ever-present, and the balance between pragmatism and fidelity remains a constant negotiation (Shahjahan et al., 2021). Here, Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying emerges not as a solution but as a method for holding these contradictions open without prematurely resolving them. By staging encounters where critique and imagination coexisted, through letters from alternate realities or imaginary schools, this study demonstrated how speculative practice can make visible both the weight of exhaustion and the possibility of otherwise. Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying allowed participants to articulate refusal without despair, to imagine beyond the limits of institutional comfort and to rehearse conditions that do not yet exist. In this sense, speculative practice offered not escapism but a rigorous decolonial methodology: a way of sustaining the work precisely where it remains painful, unresolved and urgent.

What is urgent, therefore, is clear, decolonial practice cannot remain marginal, dependent on goodwill, unpaid labour or symbolic gestures. It requires transformation at the structural levels of curriculum, pedagogy and governance. Without the redistribution of resources, the protection of political speech and forms of accountability that are relational rather than procedural, decolonisation will be absorbed into the branding machinery of the neoliberal university while leaving colonial logics intact. The urgency is both ethical and practical, that being, to resist the emptying of decolonisation into managerial rhetoric and to insist that it be anchored instead in refusal, reciprocity and imagination.

6.5 Concluding Reflections: Process, Refusal, and What Next?

This project has been as much embodied and emotional as intellectual. As a Muslim woman of Iraqi Turkmen and British heritage, I could not claim neutrality; my positionality shaped every methodological choice, reminding me that research is always entangled with who we are and the histories we carry. The hardest moments came in listening to participants' exhaustion, censorship, and grief at repeatedly encountering Eurocentrism, which left me questioning how to do justice to their words without collapsing them into abstraction. What sustained me was treating interviews as co-theorisation and speculative encounters as reciprocal rather than extractive, formats that kept participants' visions active, relational and unfinished. Refusal became both ethic and method: refusing neat toolkits, refusing to mine testimony for evidence, and refusing to erase contradictions. These refusals were acts of care that aligned the research with its commitments. The project also reshaped my own design practice, affirming imagination not as escapism but as a way of rehearsing sustaining futures. Reading the Maker Majlis induction pack aloud, I felt what it means to perform a different world into being, a reminder that decolonisation begins not with strategy but with how we carry ourselves in classrooms, studios, and communities.

Looking forward, this thesis does not offer closure but orientation. For the field of design education, the message is plain, Eurocentrism, tokenism and censorship remain entrenched and symbolic gestures of diversity are no substitute for decolonisation. Yet equally clear is the framework that has emerged from this research: six commitments that hold refusal and repair, care and accountability, imagination and action together. These are not prescriptive steps but living orientations that can guide transformation across curricula, pedagogy, assessment and institutional life. For myself as a researcher, the journey continues on two registers. Academically, Artefactual Speculative Co-Storying now stands as a method to be further developed. There is scope to test its adaptability beyond design education, into other disciplines, communities and geographies where decolonial work is urgently needed. Personally, the challenge is to carry the commitments of this research into my own teaching. This means resisting assimilation, creating spaces where students can bring their whole selves into design and continuing to practice imagination as method. It also means seeking solidarity and being in beloved community (hooks, 2000) because decolonial work is and should never be borne alone.

For design education more broadly, the next steps must be structural as well as pedagogical. At the curricular level, histories and methods must be re-rooted in plural epistemologies, drawing from Indigenous, diasporic, and community traditions as constitutive, not supplementary. At the pedagogical level, practices of care, reciprocity and slowness must be nurtured in defiance of the accelerating tempos of neoliberal universities. At the institutional level, accountability must be prioritised over performativity, resources must be redistributed, staff of colour supported in secure positions and political speech protected. Beyond the university walls, alliances with communities, activist groups and non-institutional learning spaces must be strengthened, recognising that some of the most vital decolonial practices live outside academia altogether.

Ultimately, what this thesis has illuminated is both the persistence of coloniality and the fragments of otherwise that already exist. What remains unresolved is the tension between possibility and co-option. What is urgent is the need to prevent decolonisation from being emptied into branding. The task now is clear, to carry forward the commitments of refusal, care, reciprocity and imagination, not as checklist or policy but as ongoing practice. The goal is not to reach a finalised state of a decolonised design education, but to nurture it as a continuous process, always unfinished, always in motion, the endeavour is to keep the struggle alive, to create and defend conditions where plurality, care and justice can take root. To arrive at otherwise, where decolonising is embraced as an unfinished practice, where imagination is sustained as method and where design education assembles caring futures rather than reproducing colonial pasts.

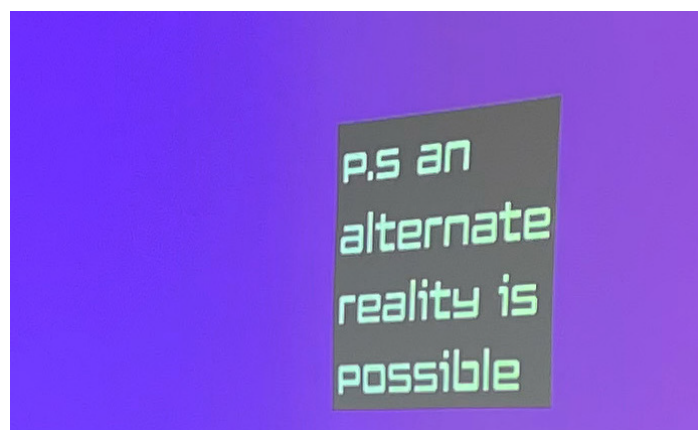


Fig. 36. Screen from A Letter from a Decolonised Future – Student Workshop

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Appendix

A.1 Introduction

This appendix gathers supporting materials including ethics approval, equity/diversity mapping, and creative/participatory outputs that emerged during the research process. Materials are presented in the following order:

Overview:

A.2 Ethics Approval

A.3 EDI Mapping

A.4 Letter from a Decolonised Future

A.4.1 Identifying Barriers in Literature

A.4.2 Participant Forms

A.4.3 The Letter Artefact

A.4.4 The Prompt Cards

A.4.5 Fieldnotes

A.4.6 Raw Workshop Sketches

A.4.7 Additional Images of the Workshop

A.5 Maker Majlis Speculative Interviews

A.5.1 Participant Forms

A.5.2 Interview Structure and Script

A.5.3 Data Management Plan

A.5.4 Maker Majlis Induction Pack Artefact

A.5.5 Transcripts

A.5.6 Analysis Mapping of Themes

A.2 Ethics Approval

Title	Ethics Review Reference	Approval Date	Thesis Chapters
Decolonising Design Education: Futures Workshop	ER45124097	19.07.22	Chapter 2
Decolonising Design Education: Assembling Caring Futures	ER63907354	31.05.24	Chapter 2

A.3 EDI Mapping

A review of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) statements from a sample of ten UK universities offering design-related courses reveals consistent patterns of institutional language that centre diversity and inclusion but rarely touch on decolonisation, colonial histories, or epistemic power.

University	EDI Statement (excerpt)
Sheffield Hallam University	“A culture of inclusion... where everyone feels they belong, irrespective of background or identity.”
University of Manchester	“An inclusive place to work and study... characterised by equity, diversity, and a sense of belonging.”
University of Salford	“An inspirational, inclusive learning and working environment, celebrating the diversity of our university community.”
University of Leicester	“A truly inclusive university... where all members of our community are valued... to challenge structural inequities.”
University of the Arts London (UAL)	“A fairer and more inclusive institution... EDI is integral to our strategy, values and activities.”
University of Birmingham	“We strive to foster an environment where all members of our community can flourish... and where a diversity of experiences and perspectives is welcomed.”
University of West London	“An inclusive environment... where all can reach their full potential... welcomed and treated with respect.”
University of Dundee	“An environment that values and celebrates diversity... empowering everyone to succeed regardless of their background.”
Queen Mary University of London	Focuses on representation metrics and acknowledges critiques of institutional racism.
Falmouth University	“Eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations... essential to our success as a university and community.”

A.4 Letter from a Decolonised Future

A.4.1 Identifying Barriers in Literature

Identifying Barriers to form the letter from a decolonised future

The following corpus of 39 texts informed the identification of five recurring barriers to decolonisation in design education. Each entry includes a representative quotation or insight that links the source to one or more barriers. These are not exhaustive readings but illustrative selections showing how theory was translated into speculative provocations within *A Letter from a Decolonised Future*.

Author(s), Year	Title	Insights/ Notes	Barrier Link
Mignolo & Walsh, 2018	<i>On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis</i>	“Decoloniality is about the possibility of a world in which many worlds can co-exist.” (p. 2) - What does a design school where many worlds fit look like? Are disciplines worlds? Perhaps Microcosms that could meet? Many worlds would be made up by many people and their values, how is “good” design perceived in that outlook?	#3 Myth of good design / pluriversality
Escobar, 2018	<i>Designs for the Pluriverse</i>	Escobar writes that design for transitions must be grounded in the pluriverse, not the universal. Not designing a system where all designers do the same thing but perhaps an outlook where ways of thinking/ making are not so separate, what happens at the peripheries of the pluriverse?	#5 Disciplinary silos
Smith, L. T., 2021	<i>Decolonizing Methodologies</i> (3rd ed.)	“Research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions.” (p. 5) This made me think about assessment in relation to conditions/ politics. Those moments where you make work to fit a “standard”. Thinking about things at stake, for a design student that is largely about grades. What if that was removed, what would that allow for?	#1 Assessment as colonial technology

Santos, B. de S., 2014	<i>Epistemologies of the South</i>	Abyssal thinking refers to Santos' theory of how modern Western thought creates a radical divide, a metaphorical line that divides reality into two realms, one that is considered real and dominant ("this side of the line") and another that is rendered invisible and non-existent ("the other side of the line"). Thinking about this in a curricula context, the lines of professionalism in design comes to mind, what are the Eurocentric dominant norms that still show up. How can they be dispelled? How can power be shifted?	#4 Eurocentric curricula
Mbembe, A., 2017	<i>Critique of Black Reason</i>	Mbembe discusses the idea of how colonial reasoning classified, measured, and hierarchised. Hierarchy shows up in different areas of education, from staff/student divides to measuring value. How can value be measured through a lens of the pluriverse? How can educators assess ways of thinking they don't understand with care?	#1 Assessment & measurement
Maldonado-Torres, N., 2007	"On the Coloniality of Being"	Torres discusses that coloniality is not just about external domination or economic systems, but about how colonial structures penetrate subjectivity, time and space. In relation to this study considering how these remnants of colonial thinking still organises spaces hierarchically, classrooms, institutions, and borders all become technologies of exclusion. For design education, this links to how classrooms privilege certain bodies, orientations, and modes of knowledge (as Ahmed also notes in <i>Queer Phenomenology 2006</i>).	#2 Spatial/temporal disciplining

Theme: Feminist / Critical Pedagogy

Author(s), Year	Title	Key Quote / Insight	Barrier Link
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hooks, b., 1994	<i>Teaching to Transgress</i>	Thinking through hooks' vision of the classroom remaining the most radical space of possibility in the academy, consider the ways that this is made true. How can freedom be implemented? How can freedom be sustained? Freedom would disrupt ideas of "good" and "bad" design.	#3 Myth of good design / pedagogy as freedom
Ahmed, S., 2006	<i>Queer Phenomenology</i>	Again considering Ahmed's notion that spaces are designed to privilege some and exclude others. What would an act of othering in spatial design look like? How can spaces be facilitated to allow for everyone to bring their whole selves.	#2 Spatial/temporal disciplining
Ahmed, S., 2012	<i>On Being Included</i>	Reflecting on Ahmed's notion that equity and diversity are often mobilised as technologies of appearance that allow institutions to appear to be <i>doing the work</i> . What would truly being committed to equity look like through a lens of value? How can students make work that truly reflects them and their identities if they remain in systems that performatively declare commitment without implementation?	#1 Assessment & institutional measurement
Ahmed, S., 2017	<i>Living a Feminist Life</i>	Ahmed conceptualises complaint as both an affective and institutional act. Complaints are not just private feelings; they are formal attempts to register how power operates, exposing the mechanics of exclusion within institutions. In design education, assessment functions like a complaint in reverse: it is an institutionalised system of judgement, where students are classified and measured according to Eurocentric standards. This outlook helps to reveal ideas of assessment as a technology of power that enforces compliance rather than neutral evaluation.	#1 Assessment / accountability
Jaggar, A., 1989	"Love and Knowledge"	Jaggar critiques the idea that knowledge is objective, detached and rational. She argues that emotions are not opposed to knowledge but are integral to how we perceive, interpret, and evaluate the world. If emotions are epistemically	#3 Myth of objectivity in design

		<p>significant, then the feelings of exclusion, alienation or resistance experienced by students in design schools are not merely personal they are knowledge about institutional injustice.</p>	
Puig de la Bellacasa, M., 2017	<i>Matters of Care</i>	<p>Puig de la Bellacasa develops care as not only an affective practice but also an ethical-political and epistemic commitment.</p> <p>Care is framed as world-making capable of sustaining and transforming relationships between humans, technologies, and environments. She argues that care is always ambivalent — it can reproduce inequalities or disrupt them. What would it mean to reject assessment as a colonial technology of classification. Care offers a counter-framework: instead of judging and ranking, pedagogy could be oriented around sustaining students' capacities, relationships, wellbeing and multiple knowledge systems.</p>	#1 Alternative to assessment / care
Tronto, J., 1993	<i>Moral Boundaries</i>	<p>Tronto develops the concept of care as a political ethic, not just a private or interpersonal concern. What would this mean for Eurocentric assessment frameworks classify and rank students, reinforcing hierarchies. Tronto's ethic of care reframes responsibility: instead of sorting and measuring, education could become about sustaining the conditions for students to thrive. In this sense, where pedagogy itself could become a collective, relational and ethical practice rather than a transmission of supposedly objective standards.</p>	#1 Assessment / #3 pedagogy
Tronto, J., 2013	<i>Caring Democracy</i>	<p>Tronto extends her earlier work on the ethic of care (1993), arguing that democracy itself cannot function without practices of care. She critiques neoliberalism for reducing democracy to markets and competition, which undermines solidarity and relational responsibility. What would this idea of relational</p>	#1 Assessment / #5 porous disciplines

silos, how could we depart those separations in favour of a free-flowing, relational, collective and hybrid pedagogy.

Anzaldúa, G., 1987	<i>Borderlands/La Frontera</i>	Anzaldúa writes from the lived experience of the US–Mexico borderlands, describing them as both a literal space and a metaphorical condition. The “borderland” is not just geography, it is a psychic, cultural, and embodied space produced by unnatural boundaries (colonial, racial, linguistic, gendered). Anzaldúa shows how boundaries discipline bodies and knowledges. In the classroom, spatial arrangements (who feels “comfortable,” who belongs) reproduce similar exclusions. How could those borders spatially be disrupted?	#2 Spatial disciplining
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Theme: Design Education & Eurocentrism

Author(s), Year	Title	Key Quote / Insight	Barrier Link
Abdulla, D., 2017	<i>Design Otherwise</i> (PhD Thesis)	Abdulla critiques the idea that there are universal, objective standards of what constitutes “good” design. She argues this myth is deeply Eurocentric, rooted in modernist, Western histories and aesthetics. The myth operates pedagogically, shaping curricula and assessment practices in ways that marginalise non-Western, local, and culturally diverse approaches to design. How can we journey away from these myths towards a design education that moves beyond Eurocentric universals toward relational, multiple design epistemologies.	#3 Myth of good design
Tejada, J., 2018	“Decolonising Design Education”	Tejada critiques how design education in the Global North continues to rely heavily on Eurocentric curricula that privilege Western design histories, theories, and figures. How do we create conditions that reveal that dismantling Eurocentric curricula requires more than diversification; to show that it needs a	#4 Eurocentric curricula

restructuring of the epistemic foundations of design education.

Noel, L., 2020	Envisioning a pluriversal design education.	Noel argues that design education must move toward a pluriversal orientation — recognising the existence of many worlds, epistemologies, and practices rather than one dominant (Eurocentric) canon. Rigidly segmented design fields (graphic, product, industrial, etc.) reproduce the logic of compartmentalisation tied to capitalist and Eurocentric knowledge systems. Noel's pluriversal framework calls for a more hybrid and interconnected pedagogy, which could resonate with worlds where disciplines are dispelled and spaces are free-flowing.	#5 Disciplinary silos
Bremner, C. & Rodgers, P., 2013	"Design Without Discipline"	Bremner & Rodgers argue that although design is often configured as a bounded academic discipline, in practice it constantly crosses, overlaps, and leaks into other domains (technology, art, science, social practice). By rejecting disciplinary enclosure, Bremner & Rodgers help ground provocations where pedagogy becomes porous and collective.	#5 Disciplinary silos
Finnigan, T. & Richards, A. (2016)	<i>Retention and Attainment in the Disciplines: Art and Design</i>	The report shows that curricula and pedagogical practices in Art & Design disproportionately disadvantage racially minoritised students. Finnigan & Richards stress that these attainment gaps reflect systemic and structural issues in curriculum and culture, not deficits in students themselves.	#4 Eurocentric curricula
UAL, 2018	<i>Attainment Gap Report</i>	The UAL report provides institutional data showing that racially minoritised students are less likely to achieve "good honours" degrees (1st or 2:1) compared to white students. Reflects how curricula and assessment practices translate into measurable inequality. How could they be restructured? What knowledge is valued and made visible? What conditions does that create?	#4 Eurocentric curricula

Theme: Speculative / Participatory Design

Author(s), Year	Title	Key Quote / Insight	Barrier Link
Dunne, A. & Raby, F., 2013	<i>Speculative Everything</i>	Dunne & Raby argue that speculative design is a way to open up debates about alternative futures, rather than producing solutions for the here-and-now. What would a future of design education that embraces diverse student histories as practice look like?	#3 Myth of good design / speculative provocation
Malpass, M., 2017	<i>Critical Design in Context</i>	Malpass argues that critical design is less about producing marketable solutions and more about interrogating norms, values, and dominant worldviews embedded in design practice. In doing so, Malpass makes explicit that design is never neutral, it always carries cultural, political, and ideological weight. The myth of good design frames design as universal, aesthetic, and functional judged against Eurocentric criteria. Malpass shows how critical design destabilises that myth by foregrounding contestation and reflection over conformity to inherited standards.	#3 Myth of good design
Candy, S. & Dunagan, J., 2017	<i>The Futures of Everyday Life</i>	Candy & Dunagan introduce experiential futures: ways of bringing possible futures into the present through embodied, immersive, and participatory experiences. This approach moves futures work from the cognitive and analytical into the sensory, spatial, and lived. Experiential futures show how pedagogy can unfold in alternative sites — immersive, embodied environments that break away from the conventional classroom.	#2 Alternative pedagogical space
Candy, S. & Kornet, K., 2019	“Experiential Futures”	Candy & Kornet define experiential futures as the practice of bringing futures to life through tangible, immersive and participatory experiences. By staging futures in the present, experiential futures collapse linear time and destabilise Eurocentric notions of progress.	#2 Spatial disciplining
Akama, Y., Pink, S., & Sumartojo, S., 2019	“Uncertainty and Possibility”	The authors draw on design anthropology to explore how design practices can embrace uncertainty, ambiguity, and possibility rather than seeking fixed solutions. They argue that design’s future-making potential lies in	#5 Porous pedagogy

its ability to be situated, relational, and open-ended, grounded in lived contexts. This approach could build towards dissolving strict boundaries between disciplines (design, anthropology, futures studies) in favour of hybrid, cross-pollinated practices.

Manzini, E., 2015	<i>Design, When Everybody Designs</i>	Manzini explores how design has expanded beyond professional practice to become something that everyone participates in. This blurs the boundaries between expert and non-expert, formal and informal, professional and everyday design. If everybody designs, then pedagogy should also be participatory, hybrid, and relational, not siloed or hierarchical.	#5 Porous pedagogy
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Theme: Assessment, Measurement & Institutions

Author(s), Year	Title	Key Quote / Insight	Barrier Link
Ahmed, S., 2012	<i>On Being Included</i>	Ahmed examines how universities perform diversity work— producing policies, committees, and reports that signal inclusion. She argues that diversity work is often a compensatory practice: it exists because institutions fail to transform structurally. Like diversity policies, assessment frameworks give the <i>appearance</i> of fairness and accountability while often reproducing inequities. In this way Ahmed’s critique helps frame assessment as part of a broader set of institutional technologies that mask exclusion under the guise of neutrality.	#1 Assessment as institutional technology
Ahmed, S., 2004	<i>The Cultural Politics of Emotion</i>	Ahmed argues that emotions are not just private feelings but public forces that circulate between bodies, shaping how spaces are organised and regulated. Ahmed demonstrates that emotions regulate who feels comfortable or out of place in a given space. This resonates with questions on the spaces design education is	#2 Spatial disciplining

practiced in, and the questions of who is comfortable in those settings? — challenging whose bodies and knowledges are disciplined or excluded in classrooms.

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W., 2012	“Decolonization is not a metaphor” (<i>Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society</i>)	Tuck & Yang argue that decolonization is not a metaphor for social justice, diversity, or inclusion. In design education, decolonising the curriculum is often interpreted as adding non-Western references while leaving the Eurocentric canon and assessment structures intact. Their argument strengthens critique of institutional diversity agendas (like UAL’s report) that highlight inequality but rarely transform curriculum structures. What if we refused Eurocentric references altogether as a structural reset?	#4 Eurocentric curricula
Costanza-Chock, S., 2020	<i>Design Justice</i>	Costanza-Chock develops the framework of design justice, which calls for rethinking design processes to center those most affected by structural inequalities. Design justice proposes collaborative, community-led practices as alternatives to traditional expert-driven models. What would it mean to imagine classrooms that extend into streets, kitchens, and communities, breaking down disciplinary silos.	#4 Eurocentric curricula / #5 porous pedagogy

Theme: Futures, Utopia, Desire

Author(s), Year	Title	Key Quote / Insight	Barrier Link
Tuck, E., 2009	“Suspending Damage”	Tuck critiques damage-centered research, which frames marginalised communities primarily through suffering and deficiency. The “myth of good design” positions Eurocentric standards	#3 Myth of good design / alternative futures

		as the measure of value, often framing other practices as lacking or behind. Tuck's move from damage to desire offers a parallel refusal: instead of assessing communities (or students) by deficit logics, design education could foreground what learners bring as histories, desires, and practices.	
Levitas, R., 2013	<i>Utopia as Method</i>	Levitas reframes utopia not as a blueprint for a perfect society but as a method: a way of imagining and interrogating possible futures. The utopian method deliberately crosses disciplinary boundaries: it requires imagination, sociology, philosophy, political economy, and art. This resonates with provocations, where design education is reimagined as porous, collective, and hybrid rather than siloed.	#5 Porous pedagogy
Bloch, E., 1986	<i>The Principle of Hope</i>	Bloch develops the concept of anticipatory consciousness — the human capacity to orient toward not-yet possibilities, imagining futures beyond current constraints. Western education often enforces linear temporalities however, Bloch's anticipatory consciousness challenges this by framing the future as open, emergent, and plural, not predetermined.	#2 Temporal disciplining
Dinerstein, A. C., 2015	<i>The Politics of Utopia</i>	Dinerstein argues that utopia should be understood as an unfinished, ongoing project rather than a fixed endpoint. Eurocentric design education often seeks closure: mastery of skills, assessment by fixed criteria, disciplinary canons. Dinerstein's framing of utopia as unfinished offers a counter-model: pedagogy as an open-ended practice that resists disciplinary enclosure.	#5 Porous pedagogy
Kafer, A., 2013	<i>Feminist, Queer, Crip</i>	Kafer critiques normative temporalities that structure how disability, queerness, and futures are imagined. They introduce the idea of "crip time" — flexible, non-linear, and adaptive temporalities that resist ableist expectations of speed, progress, and productivity. Design education often enforces rigid timelines (deadlines, "on time" progress, linear pathways). Kafer's work shows how	#2 Temporal disciplining

these are not neutral but ableist and exclusionary temporal frameworks.

Eshun, K., 2003	"Further Considerations on Afrofuturism"	Eshun positions Afrofuturism as a speculative practice that reclaims the future from Eurocentric control, amplifying Black cultural and technological imaginaries. Design education often presents futures (and design histories) as emerging from Western traditions. Eshun shows that this erasure is political: futures have been colonised by Eurocentric narratives. His framing of Afrofuturism offers a clear example of how marginalised epistemologies generate rich, speculative alternatives.	#4 Eurocentric curricula
Dillon, G., 2012	"Imagining Indigenous Futurisms"	Dillon introduces and defines Indigenous Futurisms as creative practices (literature, art, film, design) that imagine futures grounded in Indigenous histories, knowledges, and sovereignties. She positions Indigenous Futurisms as a counterpoint to Eurocentric futurisms, which often erase Indigenous peoples or depict them as part of a vanishing past. These practices resist colonial temporalities and affirm Indigenous presence in both present and future. By insisting on Indigenous presence in futurity, Dillon disrupts the Eurocentric assumption that Indigenous peoples exist only in the past. This aligns with critique of curricula that relegates marginalised knowledges to heritage rather than living futures.	#4 Eurocentric curricula
Womack, Y., 2013	<i>Afrofuturism</i>	Womack presents Afrofuturism as a framework that uses science fiction, fantasy, music, and art to reclaim Black presence in the future. Afrofuturism aligns with decolonial theory by treating speculative creativity as a form of world-building and cultural healing, not just entertainment. This provides a model for design education that is accountable to histories of oppression while generative of alternative trajectories.	#4 Eurocentric curricula

A.4.2 Participant Forms

Participant Information Sheet

Research Project

Decolonising design education: Futures Workshop

Researcher

Layla Gharib
[REDACTED]

About this form

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

This workshop uses speculative world building and collective imagination to encourage participants to propose new, more equitable, decolonised futures for design education. The workshop aims to generate proposals of future interventions for design education whilst drawing upon present accounts of student experiences. In this workshop, participants will form a greater understanding of the definitions of decolonisation and also gain an understanding of the need for decolonised design curriculums. Participants will also leave with an awareness of how speculative methods can be used in order to think about the future.

Why have I been invited to participate?

All MA Design students are invited to participate.

Do I have to take part?

With regard to the research component of this process it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Choosing to either take part or not take part in the study will have no impact on your marks, assessments or future studies.

What will happen to me if I take part?

For this study, participants will be invited to examine written proposals for a new type of design education. Participants will then work in groups to propose future interventions via the use of a set of prompt cards that encourage discussion and activity. These activities will be photographed and anonymous notes may be taken and used to support research findings.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

The workshop activities will be explained clearly and your workshop responses will not be linked to any photograph(s) of you. You will be asked to sign a consent for any information collected from you during the process to be used in the research. All information collected about the individual will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations) any data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity.

How will my data be stored?

The data generated in the course of the research will be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of five years after the completion of a research project and then disposed of in compliance with GDPR requirements.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will inform the researchers ongoing doctoral research into the decolonisation of design education and will likely be drawn upon in their writing and shared at conferences and through journal articles.

Contact for Further Information

Layla Gharib
[REDACTED]

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research.

Participant Consent Form

Decolonising Design Education: Futures Workshop

Name of Researcher: Layla Gharib

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

3. I consent to my workshop responses/ drawings being reproduced (anonymously) and the use of anonymous quotes.

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant:

Date:

Signature:

Participant Consent Form for use of Images

Decolonising Design Education: Futures Workshop

Name of Researcher: Layla Gharib

Photographs taken of you would be used to add interest and exemplify the research findings. For example, they may be used as illustrations in website summaries, research reports, social media posts, summary leaflets, newspapers articles and/or conference presentations. As you will be interacting with designed artefacts during the workshop, the images will be used to illustrate this experience, and support further research into how workshop experiences can be an impactful research method. They will not be used in any way that would show you in a bad light.

1. I agree to have my photograph taken.

2. I understand that my workshop responses will not be linked to the photograph(s).

I give the researcher permission to:

- Put my photograph(s) on websites/ social media.
- Use my photograph (s) in printed material (e.g. reports, leaflets, articles, news releases).
- Use my photograph(s) in presentations (e.g. at conferences of seminars).

4. I agree to take part in the above study

Please initial box

Name of Participant:

Date:

Signature:

A.4.3 The Letter Artefact





P.S.
an alternate
reality is
possible

the educators
from the future
pen pal initiative

DEAR EDUCATOR FROM THE PAST

I'm so delighted to hear from you again, I'm glad you've been thinking about change, for change comes when worlds grow dry.

The design education you have is broken and it needs people like yourself to poke and prod and dismantle things so that something new, something better can emerge. Things can be better but work needs to happen, you need to start taking action for the future you want. The future can just be more of the same if we aren't in conversation with it. The trajectory you're on is not a promising one if design education doesn't begin to build itself anew, the time has come to tinker with your reality and ask how you might enter a new world, for an alternate reality is possible.

It makes me uneasy to hear that you are still measuring students in such restrictive ways. May I ask you to consider what you are measuring them for and what are you really measuring them against? The students work feels safe and considered because you're stifling them with conditions. We no longer assess students in our reality, we believe in communal practice and found that by removing the overarching measuring of students against one another that a collective learning practice was formed and students were cared for by one another. Care is the answer to a lot of your concerns, ask yourself how you can create opportunities for everyone involved to care for one another? One way that we have done this is to leave the art school building as often as possible, a lot of our learning happens within the wider city environment, we meet in parks, at each other's houses, we walk and learn, rather than sit and be taught. Ask yourself, should the work you are doing happen in an educational room? Is it a comfortable room? Who is comfortable?

The detachment of student's identity from their work is a result of the structures you're working in; students are mimicking work that they have been taught is good. Are you still teaching them the myth of "good design"? Good design never existed, there was an ideal, which is the very idea that needs dissolving. In our reality, we have created conditions where everyone feels comfortable to draw from their own heritage and to bring who they are into the work they produce. Beautiful things happen when you understand who you are. In order for students to reach this level of comfort, you have to abolish the standard. For us, this meant removing all trace of European influences from the first two years of the five-year programme entirely. Just adding in more diverse voices is not enough, you have to reset the mind-set of the students to value other traditions of making that were not part of the mainstream narrative for far too long. How could you perform a reset in mind-set?

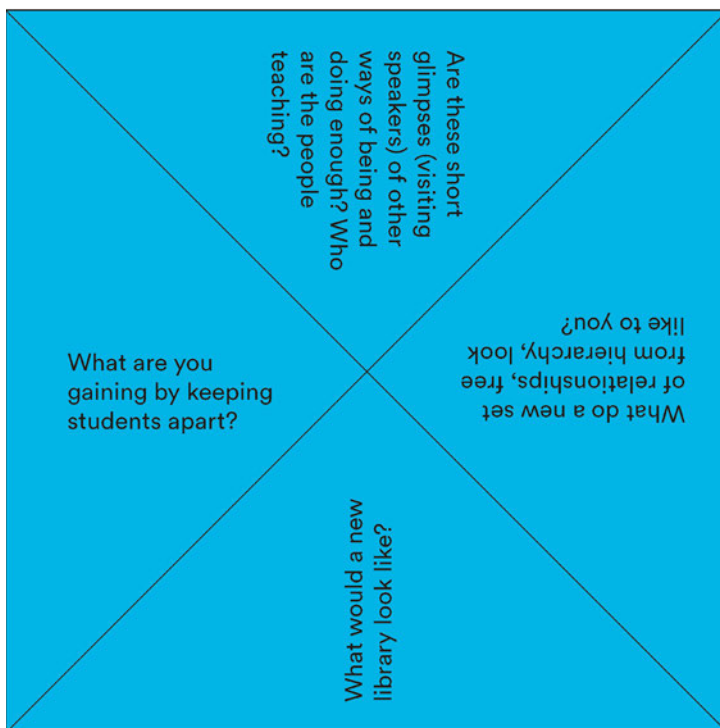
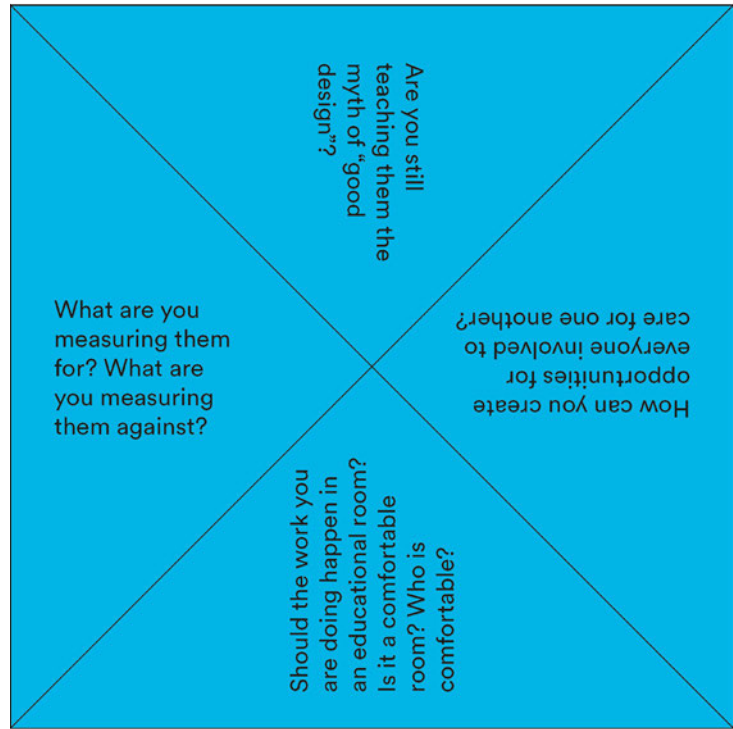
This brings me to your next point on how you are beginning to critically consider who you're inviting into your spaces for students to hear from. I think it is a step in the right direction to diversify your visiting speakers but are these short glimpses of other ways of being and doing enough? The problem with visiting speakers is that they are temporary, you need to think not only what is being taught but who are the people teaching? Ten years ago we performed a series of hire clusters that actively recruited BIPOC educators. This was our first step in making amends with communities who had been excluded from our faculties and meant that we were committing to changing the structures in which we work. We also recognised that a lot of our reading material was coming from a very particular space, more often than not being the work of white, cis, male, able bodied designers. I ask you to consider what a new library would look like, go as far as thinking what if we didn't use any references from white, cis, male, able bodied designers or researchers, what would you be left with?

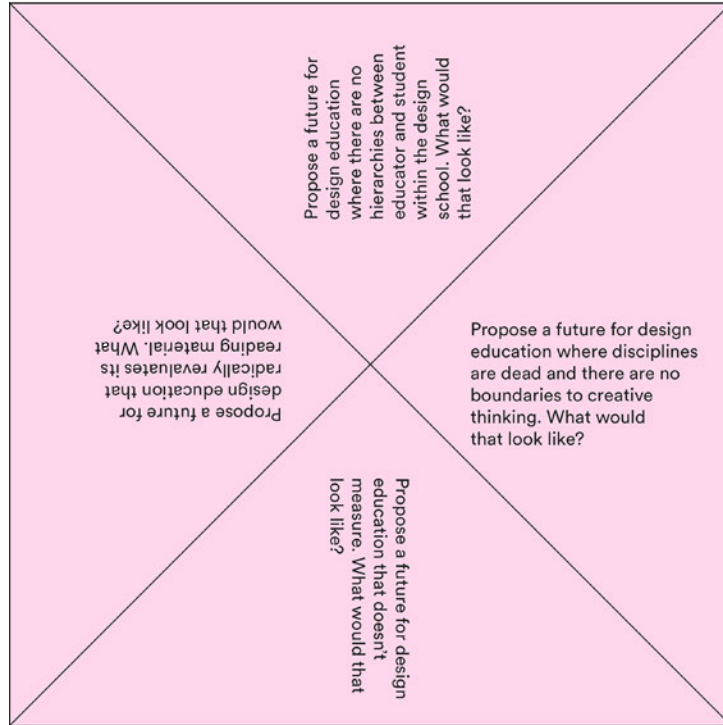
Now onto your final point about the student you are dealing with that can't find comfort in any one discipline. In our future, disciplines are dead. We believe that disciplines were only designed to withhold hierarchies and to teach students how to be designers in relation to capital. There is so much more learning that can happen when you remove the walls between our practices. Although we leave the walls of the design school a lot these days, our building is completely free flowing with students drawing upon varied practices within the space. What are you gaining by keeping students apart? What could happen in a reality where disciplines were dead?

Everything we have done to arrive at this future has been formed on the basis of creating a new set of relationships with each other, with our local communities and with our craft, a new set of relationships free from hierarchy. What do those new relationships look like to you?

I hope to hear from you again,
Educator from the future

A.4.4 The Prompt Cards





A.4.5 Fieldnotes

Field/ Scratch Notes – Letter from a decolonised future – Student Workshop

Watering Cans Flower Illustration

- “Teaching and learning could be like watering one another.”
- “What if we imagine a future where we physically have to wear watering cans that we use to nourish each other’s growth in ideas. The more people you speak with and share knowledge, the more healthy your experience will be.”
- “For me being somebody from China, I have different kinds of knowledge and history that I can use to nourish other people’s points of view. I have a different position and that has value if we are thinking about decolonising our schools and our minds.”
- “Knowledge is not owned, it moves, like water through flowers. That’s a decolonised way of learning.”

Green Cursive Writing on Failures

- “Failure is part of learning, attempting deserves more recognition. If I try something, a new way of doing or making, even if it isn’t successful, that should be rewarded as I am moving past the way I already know. Failure has value. In my culture, trying and failing and learning is part of wisdom. Why is that erased in design school?”
- “The time limits of projects stop us from dreaming properly. Sometimes I have ideas I want to do but there is such quick deadlines that I simplify things.”
- “Why must learning always be measured? What if assessment was about the journey, not the result?”
- “Grades are colonial, they rank us, compare us, and decide who belongs. What if assessment was about the care we give each other, not about marks on a paper?”
- “Imagine no grades and there was only collective projects where we all succeed or fail together. That would build a different type of community.”

Pink Writing / Controversy Drives Progress

- “Students can be teachers too. Everyone has knowledge to share. In the future, imagine if we all come to learn, I’m not sure how that would work with faculty being paid but I think there could be something so interesting if we removed hierarchy from these spaces.”
- “Controversy drives progress. Debate is a form of care, disagreement makes us grow and push past just the standard point of view. We all have different standards we have been taught, when the letter is saying the myth of good design, I understand that’s the western standard.”
- “I think creating an environment where we can interrogate and debate what is good design and work through where those standards have come from is important. What if we created a central space in the design school where we do that work, like a space of understanding.”

Pink Capitalised Diagonal Writing

- “Education should feel like we care for each other, not competition, sometimes I feel like I am competing against my classmates. I want to take time to understand how they create their work and their thinking.”
- “In the future, imagine if we all come to learn.”

School on Wheels Illustration

- “What if the design school wasn’t fixed to one space, what if it had wheels and travelled around the world. Being inside one space we can become comfortable with just one way of working but if we were meeting new people and seeing new cultures we would be learning in more than one way. Our idea of what is good design then would not be so limited.”

White Male Able-Bodied Writing

- “I’m questioning how in the future it might not be such a shift to have more diverse references as universities are making plans to do this work to decolonise.”
- “I think if it was to happen right now, we would notice, as a home student in the UK most of my understanding of design has come from a western perspective, a lot of the time Swiss point of view. Which has made me comfortable with that style, it’s what I see as professional. I’m aware that is problematic but it’s what we have been exposed to.”
- “In the future design school, I think it should begin with disrupting that standard, from the very start that should be the focus.”

Pink Circular Diagram with Green Writing

- “I’m imagining a future design school, where there is one common Space where all of them gather to discuss, a central area where the different disciplines gather and share.”
- “I think this might lead to different perspectives in our design. I think keeping us all separate is the opposite to decolonising, decolonising is about the collective, that is around making space for multiple disciplines too.”

Chairs & Scrolls Illustration

- “Why must we always sit in chairs? My culture teaches on the floor. What if in the future we had different seating options to reflect different people’s heritage.”
- And even books, what if they weren’t the only things that held knowledge, what if there were scrolls, not just square books. There are different ways to learn with each other.”
- “Yes, in my culture, in India we learn through not just studies but also through spending time together, cooking, sharing recipes and eating together.”

Tree Illustration – Nature Based Study Room

- “What if classrooms were forests? Or buses? Or rooftops? Why do we have to be inside to learn, we are designing for the world and for different people, not just people in universities. We don’t need walls to learn, open spaces will open our thinking.”

Pink Green and Black Curved Writing

- “What if we had a set of values to follow in the future design school, like a list we create together for example to have comfort, to unlearn, to unbound, to reset, to build relationships and to care. That would allow us to break barriers between not just the disciplines but our identities also. I think especially the word reset is important, reset to less Europe, more world. Which links to unlearning, which I see just as important as learning, we need to reset our minds.”

Pinball Machine Illustration

- “What if there were no boundaries? I’m thinking of a future where we operate almost like a pinball machine framework. Where students bounce across different disciplines, experiencing them all and come out of the process as less of a designer, perhaps more of an artist.”
- “I think sometimes, especially when considering decolonisation, we look over craft and making and see it as less important than design, I think in a decolonised design school we

need to return to more craft based working and understand that technology is not the only answer.”

Blue Waves Illustration – Blue Text

- “What if the library was outside, in a forest or by the sea? The classes should begin with our surroundings, our local stories. That’s how knowledge exists in many cultures.”
- “We should not just understand design as designers, we should learn other things, like biology, like the earth to understand how to design not just for humans but for the planet.”

Further Conversational Fieldnotes

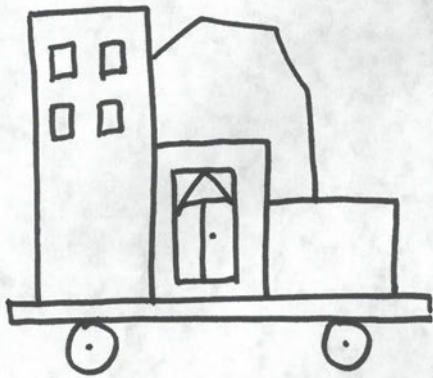
- A participant from India reflected on learning through cooking, recipe sharing, and collective time, where evaluation was embedded in everyday practices of care and reciprocity rather than formalised rubrics.
- Students described their experience of disciplinarity with metaphors of a pinball machine (ricochet pedagogy) and cross-pollination (pollen drifting between flowers).
- Participants emphasised the value of craft and embodied making (e.g., weaving, woodworking, textile traditions) as vital knowledge disavowed by Eurocentric modernism.
- Students proposed “re-cataloguing days,” collective sessions where staff and students reorder departmental reading lists by axes such as region, language, medium, or community relevance.
- Several groups suggested kitchens as learning spaces, recognising cooking as a site of memory, measurement, timing, familial and care.
- Ecological imaginaries surfaced, including visions of classrooms in forests, rooftops, coastlines, or trees, where knowledge was situated in local environments and more-than-human relations.

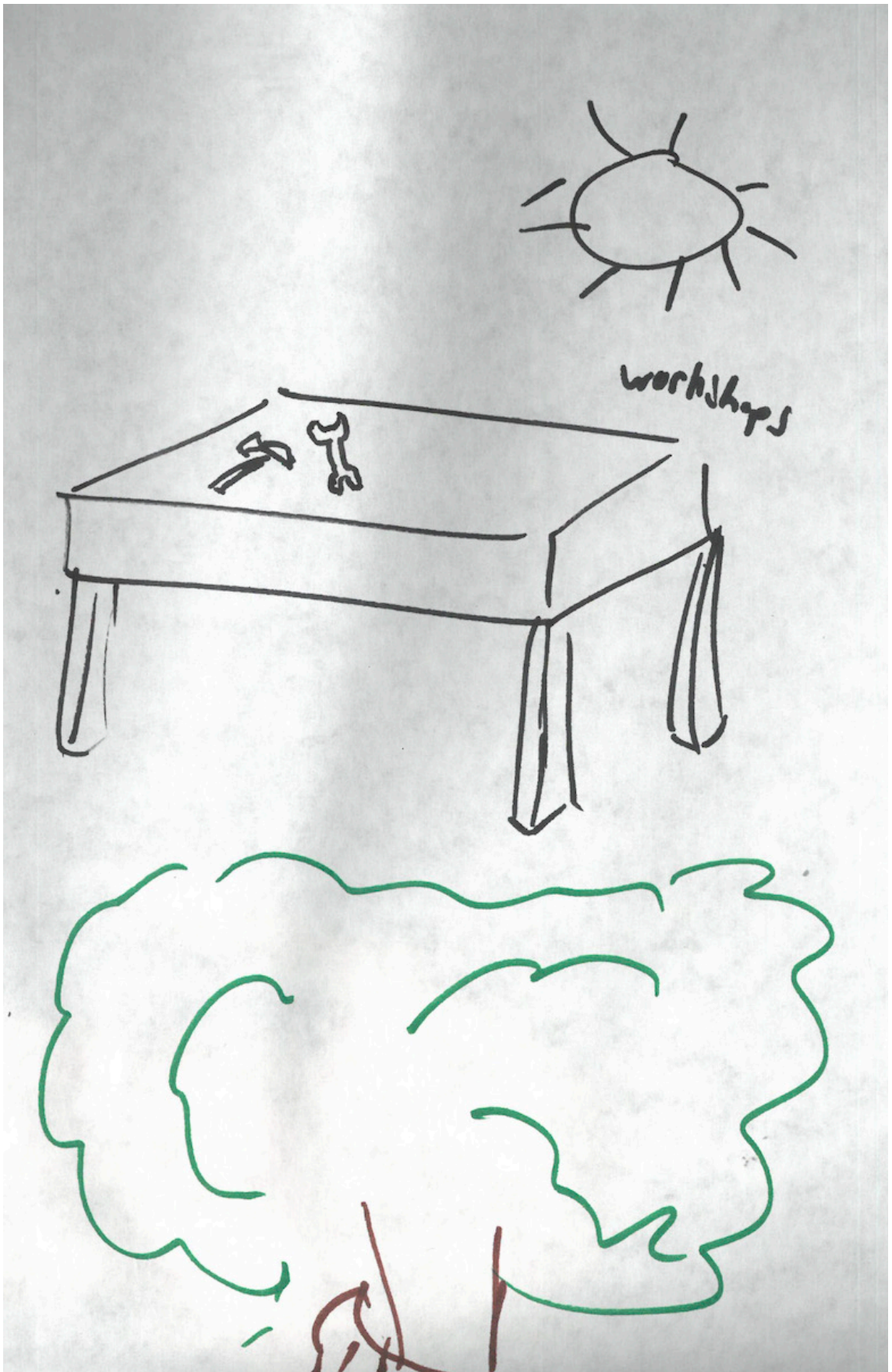
Being in a big group can
be more creative. Learning
from environment make more
creative and arts come from an
open space Not in a closed 4 walls.



Maybe there will be a room
for movement.

Students from every major
can study in this space.

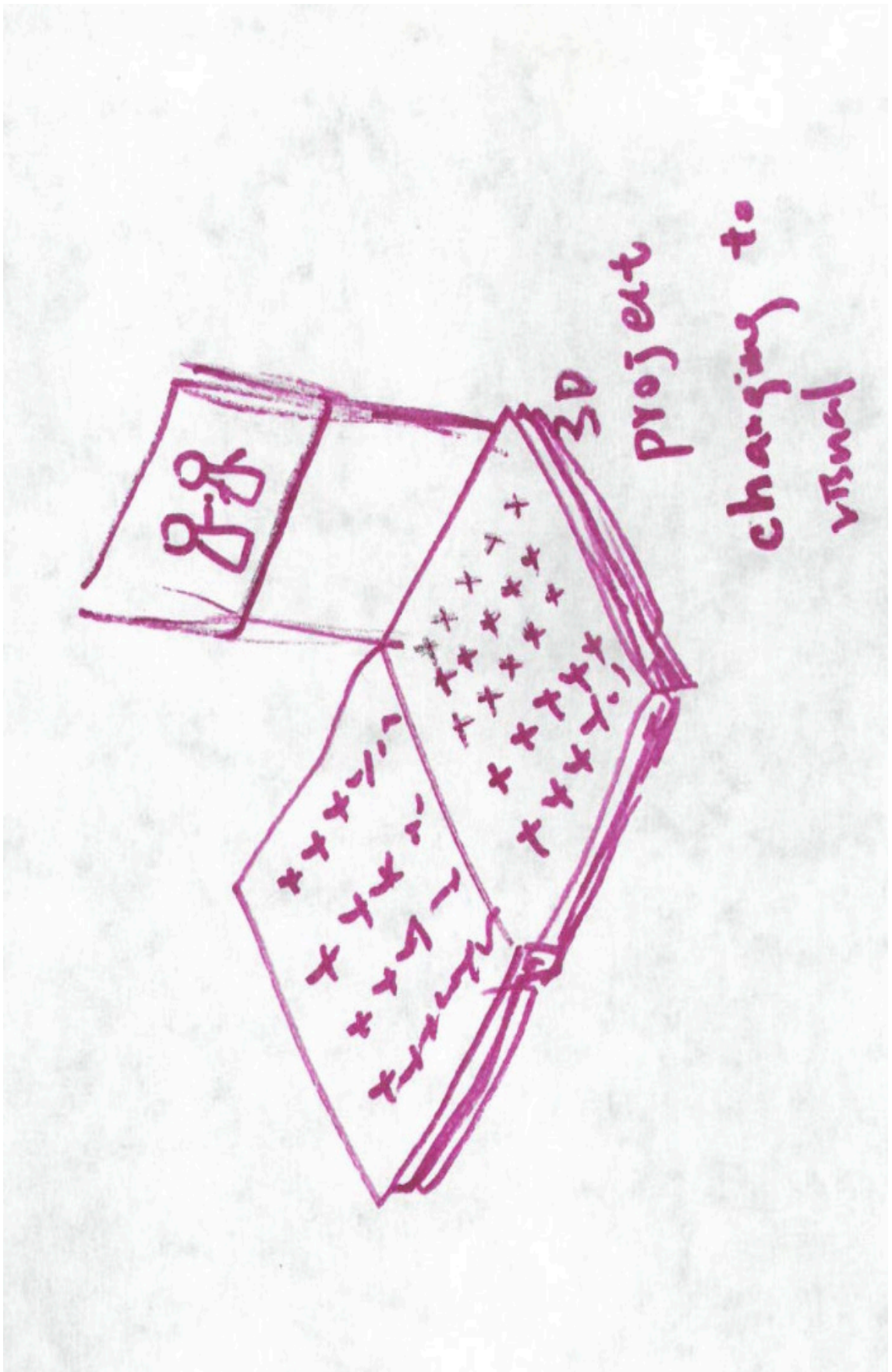




The relationship
between human = human
not
old and young people
when its time to exchange
some opinion/perspective/Ideas.



Design school provide
a space, an utopia for future
Designer. if there's no
hierarchies between educator
and student. All the professional
designer and ~~future~~ new designer
may debate for better designer.
Controversy drives progress.



with tree, ~~the~~

OR

IN the mature



* but different cause according

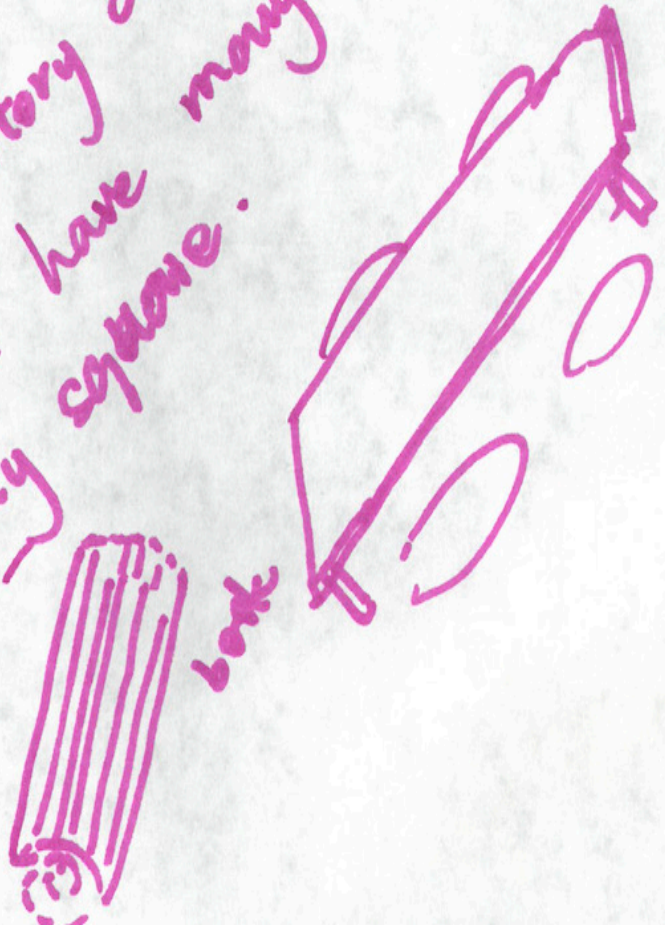
to different library in different place.

example:

biology course set up library in the sea and forest

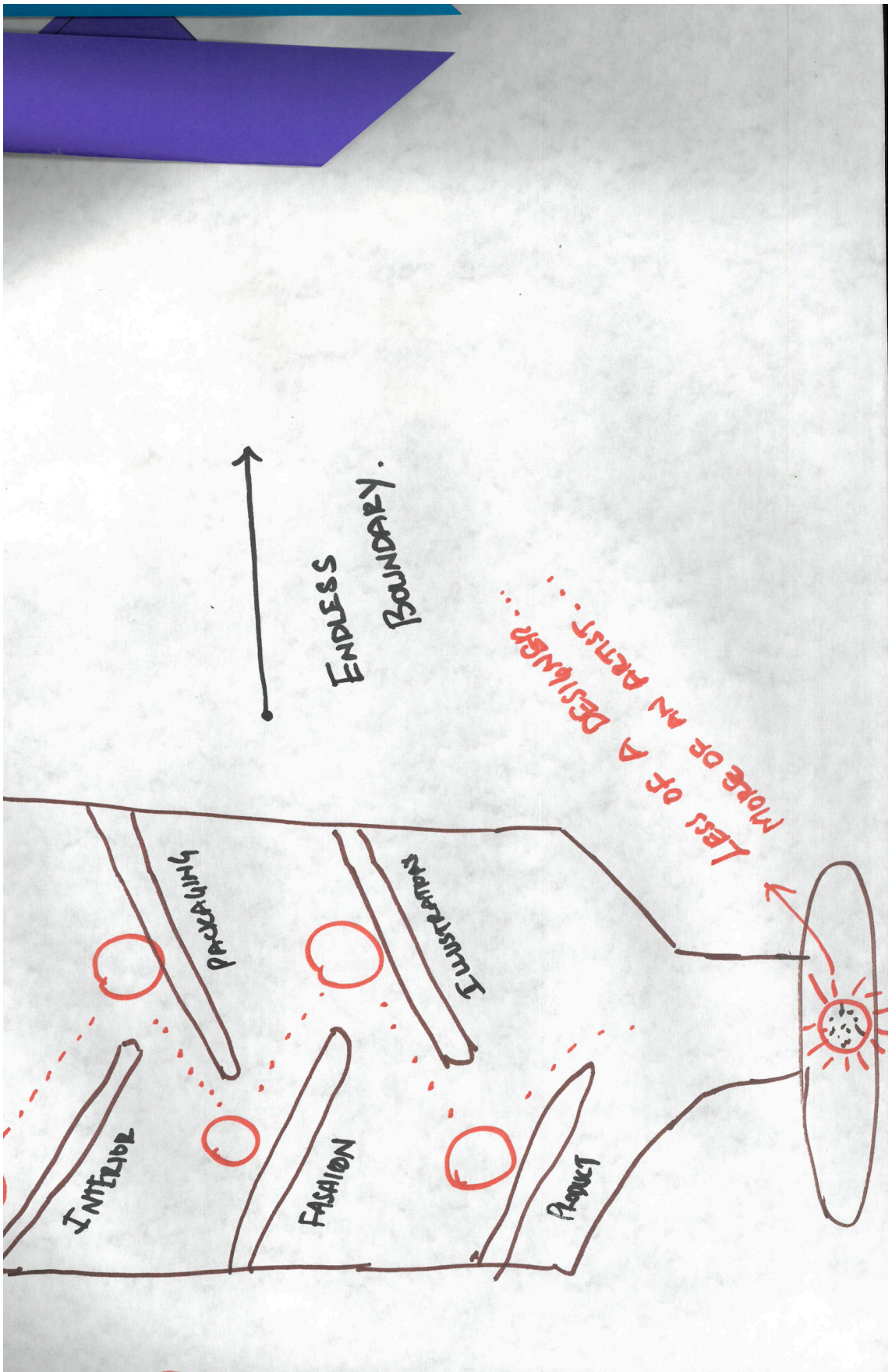


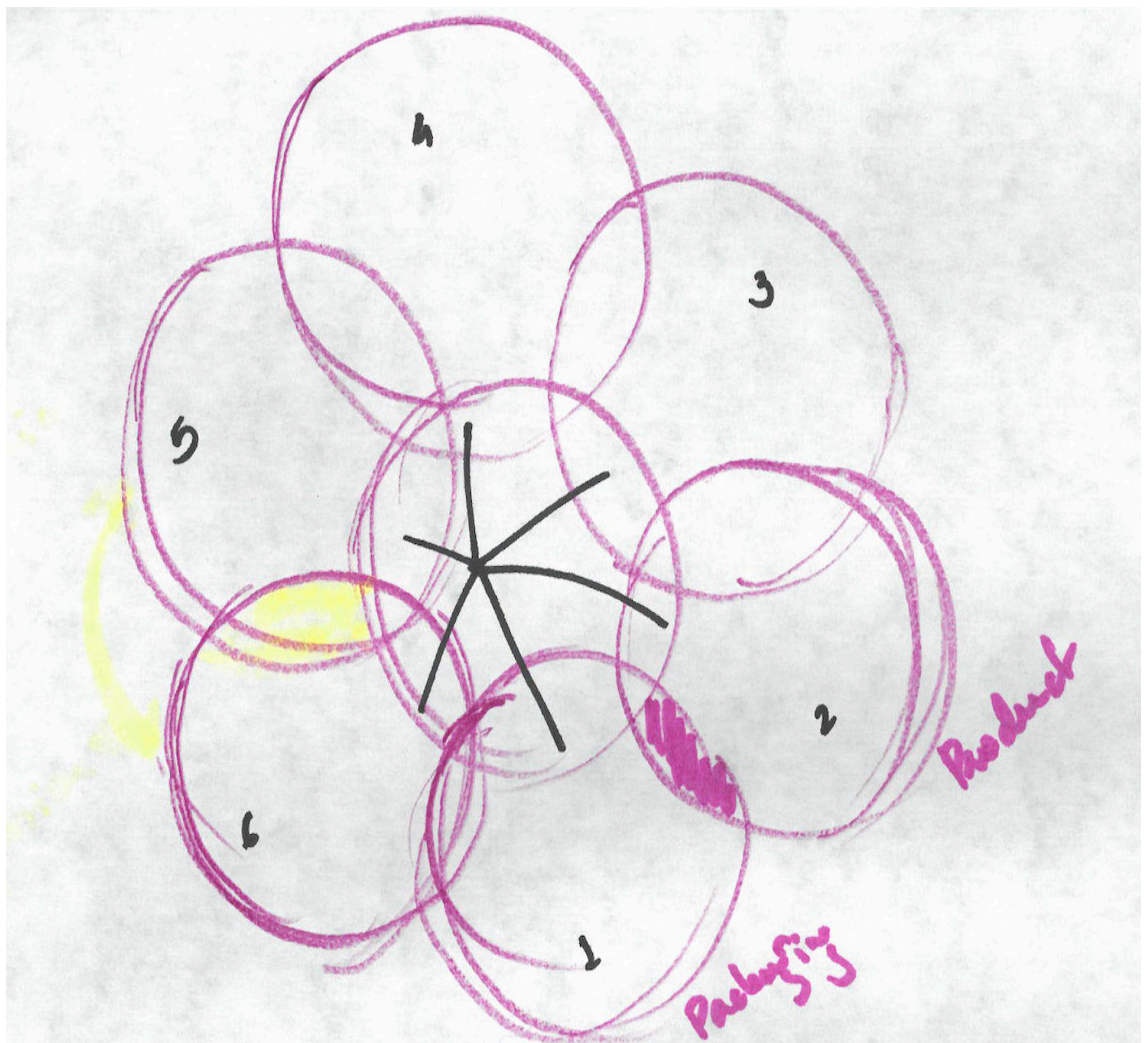
Library has different style of
seat (its according to different
culture , history and tradition)
The book have many shapes
not only square .



- disciplines are dead
- then it will live
- dead without thread
- for instance, dress with
- needles, and intention
- stuff.

Being is a big jump can
be more creative. Learning
from Environment make more
creative and sets some from an
Open Space Not in a closed 4 walls.





One common space where all of them gather together to discuss but also have how to these interlinked that go go together - might lead to different perspectives in design.

EDUCATION

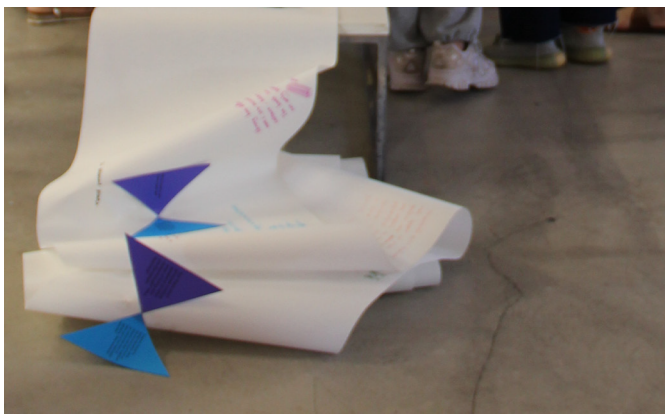


PROFESSION

PROFESSION

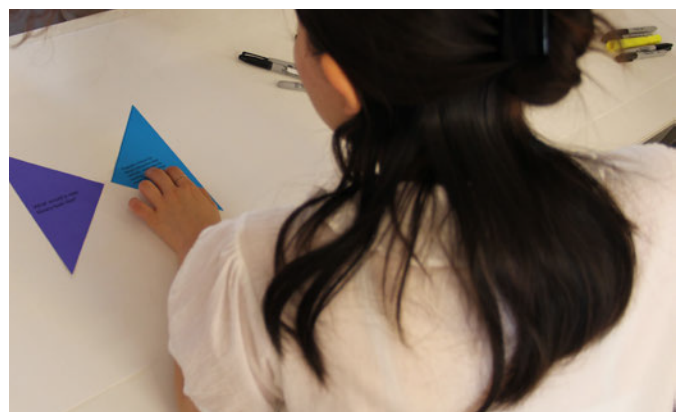
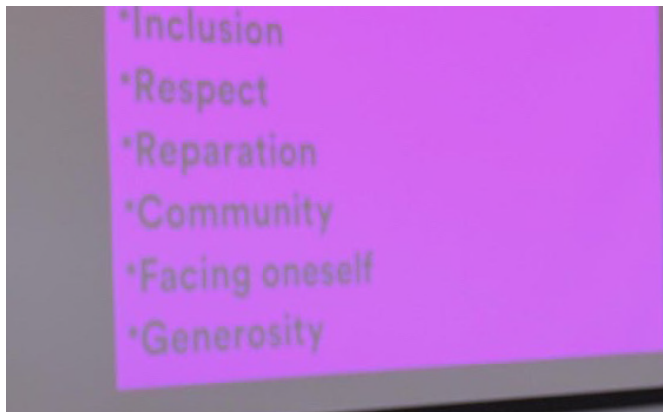


EDUCATION



A.4.7 Additional Images of the Workshop





A.5 Maker Majlis Speculative Interviews

A.5.1 Participant Forms

Participant Information Sheet

Research Project

Decolonising design education: Interviews

About this form

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

This interview uses a semi-structured format to invite participants into conversation on the decolonisation of design education and their experiences with Eurocentric curricula within UK HE design programmes. Whilst being a space to discuss their experiences of the past and present of design education, the interview will use speculative artefacts (designed prompts that suggest possible alternative realities for more caring and inclusive futures) to encourage conversations around decolonised futures for design education too. The purpose of this interview is to amplify the voices of individuals whose background has in some way been impacted by colonialism and invite them to the forefront of suggesting new structures, ideas that move us towards decolonised futures for design education.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate as an individual who is embedded within a UK HE design programme who has self identifies as an individual from a minoritised ethnic background and/or has personal experience/ background that has been impacted by colonialism.

Do I have to take part?

With regard to the research component of this process it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If you are a student, choosing to either take part or not take part in the study will have no impact on your marks, assessments or future studies.

What will happen to me if I take part?

For this study, participants will be invited to take part in an hour long interview where they will be posed with questions of their experiences of either teaching or learning within a UK HE design programme. Participants will also be presented with an artefact(s) that propose new futures for design education and will be asked to reflect on the ideas present in the artefact and also given time/ space to suggest their own ideas for decolonised structures for design education. The interviews will be audio recorded and anonymous quotes and sketches may be used to support future visualisations of decolonised futures for design education.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

The interview format will be explained clearly and your responses will not be linked to any sketches you produce. You will be asked to sign a consent for any information collected from you during the process to be used in the research. All information collected about the individual will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations) any data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the Sheffield Hallam University's policy on Academic Integrity. All responses will be anonymised.

How will my data be stored?

The data generated in the course of the research will be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of five years after the completion of a research project and then disposed of in compliance with GDPR requirements.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will inform the researchers ongoing doctoral research into the decolonisation of design education and will likely be drawn upon in their writing and shared at conferences and through journal articles. Your responses will be used to inform visualised research material that invites audiences into possible futures for design education.

Participant Consent Form

Decolonising Design Education: Interviews

Researcher: Layla Gharib

Contact: [REDACTED]

Director of Studies: Dr. Melanie Levick-Parkin

Contact: [REDACTED]

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.
3. If applicable, I consent to my interview sketches being reproduced. (anonymously).
4. I consent to the recording of the interview, and the transcription of these discussions into an anonymised form.
5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Please initial box

Name of Participant:

Date:

Signature:

Template recruitment email (Educators)

Dear [Recipient's Name],

I am reaching out to you regarding my ongoing doctoral research, which explores the decolonisation of design education, particularly within the framework of UK Higher Education. At the heart of my study lies an intention to recruit individuals who self-identify with minoritised ethnic backgrounds or whose heritage has been profoundly influenced by colonialism. The purpose of this outreach is to invite your participation in an hour-long interview session, wherein we will delve into your experiences navigating through Eurocentric curricula within institutional settings.

The interview process will be structured as a participatory endeavour, fostering an environment where you will have the opportunity to contribute insights and perspectives, ultimately contributing to the exploration of alternative paradigms for the future of design education. Central to our dialogue will be the exploration of actionable strategies for decolonising these educational spaces.

Attached below, you will find the comprehensive participant information sheet, which offers detailed insights into the study's objectives and procedures. Furthermore, should you be inclined to proceed with scheduling an interview, I would greatly appreciate your assistance in identifying potential student participants who align with the aforementioned criteria. Both educator and student perspectives are of paramount importance in shaping the discourse, and your recommendations would be invaluable in ensuring a diverse and enriching dialogue.

I eagerly anticipate your response and the possibility of meeting with you.

Warm regards,

Layla

Template recruitment email (Students)

Dear [Recipient's Name],

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Layla, and I am currently pursuing doctoral research focused on the critical endeavour of decolonising design education, specifically within the landscape of UK Higher Education.

At the heart of my study lies an intention to recruit individuals who self-identify with minoritised ethnic backgrounds or whose heritage has been profoundly influenced by colonialism. Therefore, I am reaching out to you as a student who may resonate with the

A.5.2 Interview Structure and Script

1. Introduction

Establish rapport, discuss the purpose of the study, and obtain informed consent.

1. Background

Allow space for participants to discuss their heritage.

How would you describe your heritage?

2. Eurocentric Experiences

Explore participants' experiences with Eurocentric curricula in design education.

Can you share with me your personal experiences within design education, particularly focusing on any encounters you've had with Eurocentric curricula?

How do you perceive the influence of colonialism on design education, especially within UK higher education programmes?

Reflecting on your journey, can you recall any specific moments or instances where you felt your cultural background or identity was not adequately represented or valued within the design education system?

In your view, what are some of the main obstacles or challenges hindering the decolonisation of design education in UK institutions?

3. Alternative Perspectives

Encourage participants to imagine and discuss alternative approaches to design education.

Could you describe any initiatives or approaches you've encountered or participated in that aim to decolonise design education? What were the successes and limitations of these initiatives?

How do you envision a decolonized future for design education? What changes or transformations would you like to see implemented?

From your perspective, what role do you think marginalised communities should play in shaping the future of design education, and how can their voices be amplified within this conversation?

How do you believe incorporating diverse perspectives and knowledge systems into design education can enrich the field and foster innovation?

Finally, what actionable steps do you believe institutions and educators can take to actively decolonise design education and create more equitable learning environments?

4. Artefact-Led

Utilise designed prompts and artefacts to prompt discussions and reflections on their experiences.

Can you examine the artefact and describe your thoughts towards the future reality of design education that it is describing?

5. Closure

Summarize key points, allow participants to share additional thoughts, and express gratitude for their contribution.

Are there any additional points you would like to make?

RECORD

1. Introduction

- Establish rapport, explain the purpose of the study, and obtain informed consent.

So the purpose really of these interviews are to invite design educators like yourself into conversation on the decolonisation of design education and to discuss your experiences with Eurocentric curricula within UK Higher Education design programmes. I'm really kind of interested in this idea of speaking to the past/ present and future of design education but I'm very aware it would be unproductive to only have conversations with myself about my desires for alternative futures for design education so speaking to others about this is to work towards collective/ communal dreaming that things could be different than our current experiences of design education up until this point.

So firstly I'm gonna ask you a few questions about your personal and professional context just to build an idea of your positionality and identity in relation to your experiences of being a design educator.

2. Background: Personal and Professional Context

- Could you firstly describe your current role in design education and perhaps give a little context of your educational career up until this point and what led you to become an educator in design?
 - How would you describe your heritage, and how has it influenced your personal and professional journey in design education?
 - How has your cultural background shaped your teaching philosophy and practices?
-

Okay so these next few questions are focused around potential eurocentric experiences in design education that you may have encountered either within your experiences of being a design student or being a design educator. So I'm going to pose these to you and hopefully just hear some of your reflections.

3. Eurocentric Experiences in Design Education

Refined Questions:

1. Could you describe to me some of your own personal experiences with Eurocentric curricula in your own education or in your teaching career?
 - Were there any instances where you felt there were dominant design narratives being taught and where you ever restricted by those dominant design narratives?
 -
 2. How do you perceive the ongoing influence of colonialism on design education, particularly within UK higher education programmes?
 3. In your opinion, what systemic or institutional barriers make it challenging to decolonise design education?
-

4. Alternative Perspectives and Pathways

Encouraging Imagination and Innovation:

1. Have you encountered or implemented any initiatives aimed at decolonising design education?
 - What were the successes, and what challenges did you face?
2. If you could redesign the curriculum from scratch, what principles or practices would you prioritise to create a decolonised educational experience?
3. What role do you think educators from minoritised ethnic communities should play in shaping the future of design education? There is a conversation around who this work falls upon, and I'm interested in hearing your take on that.

So for this next part of this conversation. I want to introduce you to a method I tend to use to encourage conversation around the future. And in this case the future of design education being a decolonised one. And that method is to use storytelling artefacts or speculative prompts to ground a conversation. So I'm going to share my screen and introduce you to a future decolonised design space, an alternative future for design education if you will.

5. Speculative Prompt: Introducing Maker Majlis

Presenting the Speculative Artefact:

So I want you to Imagine a future where Maker Majlis exists—a communal, decolonised design space built on indigenous sovereignty, shared learning, and creative collaboration.

And the way I'm going to tell this story of this future world is through an induction pack found in the year 2050. An induction pack that gives hints as to the values of this new type of design education and how this new space may work. So I'm going to run you through this series of prompts from the induction pack to begin to build this picture of Maker Majlis.

So this future form of design education is built upon the principles of a Majlis –now *A majlis is a traditional gathering space deeply rooted in Arab culture, where people come together to share stories, exchange knowledge, and engage in meaningful dialogue. Historically, the majlis has served as a hub for community decision-making, storytelling, and hospitality—a space where every voice is valued, and collective wisdom shapes outcomes. In its essence, the majlis embodies connection, respect, and the power of shared conversation.

And this is the welcome letter:

Read Letter

The manifesto that the participants of Maker Majlis have constructed is as follows:

Read Manifesto

The next artefact in the Maker Majlis induction pack is the values compass, at maker Majlis we do not assess participants work or measure against grading systems, instead we have a values compass that we generate and hold ourselves

accountable to. Each participant will add their personal values to reflect themselves, their heritage and their positionality.

At the centre of the physical maker Majlis: there is the heart.

Read Poster

And finally the last thing in the induction pack is the accountability cards, a deck of accountability questions that all participants are expected to engage with in their design process. An example of some of the questions are

Read cards

Okay so now you've been introduced to this future concept of design education via Maker Majlis – I want to ask you a few questions in relation to some of the themes and thoughts that may have opened up for this discussion.

Consider the following:

1. What are your initial thoughts about the concept of Maker Majlis?
2. How might a space like Maker Majlis address the challenges of decolonising design education?
3. Do you think this approach—rooted in gathering, storytelling, and shared creation—would resonate with educators and students? Why or why not?
4. In your view, what challenges might arise in implementing a space like Maker Majlis, and how could they be overcome?
5. How could Maker Majlis foster cross-cultural collaboration and elevate marginalized perspectives in design education?
6. If you were to contribute to Maker Majlis, what aspect of your teaching, heritage, or design philosophy would you bring to the space?

6. Closure

- Summarize the key points discussed and provide an opportunity for final reflections:
 - Are there additional thoughts or insights you would like to share about decolonising design education?
 - What advice would you offer to educators and institutions striving to create more equitable learning environments?

A.5.3 Data Management Plan



Data Management Plan

Template for doctoral research projects

1. What data will you collect or create?

Qualitative data will be collected including audio recordings, sketches and notes. These will result in audio transcript files, image scans and digital field notes. There will be approximately 8 interviews in total, all of which will have their own filing system that will contain the individual interview assets.

2. How will your data be documented and described?

Recorded audio, note taking and participant drawings (if applicable).

3. How will your data be structured, stored, and backed up?

All data will be stored on the University's networked storage facilities with clear file naming conventions (YYYY-MM-DD).

4. How will you manage any ethical issues?

Written consent will be gathered from participants and anonymisation of responses will occur.

5. What are your plans for data sharing after submission of your thesis?

Raw data will not be reproduced or shared after the submission of my thesis. However, fully anonymised quotes and transcripts may be drawn from within the outlined five-year period after the thesis submission to support subsequent papers.

6. What are your plans for the long-term preservation of data supporting your research?

The data generated in the course of the research will be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of five years after the completion of a research project and then disposed of in compliance with GDPR requirements.

Guidance notes

For further information and support see <https://libguides.shu.ac.uk/researchsupport/data>

1. What data will be collected or created?

- What physical data will you study? (e.g. artefacts, samples, paper archives, etc.) And what digital data will be derived from these? (e.g. field-notes, images, measurements, spreadsheets, survey data, etc.)
- What data will be 'created' digitally? (e.g. images, some analytical and survey data, etc.)
- Describe the methods/standards for data creation.
- What file formats and software will you use?
- Consider how many individual files you expect to make, anticipated file sizes, and total storage volume.

2. How will your data be documented and described?

- Think about what contextual information is required to make the data understandable to others.
- What information on the data collection methods and context (documentation and 'metadata') will be recorded for each data type/set?
- Where will the metadata for each data type/set be located? (e.g. within the data file and/or as separate metadata text document, and/or in method chapter/appendices in the thesis)
- Is it important for the research to be reproducible? If not, why? If so, what additional documentation or pointers will be required?

3. How will your data be structured, stored and backed up?

- Has a file naming convention and directory structure been agreed? (e.g. date created/date amended/version no.)
- Is the storage platform local or external?
- Do you know the backup procedures of the storage space?
- If keeping your own copy of the data
 - are there security considerations? (e.g. encrypted flash drive)
 - how will you know which is the master copy?

4. How will you manage any ethical issues?

- Do your data contain confidential or sensitive information? If so, are you gaining written consent from respondents to preserve and share data beyond your research?
- How will you protect the identity of participants if required? Will your data be need to be anonymised / pseudonymised- how will this be managed?
- How will sensitive data be handled to ensure it is stored and transferred securely?

5. What are your plans for data sharing after submission of your thesis?

- Who, if any, are the anticipated future users of any digital data/resources from the research? (e.g. yourself, project partners, future students, peer researchers, the public)
- Will any of the digital data supporting the thesis (e.g. organised project archive folders with images, drawings, spreadsheets, databases, etc.) be made available to others on request or in a form of open access (via a repository)?
- Are there any conditions on who may view your data (e.g. confidentiality)?
- Are there funding body/institutional requirements for the re-use of, or open-access to, the data?

Adapted from University of Cambridge (<http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/preservation/datatrain/documents.html>) and University of Edinburgh (http://datalib.edina.ac.uk/mantra/Data_management_plan_template_MANTRA.docx)

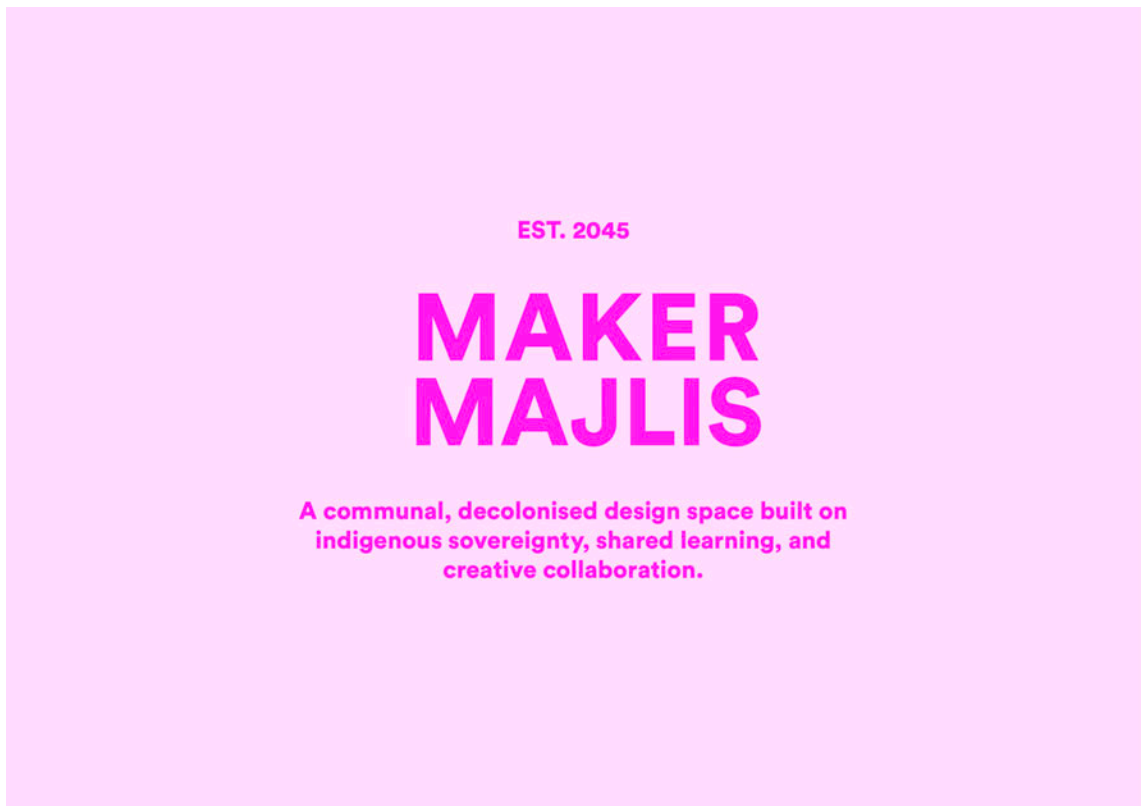
- What are your supervisor's thoughts on sharing 'their' research data, if on a project team?

6. What are the plans for the long-term preservation of data supporting your research?

- Will the digital data be archived? If you or your research group leave the University, will you still be able to access your work?
- What options are there to archive the digital data? (e.g. institutional repository, national data archive or other repository)

Note- For research students, the copyright in the thesis submitted for examination remains with the candidate, but all other Intellectual Property rights lie with the University and/or the funder of the research project - including those over the research data produced for the thesis. See <https://www.shu.ac.uk/study-here/terms-and-conditions-and-student-regulations> for links to the student intellectual property regulations and regulations for specific research programmes.

A.5.4 Maker Majlis Induction Pack Artefact



EST. 2045

INDUCTION PACK

MAKER
MAJLIS

*A majlis is a traditional gathering space deeply rooted in Arab culture, where people come together to share stories, exchange knowledge, and engage in meaningful dialogue. Historically, the majlis has served as a hub for community decision-making, storytelling, and hospitality—a space where every voice is valued, and collective wisdom shapes outcomes. In its essence, the majlis embodies connection, respect, and the power of shared conversation

MAJLIS*

WELCOME 2050 PARTICIPANTS

Maker Majlis is a space where creativity, heritage, and collective wisdom come together to shape the future of design. You are stepping into the fifth year of our journey and entering a space that is constantly shifting to reflect the people working in this space.

At Maker Majlis, participants are invited to spend up to ten years as a maker, with the freedom to leave whenever they feel their journey is complete. By allowing participants to stay as long as they need, Maker Majlis creates space for deeper exploration, iterative learning, and meaningful connections with their heritage and communities. This flexibility nurtures creativity and growth at a natural pace, removing the pressure to conform to arbitrary timelines.

This welcome letter, like every part of your induction pack, was imagined and crafted by last year's cohort the 2049 Makers. An integral part to the way we exist in this space is to learn with and from one another and draw from our individual knowledge systems to address communal explorations.

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AN EVOLVING MANIFESTO

WE LISTEN FIRST

WE CELEBRATE PLURALITY

WE HONOR HERITAGE

WE PRACTICE RECIPROCITY

WE DISMANTLE HIERARCHIES

WE RESPECT THE LAND

WE EMBRACE UNLEARNING

WE DESIGN WITH PURPOSE

WE VALUE PROCESS

WE PROTECT KNOWLEDGE

At Maker Majlis we do not assess participants work or measure against grading systems,



instead, we each have a values compass that we generate and hold ourselves accountable to.

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THE HEART



At the center of Maker Majlis lies The Heart—a space that keeps the pulse of our community alive. It is more than a circle; it is where stories are shared, wisdom is exchanged, and ideas come to life. The Heart embodies the values of Maker Majlis: connection, collaboration, and respect for the diverse traditions and voices that shape our world. Here, participants gather with elders, peers, and local communities to reflect, listen, and co-create. It is a space of equality, where every voice matters, and every story carries the potential to inspire change. The Heart beats with the collective energy of its makers, serving as both a sanctuary for reflection and a catalyst for innovation. Welcome to The Heart — where listening shapes the future.

CARDS OF ACCOUNTABILITY



WHO BENEFITS FROM THIS WORK?

HOW DOES THIS DESIGN RESPECT THE LAND?

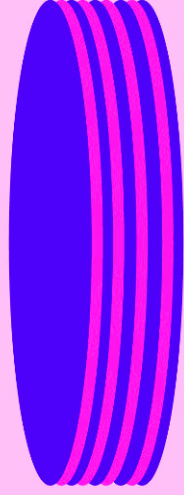
WHAT ASSUMPTIONS ARE YOU REINFORCING?

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WHO BENEFITS FROM THIS WORK?

HOW DOES THIS DESIGN RESPECT
THE LAND?

WHAT ASSUMPTIONS ARE YOU
REINFORCING?

A.5.5 Transcripts

1. Aisha Transcript

Please note that for anonymity purposes, certain passages of text have been hidden

Speaker 1

that. Amazing. And the next question I have is, how would you describe your heritage, and then, like, if it is in any way kind of influenced, like your personal and professional journey in design education?

Speaker 2

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] My kind of skills and what I brought, I don't think it was kind of so I don't want to say sadistic, but so messy with kind of background and race, etc. But I was definitely brought back, specifically because I was like a good middle ground between graduating and I started a studio design studio practice, so I was doing a lot of that stuff and coming back and speaking to students, and also being an active [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I don't think the faculty saw me as a genuine member of the faculty team, even though I've been teaching there for so long, and probably, and whoever employed me kind of was, of course, leader left at that point. So I was kind of in the system, but not really progressing. And something that I reflect back on now that I'm a kind of adult, and I would say I was definitely like a young adult at the time, was that I didn't realise that there were all these kind of, well, [REDACTED] if you're an AL somewhere for quite a long period of time, you should be offered, you know, career progression in some way, particularly for teaching a certain number of hours. And I was running units on my own, and I didn't realise that that was sort of was sort of so I feel like I didn't have a mentor in my teaching career, in the way in which you might do when you were like, when you actively decide to go in with more. I don't know clarity. So I felt a bit like on reflection. I felt like I was sort of taken advantage of in some way, because I was there and I was teaching, and I was teaching quite a large role. I was running a whole unit, and I was running it every year and support and doing personal tutorials with students, etc, but wasn't really given the kind of career progression. But like I said earlier, not necessarily a problem. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I would say that there are certain obstacles that makes teaching and someone of colour quite hard. And what I find maybe I should be more more particular. What I find now is, if I go into any department [REDACTED] any women, woman and any woman of colour is specifically [REDACTED] you don't see many of them on permanent positions within the faculty. And I can say that pretty categorically. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

1. Aisha Transcript

Speaker 1

Okay, but yeah, just like a little bit about the studying and these like interviews in particular, there to invite design educators, creative educators, into conversation on the decolonisation of design education. And also just to discuss, like, any of your experiences with your eccentric curricula within, particularly within UK Higher Education design programs. And I'm kind of interested in this idea of, like, speaking to the past, present and future of design education. But it kind of became a little bit I was aware that it wasn't so productive just having those conversations with myself. So that's when I kind of started speaking to other people about, you know, alternative futures for design, education and just to get at this idea of, like, collective and communal sort of dreaming that things could be different than what they are right now within our current experiences of design education. So for like, the first few questions, they're kind of just to build a picture of, like your personal and like professional context. So just to kind of get an idea of your positionality and identity in relation to experiences of being a design educator. So my first question is, could you firstly describe your current role in design education and perhaps give a little bit of context of your educational career up until this point?

Speaker 2

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] was invited back quite early as a graduate teaching assistant.

That was within my first year. [REDACTED] if you had graduated within the first year, they could invite you back to a kind of informal type of employment, where you would go and you would maybe run a workshop where you would shadow or support in the studio environment. So I did that for a year, and then, because, I guess they wanted to employ me, you could only do it for a year if they wanted you back the university after that, they needed to employ you as a sessional or an associate lecturer. So that kind of was the start of my teaching career. I was doing not as much teaching back then. I was definitely doing maybe more 80% design, 20% teaching, and coming in on ad hoc days to do, you know, some teaching.

[REDACTED]

1. Aisha Transcript

understand what the point is and why you've been put with your specific group of students. So definitely, there are points where you can see that the faculty need building [REDACTED] [REDACTED] has a predominantly all male faculty on the graphics team. Better for them to hire women and then women of color, to kind of diversify the faculty. So, yeah, so there's kind of like a hodgepodge of things happening there.

Speaker 1

Do you feel like your cultural or heritage background has kind of shaped your teaching, philosophy or practices in any way.

Speaker 2

Yeah, definitely. [REDACTED] culture anyway, is all about talking. It is all about, like, talking through problems, solutionising, being friendly, being open. So that's less of a philosophy, that's more of a cultural kind of way of life. So I guess when I'm teaching students, it's about I like to get them on side. I like them to get feel like they know me. It's not just about me understanding their project, but I want them to know that. I want them to know what I'm interested in alongside me, knowing what they're interested in, and then be able to build a sort of rapport, or a kind of, I don't know, safety net around the conversation to know that they can tell me whatever they're thinking, obviously, ideally in line with their work specifically. But sometimes you have to talk about other things, to talk about the work, because, as we know now, life very heavily impacts the work the students are creating and vice versa. It's and I'm not talking about it being like using their identity and projects. I'm talking about what's happening outside. You know, are they stressed? Are there other stresses, etc, so being aware of that and understanding how much you can kind of push, pull, tell a student, or learning the way in which they want to learn from you is kind of important as part of it. So that's the kind of fundamental I maybe also think, because my background is a bit more obscured, I don't necessarily always talk about it, but sometimes I'll reference it. It kind of breaks down a lot of the barriers, because they don't have to talk to me in a certain way, like I feel like, when they talk to like someone who's like a very, you know, classic British male in design, there's going to be certain barriers or certain things in place there, whereas, if you come from it and you have a more ambiguous background, things are automatically a little bit more casualised. I'm not saying that again, that the that the conversation is casualised, but yeah, and so I think, I think as person of color, I guess, and also being aware of sort of philosophy and theories around different approaches to different ways of talking to people and teaching people is really important. It would be sort of strange of me not to have done my own homework to then know how to kind of interact with people. I also think that's good, like ethics in some way, because you can't always just look at someone and think that you're going to act, you're going to act a certain way towards them because they look a certain way. So it's like you're trying to do a circular type of, I don't know, breaking down any barriers or any things before you even start the learning part. And I think that's quite important, because you want, you want to know that they can come to you and say whatever they want, so that you can facilitate and help them in the best way possible,

Speaker 1

so, so the next, the next few questions are, like, focused around any kind of, like, potential Eurocentric experience in design education that you might have encountered both as an educator and also your time. Um as a student. And so the first question that I have is, um, could you describe to me some of your own personal experiences with Eurocentric curricula in your own education or in your teaching career? And for example, like, were there any instances where you felt there were dominant design narratives being taught? And if you ever felt restricted by those in any way?

Speaker 2

[REDACTED] to a certain degree, have been quite good [REDACTED] definitely have been quite good at diversifying their references. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] From that perspective, sometimes where I find that your Eurocentric narrative comes in can be and has been through [REDACTED] that hasn't been like aligned necessarily, because then what happens is, is the default narrative of someone who isn't who is teaching design, but doesn't know about the design world, which is very vast, can default to a very Eurocentric narrative. And I think that that comes from not being a designer and not being able to speak about what's happening in the design world specifically, um, that would be where I find that students come with a very limited range or limited knowledge, and you have to really work hard To give them a very plural array of references. I think that also the problem comes in the visiting practitioners on campus, and there is a default group of people who seem to be the go-to to come in and talk about practice, and that is a problem, because that does talk to a Eurocentric narrative, not just in education, but I think, also in the way in which we work As designers in the real world. And that's a problem. So in some ways, I think what's taught in [REDACTED] I think also what's what who the narrowness of the pool of who's being brought in to talk to students is a problem, for sure.

Speaker 1

How do you perceive, like, the ongoing influence of colonialism on design education, particularly within the UK?

1. Aisha Transcript

Speaker 2

I mean, I see it so it's, it's, well, it's so prevalent in higher education, it sort of needs a huge shake up, because I think the way that we teach, design education in most universities isn't reflective of the way in which the world is sort of operating right now. I would say in terms of colonial, colonialism in higher education that you have a lot of super tokenism. So you have a lot of people who are put on a pedestal in the faculty team, and they are the kind of spokesperson for people of color, or the spokes and people of color within design. The irony is, white, passing in the very least a lot of those people aren't even designers themselves, So we have issues that, yeah, don't really trickle down to the student base, and they start really from the faculty cohort. I also think that within the kind of education environment with students that it's not a fair and level playing field for multiple reasons. Reasons. Like, obviously, if you're a woman versus trans or versus LGBTQ versus a male, that's going to cause different levels of, you know, abilities to be able to perform to a certain degree. I say perform, but I mean, like, get a job and like work, you know, do, quote, unquote, good work. I think if you're a person of colour, that's also going to create generate some problems. I think if you're neurodivergent, it creates other problems within the sort of studio environment. And the way in which we're teaching at the moment is pretty, yeah, pretty catered to one type of student, which is the student who excel is excelling anyway, or will always Excel. I don't think that we're able yet to create a system or a type of education environment where the other student is able to perform as well. In fact, what usually happens is they get hounded because they're not turning up, and because it's a practical course, as we all know, if you don't turn up, you're not gaining information, you're not gaining knowledge, you're not literally practicing so lots of things are dependent on the student turning up. And if you have anxiety, if you have mental health problems, if you have external factors, you're quite literally unable to turn up. How can we create an environment where you can still be able to participate without necessarily needing to turn up all the time? Or is there a way you can get students to turn up? And it's kind of, I don't know, and there's a kind of, there's still that exchange environment happening potentially, but I think the way in which the environment is created, and I think the way in which scheduling happens isn't necessarily open to capturing those students potentially. We need to flip the system on its head and think about capturing those students first, and everyone else is going to excel verbatim, because they will anyway. So that's the things that I kind of constantly think about, or currently think about. And then another thing is, you're like the stop gap between education and industry. And of course, what we find is, if you go into industry and you look at the studios, most of those people are middle class. So what happens to everyone else is another problem, and how are we creating an environment in the university that helps those students either figure out a way to do work themselves without the need to kind of get employed by certain studios, or prepare them for working life in a different way. So that's another, I think, trajectory that then doesn't happen in a trickle down system. When you invite visiting lecturers back into the university, there's a small pool, because it's the pool who are already excelling. So that's my kind of circular issues, I guess.

Speaker 1

what kind of either like, systemic or institutional barriers, do you think make it challenging to do this work of decolonising design education?

Speaker 2

I think this the way in which the timetabling and the structuring is just doesn't really work. It benefits the lecturer more than it benefits to student I find, and I think more could be done to find ways of changing that or challenging that in a [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] after I graduated, I got some funding research grant from school of Commons. And school of Commons is sort of similar, because there's no strict timetabling. I think there could be slightly not stricter, but more understanding of what's expected when I don't think these are necessarily perfect systems, but you can dip in and dip out when you want, but you still gain what you'll gain from experience, because you're there to connect with people first and foremost, and then build your projects out of that environment. So in a way, they've set up a system that is not about you. So yeah, it's not about self-actualisation, necessarily. It's about meeting people and engaging with a cohort, and then hopefully you are developing something alongside others at the same time. So in that respect, I think the environment, there are other environments that are able to cater for more people than the way in which the university environment caters for the one person. You know, it doesn't have that kind of collegial. It's for some reason, isn't gaining that collegial, you know, feeling that we want the students to get and gain from the experience. So I think, I think maybe the timetabling or the structuring could be changed. Bit of a problem, obviously, in the university education system because of the way it's funded and operates and how you gain your degrees. But there could be something in there. I think, I think it could be interesting to experiment and test. I mean, the obvious and most important thing is also speaking to the students and asking for those who are in third year a bit more articulate, a bit more understanding of how the three years has progressed, and asking them what they think could have been changed to help their specific you know, is it need necessarily, or is it something else, and then implementing that into the educational environment is, or could be excellent.

[REDACTED] I think it's two hours session for and it's open like anyone, not anyone, can turn up. If you identify with being a person of colour, specifically, you can turn up to this open session. And each week they discuss something different. So the first week might be

1. Aisha Transcript

references, bringing references and sharing those references. The second week might be assistance with your CV, so active workshops that help you. This third session could just be watching a prevalent video or research, so that there are active sessions that helps those students develop in a soft way. Instead of it being a kind of top down hierarchical learning environment, it's more open and plural, and you dip in and out. If you can make it fantastic, if you don't make it, okay, no problem. But hopefully you're making it because you're learning with your peers, and you're also learning something else that's informing your practice, really importantly. So that's really interesting, and I think that's really great in some way, because you're gaining that students trust and coming a lot of what's said is of students who are from another background, they just don't turn up. They just don't turn up. Why don't they come to we can't help them if they don't turn up. Well, whose problem is that, you know, it's not really the student's problem. They're sort of enrolled and they want to be engaged. There's clearly something else that's not there's a reason why they can't turn up, and that might be one of the reasons might be that the environment isn't helpful to them in some way. So how do you make environments helpful? Yeah,

Speaker 1

yeah, totally, when you kind of spoke about that idea of, like, active sessions, I think like a question that builds up, building on that, like, have you encountered any kind of or implemented any initiatives aimed at decolonising design education in particular?

Speaker 2 33:58



workshops, you name it afterwards. And that is so helpful, because that basically engages all the students in an activity together at the same time. We're all learning actively and reading, you know, reading, for want of a word, this research, engaging with it at the same time together, and you can build off of that. So then the next workshop is basically getting into groups and understanding bits of I guess, each person has given their own transcript, so they highlight, or they kind of understand areas that they don't know. So it's really important to highlight things. What we try to ask them to do is highlight things they do know, but highlight things, and they comment off of you know thoughts that happen in real time, but also highlight things they don't know. And we use all of that information, and we get students into groups, self self forming groups to then have a conversation about those things they know and don't know, the not knowing. And the knowing is kind of part of the learning experience. And if you share that knowledge between you, you're all going to know and you're all going to learn something at the end. So that, to me, is like something that I tried to do in all of my teaching. It's like if you're doing, if you're introducing some research, you don't just introduce it in the kind of ephemeral way where you say, read this book, or this would be great if it's for everyone, and everyone should start from a kind of baseline. Then we do it actively in class together, and we spend the time thinking about it, and then we spend the time documenting the outcomes, and then we can move on from there. So I think doing those workshops and not and maybe trying to not to create environment which is challenging as a area to enter as a starting point is quite important. Yeah, something I was going to add, but I can't remember.

Speaker 1

That's okay. No, that was really interesting. The last kind of question I have in this section, and I feel like we've, we've briefly touched on it in different in different points, but it's this idea of, what role do you think educators from minoritised ethnic backgrounds should play in shaping the future of design education?

Speaker 1

It's important to show up. I think I. And as hard as it is, and it is hard because you're in my mind, I'm like, I'm always going to be on an AI contract, but showing up and being brutally honest about the world and the environment is important. That doesn't mean saying bad things, but being really, being really kind of open to students. They're not stupid, like they know intrinsically they know. So explaining to them that there's going to be a lot of hard work is really important, I think, in university environment, yeah, showing up and it's pretty hard

1. Aisha Transcript

because, yeah, there is an expectation on you to do more than you than the average lecturer, I'd say, because there's more building and more more that is not said by the faculty that you should be delivering or engaging on.

[REDACTED] Well, supposedly all faculty, but and you can see the gap, the attainment gap between home students who are people of colour and home students who are Caucasian or white, or however they define themselves. And this year on the graphics department, there's been quite a large attainment gap. So it means that home students of colour are achieving much poorer grades than home students who aren't. But what ends up happening in the higher education system is they turn to the faculty of colour and say, Well, what more can you do? And actually, it's not really a what more can you do? It's what more can we all do? And how can we change the environment to make it an approachable space for those students? Because we're obviously not getting something that comes from the course leader. I think when you're an AI which most, most are, there's your remit to do is limited because you're not contracted very well and you don't have that many hours. You also are kind of dropped into situations. You're kind of parachuted in and parachuted out, or, I say, parachute but, you know, kicked out as and when it suits the need of the department. So it's not like you're there consistently, and you're able to kind of have an overview of what's happening, so you can feed in with some great, you know, great research and reflection based off of student feedback. So I think that there's a lot of issues there that kind of need to be unpacked, that probably they need more people in the department. But also, yeah, a bit better conversation with, with, with the students. I mean, all the things, all the thing.

I think showing up is important. Showing up and being, being the face, because it's really it's really easy to not be the face, but knowing who you are, and knowing that you are the face of something, and that you're that you're well researched and well versed in in decolonial pedagogy is important, because then you can bring it into conversations, not just with those homes, like with all students. It's really important for all students to be aware of that.

Speaker 1

totally. That was interesting. Well, this next part, the final part, is a little bit different, so it's I want to introduce you to a method I tend to kind of use to encourage conversations around the future. So in this case, the future of design education being a decolonized one, and the method that I'm going to use is to use storytelling artifacts or speculative prompts to ground the conversation. So I'm going to share my screen in a sec and introduce you to a future decolonised design space, or an alternative future for design education. So I'll share my screen. And the way I'm going to do this next part is read through. These slides almost like a script, and then at the end, I'll ask some questions about your thoughts and what not. So yeah, we'll do it that way. So I want you to imagine a future where Maker Majlis exists a communal, decolonised design space built on indigenous sovereignty, shared learning and creative collaboration. And let me go to the next slide. And the way I'm going to tell this story of the future, this future world, is through an induction pack found in the year 2050 an induction pack that gives hints as to the values of this new type of design education and how this new space may work. So I'm going to run you through these different series of prompts from the induction pack to begin to build this picture of Maker Majlis so this future form of design education is built upon the principles of a Majlis. Now, a Majlis is a traditional gathering space, deeply rooted in Arab culture, where people come together to share stories, exchange knowledge and engage in meaningful dialog. Historically, the Majlis has served as a hub for community, decision making, storytelling and hospitality, a space where every voice is valued and collective wisdom shapes outcomes. In its essence, the Majlis embodies connection, respect and the power of shared conversation. So this is the welcome letter. So welcome 2050 participants Maker Majlis is a space where creativity, heritage and collective wisdom come together to shape the future of design. You are stepping into the fifth year of our journey and entering a space that is constantly shifting to reflect the people working in this space at Maker Majlis, participants are invited to spend up to 10 years as a maker with the freedom to leave whenever they feel their journey is complete, by allowing participants to stay as long as they need. Maker Majlis creates space for deeper exploration, iterative learning and meaningful connections with their heritage and communities. This flexibility nurtures creativity and growth at natural pace, removing the pressure to conform to arbitrary timelines. This welcome letter, like every part of your induction pack, was imagined and crafted by last year's cohort, the 2049 makers, an integral part to the way we exist in this space is to learn with and from one another and draw from our individual knowledge systems to address communal explorations. So the manifesto that the participants of Maker Majlis have constructed is as follows. So it's that we listen first. We celebrate plurality, we honor heritage. We practice reciprocity, we dismantle hierarchies. We respect the land. We embrace unlearning. We design with purpose. We value process and we protect knowledge. So the next art fact in the maker madness induction pack is the values compass at Maker Majlis, we do not assess participants work or measure against grading systems. Instead, we have a values compass that we generate and hold ourselves accountable to each participant will add their personal values to reflect themselves, their heritage and their positionality. And at the center of the physical maker Majlis, there is the heart. So it's a space that keeps the pulse of our community alive. It's more than a circle is worse. Stories are shared, wisdom is exchanged, and ideas come to life. The Heart embodies the values of Maker Majlis connection, collaboration and respect for the diverse traditions and voices that shape our world. Here, participants gather with elders, peers and local communities to reflect, listen and CO create. It's space of equality, where every voice matters and every story carries a potential to inspire change. The heart beats with the collective energy of its makers, serving as both a sanctuary for reflection and a catalyst for innovation. Welcome to the heart, where listening shapes the future.

1. Aisha Transcript

And finally, the last thing in the induction pack is the accountability cards. So they're a deck of accountability questions that all participants are expected to engage with in their design process. An example of some of the questions are, who benefits from this work? How does this design respect the land and what assumptions are you reinforcing? So now they'll kind of introduce you to this. Future concept of design education via the Maker Majlis. I'm gonna I'll stop sharing, and then I'll ask you a few questions about about some thoughts and themes that you might be thinking about in response to those.

So the first question is, what are your initial thoughts about the concept of Maker Majlis?

Speaker 2

It sounds great. It sounds it sounds like a, almost like a residency, um,

I say, a residency, but a kind of community learning environment as well, that you join And the idea is that it's open to everyone, right? Yeah, so, and do they apply, or they, how do they? Is it sort of, what is it? Just open? How does, how does um?

I know that school of Commons do a system where, if you it's reminding me a little bit about a couple of things that I've seen so conditions has this kind of residency program that you apply to. I don't know. I've never I don't define myself as an artist, so I don't know what the kind of scope of the application is, necessarily. But you can kind of come back each year. You don't have to leave you, but they do every year, bring in a new cohort. I don't know the kind of application process necessarily, but I know that you can stay as long as you want, in theory, so you can keep coming back until so there's some some elements there that kind of parallel Maker Majlis and then I know that with school of Commons, they do a what they do is they ask for any alumni, so anyone who's been through school of Commons in previous years to be a part of the kind of panel selection panel for the projects or the it's more the projects instead of the people in this instance, but the projects that will be selected to be a part of school of Commons community, and then it and then it kind of moves forward from that, but you only do school of Commons for the year, and then it's over with, other than being an alumni. But as an alumni, you can kind of dip in and out as much as you want, and you have access, I guess, to the community.

it's quite interesting that those are all kind of like alternative programs, whereas, I think like with this is like imagining that this was the standard of universities, yeah. It's interesting to think about, because I think it, I guess maybe my brain works is like, I'm quite pragmatic. So the things that I would think about is, you can, it's amazing to so you kind of apply as a person I would, I would imagine or with a kind of project in mind, but based off of the kind of focus areas. And you, of course, would be someone who would love to, like, you know, you sort of adhere to the manifesto, if it, if you call it that, can't remember now, I guess I'd want to know if it was me, how it would, how I would engage with it, like, where am I based? Who are the people that surround me? How many of them would surround me if it's not graded, which is pretty cool, and I think that's great, and it's things shouldn't be graded, but maybe there should be something where there's peer reviews, or something, or even that's a not very nice word, but something where feedback sessions communal, feedback sessions are actively engaged and encouraged and engaged in that do people get Lost, or do they come back? Because it's this open system. Um, so how do you define it without it being so big that you lose people, totally lose people, because you want people to have the flex and so small that it's too inclusive, too exclusive. And. Um, if we're using this as kind of the way in which universities were going to run, so let's say, give or take, 80 students would be a part of it, and they can come and go. I think that could work pretty well, because you lose about 20 if you throw a party, let's say house party or whatever, you lose about like, something like 40% of the people don't turn up.

If it's an open invite, it's a house party, anyone can turn up. Bring your partners. You lose about 40% and that's not because they don't want to come. That's because something happens in their life. They're unwell, or, you know, so giving a big breadth of space for someone to facilitate their own learning journey is great. Three years is too short. We kind of know that and see that, but you do want certain touch points to make sure that people are aligned and are progressing in a way in which they feel like they're progressing. So there are some like milestones, but those milestones are kind of subject to what they set themselves. So in a way, there does need to be a kind of trajectory, but that trajectory needs to be outlined by the person, individually, if it is 80 people, 80 people being one body is pretty impossible, but 80 people forming interesting community, like mini communities that are somehow interdispersed within the bigger is super interesting. And what you'd hope for is that those 80 people don't fracture and become separated totally. But there are some sort of, again, touch points where not that there's shake ups, but you can change the dynamics within it, so that people meet other people and are engaging in in, I guess, the community environment. Yeah, yeah. So I think I think it could work. I think it's a beautiful initiative. I mean, I love the idea that you have the space to leave and enter as you want. Yeah, but I wonder how the commitment comes into play.

Speaker 1

do you think kind of this approach rooted in gathering, storytelling and shared creation would resonate with educators and students and then, like, why or why not?

Speaker 2

Yeah, I do. I do think so

1. Aisha Transcript

[REDACTED] but it was all about sort of healing and learning through one another and through nature, etc. And her guest lectures she brought in were, you know, people who were sort of, I don't know, like in, who were definitely more in tuned with like nature and ancestry. And got you thinking about your work, but not your work. Got you thinking about you as a person before thinking in order to then prepare you to thinking about your work. So yeah, she had some of the most amazing lecturers who weren't designers, but totally engaged with the idea of design thinking, but design thinking as an approach to medicine or as an approach to how we see ancestral objects, etc. So that was really an interesting, I guess, learning journey. I feel like I went on through that, because it wasn't about delivering it was about embracing something other and learning from something other, and then learning something about yourself and the process to then make work that it was actually not my favourite work that I made, but it is the most. I guess conceptual work I made because it felt very original. I guess if it was the closest to making art, I would think about making. But I think going through that definitely unpack something on you know, within yourself, and makes you a bit freer in the work that you're going to make. So sometimes you come to uni, and the students say, Well, it's my last year, and I haven't made a book, and I'm a graphic designer, so I want to make a book as my final project, or I'm going to get hired if I make a book, it's like, yeah, but, like, a lot of that depends on who you want to be hired by. But they don't know that they're so young, you know? They just know this is, like, this weird getting hired thing. So, yeah, I think, I think it could work. You'd have to do a lot of unpacking, maybe, because I've spoken now about the hiring part is that you'd have to do a lot of unpacking. If this was a new university kind of system structure to engage people in the understanding that I feel like students come to university, really, to get job, like, that's just it. It's a gateway, um, and I wonder, I do wonder, how much of it is for them coming and being open to the process of what it is that they're learning, or the creative like, kind of learning journey itself. And maybe that's a problem that is graphic design related, intrinsically, that you want to get a design job before you come you study graphic design. You think like that's the process. But actually, what happens in some universities and some and most of them actually, is they want you to be creative and they want to stretch you. But the student doesn't necessarily always want to be stretched. Some of them do, some of them just from land design, because they just want that design job. So if a student came into, or if this was, you know, a replacement for a student environment, I guess the kind of would it be? Would it there would be less pressure on that aspect, you know? So it would be interesting to see who would apply and be a part of it. Because of that. I'm sort of going off on a tangent. I'm sort of thinking out loud here. But for me, for someone like me who's already had a career and has a career, I love the idea of it, because I'd love to be a part of something that's always actively engaging and changing and wondering and totally opening myself up to new people and experiences and learning in an alternative way. I wonder if someone so young would see and understand it in the same way.

Speaker 1

Yeah. Well, that that that leads quite nicely to like the last question, because the last question is, if you were to contribute to Maker Majlis, what aspect of your either teaching or heritage design philosophy, any of that would you bring into the space?

Speaker 2

I definitely think about research and learning as a process we can do together that doesn't need to be done in isolation. Thinking about the UK environment and education really, specifically, it's always, it was always study at home, study, you know, isolation. Do it. You know, if you're not locked away in your bedroom, you're not studying, but that doesn't make sense, and definitely didn't make sense to me from a personal perspective. I'm a very active learner. I need it to happen in front of me. I need to learn and try and do and speak to people, and then it kind of sticks in my mind. So I would, I would, I would make the research and things that are happening, because I don't think that it's always about workshops. Sometimes you really do need to sit and read in order to engage, but make that a much more open process, which is kind of like an active book club in a way or an active reading group, but active in the way in which you're trying to engage people in conversations and trying to ask them to create parallels in what they're reading with their own experiences or their own knowledge, or other knowledge that they've. Kind of been given or, you know, so they're starting to fuse those connections in some way. So, yeah, that's what I that's what I would contribute if I was contributing and if I was maybe contributing something a bit more cultural, it would probably be to just sit on the floor and, you know the and just talk to people you know, sit in a comfortable way that isn't that is intimate and is about sharing and not, not always, I guess, a slow and informal way of conversing and having different points of conversing that isn't all just nighttime activities. Are you drinking, boozing whatever that isn't just, you know, interviews, meetings, whatever in the day, workshops, that can be very slow points in the day where you're just milling about, milling about, asking questions, being more casual, because I think that's really important to connecting with people as well, which we don't necessarily have in the university environment at the moment, you don't have that kind of slightly slower pace, which I think is why the longer length of time allows for that.

Speaker 1

any kind of additional thoughts or insights that might have come up in your brain but didn't feel like you had chance to share or like any advice for educators and institutions striving to do this one?

1. Aisha Transcript

Speaker 2

Oh, I don't know. I feel like I'm a bit doom and gloom these days, like it's not going to happen in the university environment. Is my, it's like my, you can, you can try and they try. But I think with the funding issues, not that this needs funding necessarily, but I think it's so broken. I don't, I don't think you can unpick the vast vastness of the problems that exist in the university environment and I which is probably why a lot of these initiatives run external to the university.



strategies, I guess, or structures that are working, and then to look again, further afield and understand how education structures were elsewhere, and maybe that's not specifically design education. Maybe that's something other, because

I think we've entered a system where most higher education really has defaulted to the UK system, and the UK system isn't working.

So, yeah, so potentially broadening the horizon even further.

2. Amina Transcript

Speaker 1

There we go. But yeah, like the purpose of the interviews is, it's to invite design educators into conversation on the decolonisation of design education. And like previously, I've done things with students, and then this kind of part of the study is just mostly focused around people who have experience within the teaching side of things, to kind of discuss any experiences of like Eurocentric curricula that you may have encountered within like, particularly UK Higher Education design programs.

And I guess I'm kind of interested

in this idea of thinking about the past, present and future of design education and how they can speak to one another. And I kind of like have toyed with that idea a lot throughout it, and I've found it, I guess it's unproductive for me to have those conversations solely with myself about what my desires for the future of design education are so speaking to others, I guess kind of works towards the idea of Like collective, communal dreaming that, that, you know, things can be different than the way they are right now, with our current experiences of how design education is kind of unfolding, and some of the frustrations that might come out of of being in in these kind of highly Western, what feel like quite highly Western spaces sometimes. So I guess, like the first, the first bunch of questions is just to to ask, like, a little bit about your your first non professional context, just to kind of build an idea of of your positionality and identity in relation to your experiences of being a design educator. So, so yeah, the first, the first question is, Could you, could you firstly describe your your current role in design education, and perhaps give a little context of your educational career up until this point and what led you to this spot that you're in now.

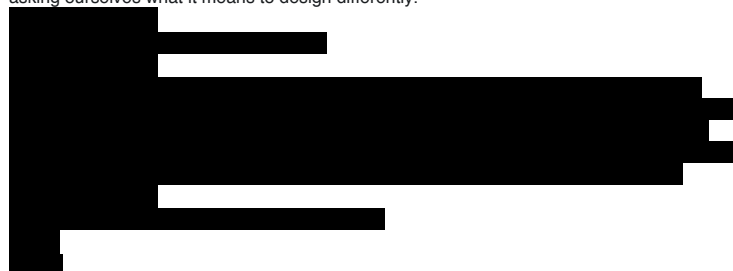
Speaker 2



but the gaps were really the gaps in that education due to the lack of diversity. Really, were really glaring, and so that's a lot of the work that my role does. Now. My role is centered around challenging the canon of graphic design. And so a lot of the work I do is about providing pastoral support to students who may be struggling because of lived experience or cultural identity or whatever reason,

05:30

I give a lot of lectures and workshops on design histories from around the world, and they're kind of designed to open up students ways of thinking about what design is and what it can be. Because I feel like for me, obviously diversifying the staff team of any educational institution is really, really important. But decolonising is about introducing multiplicity into our conception of what design is, and really taking this Angela Davis conception of what radical means, like grasping something at the root and really getting to the root of what we conceive of as design, and asking ourselves what it means to design differently.



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[REDACTED]

think there is something sorry in that about there is something valuable about committing yourself to an institution as difficult as that might be, and committing yourself to doing the work in that one place and in that one context, and get because then you know that context so well, and you understand its problems. And I think there is, there is something to be, to be said for that, basically, with the work that we're doing, I think it makes a lot of sense. Obviously, that's not for everyone, but I think it is an interesting context to be working from.

Speaker 1

yeah. I get the next question I have done is like, how would you describe your own kind of cultural identity or heritage, and perhaps how that's influenced your personal and professional journey in design education.

Speaker 2

Yeah, so my parents are first generation immigrants from India. So I was born and raised here,

[REDACTED]

I think there's something about the the instability that is caused by the big migration between countries having an effect on like the micro migration between different places that definitely had an effect on me,

[REDACTED] And so I think there it influenced me in in terms of, like searching for what this notion of home is, and some kind of anchor within that. And then the wider questions, obviously, of Britain's [REDACTED] colonial relationship has always, I think, influenced me more than I realized. A lot of that I'm kind of unpacking in the work on my masters right now, because I don't really understand it. But I went, we usually went back [REDACTED] like every year when I was growing up, and I would always be quite fascinated by the complete stark contrast in cultures like Britain was so in a way, like visually quiet and gray and muted. And then [REDACTED] was this, like kind of assault on the senses in the best way possible. And I think that really influenced what I was interested in aesthetically, and what visual languages I was drawn to, and when it comes to design, I really felt like physically oppressed by modernism and this kind of minimalism, minimalist aesthetic that was really dominant when I was studying design and my tutor

[REDACTED] European modernism is literally about stopping the conversation, like, you don't put anything on the page. Like, that's the point. And it was such a good description of like, the politics of modernism and how it works, how I feel like it works to silence, like voices that are deemed as other.

But a lot of that is like, based on feelings, my feelings, rather than like any particular evidence that I have yet. So I think, I think my cultural identity, and I'm queer as well, so that kind of provides a different opportunity to like, think outside of existing structures, or question them or push against them. I think that has kind of formed a ground for me to really think about the relationship between aesthetics and colonialism. Basically, I'll talk, I'll talk maybe a bit later, [REDACTED] work that came out of that, because that was a lot about the relationship between colonialism and aesthetics and finding different ways to see the world. But yeah, I hope that answers your question.

Speaker 1

Yeah, totally, yeah, totally. And I guess, like a follow on kind of question from that is, like, how you perhaps feel that your your cultural identity has shaped your teaching, philosophy and practices, and if you have any kind of collecting, yeah? Just um, I think

Speaker 2

I actually don't always think explicitly, like explicitly about how it's informed my teaching philosophy, but I think my like some I think it's something that I just do rather than like. I think I plan to do like. It's not premeditated, but I think my teaching philosophy is about really trying to push the students to question like established norms and question their instincts towards a certain form of design, like Question what they've been indoctrinated with and why that is, I think it's really about introducing them to critical thinking within themselves, within their lives,

2. Amina Transcript

within their design practice. But it's also, I think I'm really interested in introducing warmth into the classroom and kind of an informality or like a colloquialism that allows us to approach these big, serious topics and take them seriously, but also not feel intimidated by them, and still be a lot like able to make quips or jokes. And I think there's something about doing that dance between taking something seriously but also having a laugh that is really, really important in the classroom, and is important in terms of, like, finding joy in education. Because I don't know about you, but students are really stressed all the time, and it's, I think anything we can do to relieve that pressure and instill like fun into these topics, even if they're really serious, is really important.

Speaker 1

Okay. So, so I guess these next few questions are focused a bit more around, around that kind of idea of potential Eurocentric experiences, and more so about, perhaps, like the curriculum and things that we're kind of teaching. So, so the question that I have is, Could you, could you describe to me some of your own personal experiences within your eccentric with your eccentric curricula, in your own education or in your teaching career, for example, were there any instances where you felt there were dominant design narratives being taught. And did you ever feel restricted by those narratives?

Speaker 2

I think definitely when it came to like, design history. Like we weren't taught loads. We weren't like, taught loads of history and theory [REDACTED] because that's not really what it's designed to do. Like you learn about the history and theory through practice, through doing the projects. And so when it works like that, you like go out to the library and or you go out to design talks, and you learn that way. And there was very little scholarship on any form of design by people of colour at that time [REDACTED] there, there were seeds, [REDACTED] realizing that that those books are in other parts of the library, and they're under different categorizations, and they're not under graphic design, and so there was just a massive lack of voices from the global south in terms of contributing to thinking about what graphic design is like. It to me, it seemed like a European project that came out of the Bauhaus and this like post World War Two aesthetic of scarcity and wanting to save and scrap, which I completely get. But yeah, it was, it became. It then became very difficult if you were trying to ask, like, decolonial questions of design. It became difficult to do that when you didn't have any other visual languages to look to. And so I think now it's really in whatever the last 10 years, like it's really turned around, like there's so much more scholarship and research on, I don't know, black design history or design history from the Arab region, like there's, there's so many more books being published, because after 2020 people have realized that they need to make space for this. And there's a bit of jumping on the bandwagon, as there always is um, but I think the Yeah, I don't know how to describe that, necessarily, that the impact that Eurocentrism had on me was not seeing myself in the curriculum necessarily, like it didn't need to be me. It just needed to be any representation of any other kind of culture whatsoever. And I think the cultural dominance that Europe has over design is a form of colonialism, because it displaces any other form of communicating. And this dominance, this dominant form of communication, has really led us to a shit place in the world, and I think that we need to find ways to, like, unhook graphic design from capitalism and think about what it means to design without those tools, without those values, without those politics, and again, forge new ways of designing. And you can, you can start to see it coming out now in the student work. And that is, that is an impact of diversifying the design curriculum. Obviously, it's not where I would like it to be, but you can see the impact on the questions students are asking of themselves and in their work. So impact of Eurocentric curriculum on me? Was there anything else I think, yeah, I think probably also just having never been taught by a person of colour, really had, just added to that feeling of isolation, or like having my voice, my creative voice, silenced. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] And so it's kind of the polar opposite experience of arts education that I had 10 years ago. But also the context has changed so significantly, like, I can go to like, probably like four exhibitions right now that are about decolonialism, which is like within art and design, which is mad like it was difficult to find an exhibition like a big exhibition at one of the big institutions that was showing a person of colour 10 years ago. And so it does feel like a bit of like, where am I? What is happening? Because the things that I was craving in my undergrad have kind of come to fruition now, um, and it's really like allowed me to flourish as I don't know whatever an artist, a designer, a creative practitioner, so much more, because I have like, a community of practice now. But I think the impact of the Eurocentric curriculum that I had on my undergrad is so starkly different now that I can see what the original negative impact was, because I'm having the opposite experience,

Speaker 1

And I guess, like thinking about all of this stuff within, like an institutional environment that comes with, like its own, its own kind of set of challenges and this question was, you know, in your opinion, what systemic or institutional barriers make it challenging to decolonise design education.

Speaker 2

I think, for me, lack of funding for everything. So I think the like commodification of education is like the root issue. Because, because students are having to pay so much in fees, they see education as not like a place to explore or take risks or take refuge from the working world. They see it as a means to getting a job, and because they're investing in it, and that's not their fault. That's a fault of the system. And I think that that attitude really denies students the

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opportunity to think about what design might be or think about how they can push the boundaries of design. Thankfully, they're still managing to do it, but the conditions that are set for them inhibit that so much they inhibit any kind of um experimental thinking, because there's not as much room for them to take risks, and especially when there's a lack of funding in terms of maintenance for them. So some of them are working like 20, 30, 40, hours a week in order just to live and have an education. And it's a kind of a bit like, it feels sort of calculated by the government in a weird way that in order to inhibit the masses from like thinking in any kind of revolutionary way, they will just make the conditions so oppressive that people genuinely have no time to think about what another life might look. Like. And maybe it seems far fetched to think about that in terms of the lack of funding for education, but for me, I think that is an important connection to make. And then that's also true of the stuff like the working conditions are incredibly difficult at art schools because of the lack of resources. Everyone's over always overworking and overstretched. And when you're stretching yourself thin within the working day to just make the course run again, there's it feels like there's not enough time or space to think about how we might decolonise, how we might do things differently. And so I think the late stage capitalism, Post conditions of design, education are like the biggest barrier to decolonising. And so some of the best spaces that I've found that offer an opportunity to think about what decolonisation looks like are outside the institution. They're reading groups or community education groups or just friends, meeting for dinner and having a conversation. I think the institution is really not the ideal context to be thinking about decolonisation right now, because it's just in a way designed the conditions now are designed to prohibit that. I don't think British universities are what they were in, like the 80s. I think obviously I wasn't there, but it was, yeah, I think the the conditions very different.

Speaker 1

I guess the the next, the question I had was, is this idea of, like, who this work of decolonisation, falls upon a lot of the time, and what role you might think that educators from like, from both minoritised ethnic backgrounds and then also not like what, what is their role in in shaping the future of design Education. I guess, just speaking to that question of who, who this work falls upon.

Speaker 2

old versioned but I still think the work should be led by people of colour, I understand this notion of like unpaid labour and the extra, like emotional toil that it takes on people of colour to do this work, but also, we're the only ones who know how it feels, and I think it's the job of people who are not from minoritized backgrounds to like, research and understand and make space and help facilitate space for us to lead these conversations. I've seen way too much of I've seen way too many examples of white people trying to take the burden off people of color and trying to do decolonising work with, then without any people of colour, and it's just like another fucked up form of colonialism, like it doesn't It doesn't make any sense. And I think in this instance, like collectivity and collaboration is really essential to do any kind of work. And I think this queer reading group that I go to last night, and we were talking about, if queerness is always oppositional, doesn't that put us into this like binary all of the time, of like us versus them. And the something I've been thinking a lot about is how i. I'm like, this binary of settler versus native was part of the colonial project, like it was designed to separate people into these two groups so that the colonisers could justify their civilizing mission in order to civilize the native people. But what happens when you smash that binary and you try to think outside of it? It's very difficult, like I've already like in talking about who should be doing the work, I've already fallen into this binary of like white people and people of colour, but I'm still interested in moving past that and thinking about, how Can we I don't know, how can we acknowledge the impact that race has on some of us, but not all of us, but also acknowledge that race is a fiction, and also acknowledge that it is a construct that is depleting all of us, but at the same time, recognize people's lived experience of colonisation, and that being the most important qualified, not Quality, no, not the most important qualification and important factor in understanding how to doing do decolonial work. It's not the only factor. Obviously, there are lots of other things that need to come with that. But, um, yeah, I think thinking about who can embody decolonial work is very important.

[REDACTED]

Speaker 1

But yeah, I guess I was also curious if you, if you have ever, encountered or implemented, any direct initiatives aimed at decolonising design, education within your role

Speaker 2

[REDACTED]

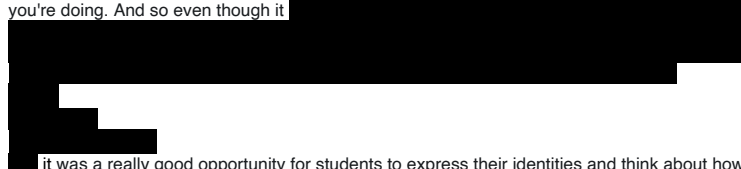
And the project that we ran was about archives whose who is silenced from the archive whose voices are heard and not heard. But also, if we look outside of institutional archives, we look at Community archives. What evidence can we find of people from the past who mirror our experiences? And how can we learn about history in this, I don't know, more punky, less formal, institutional way. And we got our students, we had all of this, like visual material, like posters and leaflets and stuff from archives, and we asked students to remix them so use the material to make a collage that

2. Amina Transcript

communicated an aspect of their identity,



getting students to engage with archives, Getting them to think about themselves and their own cultural identities, getting them to think about research and how to research into the past and look at history in a different way, because a lot of students, I think, are stuck on the internet a lot of the times and don't realise that The good stuff is not on the internet. I think also having agency over how they can approach history and reuse that material and to communicate something that is interesting to them. And I think that process of like cons, constantly having the students involved at every different stage of the project, like the design book, the panel discussion, the exhibition was really forefront to this, like teaching philosophy, where the student voice is always present as a collaborator, and it's like a shaper of what you're doing. And so even though it



it was a really good opportunity for students to express their identities and think about how that is connected to aesthetics in a way that was outside of the curriculum. And I think that was really important. I really believe in extracurricular opportunities as a way of again, like divesting from the institution slightly and thinking about spaces where students can think about design differently, if that makes sense.

Speaker 1

Yeah. There's something really interested in the idea of, like, creating spaces for students to bring, I guess, their whole their whole selves, and for us to bring our whole selves into those spaces too. Yeah. So, yeah, totally, very interesting. Okay, so this next part of the of the kind of conversation I'm going to share my screen, and it's kind of going to be a just provide some kind of speculative prompts, but I think I can go through it once I get the visuals, visuals up for this next part.

So yeah, so for this next part of the conversation, I'm going to kind of introduce you to a method I've been kind of using to encourage conversations around the future, and in this case, kind of being about the future of design, Education, being a decolonized one, and that method is to use storytelling artefacts or speculative prompts to ground a conversation. So that's how, I guess, yeah, framing this part of the conversation. So I'm going to introduce you to a. A future where Maker Majlis exists, so a communal, decolonised design space built on indigenous sovereignty, shared learning and creative collaboration. And the way I'm going to tell a story of this future world is through an induction pack found in the year 2050 so we're thinking about 25 years into the future. So the induction pack that that's going to give kind of hints as to the values of this new type of design education and how this new space may work. So I'm going to run you through the series of prompts from from the induction pack to to begin to build this picture of of Maker Majlis. So this future form of design education is built upon the principles of a Majlis. A Majlis is a traditional gathering space, deeply rooted in Arab culture, where people come together to share stories, exchange knowledge and engage in meaningful dialogue. Historically, the match list has served as a hub for community decision making, storytelling and hospitality, a space where every voice is valued and collective wisdom shaped outcomes. In its essence, the Majlis embodies connection, respect and the power of shared conversation. And yeah, and this is the welcome letter in the induction pack, so I'll read it out for you. So welcome 2050 participants - maker majlis is a space where creativity, heritage and collective wisdom come together to shape the future of design. We are stepping into the fifth year of our journey and entering a space as constantly shifting to reflect the people working in this space. At maker majlis, participants are invited to spend up to 10 years as a maker with the freedom to leave whenever they feel their journey is complete. Maker majlis create space for deeper exploration, iterative learning and meaningful connections with their heritage and communities. This flexibility nurtures creativity and growth at a natural pace, removing the pressure to conform to arbitrary timelines. This welcome letter, like every part of your induction pack, was imagined and crafted by last year's cohort. an integral part of the way we exist in this space is to is to learn with and from one another, and draw from our individual knowledge systems to address communal explorations. so yes this is the evolving manifesto written by the participants. So it's that we listen first. We celebrate plurality, we honor heritage, we practice reciprocity. We dismantle hierarchies. We respect the land. We embrace unlearning. We design with purpose. We value process and we protect knowledge. This, this next artifact in the maker majlis induction pack is the values

2. Amina Transcript

compass at Maker majlis, we do not assess participants work or measure against grading systems. Instead, we have a values compass that we generate and hold ourselves accountable to each participant will add their personal values to reflect themselves, the heritage and the positionality at the center of the physical maker majlis, there is the heart, a space that keeps the pulse of our community alive is more than a circle is where stories are shared, wisdom is exchanged, and ideas come to Life. The heart embodies the values of makeup, mindless connection, collaboration and respect for the diverse traditions and voices that shape our world. Here, participants gather with elders, peers and local communities to reflect, listen and CO create is a space of equality where every voice matters and every story carries a potential to inspire change. The heart beats with the collective energy of its makers, serving as both sanctuary for reflection and the catalyst for innovation. Welcome. Welcome to the heart, where listening shapes future. And lastly, the final thing in the induction pack are the accountability cards, a deck of accountability questions that all participants are expected to engage with in their design process. An example of some of them. Questions are, who benefits from this work? How does this design respect the land and what assumptions. Are you enforcing So, kind of with, with that those prompts in mind, and kind of some of those future concepts of of how we could practice design, I'm just going to, I'm going to ask you now a few questions in in relation to some of the themes and thoughts that that might have opened up.

Speaker 1

the first question is, what are your initial thoughts about the concept of maker majlis

Speaker 2

sounds like a great space. I think it made me feel sad at how it feels like a dream, like it feels I think about what it would take to achieve that space, and how difficult it would be, and it makes me sad that that's my response, rather than like, oh, what would I make? What would I do if I was in this space? Like the fact that it feels so unattainable is really depressing. Because we're stuck in this capitalist context where we measure everything by like, how many resources it's going to take to make it.

But then,

yeah, but then also, have you read that the me book experiments in imagining otherwise? Yeah, I think this is a good example of that, where she's talking about how we need to like, we need to have these visions of the otherwise in order to have something to work towards.

Otherwise, we don't have anything

to motivate us to we don't have any kind of like vision or goal. And there's another book called, I think he came out in the early 2000s or the 90s, called Freedom dreams, the black radical imagination, by Robin DG Kelly, and that's a really good book that really chimes with this as well, because he's writing about All of the different dreams of freedom that these different black political movements have. And obviously the political movements obviously failed, but the vision of freedom that they had was still there. And I feel like this feels like like, maker majlis feels like designs, example of like what liberation looks like, which feels exciting, it feels motivational, it feels sad all at the same time, because it's about like the dream and the importance of the dream, and wanting the dream, but knowing how hard the journey is going to be To get the dream.

Speaker 1

I guess you kind of covered that idea of, like, what challenges might arise in implementing a space like, like, maker majlis, yeah, yeah, I guess how do you feel like this approach, like kind of rooted in gathering, storytelling and shared creation would resonate with educators and students, or do you think it would be met with resistance, If you know, trying to implement some of those, those ideas,

Speaker 2

I think it would be met with.

Let me think before I speak,

the students would love it, I think, and the students would really take to it, because they're most for the most part, young and at uni, and they have an ability to like think reflexively. And I. Like their imaginations are unlocked, but I think educators might find it difficult because they've been locked into these systems for so much longer.

And so I think when we're thinking about

trying to create spaces like maker majlis, it's about like they're undoubtedly going to be amazing spaces like that's not contested, but I think, I think they have to be student led in a way, because the students are the only ones whose imaginations are that unbridled to be able to envision a space like that. The other thing I was going to say that it reminds me of is like the times that I've come close to having a space like that is, do you know ellipsis? It's this, like ellipsis Open School. It's this like summer school, slash residency thing that's run by Eva Gonzalez.

which is the Brazilian, like culture of hair touching. And so we just like sat outside in the afternoon, like under the trees and under the sunshine and or just sat like touching each other's hair for like two hours, and it was so magical because it was about like cultural to tradition and like care and touch. And I think Bruno was reading ursula Le Guin as we were doing this, and it more nice this, like real Ultra, like feminist care centered space that we created together, and it was just a pocket of time.

But I think the other thing about those spaces is that you never know. There's an element of like spontaneity or surprise that you never know how they're going to turn out. You never know if it's going to work. And I think the the magic happens when it does work, and something does come beautiful, does come out of it, even though you hadn't anticipated it. And so I think, with maker majlis it's also about, how do you introduce spontaneity into the creation of it, and how do you how does it not become systematic, but it becomes this thing where that otherwise is introduced in, where you don't know if it might work, but, and it's always on the like precipice of something kind of a bit like jazz, where it's like, constantly dissonant, until it gets to a point

2. Amina Transcript

where it makes sense, and you're like, Ah, it's all come together. Now, I think there's something about those spaces which are, yeah, what you're trying to get at with, maker majlis.

Speaker 1

Yeah, totally. And you kind of like touched on that idea of, like, this idea of hope within, within this kind of work. I think to kind of begin to wrap up the questions society, radical hope in this work, and I guess what? How you'd reflect on, on, like, the need to remain hopeful within, within these situations.

Speaker 2

yeah. I think the, I think there is something, I think everyone has their own way of sustaining that hope. And I think for me, it's about like constantly coming out of the institution, like literally coming out of that space, and like going on a residency or doing. [REDACTED] reminding myself of other ways of thinking and other ways of being, because, and that's my way of like, sustaining my hope through my imagination, because my imagination constantly has to be stimulated in order to dream these alternative dreams of freedom and keep that hope alive that we're going to get there. But if I'm trapped in the institution all, all of the time, that hope dies completely, even though the people there are people that I love and people, though, who are great, but this space itself is not designed to sustain that. And so I think everyone has their own like sustaining Hope Project that only they know how to fulfill.

3. Elana Transcript

Speaker 1

These set of interviews are to invite design educators like yourself into conversations on the decolonisation of design education, and to discuss, like any of your experiences with Eurocentric curricula, you know, being within UK Higher Education design programs. And I guess I'm really kind of interested in this idea of speaking to the past, present and future of design education, but I'm very aware and it got to a point where I thought it was unproductive for me to just continue having those conversations with myself. So open it up, to speak to people you know, kind of opened up this space for working towards collective or communal dreaming or imagining that things could be different than our current experiences of design education up until this point. So the first kind of bunch of questions mostly about your personal and professional context, just like build an idea of like your positionality and identity in relation to like your experiences of being a design educator. So, yeah, my first question is, could you firstly describe your current role in design education and perhaps give a little context of your educational career up until this point, you know, like what led you to become a designer educator?

Speaker 2

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] just realised I really loved sort of teaching and being in that environment of constantly learning. But also it was at that time, all throughout my education, of sort of primary education, secondary education, college and then going to university in the UK that I had only ever been taught by essentially white males,

I think the first time that I'd ever been taught by a woman was in my third year of university, and I'd never interacted with any educator in higher education who was of colour. So especially in my final year, projects of exploring identity. And I come from an indigenous. Indigenous tribe in India, and I wanted to make those connections of my British Indian identity, and exploring a tribe that has never been documented, and having those conversations and and really realising that some of the parts in the curriculum that I was sort of taught I didn't understand how to utilize them. So that was quite difficult to navigate in that sense, but also starting to, I think, for the first time, realise that I hadn't been taught by anyone of colour and not that you necessarily need to be a person of colour to discuss alternative ways of doing or being. It was just something that I started to pick up on like that hadn't happened to me within my curriculum or within my sort of experience. And yeah, just really enjoyed being in education. So after I graduated, I took every opportunity to come back and do crit and talk about my practice and talk about my research that I started to develop and to be excited in that space. And then that slowly led to being a sort of a visiting lecturer on certain modules and giving certain crit and and then explore, I wanted to explore that as a full time route. [REDACTED] and then had the opportunity to come to Plymouth, which is fantastic. So, yeah, I hope that answers your question. Was there any other things you wanted to know?

Speaker 1

I wondered if you could speak a little bit about how you describe your heritage or your ethnic identity, and also if you think it's like influenced in your personal and professional journey in design education at all

Speaker 2

for sure. [REDACTED] My mum migrated here when she was 15 years old in terms of sort of creative creativity and sort of the arts. I guess I was always exposed to that at a young age. But I guess looking back at it now, it would have been quote, unquote, expressed as "craft". My mum was a seamstress, and that was my closest connection to sort of, I guess, anything creative. My siblings aren't necessarily within that realm. But ever since I was a kid, I was always interested in sort of making and telling stories and just designing things, whether they were clothes, whether they were posters, whatever that was, [REDACTED] there is sometimes this pressure that you can't take a creative route, because that's not a career, or that's not something that you can feasibly do. That's a hobby. But I was really fortunate in terms of the family that I came from, where they were so understanding and so willing. And I think the other

3. Elana Transcript

thing that I started to recognize when I was younger was I actually come from an indigenous tribe [REDACTED] and they're undocumented and almost sort of sort of dying in that sense. And within that the arts is a huge part of it. So women getting tattooed from the age of 14/ 15, to wearing specific clothes which are inspired by nature, in our in our in our way of sort of doing and living life, which is being sort of farmers and would farmers now, but they were sort of warriors. So a lot of the clothes, a lot of the jewellery, a lot of the tattoos, all told stories about nature and the harmony of how we live with nature and our Gods. So looking at that imagery was a huge part of my life and my childhood, and being exposed to that.

Yeah, I think it was having an experience of sort of growing up in the UK, and then having also the experience of experiencing this indigenous tribe and not living in the indigenous way. I guess something that all I have always sort of struggled with is the sense of identity, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] been really, really hard for me to

navigate, and what that means, because that means something so different for everyone, but also from an economical sort of standpoint. I We, I grew up quite poor. We grew up in a really low socio economic background. In a council estate. So I think again, that had an effect on me and my view and the things that I engaged with because of my surroundings. But that wasn't a negative. That was almost a positive in that sense, if that makes sense. But yeah, I think I wasn't really good at education. I was I really struggled at school, and I really struggled all throughout college as well because of the curriculum, but I think I really found my feet and started to flourish when I got to university. But I was always told that education was a privilege, and I really enjoyed the privilege of being able to go to university and having that opportunity. And loved. And I still love it. I still love being in this hub of knowledge and sort of this ever growing knowledge. And it's not something that stops. And I think that's, that's what kept sort of feeding me back, was the constant need to learn, I guess, yeah. And, I

Speaker 1

Do you feel that your cultural background has shaped your teaching, philosophy and practices?

Speaker 2

Um, I think in terms of my cultural background, I think it has, I think I've learned to recognise some conversations that we need to be having, so particularly when I started teaching and looking at the curriculum and looking at reference points and acknowledging that I had to be able to learn, to unlearn, to learn, to sort of widen reference points, and knowing that there's a sort of sense of responsibility in doing that as designers, [REDACTED] not necessarily about sort of problem solving, but also problem finding, but having an awareness that the work that the students are producing have an impact on the world, and acknowledging the importance of reference points and acknowledging reference points of ideas around history and relearning history is really one of the things, and understanding that history is one person's perspective, so having to sort of blend that into the curriculum or find opportunities to have those discussions has definitely been sort of a process that's developing more so recently, I think, as a team, having a conversation around unlearning to learn has been quite interesting. But I do think my cultural background and my acknowledgement of being a person of color in higher education, I sort of recognise that, not whilst I was only teaching at Uel, but also here, I think I read, when I was doing my PGCE. [REDACTED] I read an article which was about women of color, and I think it was saying there are only zero point 14% of women of color in higher education teaching. And that's really stood out to me, because I think our perspective and our lenses really shape the way we communicate and shapes the way we discuss certain topics, whether it be around sort of ethics or ideas around identity and otherness. So that that really sort of shifted something in me to recognise the importance of doing that, and the importance of sort of my position, not like I think only people of [REDACTED] can have those conversations, but acknowledging the importance of my reference point and how to sort of integrate that into teaching?

Speaker 1

Okay, so the these next few questions are focused around any kind of potential Eurocentric experiences in design education that you may have encountered either within your experiences of being a design student or being a design educator. So the first question I had was, could you describe to me some of your own personal experiences with teaching, either very Western, Western centric, Eurocentric curricula in your own education or in your teaching career, like for example, were there any instances where you felt there were dominant design narratives being taught? And did you ever feel restricted by those design narratives?

Speaker 2

I think when I was at university, I. Um, only, as I said, in sort of my second and third year did I start realizing that a lot of history of design that we get taught, a lot of the fundamentals of design we get taught, or the idea of what we view as good design is sort of Swiss design or Eurocentric. And you look at those, and you put them on a pedestal, and that's what you're sort of taught as, that's what's acceptable, that's what's beautiful, and that's what's pleasing, and then finding it really hard because of that friction of looking at reference points that weren't necessarily Eurocentric, because you didn't identify with them, or they weren't a part of what you saw, you know, whether that was sort of textiles from, you know, Asia, or architecture from other parts of the world that wasn't West was really hard to understand, and I thought I found myself looking at those things and saying that they weren't good enough, because that's what I was taught, that they weren't

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good enough and that they were almost whimsical, and they were craft. They didn't have a standard of purpose or function. You know, they were these sort of discarded things and that we shouldn't be looking at them. Is sometimes how it felt, because those constant conversations were about how history and about how war and how politics and policies shape design and design history, you know, design is still sort of a relative, relatively new practice. So you see the influence of history on that. And I've have when we look at sort of Bauhaus or the Swiss movement, you know, we're having conversations around good design, or what is considered beautiful.

I struggled

once, I acknowledged that, I realised that my perspective was that I was just disregarding a lot of other things that existed because I didn't hold them to the same standpoint. I didn't look at them the same way. I didn't analyse them the same way. And recognising that was quite almost horrific, in a way, because it feels like something that's just bred into you because you don't have a discussion about anything else. And it can be really hard again when you're in a room full of people, and there are probably only two or three people of color, and it can be really hard to sort of dismantle that and have those conversations. But in terms of my experience when I was at university, you know, challenging lecturers or having those conversations of alternatives wasn't something that everyone was willing to have a conversation about, because they didn't have a reference point to point me towards.

So you had to be the one to learn. Well, you had to be the one to go to the library and find these things, but find them in a way where they weren't written as someone's going to explore these cultures, you know, as an adventurer, but to go and experience them as sort of a person's authentic experience was quite, quite hard to navigate around that, but now at the stage I'm at right now as a lecturer, as someone who is in higher education and who's starting to sort of contribute, even though I'm a super, super early academic. And that starts from, you know, that starts from a collaborative conversation around what we mean about decolonization, and what we mean about reference points, and how we start integrating that, and how we start having that conversation. So now I feel like in comparison to when I was being taught till now, what students are being taught, I have seen a huge shift, and that shift hasn't happened because of one person. It's happened because of a team of people recognising that, and I think you have to be willing to recognise that within a team to implement those changes, and that starts from unlearning what you know and starting to read other things that exist, and how we can integrate that. But I still think there's a lot of work to be done. You know, for example, we have just gone through a revalidated course, so we're slowly rolling out each modules. We've just started to roll out the first year, but when I first started here three years ago, there was a module on typography, and the whole basis on that module of typography is learning about type and learning about sort of fundamentals and functionality of type. And all of the reference points were Eurocentric. All of them were Eurocentric. Not once did any of them touch on other ideas of type or narrative or communication. And when I first started here the having the opportunity to point that out and then to see changes happen. But I think it comes from when you've been taught something a certain way, and then you go, well, you're, you know, you're, you're teaching history, so you have to teach them the same way you were taught. And you actually need someone to someone to challenge that, or question that, or say, actually, we need to change. Just that we need to change that way of sort of doing. Yeah, it's been great to see see a lot of those sort of changes come to life, not because of my contribution, but a contribution as a team. Has been fantastic. So I do think the landscape has changed a lot in the last 10 years, but there's still a lot of room for growth and change.

Speaker 1

what kind of barriers do you think make it challenging to do this work?

Speaker 2

Think what kind of barriers make it challenges is sometimes we see people in authoritative positions who have been taught in a certain way and have got to that position, and they're not willing to be novices, they're not willing to unlearn. So it makes it really hard to make those changes when those perspectives aren't wide enough or big enough, you know, and sometimes the challenge becomes around the simple sense of people in those positions unable to see it, so you're sort of stopped because you're not able to follow through with it, or let it flourish because they don't see the value in it, you know? So that's one thing. Another thing that we've recently starting to have conversations around is and I've recognized from having conversations with sometimes international students. So sometimes when you speak to international students who have come to the UK, whether that be from, you know, and I'm talking about some of the conversations I've had with students who have come from India, for example, who have come here on their BA or their MA, they've come here because they value this education, this qualification, the same qualification they could get, you know, in India more, because they're learning Eurocentric design, and that's what they have come for. And that can be really hard when you start speaking to them about reference points, or how curriculum is changing, is because they have come here for a specific view and we're changing our landscape, and that's because they've been taught to value this and to not value that, if that makes sense, yeah, so that that's been quite challenging, because they've paid essentially for a service in that sense. And I don't like to look at education as a service. And I think if you're an educator or a lecturer who's on the ground, who's teaching, you're here because you enjoy it, we don't see it as a business transaction. But you know those specific authoritative positions do see it as a transaction, and do see it as a business. So for them, it is about providing a specific European education, because that's what someone is paying for. When you talk about sort of design or creative education, we're dismantling that, and that is the place you start to dismantle it when you're starting to have wider conversations. So I think those are some of the challenges and barriers that are in place.

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Another thing is, in the last couple of years, there's a rise in curriculums, in descriptions and curriculums, or, you know, people across he trying to sell or advertise courses, and they use decolonising design or other perspectives as a buzzword, but it's a buzzword to say, Oh, we're thinking about it, but there's nothing that's being done about it, and that can be really hard to dismantle what what they mean when they do that. That doesn't mean, you know, having having a week of cultural immersion. That doesn't mean having a month of cultural immersion. That doesn't mean you look at, you know, a handful of these books, and it's a checklist system that's done. It's a continuous process. So I think that's quite frustrating as well. Of being able to dismantle that notion of other other references, or decolonising is so big, and I don't think there's a strategic way, and it shouldn't be a strategy, but sometimes people use it as a strategy or as a buzzword without actually knowing or making any changes. And that, again, comes from sort of an authoritative position of higher ups who make these decisions in that sense, yeah, or I can actually say, Yeah, I don't know this is gonna be anonymous, right? I talking about that that's actually just reminded me when we were going through a revalidation as a course, and we're a really close team here. Are we re validate the course, we're really happy. And we went into a meeting with, The crediting body

essentially people who check the revalidated course and the material to ensure it's up to a specific standard. And I remember being in this meeting, and this individual knows nothing about design or education, because they're just here to check that you've got all the words. And I remember them saying, oh, you know, you can put here sustainability or put in put another buzzword in here, like, ethical, oh, you should put another word of that. Actually decolonising. And we were like, and then their whole reference point to this was, you have to put this buzzword in because there are these sort of checklist systems that they have to ensure that we're changing something, but it's like, but that's a sort of organic and holistic thing that we're doing. We don't want to use it as a buzzword. I remember being in this meeting and them not actually knowing what those words meant in that context, and being like, no, no. You need to put them in. Because everyone has to do that. Everyone has to put these specific words in so when, when a student goes to check, or someone's checking the quality or the validity of this, there are these key words,

Speaker 1

Have you encountered or implemented any initiatives aimed at decolonising design education, and if you have, like, what, what were the successes, or what kind of challenges did you face?

Speaker 2

I think, the challenges, I guess, and you know, when we talk about decolonising design, is, it's really big. It's really, really big. And I think something that I've had the fortunate opportunity to be part of and knowing is it's not down to one person, it's a collaborative thing, and it's a contribution for everyone. And that decolonising design, we're not going to be able to do that in a year. We're not going to be able to be able to do that in five years. And that, you know, there always needs some element of decolonising in 50 years to 100 years. That's always going to have to be a part of it. But some of the changes I think we start to make are some of the things of learning the ideas of what we mean by decolonising, design, about challenging the way we think, challenging our perspectives, thinking about sort of history, but also acknowledging that the history that we discuss is through a specific canon, and we need to shift that by educators having to learn, having to relearn, and having to go through that process again and finding sort of those alternative ways. And you know that can start from having a conversation about what we mean by decolonising design and what that means, and what that means for everyone, relearning sort of histories and integrating that, and then diversifying the curriculum from reference points to having much more broader conversations around ethics, from having conversations around, you know, if we're speaking about a group of people, how do you not homogenise a group of people and introducing students to that, introducing students to criticality being an integrated part of their practice about thinking about a sort of a 360 landscape, and understanding the impact of their work and the different types of communities that they're speaking to, and that comes from reference points, that comes from conversations, that comes from discussions, that comes from feedback and us recognising that it's an ongoing process that everyone contributes to, I think that that is something that's been rewarding, and that's something that we've been starting to sort of implement in that sense as well, which has been fantastic, but also having those conversations with the students about what they feel towards that, I think especially sorry, if we look at the landscape of the students are coming into higher education now from when I was or when you were, you know, they're so socially aware. They're so much more culturally aware, which was fantastic, because of Instagram, because of Tiktok, because of the world of communication that they live in. So I think having those conversations, there's a lot more openness to those discussions, and they're aware a lot more as well. But yeah, to know that there isn't a power structure when we talk about decolonising the curriculum, and actually doesn't just involve a team of lecturers and educators, it actually in. Involves students as well, from them sharing their perspectives of their identity and their experiences, is a part of that.

Speaker 1

who are involved in these conversations? And there's kind of a conversation that comes up a lot of the time in terms of who this work falls upon, the work of decolonising or And I'm kind of interested in your perspective on what role you think educators from either minoritised ethnic backgrounds or people of colour. Like, what role do they play in that process?

Speaker 2

Yeah, I think in terms of that, you know, when we're talking about decolonising design, it's not, as I, you know, said, it's not one person's responsibility. It's, it's, you know, on a on a more insular level, it's a responsibility of the educators. It's a responsibility also that we have those open conversations with students. It's also a responsibility of industry, you know, because

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these students are hoping to step into an industry, but if the industry's landscape hasn't changed, how are they able to implement those changes? How will be able to be successful in S sort of cultural society or the wider community of a national, sort of context or a global context? So I think it becomes a three way conversation, with educators, with students, with learners, and with industry. And I think if you are someone you know, like myself, who is classed as a minority, and I really despise that term, because if we look at it in a global context, we're not a minority. We've been made to feel like a minority. So I think even changing the landscape of language, of how we can sound more positively is important, but that I don't think we should be putting this pressure or implement or getting people of specific backgrounds to be the ones that change this. You know, that sense of like you're a black designer, or you're an Indian designer, or you're an Indian educator, or you're a black educator, you know, that's a sense of tokenism, and you're putting a lot of pressure on these people, and I think it comes from all people of all walks of life to make and implement those changes and but on an institutional level, I think there needs to be a conversation around how you how we create a Much more welcoming scene, how we create a much more welcoming landscape for people of colour to come into education. Because right now, you know, from that sort of article that I read, and I think it was a statistic from 2021, I can send you the article. You know, it's essentially 14% of women of colour are in education. I'm just talking about women. I'm not even talking about men of colour or men who come from minority backgrounds. You know, there's a real issue within that, because if we look at the landscape of the UK, there are, there are those people that exist, there are those people in industry, there are those people who have gone to university. But it's about how we how you might create, create that. Um, sort of welcome environment, welcoming environment. And again, it's almost like this sort of circle, isn't it? You go in to education, you don't see those reference points, and then you go into industry, and you might not see those reference points, so you have to find an opportunity, a way in to get those reference points. But if you never felt welcome in the first place, you never want to give back in the first place, because you don't know what you're giving. What you're giving back, if that makes sense. So it's this, like really weird circle, and we have to sort of break that circle somehow. And that comes with time, that comes with discussions, and, yeah, it's a collaborative thing with educators, with students, especially there at the centre of this, and industry, industry, I think that landscape is changing, though, you know. I think you know, before you know. I think a lot of people went to university to get jobs, and I think people still do that. And universities felt this pressure of we had to produce this, this, this sort of thing, where they were going to fit into industry and they needed to be able to get into these roles. But the landscape has changed so much because of the shift in culture and the conversations we're having, the shift in sort of AI and technology that actually, you know, the biggest thing that we can give, or the biggest thing that we can introduce is criticality, impact is about having awareness of the world that you live in and of your future, and it not being a scary thing, but a positive thing, and how you become a sort of active person. Positive citizen in your own right, and that what you do have to say and what you do believe in does have value to it. That's, that's the sort of, you know, the best that you could sort of give in that sense. But yeah, I think that the landscape of industry is also changing a little bit. I don't think it was the same as it was 10 years ago, or even six years ago, which is, which is great to see there, but I think there still needs to be a lot of work done.

Speaker 1

So for this, this next part of the conversation, I'm going to introduce you to a method I tend to use to encourage conversations around the future, and in this case, the future of design education being a decolonized one. And that method is to use storytelling artifacts or speculative prompts to ground a conversation. So I'm going to share my screen in a moment and introduce you to a speculative future decolonised design space, or a different, you know, an alternative future of design education. I want you to imagine a future where maker Majlis exists a communal, decolonised design space built on indigenous sovereignty, shared learning and creative collaboration. And there we go. And the way I'm going to tell this story of this future world is through an induction pack found in the year 2050 an induction pack that gives hints as to the values of this new type of design education and how this new space may work. So I'm going to run you through a series of prompts from the induction pack to begin to build this picture of Maker Majlis. So this future form of design education is built upon the principles of a Majlis. Now, a Majlis is a traditional gathering space, deeply rooted in Arab culture, where people come together to share stories, exchange knowledge and engage in meaningful dialog. Historically, the Majlis has served as a hub the community decision making, storytelling and hospitality, a space where every voice is valued and collective wisdom shapes outcomes. In its essence, the madness embodies connection, respect and the power of shared connection. So this is the welcome letter, so I'll read this out for you. Yeah, welcome. 2050 participants. Maker Majlis is a space where creativity, heritage and collective wisdom come together to shape the future of design. You're stepping into the fifth year of our journey and entering a space that is constantly shifting to reflect the people working in this space. At Maker Majlis, participants are invited to spend up to 10 years as a maker with the freedom to leave whenever they feel their journey is complete by allowing participants to stay as long as they need. Maker Majlis create space for deep exploration, iterative learning and meaningful connections with the heritage and communities. This flexibility nurtures creativity and growth and natural pace, removing the pressure to conform to arbitrary timelines. This welcome letter every part of your induction pack was imagined and crafted by last year's cohort, the 2049 makers, an integral part to the way we exist in this space is to learn with and from one another and draw from our Individual knowledge systems to address communal explorations. so the manifesto that the participants of maker Majlis have constructed is as follows, says that we listen fast, we celebrate plurality, we honor heritage, we practice reciprocity, we dismantle hierarchies. We respect the land we embrace on. Learning. We design with purpose. We value protest process. Also. Protest is quite nice that should be added. We protect knowledge. So the next artifact in the maker madness induction pack is a values compass at Maker Majlis. We do not assess participants work or

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measure against grading systems. Instead, we have a values compass that we generate and hold ourselves accountable to each participant will add their personal values to reflect themselves, their heritage and their positionality at the centre of the physical maker Majlis, there is the heart, a space that keeps the ports of our community alive. It is more than a circle is where stories are shared, wisdom is exchanged, and ideas come to life. The Heart embodies the values of maker Majlis, connection, collaboration and respect for the diverse traditions and voices that shape our world. Here, participants gather with elders, peers and local communities to reflect, listen and CO create is a space of equality where every voice matters and every story carries the potential to inspire change. The heart beats with the collective energy of its makers, serving as both a sanctuary for reflection and a catalyst for innovation. Welcome to the heart where listening shapes the future. And finally, the last thing in the induction pack is the accountability cards. So they're a deck of accountability questions that all participants are expected to engage within their design process. An example of some of those questions are, who benefits from this work? How does this design respect the land? And what assumptions are you reinforcing? So that was all of the different prompts in the induction pack and tonight have been introduced as kind of future concept of design education via the Maker Majlis. I'm going to ask you a few questions in relation to some of the themes and thoughts that that might have opened up for this discussion. So I will stop sharing. So I guess that, like, my first question is, what are your initial thoughts about the concept of Maker Majlis?

Speaker 2

think it's really exciting, because I think the way it's set out, you're sort of entering into a realm, and it almost feels like you leave, leave of your leave, your predisposition knowing and being at the door when you enter into this. But I think that as an activity, or as you know, a workshop, as you said, because it's really exciting in the sense where it opens up the opportunity for vulnerability, and it gets you to start thinking about a lot of stuff that you might not give other considerations to, maybe. So yeah, and I think also that sense of like speculative design always provides that opportunity of possibilities, which is also amazing, you know, and in itself, is feels adventurous and exciting, okay?

Speaker 1

How might a space like Maker Majlis address the challenges of decolonising design, education?

Speaker 2

Again, it opens up the opportunity for a discussion. It provides an opportunity for debating. It provides an opportunity to maybe find our biases that we didn't know existed. And I think it also provides that sense of hope as well, the hopefulness of being able to have the opportunity to change or having the opportunity to do something.

Speaker 1

thinking about the approach that Maker Majlis takes as a concept, this idea of being rooted in gathering, storytelling and shared creation. Do you think that would resonate with students and educators in the present?

Speaker 2

feel like it would resonate, because it's asking those really uncomfortable questions and it's sort of provoking thought in a really sort of fun and hopeful way again, but that, yeah, it feels like that sense of it being built around a community, fills it with the opportunities. Yeah, I think it fills it with sort of hopeful opportunities.

oh, yeah, yeah. I like the idea of hope. Um, thinking like about, like, specific things mentioned in in the induction pack, like, particularly that idea of assessment. How do you feel? Because that feels like quite a far off idea, I guess, that idea of having judging people by not judging people, but people holding themselves accountable by like their own values rather than learning outcomes, for example, it gives you a lot that sense of accountability on a different on a different level, because it makes you question the things that you value, and then the things that you produce are being assessed, quote, unquote, against, against what you've written down of your expectations. And I feel like that's a much better way of doing it, because we all bring in different things, and it provides that alternate, alternative sort of idea to sort of, quote, unquote assessment, or how we judge, not judge, but how we might review something, because then when you're looking at it, You have to shift your perspective onto this individual's expression of their values and their beliefs and what they hold to a standard. So it becomes fluid, in that sense, actually quite, really like that model looking at it, because then, then it becomes about equity, doesn't it, rather than equality? In that sense,

Speaker 1

So in your kind of view, what challenges do you think could arise in trying to move towards creating a space like Maker Majlis in the future?

Speaker 2

What challenges would you mean what challenges as in, like implementing, I think the challenges will be the uncomfortableness and the uncertainty of that you have a particular way of doing something, the questioning anything, and that provocation could be a challenge that people might not be comfortable with, and that the sense of responsibility and structure and the onus is on an individual and a community. I think the challenges could arise from what people might view, or what people might expect,

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or how we might expect a community to work, those could be the like individual challenges when someone's working in that sense of sort of community be a challenge. But I think also the other element of that would be so the sort of investigation and the critique into your heritage and your values and looking in could be quite hard. I think, I think that that can be quite challenging, especially for people who come from different walks of life, and who might find it hard to express that. So, like when I was giving you the example of there's always that friction between the the identity of being like, what does it mean to be a British Indian when you're Indian, but you are British like that, that that can be quite challenging to face and understanding. What sense do we mean by our heritage, or what sense do we mean by tradition, that looks different for everyone, and how might we value someone else's? How might we hold someone else's at the same regard as how we hold ours? I think that can be quite challenging. And understanding that.

Speaker 1

The last kind of question, in regards to the MakerMajlis concept, if you were to contribute to Maker Majlis, what aspect of your teaching or heritage or design philosophy?

Speaker 2

I guess, a sense of rebellious and what I mean by that sense of rebelliousness is not all anarchy, but the rebelliousness to be able to be more inquisitive, but but to question, to like, just question everything for the sake of questioning. Sometimes that's what I mean by rebellious. It feels really great, and it feels really harmonious, harmonious. But I think sometimes that could be the challenge of, if something is too harmonious, you know what I mean? Yeah, probably not explaining it very well. No, I think sometimes when we live too much, maybe in in that sort of harmonious setting, we forget to challenge ourselves, you know, because you get too comfortable. So the idea of rebelliousness, the idea of sort of being uncomfortable can be positive. It doesn't have to be negative.

Speaker 1

I guess before we kind of bring it to an end, I was, I was kind of interested in, in a if you have, like, any other thoughts you want to add before the end about the whole thing, and also, like, what advice would you offer and institutions striving to create more equitable learning environments.

Speaker 2

Think that's the thing. It's about equity. We get really confused with equality and equity and really understanding what we mean by equity. But again, I think we all need to be really open to unlearning and recognising that is uncomfortable. Because I think sometimes, especially in the education system. You know, sometimes you see people who have been here for 10 years, 15 years, I think that's fantastic, you know, because you have so much to offer that someone who's been here for a year or two doesn't. But there are also some of the challenges that come with that. Is where you get stuck in your own ways, and you forget that grip with reality and understanding how the landscape has changed. And I think that starts from a simple you have to be an active citizen, and seeing the landscape of the world around you and how it has changed, and how we have an opportunity to have those discussions and debates. You know, whether you agree with them or not. You know, universities were, were these places where you just didn't, didn't just learn, but it questioned you. And I don't think we do enough of questioning ourselves enough, because it's uncomfortable, because if you question something, you know, there's a scarcity of you become difficult. You know, that's one of the challenges. I think if you question too much, you are seen as someone who's difficult to work with or difficult to do something with and I think that that that in itself, can be quite terrifying, and that's why sometimes we will sit here and see the unjust. And I've been guilty of it. Sometimes, you know, of not speaking loud enough because I didn't feel qualified enough, and I think there needs to be equity, not in just the way we teach and the way we communicate, but there needs to be equity in how we communicate with one another, and understanding that if someone is in an authorial sort of position, we shouldn't be putting them on a pedestal, and that we do actually need to speak to, you know, quote, unquote, someone who's below you or not at that level. You know, and understanding the value of exchange of someone who's been here for 15 years, or knows how this works, and they're aware of it, to someone who's come here and they're unfamiliar, you know, there are we need to be more open to having an exchange, and also to test an experiment. Sometimes we are so terrified to experiment with something because of these predispositioned ideas of, oh, it's not going to work, so we can't do it. Well, you don't know that.

every year the descriptions what we do, has to change, because the landscape has changed. The student that was here a year ago to the student who's come in now has changed. And you have to constantly be changing. And it is a lot of hard work, but that is education. That is a landscape of education. You need to change every day, every single day, you have to change and you have to be open to it. So, yeah, I think that, all in all is, I think is what everyone needs to do. But also I think the other thing is we need to have support structures in place. Yeah. There aren't enough support structures to have those uncomfortable conversations because of the fear, you know, a fear of being in a meeting and saying, oh, you know, this doesn't make sense. Or what do we mean by this? Or how are we going to change it? You know, because it's not a strategy. You know, when we look at design, and we might look at commercial settings of design, or even any sort of other operations is a strategy. But when we talk about decolonisation or other perspectives, or where shifting perspectives, there's not, there's not a method, there's not a strategy, it's, it's, it's not linear either. That's not difficult because you don't know how to step into that space. And I think it just comes from the sort of the sort of conversations you have to have and you have to just take it as it comes. I don't think it's something that I don't think it's something we should push towards. This idea of solving, you know, comes with a lot of unlearning.

4. Lara Transcript

Speaker 1

Thing. So just to, like, kind of introduce the, I guess, context, a little bit around the purpose of these interviews are kind of to invite design educators like yourself into conversation on the decolonization of design education, and to you know, discuss your experiences, perhaps with, like your eccentric curricula within, like the UK higher education space or design programs that you might have been part of. And I'm kind of interested in this idea of speaking to like the past, present and and future of design, education. But I think, like the more time I spent with the research, it was kind of becoming a little bit unproductive. It just being me, kind of thinking about those different things. I was it's nice to kind of open it up, to speak to, to other people. So yes, I think it's all about this idea of, like, collective and communal dreaming, that things could be different

So just to, just to begin the first half, it's just like a little bit about your your personal and professional context, just to build kind of an idea of your positionality and identity in relation to your experiences as of a design educator, apologies if you can hear that sound. I think my garden is like trimming the

firstly describe your current role in design education and perhaps give a little bit of context about your educational career up until this point and what you to becoming an educator in design?

Speaker 2

students are invited to think critically about the world and think about how illustration has served and continues to serve a certain political or social narrative, whether we do it intentionally or not. So it's just about realizing that and then working from an informed position. From that point, it is a lot about colonial history

The word unlearning was very popular, but then nobody was thinking about, Okay, what happens after the unlearning? So is it just we erase information, and then what happens after that?

and one proof of that is that people like me are employed to do that. And I think that, in itself is problematic, because it's almost like you oppress me, and then you hire me to clean your oppression. So you do the oppression, and then you want me to do the labor of undoing the oppression, while you just sit and watch passively. And you're you're obviously that passive gaze, in itself reproduces the oppression, and so we're doing nothing really. I always felt like I was working against the institution. The institution is not working with me, although it's claiming to be working towards the same objectives that I'm working with.

And, yeah, it was all good until the genocide started. We used to have, for example, I was employed together with some cross program people who were focused on the objectives of the social climate and racial justice, we used to have, like, for example, weekly or even monthly, monthly or weekly meetings to see to speak about how we are implementing that. And then once the genocide started, those meetings stopped happening. And the conversations that I had there were very difficult, because the university is not privatized, but it's financed, and so that comes a lot of interest in Zionism and so on. So yeah, maybe we will be speaking more about that. But this is my professional position. I don't know if you're looking at personal positions or that answers your question.

Speaker 1

so yeah, with that being, like, the professional context, the next question was like, how would you describe your heritage, and how has that perhaps influenced your personal and professional journey in design education? Yeah,

4. Lara Transcript

Speaker 2

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Then I lived like a lot of structural racism, structural apathy. That's the word that I choose to use that has informed me about my position in the world. It's made it clear for me how I was different and how my difference is enabled by art as well.

[REDACTED]

me realize how how art informs and design informs and is informed by the politics.

[REDACTED]

Manifestation of how design and art is very directly political, and how it threatens governments, and how it has that power to threaten government.

[REDACTED]

And so what people did, what artists did, is that they went down the streets and they started documenting on the walls of the city. So they're like, Okay, this is going to be the media. So they were documenting everything that was happening in the streets. They were documents in the names and faces of all of the people that died or were killed by the military.

[REDACTED]

And for me, that was like, Okay, actually, design and art can threaten governments and can be actually a form of resistance, a tool of resistance. So that has informed my way of seeing design, the role of design, yeah, and I was, like, I was a teenager, an older teenager back then.

Speaker 1

Would you say any of that thinking has, like, made an impact on, like, your teaching philosophy, how you perhaps, engage with students now?

Speaker 2

Yeah. I mean, I learned very early on about which I realised recently about collaboration and the selflessness in design, because during, for example, the revolution, the artists collaborated with the people to get the work done quickly, because they couldn't take forever, because then the military would chase them, and you'd never find a signature in any of those paintings or drawings. You'd never find one, because for them, it was a collective practice. And I think there's something interesting there, and that I link to horizontal ways of teaching, where you see that the knowledge is constantly exchanged and built on from both sides, like students and teacher. It's never something that I'm transferring. And this is how those artists saw their work. They're not transferring this knowledge to the public. They are collaborating with the public to resist against the government, you know, to create this knowledge. And so I think it's something it is. There is a connection between that and how I view pedagogy of design as something horizontal, something that's exchanged and built on, and includes formal and informal forms of knowledge. And so, yeah, it's never like this vertical me telling the students, okay, I'm gonna make 120 copies of me right now, graduates. You know, it's more about like, Okay, you have some knowledge. I have some knowledge. I'm going to facilitate the space for us to build on on this and look at it together.

Speaker 1

Okay, that's really interesting. Thank you for that. These next few questions are focused around any kind of like, potential Eurocentric experiences in design education that you might have encountered within, within your experiences of being a creative educator. So I'm going to pose them to you, and then hopefully, just Yeah, your reflection. So could you describe to me some of your own personal experiences with your eccentric curriculum and your own education or in your teaching career, for example, were there any instances where you felt there were any dominant design narratives being taught, and were you ever restricted by those narratives?

Speaker 2

Where do I start? I only have those examples. Uh. A Yeah, I think generally speaking, there's always thoughts that people, people at institutions, educational institutions, educators who are reproducing Eurocentric narratives that are very harmful, if you look at them, they all believe that they're already doing criticality, they're already doing decolonisation, they're already doing query and all of that. And that makes that process even more difficult, because they feel very defensive around you, because, like, Okay, why are you being employed? Like we're already doing this one example, when I just started working as an educator, there was a unit course where students had to deal with the decolonisation. Somehow, I don't remember why. And then it was first year students, and then the teacher said, that's great. You know, we will just, we'll just let them define it themselves. So we're not going to provide them with anything. We'll just let them they can solve that puzzle. And I'm like, these are first year students. They don't even know what illustration is for you to let them. And I think this is very harmful, because people think that they are doing something collective, but actually, they actually, they're writing on

4. Lara Transcript

the paper that they're doing something, but they're not. And then my role becomes a bit like, Okay, well now I have to fight for this like, so my role is not only an educator there, but somebody who has to be on a protest at work. Another I think another thing on level of institution is when I see that students who work with those topics are almost like their traumas are exploited. It's almost like, yeah, we want you to make work about this, but there is no environment where that has been supported. [REDACTED] it happened that a student's work that dealt with that was advertised, because it's sells, you know, the idea that they are inclusive, but then the students fail. He Yeah, he failed. The students were failed. Another incident more recently is how again, like I'm encouraged, I am employed to do all of that job. But then when the genocide against Palestine started, then I was told that I could not do that. I cannot teach at any documentary work or history based work. And I said, Okay, well, can I teach fiction, Palestinian fiction from the 60s? And they said, No, that's not that's not allowed. And then I wonder, okay, what does decolonisation mean? Then, at that moment, so you have a Eurocentric curricula, and then you invite me to challenge it, but then, you know, you don't let me challenge it. And I was even threatened. I was even told, Well, I'm just worried for your reputation. Yeah, I was told that. And then when I asked for the institution or the department to do a statement, I was told that that person had to protect all of the opinions of people at the department so they could not make a statement. And then when I asked them if they would protect the opinion of people pro the killing of George Floyd or black people, they said no. And I'm like, Okay, so what's the difference? So even having to deal with this stops me from even like working against the Eurocentric curricula. Another thing is that how some schools of thoughts in the European history are always reproduced without people even thinking about them, like modernism, for example, which I find very colonial. Modernism has a colonial history, and it has to be taught as a movement that has contributed to colonial reproductions, visual reproductions, and it's almost always romanticised in school. And then when you see colleagues doing that, you're like, Okay, well, am I supposed to teach the colleague, or am I supposed to teach the students? So all of this neutrality, if you want to call it or like, lack of question in what we are already teaching, makes it makes the whole education and conditions for education and environments very much Eurocentric, it becomes beyond like me having to change the reading list, or which also was funny, because when I was employed here, I was given a reading list to look at if I want to change it. And the reading list had two women out of like 30 books, it had two women and. They were white women, and then bell hooks was misspelled. It was one black woman, and it was bell hooks and it was misspelled, and and I'm like, okay, so you're just ticking the box. So all of these conditions I feel are very much Eurocentric. I don't know if this question went over the place.

Speaker 1

how do you perceive the ongoing influence of colonialism on design education?

Speaker 2

design doesn't want to deal with what is happening in the world, because it's almost like design needs to be the separate entity that only informs design and is informed by design. And then the question there, okay, who is designed for also? It's not made for humans. It's made for design, designers that is like isolated in this bubble here, I think, like until now, the institution refuses to deal or engage with what's happening in the world, although it claims to do that. For example, there was this course about climate and the tutor presenting it was saying about how they want to deal with urgent climate crisis, and then they start talking about something that has nothing to do with what's happening in the world. And a student protested and said, Well, all of the bombs that are happening that is something that has to do with climate I don't know if it's like shame. I don't know if it's racism, because people just don't care about that part of the world. I don't know if it's like Europeans being embarrassed about their history of anti-semitism or what it is, but there is a resistance. There is an active resistance against dealing with colonialism as an event of the present. And I know, I know for sure that in 10 years, they will deal with this history because it's history, because it ended, because it cannot threaten their position, because they can claim that they have been always against it, but they haven't. So I think there is a there is an interest in Europe to deal with colonialism as a history of the past, rather than a continuous presence. Act like an event in the presence that we are all producing, reproducing through design, through education, through the conversations that we have, through everything that we teach, through the silence, basically the loud silence. So yeah, I think there is the answer. Is that the interest in colonialism is always something that happened in the past that we're not responsible for, because I cannot deal with my position in it.

Speaker 1

What kind of systemic or institutional barriers make it challenging to do this work of decolonising design, education,

Speaker 2

I think how the university or the institution sets the objectives of dealing with decolonisation, first of all, employing people of colour to deal with that. I think this is a big problem, because against again, racism is not my problem to fix. It's not the problem of the person who racism is practiced on to fix. And I think a lot of people do not deal with it. A lot of people who teach in a Eurocentric way do not deal with it as a responsibility that they have and as a history that they carry and they come from, because people again, refuse to consider their position in education, the position of the of design as placed in In a linear line where there is a past, a presence and a future, and this is the past of design. The past of design is that it's very racist. It has produced stereotypes to enable wars and genocides and colonialism, and it continues to do that through silence, which is equivalent to that complicit contribution. So I think there is something about the vulnerability of people and not wanting to consider their position in an institution. Also, I don't know if you feel this, but I think that's I. Institutions and people just nowadays, at least, this is how I experienced this just really crave and spend their whole life trying to be victims. So for them to understand that they come from a history that is problematic is really challenging, and they don't want to question that. So then decolonisation falls on the shoulders of the

4. Lara Transcript

people who colonialism has impacted, it is unethical work for you to, like, destroy the life of someone and displace them and then tell them, Okay, well now I'm going to pay you pennies to fix what I've done so that I can look good, because I don't want to be fixed. I don't care to fix myself. And this is how the institution looks at it. And a big proof of that is the investments the university keeps making. They're all colonial. They all are directly contributing to colonialism and the killing of people. So the institution is not genuinely, is not interested in decolonialism. It is interested in selling a product that looks good nowadays to students, and they're doing that through employing us, through one lecture a year or a term about decolonialism through book in a reference that nobody read in a reading list that nobody reads. It's the way that they look at it that is not systematic. And as long as it is not systematic, as long as we have an institution investing in Zionist companies, or companies that contribute to settlements or colonialism, as long as it employs white people that are not interested in these questions, as long as it looks at us as people who can clean its image in front of the public, so yeah, not really looking at us as people, looking at us as tools, as long as it does diversity trainings that are one day long and that are made by people who are not necessarily informed enough, as long as it looks at the Colonial thinking as a toolbox, basically, and as soon as I tick those things in the toolbox, then I'm safe. Yeah.

Speaker 1

Have you encountered or implemented any initiatives aimed at decolonising design education within a university setting. Have you had, like, any experience that? And if you have, like, what kind of challenges or successes came from?

Speaker 2

there was a lot of resistance from the Department not to teach anything about Palestine, about Congo, about Sudan, yeah, everything that was happening in the world and insisting on teaching colonialism as an event of the past. I collaborated with a group of tutors of color, of course, who were interested in working against this, and

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the other day we were reading about Palestine, but then the whole conversation about trans rights in the UK happened, and then we immediately decided that the next session will be a reading about trans rights in the UK, and yeah, so it's across all of the faculty, so in we invite students and staff from all over the faculty to have these conversations, and it's something that is open and accessible to all participants to shape together with us, because that's also how we see it. We see it as like, again, a horizontal space for learning. And yeah, they have been amazing. Of people who are uninformed believe in that Palestine was a was an empty land.

[REDACTED] And we looked at the artworks that were displayed in Jerusalem back then, before the Nakba started, before the catastrophe, and we've been also reading about India and Pakistan. So it's also sometimes new to me, and then students inform me. And so it's always like a circular kind of thing, where there's no hierarchy, or that's what we aim for. So this is one of the spaces that we've managed to create in an institution that challenges the institution itself. I think that's an example.

Speaker 1

it sounds like a big one, but if, if you could redesign the curriculum from scratch. What principles or practices would you prioritise to create these experiences that are rooted in decolonisation?

Speaker 2

Yeah, I have been thinking about this a lot because I have a lot of space in my position [REDACTED] there are some sessions that I lead by myself. And so I was like, Oh, I have this power. I can do something. I do. Think that no matter what I do, what we do in the curriculum, collectively in the UK, specifically, because I taught outside of the UK, I think there's a problem in education here, and that is the number of students that they enroll in one classroom. I think education is extremely privatised. I know it's not private, but it is dealt with as a private company, and it is dealt with as a company as well, where students are clients, rather than than people coming to educate themselves. And based on that, also the choices of students is bad as well. I think there are so many students that are not ready to be at university level. There's so many students that are also just not interested enough. And this is something that I have not experienced outside of the UK. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] So I think no matter how much we do in the curriculum, there are some problems beyond that that make educating critically difficult and not possible, and some things that we can do. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

4. Lara Transcript

difficult histories. So how do we want as a group of people in this room, educating ourselves about unjust histories? How do we want to do it in a way that is ethical? And I learned a lot of things.

when speaking about unjust histories, it's always important to expose the oppressor rather than the oppressed, especially that we don't know about the oppressed beyond this moment of oppression, which dehumanises them again. So I think, I think again, it is about the conditions of learning, how they are happening, and the conversation of this horizontal teaching that happens around this horizontal teaching. So how do we want to create a space where students and tutors are learning together in an ethical. And inclusive ways. So, yeah, there are two points the institution, as long as it's privatised or interested in money, is it's very difficult to do it to speak about criticality and decoloniality. However, we can create some spaces where we have this conversation about how to speak about difficult topics.

Speaker 1

Okay, interesting. That kind of feel like that sets up the next section quite, quite nicely, thinking about these different kinds of space we might create. So for this, this next part of the conversation, I want to use this method that I tend to use to kind of encourage conversation around the future, and in this case, the future of design education being one rooted in decolonized values to the method is to use like storytelling artifacts and like speculative prompts to ground the conversation. So I'm going to share my screen in a second to introduce you to a future, a future space, to an alternative kind of future for design education. And I'll read through it almost like, like a script. And then afterwards, well, I'll pose you some kind of like questions we can we can talk about.

And the way I'm going to tell the story of this future world is through an induction pack found in the year 2050 so an induction pack that gives hints as to the values of this new type of design education and how this new space may work. So I'm going to run you through these different elements of of the induction pack, and kind of begin to build this picture of Maker Majlis. So this future form of design education is built upon the principles of a Majlis. Now, a Majlis is a traditional gathering space, deeply rooted in Arab culture, where people come together to share stories, exchange knowledge and engage in meaningful dialog. Historically, the Majlis has served as a hub for community, decision making, storytelling and hospitality, a space where every voice is valued and collective wisdom shapes outcomes. In its essence, the Majlis embodies connection, respect and the power of shared conversation. And this, this is the welcome matter. So Maker Majlis. This is a space where creativity, heritage and collective wisdom come together to shape the future of design. You are stepping into the fifth year of our journey and entering a space that is constantly shifting to reflect the people working in this space at Maker Majlis, participants are invited to spend up to 10 years as a maker with the freedom to leave whenever they feel their journey is complete by allowing participants to stay as long as they need. Maker Majlis creates space for deep exploration, iterative learning and meaningful connections with their heritage and communities. This flexibility nurtures creativity and growth at a natural pace, removing the pressure to conform to arbitrary timelines. This welcome letter, like every part of your induction pack, was imagined and crafted by last year's cohort, the 2049 makers, an integral part of the way we exist in this space is to learn with and from one another and draw from our individual knowledge systems to address communal explorations. The manifestos that the participants of Maker Majlis have constructed is as follows. So it's that we listen first. We celebrate plurality, we honour heritage, we practice reciprocity, we dismantle hierarchies. We respect the land. We embrace unlearning. We design with purpose. We value process. Us, and we protect knowledge. So the next artifact in the Maker Majlis induction pack is the values compass at Maker Majlis, we do not assess participants work or measure against grading systems. Instead, we have a values compass that we generate and hold ourselves accountable to each participant, will add their personal values to reflect themselves, their heritage and positionality. And at the centre of the physical maker Majlis, there is the heart. So at the centre of maker Majlis, the heart a space that keeps the pulse of our community alive. It is more than a circle. Is where stories are shared, wisdom is exchanged, and ideas come to life. The Heart embodies the values of Maker Majlis connection, collaboration and respect for the diverse traditions and voices that shape our world. Here, participants gather with elders, peers and local communities to reflect, listen and CO create a space of equality where every voice matters and every story carries the potential to inspire change. The heartbeats with the collective energy of its makers, serving as both a sanctuary for reflection and a catalyst for innovation. Welcome to the heart where listening shapes the future. And finally, the last thing in the induction pack is the accountability cards, a deck of accountability questions all participants are expected to engage within the design process. So an example of some of them. Questions are, who benefits from this work? How does this design respect the land, and what assumptions are you reinforcing? So that was, that was the induction pack. So I'll stop sharing and maybe ask a few questions in relation to some of, like, the themes and thoughts that that might have, that might have opened up. So my first question is like, what are your initial thoughts of the concept of Maker Majlis?

Speaker 2

Yeah, it sounds like a dream. I reminds me a bit of the work of this Palestinian architect, I don't remember her name right now, where she says that she lived for like, 30 years in Italy and has Italian kids, but she's still a guest. And so she creates a Majlis for Italians to be the guest, and then she becomes the host. So when I was looking at this Maker Majlis, I was thinking about shifting roles a lot and authority, or agency, agency rather than authority. And, yeah, a dream world. However, I was questioning. I was thinking about this question about who it is for and who is allowed to be in the maker Majlis. Is it for a certain group of people? And how you What do you think about that? Because when you speak about heritage, I was mostly thinking, Okay, well, it's a certain group of people that are not necessarily European or North American, and so

4. Lara Transcript

in making a space that is not made for them, then who can access the space, and what is the impact of that? These are just some questions that I was having.

Speaker 1

The next question I have is like, how might a space like Maker Majlis address the challenges of decolonizing, design, education?

Speaker 2

Yeah, this is exactly why I was thinking, if it is a space for people who come from certain, from global majority, or Yeah, I mean, from Yeah, from the SWANA region. Or, I don't know which term you feel most comfortable with. Then, if we create spaces for those people, that's great, however, then how are we given the responsibility of decolonialism to people who have been in Eurocentric contexts? So then I wonder, what is the role of this? Is it only to is it to connect and to feel heard and to create work that revolves around our identities. But then does that mean that we can continue to take on the responsibility of decolonialism? Does that mean that we cannot make word about colours and other things, rather than our identity or this part of our identity, that is what I was thinking about. But at the same time, it sounds like a haven for people from that background. I have been in some spaces that were only made from people from certain heritage, and I felt so heard. I felt so in tune with myself, so connected, and it felt amazing. But then again, when I went out of it, I was faced by the reality of the world. So, I'm just thinking about this and but also, I'm thinking like, why should you be the one making space for this other side, for them to do the work that they have to do. That's also, not your responsibility, but it does sound like a great space for people who come from colonised histories, histories of being colonised.

Speaker 1

Do you think this approach rooted in gathering, storytelling and shared creation would resonate with educators and students?

Speaker 2

Yeah, absolutely. I think there is something so important about unfortunately, we call these things informal knowledge, or experiential knowledge, that is so disregarded that we've, I think, in Eurocentric education of design, we've managed to create work that is isolated from the world because of that, because we're so obsessed about the name of the big philosophers, without looking at the intersections of experiences and the informal heritage of storytelling, like oral, for example, storytelling or community work, or anything that is not necessarily considered formal. And I think that is a big gap in in education in the West. It's almost became like a robot, robotic things like a robot that is just looking at this like, Okay, let's look at French philosophers once again for the millionth time, without questioning their position, without questioning what they've done in real life. That was not school and how? Yeah, so I think this is something that is urgently needed in design education, this informal ways of creating knowledge. Okay,

Speaker 1

what challenges do you think might arise in implementing a space like Maker Majlis?

Speaker 2

I don't know how you intend for it to practically look like for me to think about the challenges. So one of the things that I think about because I spoke about this, is the number of people in this Majlis. I do think that when you were speaking about it, it sounded like something intimate. And I think it should stay that way. If not, then it is challenged again by not being able to listen to every single person who's in the space. So that's that could be one challenge. I don't know how you thought about the setting, but if you have many people, then that could be a challenge. Another challenge could be again, how do we make space for difficult feelings? If somebody is speaking about their heritage, if it is something difficult, if it's a difficult heritage, or a person who doesn't want to share that heritage, or wants to be present without sharing a difficult history, then what are what kind of conditions are we creating in that space for it to be safe and welcoming to people with different experiences, whatever that might mean, but at the same time, how do we question and challenge conversations inside the Majlis where conversations are actually coming from a personal history. So then, how are we pushing for conversations? How are they made without feeling like you're attacking someone's personal history? These are some of the things that I'm thinking about. Another thing is, how. Who gets to access this space? But I think it's really nice. What you said about, why are we assuming that it is only for certain people? Why are we assuming it's as an alternative? Why is it not the default space that has all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds? So if it is that, that that, then the challenge of it's been excluding, or of its not excluding, but puts in people with a specific heritage in a bubble, again, once again, but again. If you're considering it's inclusive, then I don't think that's a challenge. Interesting.

Speaker 1

The last kind of question I have in my response to the Maker Majlis is, if you were to contribute to that space, what aspect of your teaching or heritage or design philosophy would you bring to the space?

4. Lara Transcript

Speaker 2

So, because I speak Arabic, I'm a native speaker, when you said Majlis, I already have lots of associations with what Majlis is, or what Majlis could be. I am interested in some forms of teaching that, once again, I find challenging because of the number of students that I have. I would be interested in some cooking practices. I think that is a collective practice that encourages informal conversations, I think, and those are very important in the process of learning, especially when we're looking at intersectional knowledge of learning. I think practices of cooking encourage those kinds of conversations, especially when it's like, Okay, now we're making the food and they were cooking it, and then we're eating it, and that is what I consider, also a Majlis for my from my background. So I would be looking at making beyond, because I'm an illustrator, I would be looking at making beyond one form or one practice, which is illustration. Even if I'm only teaching illustration students, I would still look at cooking. Maybe we would make a choir in the Majlis, maybe singing together, which also something I associate with the Majlis on aid or on certain occasions there's some singing, so some celebration. Yeah, those are some of the things that I would be interested in bringing to the Maker Majlis.

Speaker 1

if you had any kind of, like additional thoughts or anything you wanted to share about, anything that might have come up in your thoughts today, and Then, like any kind of advice you might offer educators or institutions trying to do this work.

Speaker 2

I think the thing that I would really like to scream very loud is that decolonisation is not the work of the oppressed. It shouldn't be. It shouldn't be the homework of the oppressed. It's not my homework, and it makes me sad to do this homework for white people. It makes me sad that my country was destroyed by white people, and then I was displaced because of white people, and then I come to their land, and then they make me do the labor of them looking good after everything that they've done because they hired me. It's very sad. It makes me it makes me feel defeated. Somehow, as long as decolonisation is my job, I feel defeated, and I'm very sad because of that, I would really like to encourage institutions to drop performative practices of of doing politics, drop the claim that we can be neutral. It's impossible to be neutral. Being neutral is a privilege that contributes to the benefits of the of the more powerful. We are all complicit in everything that happens in the presence and how we speak about it, and how we are spoken about. I think it is time that institutions take theories around positionality to practice, theories around intersectionality to practice. I am a bit sick because of the performance I am I'm really tired. It's it's really it's been a bleak time this last two years when I'm watching the news, and then I come to the classroom, and then there is nothing. So as if I live in a bubble somewhere that doesn't belong to the world, as if the design education is in a parallel universe that never meets the reality of the world. It makes me like, really have pain in my stomach, like it does. It really does see my people, you know, getting hungry, getting killed because of Britain. That is the history. And then I come back, and then they're like. Oh, yeah, but you're making me feel uncomfortable when you talk about these things. It's a good day. So yeah, it is time for institutions and the West in general to acknowledge that silence is an enabling behaviour, and that's okay. There is a bad history, and we need to deal with it. There is a bad presence, and we need to deal with it. And I really wish for them to stop throwing this homework on me, because I'm exhausted of doing other people's homework.

5. Tulsi Transcript

Speaker 1

give a little context of like your educational career up until this point and what led you to becoming an educator in design?

Speaker 2 02:06

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] But when I was studying, it was quite a like, Western, like European, very the student body was heavily quite white, or there, there's a quite a big like Chinese international student body as well. But in our class, like all the people of colour would, like, sit on one table, like we would all fit into one table. And, yeah, similar, like, well, our lecturers as well were all until, about until I was in third year. So up until second year, they were all, like, white and male. They were they were great, obviously, in what they do. But it was just something that I definitely like noticed until we got to third year. Then we had some female lecturers as well. But yeah, I think at the end of second year, started becoming quite critical of design education, or like, design in terms of like, which I think a lot of students would experience, in terms of, like, okay, cool. Like, I'm studying this here, but like, Where can I? I couldn't really see myself in the industry, because all the lectures were white and male, all the references that we were shown were like white, male, American, like, quite European. Never really, never really saw any brown women, non binary, like people of color.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] And so yeah, and third year, I just spent it, like, critiquing design education and what we're taught. And they were so supportive about, like, my lecturers. So then in third year, they told me, like, they paid me to run a workshop with the first years around whose history and like, who are they? Design educators, not design educators. Sorry, we looked into like, I think world of a conversation between two designers around world of graphic design, and we put up all the designers that they mentioned, and it was just white. It was all European, all white, one woman. And so task in the workshop was the students would fill up the white space all the other designers and creatives that they saw that they like kind of what I bring into my practice. Design and teaching practice now is for students to be able to bring themselves into what they learn.

[REDACTED]

5. Tulsi Transcript



Speaker 1 11:22
the idea of, like, whether your cultural identity shaped like your teaching philosophy in any way.

Speaker 2
Um, yeah, I think, I think, yes. I think because of my own, I guess, personal experiences, I feel like I can relate or connect to students in a different way. I think I'm very aware of what it's like to sit in a lecture and they're like, chucking all these references, all these dates and things, and be like, I don't know any of this. I don't know what you're talking about. Because this isn't, this isn't my history, like I familiar with this. And so for me, in terms of teaching practice, it's really important to be able to show or like, link back to sources that I know will be slightly more familiar to the students away, kind of reducing access, like not alienating them, because they have experience a different understanding, a different kind of historical connection as well. I think again, like showing references, like showing students that actually, yeah, there are designers who look like you, interested in things like you, work like you also, I think a huge part is encouraging students to bring themselves like we want to hear what you think we want to hear. It's not about that we want to see. It to an extent. It's more about you, your interest, your experience, your passions, like you, the things that you see and catch your eye, and for what reason? So for me, I think a big thing is like supporting students to bring their sense of self into and like showing them that there is value in that. There is it's Yeah, you don't need to try fit into something, but you can make your own?

Speaker 1
so these next few questions are focused around like, potential Eurocentric experiences in design education that you may have encountered either within, like, your experience of being a design student or, you know, design educator. So yeah, I'll get into those. So the first one is, could you describe to me some of your own personal experiences with your eccentric curricula, in your own education or in your teaching career, like, for example, were there any instances where you felt there were dominant design narratives being taught, and did you ever feel restricted by any of those design narratives?



And all of four designers are, like, white men. And I'm like, look at your student body. Look at the people and the students that you want to encourage and support and champion within this and your aim of having these talks, and I'm like, You really could have done that, like you really reinforce this idea that there is a lack of other designers and interests and like designers of colour, different identities, minorities, agendas, everything like you, you doing this just reinforces the idea that there is like, a scarcity of lack of like. And I'm like, I'm just, I'm tired of of seeing this, and whenever I like, run modules, or I'm given a budget, then I make sure I'm bringing, like, these really, like, just like, I try to do my bit and bring in designers that I know

5. Tulsi Transcript

would challenge that, or, like, help them thinking different way, or different ways of working, or anything like that. Like the designers are bringing in, they're amazing. They have earned their name, for sure. But my critique is of, just look at your student body, and they don't reflect the audience that they're speaking to. And I think that is sometimes missed, yeah,

Speaker 1

yeah, that's interesting, which kind of leads on quite nicely to the next question, in terms of like, in your opinion, what kind of systemic or institutional barriers make it challenging to decolonise design, education?

Speaker 2

I think, I think there's quite a lot in terms, but I think also in the current climate, for example, it's really expensive to live for anyone. And I think that, in itself, is a huge barrier for students, because Creative Industries is not cheap. Like being a creative, like having that sort of flexibility, and that sort of being able to lean back on, ah, freelancing all these things. It's not easy, and it's not something that, and I think everyone has the the luxury or the privilege to engage in, in terms of, like, you know, things like the demand to have, like softwares and laptops and all these things, I think also just the something really small, in terms of, like, nobody else in your family being a designer or creative and having to, like, overcome that sort of barrier as well. I think there's, there's quite a bit in terms of even, like the smallest things, like these speakers are coming in. They're like, Oh, yeah, half of these conversations clients have come out from having talks in a pub. I'm like, Okay. And like, you know, reinforce this idea that you have to not perform it. You'd have to do things that may not be. Normal or natural, or within your own kind of routine, or like, just where you exist, to be able to make it in this industry, because it can feel quite set in its ways.

[REDACTED]

Speaker 1

in terms of like, within that, like design school space, though, and like these words like decolonisation, or diversity and inclusion being thrown around a lot, what do you what do you think is the thing that blocks that work actually getting done within the design school. Because I think there's like moments where it's definitely spoken about. It's that, like next part of putting things into action that sometimes doesn't quite translate.

Speaker 2

I think, yeah, it can be quite tokenistic. A lot of the time. I feel like it has to be done with, like, integrity and it being authentic, because I think you risk the the other side is where students feel like, Am I just here because I'm brown? Am I just here because I'm ticking a box? And I think that's a really, really scary place, or like, it has its own sets of problems to then encourage that sort of like, oh yeah, we're so diverted. And you're like, you're saying these things they don't align with the things that you're showing or that you're doing. And yeah, I think the bigger Yeah, I would find that quite the risk of students feeling like tokenistically being there, I think that's quite a horrible thing. But, um, in terms of the barriers of what's stopping it, I think design that career education is just already such a system that alienates people in itself. So it's really hard to change the whole system when it is already problematic.

Speaker 1

have you encountered any or like, implemented any initiatives? I know you mentioned the workshop you did about histories aimed at decolonising design education, and if you have, like, had any of those moments, like, what were the successes? Or, like, what challenges did you, did you face in doing that work?

Speaker 2

[REDACTED]
teaching the tech softwares, but specifically through the lens of storytelling and activism, where they we show them super like, without jargon, without really kind of reducing using free softwares, reducing the barriers to access, and showing them these tech tools, but they're handing over to them to kind of talk about, reflect on their communities, their issues that they see within the world around them, and what do they want to speak about, and showing them that, you

[REDACTED]

5. Tulsi Transcript



Speaker 1

The next question seems really big, but we can, we can try it. But if you, if you could redesign the curriculum from scratch, what principles or practices would you prioritize to move towards this idea of being a decolonized educational experience?

Speaker 2

history of design. I think that'd be the first thing. It'd be like a mandatory like module semester to do like, learn the history of design, but specifically through different lens, through different people, through different like, take like, tools and techniques like that would be the first one would be, because there's so much about, like, what how we categorise and what we include, also having to think about what we're excluding within that, and then wanting them to expand their understanding and narrative of when we categorise this as good design or bad design. Like, what is our thinking and our parameters and guidelines when deciding that, um, what kind of forms of like, class and race and informing that decision and how we categorize things, I think that would be, that'd be the first thing. I would if we had all the money in the world, we couldn't fail, like they can pick a different like, they have to travel to a different country and learn, like, a really traditional, dying art form or tour or like ways of working that they need to bring back, get them to make their own, like paper and ink and like really analogue methods of working. And like, I think that would be the start, and they're like, no Adobe for, like, a semester, just to get them, like, you know, testing, like old, like previous ways of working, different tools look Like, I think community workshops. I think, inviting people of and from the community into these spaces that don't necessarily feel accessible to people within the community, like, you know, maybe like, encourage them to go out and spread their work and tools and techniques to, I don't know, sit in a market and teach people how like wood carving and making stamps, you know? I don't know, but I think that would be kind of making design accessible, bringing focusing on bringing community into their design and into their audience.

Speaker 1

that. The next question is, is, what role do you think educators from minoritised ethnic communities should play in shaping the future of design education? And that, that question is mostly aimed at, like, this idea of the discussion that comes up a lot within this work is like, S who does this work fall upon, in terms of decolonising or thinking about these things?

Speaker 2

that's, I think, yeah, I think that's true. It's quite tricky, because I feel like design education is already such an overworked and difficult teaching yourself is such a difficult thing. And on top of that, to be like, now we're going to try and change the entire system while keeping our sanity not burning out?

I know there is merit, to an extent, with more people of colour, more minorities being within design education, even, especially, especially for students to see that there is, there is, like, you know how you can exist within the creative industry. But I'm not. I was reading something recently, and it was, it was, it was by a woman of colour, and she was basically saying that this, this work usually kind of gets thrown at her in terms of, like, checking off, like the diversity boxes, and she it was her, just like saying, I'm stepping back from that. I know other people I've spoken to, think there's like, it should be led by the people it affects the most in terms of giving them power back. So it's kind of like that.

It's a tricky question

because there's a whole thing, yeah, the labour falling on the people, but then also, like, it can't just be those people? Yeah, done in isolation. It cannot be. It feels tokenistic if it is, if all the work is done by the people affected by it, because the issue isn't because of the people who are affected by it. The issue is from outside of that. And then making the people do that work doesn't actually like fix the issue. So, yeah, it's a really tricky, it's a good but tricky question.

Speaker 1

Okay, anyways, for this next part of the conversation, I'm going to introduce you to a method that I tend to use to encourage conversation around the future. And in the case of this future being that decline education being a decolonised one, and that method is to be like storytelling artifacts or speculative prompts to ground the conversation. So I'm going to share my screen in a moment and introduce you to some prompts for a future decolonised design space, or like an alternative future for design education. So I will attempt to share my screen. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. We will try. Can you see that? Yes, let me just open it on to Okay, so I'm gonna, I'm gonna run through these slides, and then we can have a conversation at the end, once we've got, like, an idea of of this future space. So I'd like you to imagine a future where Maker Majlis exists, a communal decolonised design space built on indigenous sovereignty, shared learning and creative collaboration. And the way I'm going to tell this story of this future world is through an induction pack found in the year 2050 an induction pack that gives hints as to the values of this new type of design education and how this new space may work. So I'm going to run you through this series of prompts from the induction pack to begin to build this picture of Maker Majlis. So this future form of design education is built upon the principles of a Majlis. Now, a Majlis is a traditional gathering space, deeply rooted in Arab culture, where people come together to share stories, exchange knowledge and engage in meaningful dialog. Historically, the Majlis has served as a hub for community, decision making, storytelling and hospitality, a space where every voice is valued, and collective wisdom shapes outcomes. In its essence, the madness embodies connection, respect and the power of shared

5. Tulsi Transcript

conversation. And this is the welcome letter, so I'll read. It for you. So welcome. 2050 participants. Maker Majlis is a space where creativity, heritage and collective wisdom come together to shape the future of design. You are stepping into the fifth year of our journey and entering a space that is constantly shifting to reflect the people working in this space. At maker Majlis, participants are invited to spend up to 10 years as a maker with the freedom to leave whenever they feel their journey is complete, by allowing participants to stay as long as they

need. Maker Majlis creates space for deeper exploration, iterative learning and meaningful connections with their heritage and communities. This flexibility nurtures creativity and growth a natural pace, removing the pressure to conform to arbitrary timelines. This welcome letter, like every part of your induction pack, was imagined and crafted by last year's cohort, the 2049 makers, an integral part of the way we exist in this space is to learn with and from one another and draw from our individual knowledge systems to address communal explorations. So the manifesto that the participants of maker matters have constructed is as follows, that we listen first, we celebrate we celebrate plurality, we honor heritage, we practice reciprocity, we dismantle hierarchies. We respect the land, we embrace unlearning. We design with purpose. We value process and we protect knowledge. The next artifact in the Maker Majlis induction pack is the values compass. At Maker Majlis we do not assess participants work or measure against grading systems. Instead, we have a values compass that we generate and hold ourselves accountable to each participant will add their personal values to reflect themselves, their heritage and their positionality, and at the heart, at the center of the physical Majlis, there is the heart. So yeah, a space that keeps the pulse of our community alive is more than a circle is where stories are shared, wisdom is exchanged, and ideas come to life. The Heart embodies the volume the values of maker Majlis, connection, collaboration and respect for the diverse traditions and voices that shape our world. Here, participants will gather with elders, peers and local communities to reflect, listen and CO create. It is a space of equality where every voice matters and every story carries the potential to inspire change the heartbeats with the collective energy of its makers serving as both a sanctuary for reflection and a catalyst renovation. Welcome to the heart where listening shapes the future. And finally, the last thing in the induction pack is the accountability cards, a deck of accountability questions that all participants are expected to engage within the design process. And an example of some of the questions on those cards are, who benefits from this work? How does this design respect the land and what assumptions are you reinforcing? So that was the last thing in the in the induction pack. So now you've kind of been introduced to this future concept of design education via Maker Majlis I'm going to ask you a few questions now in relation to some of the themes or like thoughts that may have opened up for like, the next part of the discussion.

Speaker 2

No, I love it. I love the focus on kind of collaboration. I love that completely. Getting rid of any sort of grading system. I think that's amazing. And I think that is that would be hugely influential. And like, the pivot from like, oh, I need to make things I think would get a good mark, versus I need to make things that are genuinely, like, authentic and like, guided by personal values and making something that would actually contribute, you know, more positively to the community. And I think the other one, which was really good, which was like, What are we reinforcing with this? Because the idea that design isn't you, you're like, you are communicating something with that and like, what are you reinforcing? What biases? What things have you considered and not considered? Yeah, that's amazing.

Speaker 1

how might a space like Maker Majlis address the challenges of decolonising, design, education? Yeah.

Speaker 2

there's such a focus on the heart and the community and learning, and also learning, unlearning, relearning, teaching each other. I think it feels like there's, there's no hierarchy, there's no hierarchy, and we're all learning from each other, with each other, growing at the same time, but it feels like such a healing space. It feels like somewhere where you'd heal and learn and grow and share and with such a strong sense of community that's led through creative practice and creative learning and making and doing, and like the word that just keeps going is healing, like it feels, yeah, that's a nice word. I like that word

Speaker 1

if we were to introduce an approach like this in the present, you know, an approach that's rooted in gathering storytelling, in shared creation. Do you think that would resonate in contemporary design education, amongst educators and students, if it was just to, like, throw this kind of thing at them,

Speaker 2

the focus on shared storytelling and voices and of like, the importance of that is, I think, really, really undervalued. And I think in the way that the system, the way design education, is set now, in terms of the way we write, the focus on written work, which is still really, really important. But I think even considering like referencing is like a feminist act, like who you look at, where you're getting your thoughts from, and who are you then, like reinforcing, like, proper referencing citation is feminism. It's a feminist act. And I think you don't, you don't get that sort of emphasis within design education. But, yeah, I think also, like, if you have to bring that into current design education, I think it would struggle with the focus on spoken word, which is usually very much disregarded due to the classes, way that we position written, written text over spoken, spoken way of like, learning and writing like it's so elitist.

5. Tulsi Transcript

Speaker 1

what do you think like if we were to say, like, the whole no grading system to students right now. How do you think that they take that?

Speaker 2

I think it depends what level you introduce that in. And I feel like, yes, it should be introduced, but I know some of the students I teach and there is a grading system, and that still doesn't motivate them. So it'd be a you'd have to shift it completely, like you're here by choice, which is also currently the case, but maybe they don't see it like that, and it is fuelled by your own interrogation and your own kind of your own ways of working. And I think it would work for a specific style of student. I feel like, yeah, I don't think it'd work for all. Because I think something within design education which needs to be, I guess, respected as well, is in terms of inclusivity. Is like, understand that students learn differently and they need different things to support them in their journey. And I think this will definitely work for a type of student who has come from a very specific background, because even currently, even though we have a grading system and but we are more open, a lot of students still struggle with that ambiguity of like, you can do whatever you want, and they're like, no, but tell me what? But tell me what to do. And I think you I think that's why the 10 years is really good, because then they have that transition period to unlearn and unwork themselves of how the constraints of grading and measuring and like standardised measuring has been placed on them, to kind of unlearn that and be like, actually, like, I am the driving force of my work, and I am the one who can, like, push this forward.

Speaker 1

Okay, interesting. I guess, like, the last question in in relation to like, Maker Majlis, was, if you were to contribute to that space in any way, what aspect of your teaching or heritage or design philosophy would you bring to that space?

Speaker 2

Hmm. So is this? Is this a space? Is this a Traveling Space? Is this like a physical space that is like embedded into the community? yeah, on wheels, and invite people in to, like, Come learn I think, yeah, oh, my God. Because it's so abstract, it's really hard to like, yeah, because I'm like, it can be anything. Oh, yeah. Because I mean, what I'm understanding and imagining from this, like, utopia of design education would be, it's like you learn from each other. You're bringing each other in. There's like no hierarchy, but there's such a strong sense of self within your design, but also that prioritises and focuses and builds community. It's like, healing and builds community. The idea of movement is interesting, yeah, make it traveling more accessible. Like, there'll be like a main hub, there'll be like a TV center, like a main static one. But then especially, there would be one that was moving and traveling, and would like do a tour and collect these stories and histories and experiences and techniques from people and and gathering gathering this research and Knowledge of storytelling that can sometimes be lost. I'll put it there'll be a hub, but there's also, like, a traveling

Speaker 1

And then, like, I guess, like, the last, the last thing is, like, if you had any other thoughts or insights that this is like brought up that you think would be useful to share or like any advice

insights that this is like brought up that you think would be useful to share or like any advice you'd offer to like educators or institutions striving to create more equitable learning environments.

Speaker 2

I think, like, I think going back to, I think one of the points in the induction pack was, like, the, is it the manifesto, something is made by the previous cohort? And I think that idea of, like, putting the students first, learning from the students and what they want. Um, I think encouraging the students to bring their sense of self into their work and kind of encourage them to see that their own lived experiences and the way that they navigate the world is is hugely important and influential and in their creative process, like it shouldn't just be like, Oh, look at these gestalt principles. And this is Germany. Like, no, it's like, look into what makes your heart tingle and then gives you the, you know, that's what I tell my students, that they always laugh. I'm like, okay, but does it make you single in your chest? And they're like, what? I'm like, Yes, you know you feel it. You You know you're onto something, and you feel the driven and I'm like, you need to, you need to find that. And that's when you know you're like, okay, it might not work, but you you're on that explore, exploration, to not be scared of like the to not make the decision in your head that's already not going to work out. You out, that to just follow the process and see where it goes. But I guess this is more. I feel like I'm answering the previous question more than this one, yeah, I think my biggest one is like, encourage and support the students to bring their sense of self into the classroom, into the work, into the lectures, the references, and try do more that reflects the student body that you're engaging with.

I think it feels like it humanises the system.

6. Zoya Transcript

Speaker 1

There we go. But yeah, I'll read a little bit about, like, the purpose of the interviews first, just like give a little bit of context and then, and we'll get into it. But the the purpose really, is to invite design educators like yourself into conversation on the decolonization of design education, and to discuss your experiences with your centric curricula within UK Higher Education design programs. And I guess I'm like kind of interested in in this idea of speaking to like, the past, present and future of design, education, but I kind of got to a point where I was, like, very aware that it was unproductive just to have conversations with myself. That's when like decided to open it up to other people to like, think about this idea of like, collective and communal dreaming. You know, things could be different to, like our current experiences of design education up until this point. So that was, like the thinking behind establishing these interviews. So, yeah, we can get into the first bunch of questions, which I guess are, like, more focused around, like your personal and professional context. So just to, like, build an idea of your positionality and and identity in like relation to your experiences of being a design educator, to the first question is, could you firstly describe your current role in design education, and perhaps give a little context of your educational career up until this point and what led you to become an educator in design so You can touch on, touch on little bits and pieces that you might

Speaker 2

So currently, I'm, I don't think I've been teaching for the past. I did like a good bit of teaching one one year for every it's quite like touch and go, where I'd go in and do a bit of like students about their projects and stuff I didn't do, like, like session, like, hardcore, like, full on computer thing, but yeah, it was very like, more tutorial based, more workshop based, stuff like that, and also just teaching based on my experience as a student that was kind of like my main,

I guess, my main point, or like my benefit. I was very recently a student before I started teaching, so, and a lot of the things that because I I taught where I was studying. So a lot of the projects are still quite similar to what I did. So I had some kind of like points where that could help them potentially as they helped me. So that was kind of where I was going from. And yeah, even when I was teaching, I really wanted it to be very like investing on a middle ground, rather than me being like, this is how you should do it. And like me talking down and like teaching out. I guess that's my positionality

I guess once I did like a couple of sessions like here and there, they found that maybe I could help with different module, like here and there. That's kind of how it happened. Really

04:01

cool, very nice

Speaker 1 04:04

to the second question is, how would you describe your your cultural identity or heritage, and perhaps how that might have influenced your personal and

04:16

professional journey, design, education?

Speaker 2 04:21

Malaysian, so I'm Indian, Mo Asian. And yes, in Asia, there is this culture of like, especially when I was growing there's a culture of like respect that we give to teachers, or like teachers, and I think that respect, or that kind of like appreciation for the teachers I had kind of inspired. I like being able to see like, oh, you know how I what? I am right now, career wise or education wise is based on like these few people that helped me along the way, and like my, my kind of achievements now is like, because of those people, because of like, the little bits I had here and there. So seeing that and how, like, how much of a positive influence I had from my teachers when I was younger. I think I kind of liked that idea of being able to help someone figure things out in any way that I could, even if it's just middle, like one tutorial session where you know something I said might have helped them or made their projects made more make more sense. I like that aspect of it. So I think that's where, you know, I was influenced by where I grew up, and that kind of stuff.

Speaker 1

How has your cultural background shaped your teaching philosophy and practices?

Speaker 2

Yeah, so again, yeah, coming back to that being like being so thankful and appreciative of everyone who helped me get to this point, and that also inspired me wanting to be that for someone else in a, not really, like, oh, like savior complex kind of way, but like, just trying to be helpful. And that's something I noticed in final year as well in undergrad, that, you know, there's something I knew how to do, and someone was kind of struggling with even other student to student level. Want to, like, try and help them if I did, yeah, okay, perfect.

Speaker 1

These, these next few questions, are focused more around like, potential, like Eurocentric experiences in design education that you might have encountered either like within your experiences of being a design student or being a design educator. So the first question I have is, could you describe to me some of your own personal experiences with like, Western or Eurocentric design curricula in your own education or in your own teaching career. So like, were

6. Zoya Transcript

there any instances where you felt that there were dominant design narratives being taught? And did you ever feel stricted by those dominant narratives?

Speaker 2

Eurocentric, if you're coming into design, Eurocentric design values and stuff like that in uni like, even when I was [REDACTED] And there was a lot of that where it was like, you know, these like standards that we had to like design for and like that was kind of what, you know, if it's trending in the Western world, then that's what we need to like, recreate within our own life [REDACTED] And I kind of always struggled with that because I was designing clothes. There are certain guidelines that I wanted to adhere to. I found that really hard to kind of explore with within the Western value, which is why I ended up going into graphics. Not one of the reasons why, because clothes just felt really restrictive in that sense. Whereas graphic, I could go into anything. But [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] And there's definitely like this whole kind of like almost a pedestal that, like Eurocentric design, is given to, especially like Swiss design. I remember, like this one semester we were just, like learning about Swiss design and like minimalism and all these kind of things.

And if you look at Asian design, I'm not speaking for all. I don't want to generalise this theme of maximalism. Like, even if you look at, like our catalogs, like bad catalogs, and like posters or like billboards and stuff, it's all very maximum. It's only very recently that it's become a bit more, you know, minimalist or something. But again, it's also coming back to that whole like, you know, going back into, you know, like early 2000s and getting inspiration from those kind of, like, design elements and stuff. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] different meanings.

[REDACTED] I've been very fortunate to have tutors that kind of pushed me to explore different design, design aesthetics or design, or like, have me build the aesthetic around the topic rather than what the actual outcome would be. And that makes sense. Honestly. I think that was me lucky to be honest.

Speaker 1

And then the next question I have, which feels like a big question, but we can, we can have a go at, is the idea of, like, how do you perceive the ongoing influence of colonialism on design education, particularly within the UK,

Speaker 2

as a student, I feel like what's more remnant now within my sort of experience is sort of like The whenever I do research, I'm looking at these journal articles, I think the languages that are used within these articles can be quite disclusionary, and I've noticed it within my like you know classmates as well, because after full of people from different places, they find it quite hard to connect with the reading. In turn, find it hard to research. And then, you know, it kind of creates like this. It almost demotivates them to research further or to be progressive in their projects. The other thing as well is certain type of terminology that is used within the classroom that I have been quite familiar [REDACTED]

Speaker 1 13:19

And then like, the next question, I guess, is, like, in your opinion, what kind of systemic or institutional barriers do you feel make it challenging to decolonize design, education? Because, like, I know, like, the efforts to change things, but like, what do you think the things that might be that get in the way of of change happening?

Speaker 2

I think the first thing probably would be the fact that there isn't enough, you know, teachers of color. I feel like I remember seeing an email from the newsletter from the playing around the other day. It was like, like 14% of staff, so maybe 5% of staff and 14% of students within [REDACTED] Yeah, just the fact that there isn't enough staff within the name within the art department, specifically, that have different point of views that can sort of thing, or, like, push forward the idea that, you know, there needs to be more consideration within, you know, what we're teaching, or what type of, like, you know, design, design principles and stuff like that are being taught? Yeah, I think if there were more people within the staff do that, that would be just because even when I was teaching, like doing a bit of tutoring, last year, I had a. Group of students that were from the UK, they're of Asian descent, and they were just like, oh, it's nice to have someone that is also Asian, that also understands, sort of like, how they grew up and how, what, how that informs their, you know, design process.

6. Zoya Transcript

Speaker 1

And I get like, the next bunch of questions is kind of like thinking about alternative perspectives and pathways. So the first one is like, Have you encountered or implemented any initiatives aimed at decolonising design education, and if you have like, had like, any experience of like, either being part of those or or running those, what were like, kind of the successes and what or like, What challenges do you think might have come on? I

Speaker 2

revolutionary it's more just I did find create, or, like, help create the EDI [REDACTED]

yeah, it was meant to be, I hope it's still continuing on, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It's a student based group that people can like, you know, join and also post on Instagram, like sharing different creatives from different backgrounds. And we do like spotlights and stuff as well to kind of shout out, you know, creators of colour, different, yeah, different, sort of, not even just graphics. I think it was like, it's all different design, like fashion and like interior and stuff like that, if I'm not wrong. And, yeah, so it's a student led, I don't remember the copy anymore, my student led initiative. They also, you know, champion of course, and so, yeah, it was actually that was a bit of a challenge to start that I had, like, just getting students to be engaged in that. I don't know if it was just because, you know, like the type, like the only two volunteers, I think at the time, I've noticed the current students that have picked it up are a bit a lot more involved, but the ones that me and my friend were designing with, it was just hard to get them to engage. And I think they were a bit disheartened because it was a new initiative, and it was very slow and picking up and seeing that they were very disheartened, and they didn't really want to like engage with as much. But I've seen a positive thing.

Speaker 1

I guess. Like the next question I have is, if, in like an ideal world, if you could redesign the curriculum from scratch, what principles or practices would you prioritize to create like a decolonised educational experience?

Speaker 2

getting students to i I've noticed that it's hard to get students to design for things that truly matter sometimes. So trying to build that kind of like why it's important to do that in the first place, and creating ethics within the undergrad, I think I've noticed that, you know, talk about design, as much as [REDACTED] just starting that early, maybe even in foundation, having, like, a basic sort of sense of why it's important to design, rather than just having, you know. Like design, like colour theory, and like all these things, having that also implemented within the curriculum. That's something that's important, because I can imagine that, you know, if you're studying something that is like, mainly based on aesthetic, and then coming into undergrad, and then suddenly you're being told, like, you have to design for social good, it's going to create, like, this, not confusion, but you're going to just be like, what's the point? Yeah, building that earlier on. And I don't know if that should go even earlier into like, you know, a levels and like, maybe that's when you kind of have a sense of, you know, if you are doing this, if you're doing graphic designs, it's not just for marketing or, you know, ads and whatever it's there's a bigger purpose to it. And like, trying to teach students that maybe that was something that would be something I would add. And also, like, I feel like slowly phasing out. But I think there's still some of that around, like, that whole kind of, like lab culture design and like the whole idea of, like, London based studios and stuff like that. So trying to, like, phase that out, maybe teaching kids, students to be a bit more open to freelance work, rather than going directly into studios, just because my personal background, because I come from a freelance background as well, I I've noticed that, you know, I [REDACTED]

Speaker 1

Perfect. And then, like, the next question I have is, is, what role do you think educators from like, minoritized ethnic communities should play in shaping the future of design education. And I have that question because I know there's like this conversation that happens about who this work falls upon a lot of the time by either like being decolonising design education or diversifying like it, it sometimes tends to fall on the communities it like affects the most. Yeah, your thoughts on, on, on that, I guess, yeah.

6. Zoya Transcript

Speaker 2

yeah. I feel like I don't necessarily believe it's a 5050. Is obviously, you know, people that aren't from minoritized groups wouldn't necessarily know, so they need to get educated about these things. And I believe people who are minoritized are the best people to educate based on, you know, their experience that's the most relevant within this sort of context. But I think it should be rather than, say, for example, me going out and educating maybe just me living as I live, and then based on that, I could also be open to curious, like, you know, if you have any questions about how I'm living, so, for example, like me building me, mentioning that I need to go pray, that also creates, like this thing in their head, like, okay, she prioritised our prayers. So you know that needs to be built in within. You know, you know when we're going to go meet, there needs to be a space. Place where I can pray. There needs to be like, you know, five to 10 minutes where I can go pray and might also come back. And the space should be close enough where it's like, it doesn't disrupt this, you know, the meeting, or whatever it is. So meaning, like, living as I live, and then making a point of like, you know, this is what is my priority, that also hopefully teaches other party that, you know, this is the priorities they have, and this is how we need to consider, if we're, if we're trying to involve these, you know, people from this type of group, you know, this is the things that we need to consider. I don't know if that makes sense from my example of like, instead of being like, oh. So this is why I do this. This, this, rather than that, just being like, okay, this is what I need to do. And you know, either accommodate it or like, I yeah, like, if you're trying to make the space an inclusive space, we need to learn to accommodate that.

Speaker



Speaker 1

Okay, for the like this next part of the conversation, it'll be a little a little bit different, but I'm gonna introduce you to like, a method that I tend to use to encourage conversation around the future, and in, in this case, the future of design education being a decolonize one, and that method is to use storytelling artifacts or speculative prompts to ground a conversation. I'm gonna, I'm going to share my screen in a sec and introduce you to a future decolonized design space, or like an alternative future for design education. So I'll share my screen. Hope it works. If you can see that, yes. Okay,

Speaker 1

so I'm just, I'm going to read through these slides, and then afterwards, we can have a conversation with a few more questions. So I want to introduce you to a future where Maker Majlis exists a communal, decolonized design space built on indigenous sovereignty, shared learning and creative collaboration. And the way I'm going to tell this story of this future world is through an induction pack found in the year

I'm going to tell this story of this future world is through an induction pack found in the year 2050 an induction pack that gives hints as to the values of this new type of design education and how this new space may work. So I'm going to run you through this series of prompts from the induction pack to begin to like, build this picture of maker Majlis. So this future form of design education is built upon the principles of a Majlis. Now, a Majlis is a traditional gathering space, deeply rooted in Arab culture, where people come together to share stories, exchange knowledge and engage in meaningful dialog. Historically, the Majlis has served as a hub for community, decision making, storytelling and hospitality, a space where every voice is valued and collective wisdom shapes outcomes. In its essence, the Majlis embodies. Connection, respect and the power of shared conversation.

And this is the welcome letter. I'll read this for you. So welcome. 2050 participants Maker Majlis is a space Where creativity, heritage and collective wisdom come together to shape the future of design. You are stepping into the fifth year of our journey and entering a space that is constantly shifting to reflect the people working in this space. At maker Majlis, participants are invited to spend up to 10 years as a maker with the freedom to leave whenever they feel their journey is complete, by allowing participants to stay as long as they need, make a magic create space for deeper exploration, iterative learning and meaningful connections with their heritage and communities, this flexibility nurtures creativity and growth at a natural pace, removing the pressure To conform to arbitrary timelines. This welcome letter, like every part of your induction pack was imagined and crafted by last year's cohort, the 2049 makers, an integral part to the way we exist in this space is to learn with and from one another and draw from our individual knowledge systems to address communal explorations. The manifesto that the participants of Maker Majlis constructed is as follows. So it's that we listen first. We celebrate plurality, we honor heritage, we practice reciprocity, we dismantle hierarchies. We respect the land. We embrace unlearning. We design with purpose. We value process and we protect knowledge.

The next artifact in the Maker Majlis induction pack is the values compass at Maker Majlis, we

6. Zoya Transcript

do not assess participants work or measure against grading systems. Instead, we have a values compass that we generate and hold ourselves accountable to each participant will add their personal values to reflect themselves, their heritage and their positionality, and at the centre of the physical maker Majlis, there is the heart. At the centre of maker Majlis lies the heart, a space that keeps the ports of our community alive. It is more than a circle. It is where stories are shared, wisdom is exchanged, and ideas come to life. The Heart embodies the values of make a Majlis connection, collaboration and respect for the diverse traditions and voices that shape our world. Here, participants gather with elders, peers and local communities to reflect, listen and CO create. It is a space of equality where every voice matters and every story carries the potential to inspire change. The heartbeats with the collective energy of its makers, serving as both a sanctuary for reflection and a catalyst for innovation. Welcome to the heart where listening shapes the future.

And finally, the last thing in the induction pack is the accountability cards, a deck of accountability questions that all participants are expected to engage within the design process. An example of the questions are, who benefits from this work? How does this design respect the land? And what assumptions are you reinforcing? So I guess now you've been introduced to, like, this future concept of design education via makers. I'm going to ask you a few, a few questions in relation to some of like, the themes and thoughts that that might have opened

the first question I have is, like, what are your initial thoughts about the concept of Maker Majlis

Speaker 2

it's like, I really, really, really like the value, personal value, instead of, like a grading system, is because I think again, it, it challenges how, currently, I know, even in my like peer group, I noticed how people are so obsessive over the rubrics and stuff, and then it doesn't, it never reflects with the way they work. So like, again, like the whole value and then the kinds of accountability, let's focus on the work rather than, you know, this external kind of, like pressure of meeting these learning outcomes and stuff which I really like. And yeah, I think it really aligns with some of the stuff I was saying earlier. But. Like, you know, cards for accountability, like teaching that design have more purpose than just the surface level stuff. So, yeah.

Speaker 1

then I guess, like, how do you feel a space like Maker Majlis might address the challenges of decolonising design, education?

Speaker 2

I think there are certain it's make or much less. Is it a form of like I kept you would use that I'm using basically, right? Like, is that the idea, or does that exist anywhere? Because, yeah, I think yeah, it challenges. If we're talking about the current state of what the uni is like, it definitely does challenge it. And certain systems, again, like the whole grading thing and the other things. It was the manifesto where it was very it was like, we listen first, and like, it's very human centric, which, at the minute, I think, is very contrast. It's like it contrasts really greatly to what education system has become at the minute, where it's very money centric. Yeah, so, but again, putting back the focus on humans and what we value and how that's perceived, and how you can teach that and that, that's how it kind of contrasts. It decolonises education.

Speaker 1

And then the next question is like, do you think this approach like rooted in gathering and storytelling and shared creation. Do you think that would resonate with educators and students in the present? And I guess if you think so, then like, why or why not,

Speaker 2

[REDACTED]

Speaker 1

do you think it would resonate with educators and students? I especially the idea of like, co creating, like, when, when I began speaking about like, that central part of the Majlis, where it would invite in people from all different kinds of walks of life to, like, create together. Do you think that would resonate?

Speaker 2

Again, speaking from my own, my experience like, because I have peers that are from different backgrounds, different design major, so some interior, some fashion, but when, whenever we talk about our projects to each other. There, it's almost easier to see a solution for their work, their project. So that kind of like discussion based, kind of like just even, like, not a formal thing, but we just talk to each other and we find solution. So definitely, like a collaborative environment would really benefit, especially in like right like design education, like right now, it would be good. I was gonna say that was my one point. And I think this just comes down to a cultural thing. Let's be fair. I've noticed it with students that are local to the UK, but I can imagine students. Students who have parents that are that have been quite strict on them about education and

6. Zoya Transcript

about grades. This could be a bit, if we're talking about right now, it could be a bit, I think they get lost in terms of like, what is if you're not being graded in the way that we've always been graded, how does it work? Then I think it will be very like confusing. They could almost be very it could almost be like blindsiding them in a way. And I, I definitely chalk that up to culture. But I noticed when we were doing holistic grading students that were local, that used to come from a different culture, they were stressed about seeing a grade that didn't truly reflect what they were going to be graded at the end of the semester, if that makes sense. So I think there's definitely a heavy culture on grades and trying to achieve a certain grade, and if that is not visible in the way that we know it's definitely might be a bit too stressful, but I wonder if you slowly, gradually phase out this way of grading and like, you know, introduce the Maker Majlis how that works. I feel like it would be a really beneficial change, but it also needs to change within, you know, family dynamics and, like, parents view grade and stuff

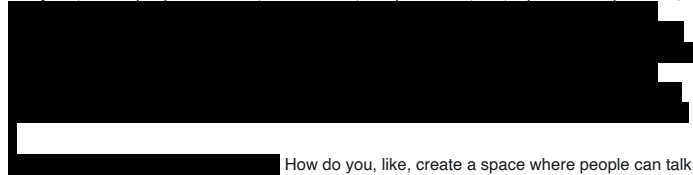
Speaker 1

then the next question I was like, in in your view, what challenges might arise in implementing a space like Maker Majlis and how could they be overcome?

Speaker 2

coming back to the manifesto and how you know, it's, the space where people can, you know, speak, how they feel, like, you know, you listen first, and all that kind of stuff. I can imagine there would be quite a bit of laugh in terms of, if people are coming from different backgrounds,

I can imagine that there'll be, you know, almost like a debate, like, culture, and then again, I think the challenge would be, then establishing that safe space. And, like, how do you determine that it is a safe space for everyone, where people don't feel, wow? Mean, if I speak from, like, a personal experience, we



How do you, like, create a space where people can talk, and then that would be the main, biggest challenge, if people are coming from, like, different, like, almost opposing sort of point of view. Yeah,

Speaker 1

And then the next question I was like, How could Maker Majlis foster cross cultural collaboration and elevate marginalized perspectives in design education. In

Speaker 2

going back to the whole Safe Space idea, if it is like, structured around that theme. It can, it can say, I was trying to say that it would open up students to allow them to be like, you know, if all ideas are. Respected, and if all ideas are welcomed, it can, like, I think, very easily, foster that energy.

Speaker 1

If you were to contribute to Maker Majlis what aspect of either your teaching or heritage or your design philosophy would you bring to this space.

Speaker 2

Oh, I'd love to just be like a, just this technician that knows how to do anything to just being there, kind of like a rather than telling them how to, like, what they could do to, you know, bring their project forward, but just showing them how that could work, rather than Yeah. So just being someone that is, like, almost like a tool to it's not, not that way, but like a multi purpose kind of like this knows, like, it's skill wise, okay, so like, yeah, rather than the theory and life, you know, not kind of element to it. It does, yeah,

Speaker 1

that was, like, all of the questions I had in like, relation to, like, Maker Majlis So, like, before we end, I guess it's like, if there's any additional thoughts or or insights that you'd like to end with in relation to your thoughts on decolonising, design, education,

Speaker 2

I, I really like the idea of having this Space and having it seems like a lot more care put into this sort of system, like Maker Majlis, I've seen how The hours are dwindled, especially comparing last module to this module. We only have, like, we only have one and a half day of stats early, which I find absolutely insane compared to, you know, how much you're paying for, you know, and I know it's like, facilitate and stuff like that as well. But they're like, I think having this, you know, this concept of Maker Majlis in the context of a uni would subvert that whole like, you know, you know, the limitation of time we have with the tutors, just because it also opens up the idea of, like collaborative work within, you know, within the group, so that can be students, and I imagine, and teachers student and, you know, it opens up these crafts, kind of, like, Almost relationships that can help progress your you know, education, like higher education stuff. So I like that concept of that, you know, almost creating like this, taking out that element of like. You know, we only have certain hours allocated to this. And like helps open up like us to be able to do that work more. I don't know what the word is, but like, it just allows more time, I think, and care, into the education system, which is, I think starting to lack now, yeah, okay,

