



**PROCESS BOOK 1**  
DESIGN + RESEARCH METHODS



# INTRO DUCTION TION

## **DESIGN + RESEARCH METHODS**

This booklet, 1 of 4, focuses on the kinds of research, inspiration, thinking methods and processes I used to form my project over the better part of a year.

In here, I highlight important ways that I built a context around my project, and how these were informed by my personal design philosophies. I explain how key parts of my project, such as the food and board game aspect, came to inform how I built a workshop through continual iteration and collaboration with different kinds of people and activities.



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## 1.0 PROJECT SCOPE

In developing this workshop framework and practice, I wanted to use my project to support a community that I am so vitally attached to: my Industrial design studio community at Emily Carr University.

This community was, indeed, the inspiration for my project in the first place. My classmates and peers have become the closest friends, collaborators, support network and partners-in-crime I have grown to love over the last three years of our program. Three years of comradery, collaboration and messing around has taught me the value of having such a strong group of perspectives, ideologies

personalities and skillsets in a design space. Through my project, I hope to celebrate the sense of collectiveness and togetherness that helped my own growth as a designer and person.

Past the scope of my graduation project, this framework could be applied to and practiced in other spaces: schools, offices, project teams, etc; as a way of supporting the collectiveness in those spaces too.



## 2.0 MY DESIGN MANIFESTO

Before even beginning this work, I wrote a personal “design manifesto”, as a way of reflecting and documenting for myself the values and philosophies that I want to follow as a designer.

This was no definitive document, and would not even be a complete document at the time of writing. Perspectives and priorities change over time, and the way I write about my practice as a designer needs to respect, acknowledge and respond to that fact. This document is an evolving and responsive journal of the beliefs that shape the way I design and grow.



## 2.1 MY DESIGN MANIFESTO → Values

The values in this manifesto are centred around foregrounding:

- Accessibility of experience
- Community and relationship building
- Accountability of the designer
- Tangibility of process and experience
- Democratic sharing of knowledge and skills

These are the bedrock of my practice both in a design and personal context – as I have said, my work often blurs the line between who I am as a person, and the kind of things and ideas I create for this world.

### LESS BRIEFLY,

**F**ive ideas, that are **constantly evolving and growing** through the people that exercise these philosophies in design disciplines. Each is inextricably connected, and each is able to exist independently. But only when these ideas are exercised collaboratively and given direction does real change take place, and an **establishment-challenging** model of design and design thinking present itself.

#### ♦ Accessibility

I believe good design is non-exclusive in nature – able to be understood and connected with in some capacity through different perspectives; age, race, gender, ethnicity, language, socioeconomics, neurotypes, list cont. Scopes of accessibility can also be expanded through communal learning, skill-sharing, knowledge building and collaboration.

#### ♦ Connection

The collaboration of multiple perspectives (pluriversalism) can foster spaces of accessibility and egalitarianism in design. Forming relationships and the ability to steward connections between things underpin much of my work, and I believe that creating and maintaining links between many elements, perspectives, ideas and nodes can be a method of disrupting a status-quo of reductivism and modernist design.

#### ♦ learning

Knowledge, skills and thinking abilities are the tools that give people and ideas agency. By equipping people with a wide range of skills through acts of sharing, care and proactivity, design can be a way to encourage non-destructive self-actualisation, advocacy and upliftment, and place people in their own power. How they want to learn a better world.



### 3.0 INSPIRATION

Inspiration comes in many forms - and for me, many forms there were. I have always been interested in social activities, especially ones that occur within the environment of a mutual activity. Food, mealtimes, and board games have always had a special place in my heart.

They became that much more important to me during the COVID-19 pandemic, when I was unable to see my family for three years, because of my studies abroad. Craving feelings of deep connection and social lightheartedness, these feelings have become central drivers of my design work over my university career.

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### 3.1 INSPIRATION → Previous work

Some of my projects from previous years actually became foundational inspirations for Food For Thought; my graduation project is the culmination of four years of reflection, development and eventual manifestation.

*Some notable projects were:*

- **Mancala**, a personal take on a traditional African board game intended as a conversation facilitation tool.
- My **Manoomin box**, a practice for changing how people think about food and mealtime.



### 3.2 INSPIRATION → External work

There were also a number of important works from other sources that I drew inspiration from, and used to develop my project concept.

A key moment in my research was an exhibition that I attended at an early stage of my project trajectory:

[A Seat at the Table](#) is a “multi-sited and collaborative exhibition project that explores historical and contemporary stories of Chinese

Canadians in BC and their struggles for belonging”, curated and run by the Museum of Vancouver.

Though I am not Chinese Canadian myself, so many of these experiences and images rung true to my own experience of being an immigrant of Chinese descent. The exhibition used food and restaurant culture as an entry point to highlight diverse topics and experiences of belonging, racism and resilience to honour a complex-



history of migrancy. I had felt at home surrounded by cultural symbols of my childhood and family.

It was at this point that I decided I too wanted to use food, storytelling and personal experience as a joyful medium of cultural collaboration, to foreground a kind of personal agency and safety as I had felt in this exhibition.

Other sources of inspiration for my project presented themselves in my research of various precedent relationship-building frameworks:

- [We're Not Really Strangers](#) is a commercially available card game that uses increasingly more personal prompt questions to build relationships between people.
- There are many variations online on the same concept of “X questions for \_\_\_\_\_ (getting to know someone, [falling in love](#), etc.)”. These present a kind of interaction of vulnerability and bonding, done with the implied intention of better understanding people through spending intentional time together.



## 4.0 RESEARCH METHODS

Research and research outcomes for my project came from a very wide spectrum of places and sources. I am not typically one to sit down and look for information through journals, books and data. So much of what I looked into was very much experience-based and came directly from people. As much as I appreciate a good hard fact, I find tacit knowledge far more engaging and interesting as the basis for a design project.

My first gut reaction was to do what I know best; seek out, connect with, and talk to people.

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#### 4.1 RESEARCH METHODS → My questions

I came into my fourth year with ideas that orbited questions of culture, identity, food, human connection and community. I was seeking ways of connecting with the students around me that went beyond institutional boundaries. I knew that food and conversation would play important roles in how I approached doing this.

I knew that in order to find intention and sense in what would eventually become a grad project, I would have to fill out these spaces and contexts I was so curious about and eager to engage in.

I have, over the last four years of university, built up a strong community of people with unique perspectives, practices and knowledge focuses: Friends, family, my partner, classmates and instructors. They are where I started my research.

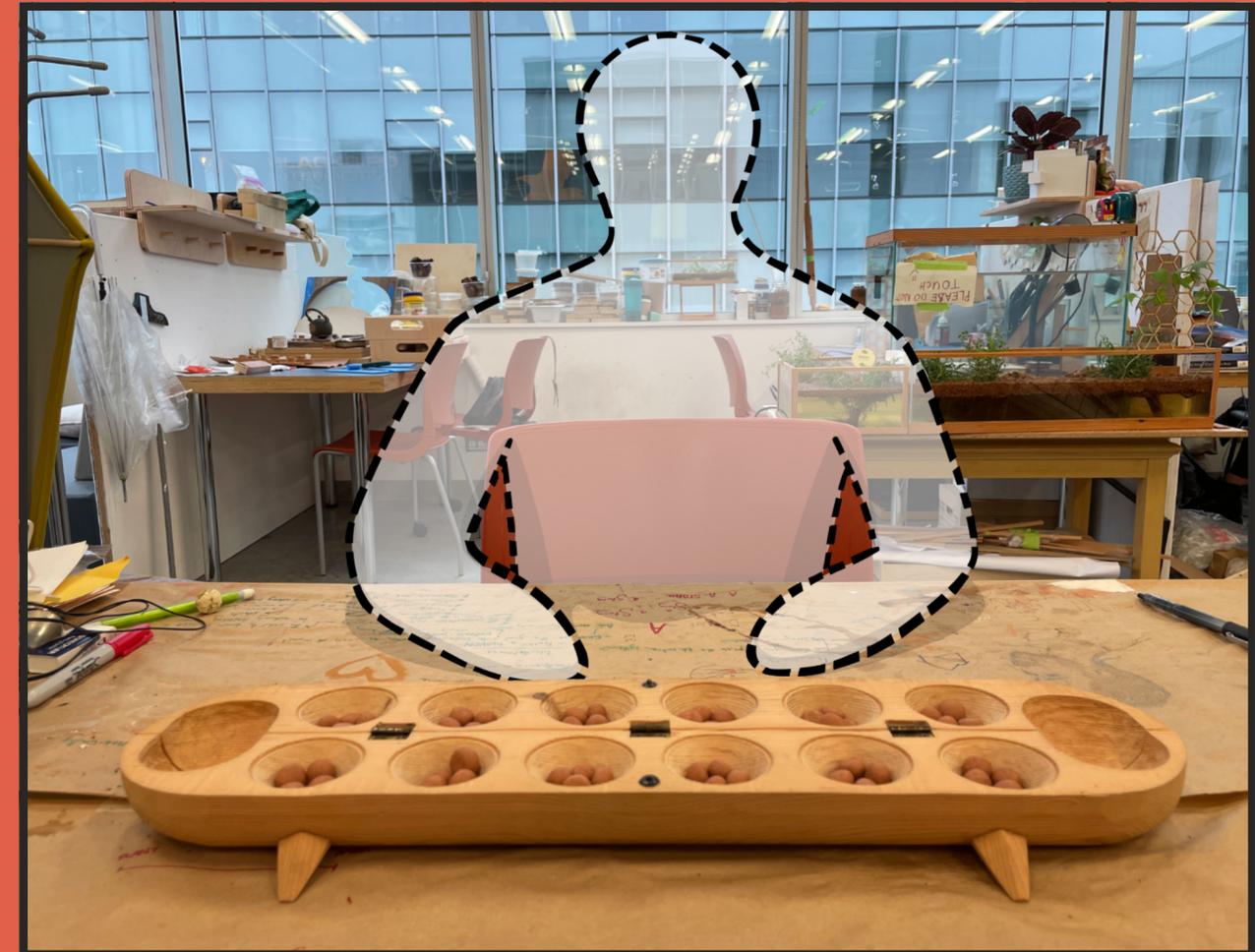
Conversations began with an intention of getting a loose sense of people's relationship to my spaces of inquiry. Although these were fairly informal and anecdotal conversations, I began to see an opportunity in not only the subject matter of these conversations themselves, but also the manner in which they had been occurring.



## 4.2 RESEARCH METHODS → Mini-workshops

What these conversations became were intimate and approachable ways of getting to know someone, in unexpected ways. I found that by using an accessible "in", I could get people to open up and converse in a way that felt effortless, mutually empathetic, and respectful.

Using my Mancala game, which I had originally designed as a game to spark intimate conversation, I discovered I was very much interested in how I could use this as a tool to really develop relationships between myself and my peers, as a way of developing the sense of community we have in our design studio.



## 5.0 DESIGN METHODS → Crowdsourced testing

Co-creation was a concept first introduced to me in my second year of university, and has since become a method that I often incorporate into my design work. I have also learned the value of participatory design methods in the co-creative work that I have done with the Health Design Lab at Emily Carr University.

Co-creation and participatory design to me signals an important shift for design towards placing more agency within the hands of stakeholders within a design(ed) system, and those affected by the consequence of such a system.

To this end, I decided to begin an iterative practice of workshops, where I would host successive sessions of conversations to explore notions of community building and relationship-making. In each session, I would try different methods of engaging participants, to hear their reflections, to map out a picture of what community is, and how to create the conditions for it.

This format of working with people, listening, synthesising, reflecting and facilitating would become the core of what I wanted my project to be: a decolonial, pluriversal and collaborative practice, that is intended to support the people who become a part of it.

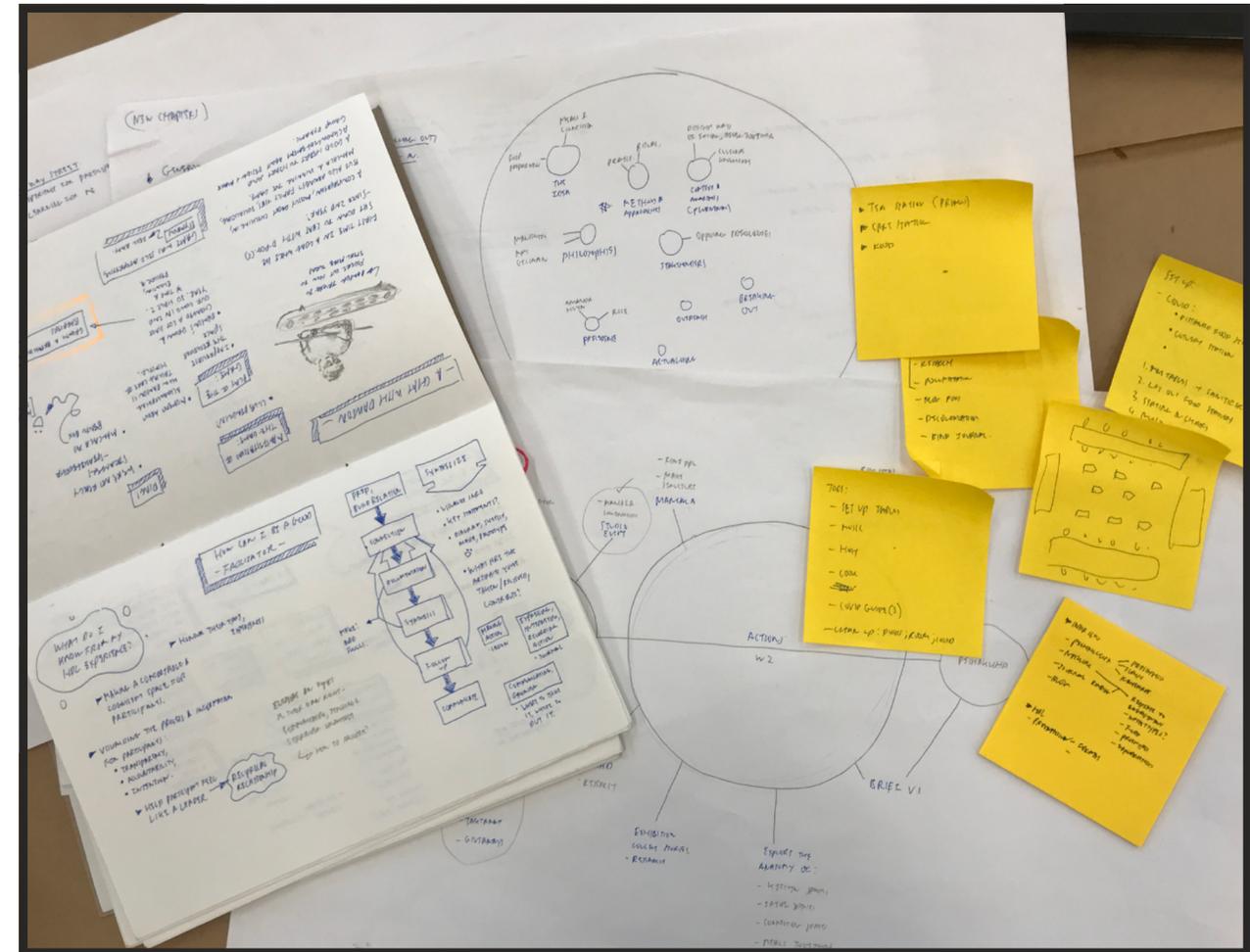


## 5.1 DESIGN METHODS → Storyboarding

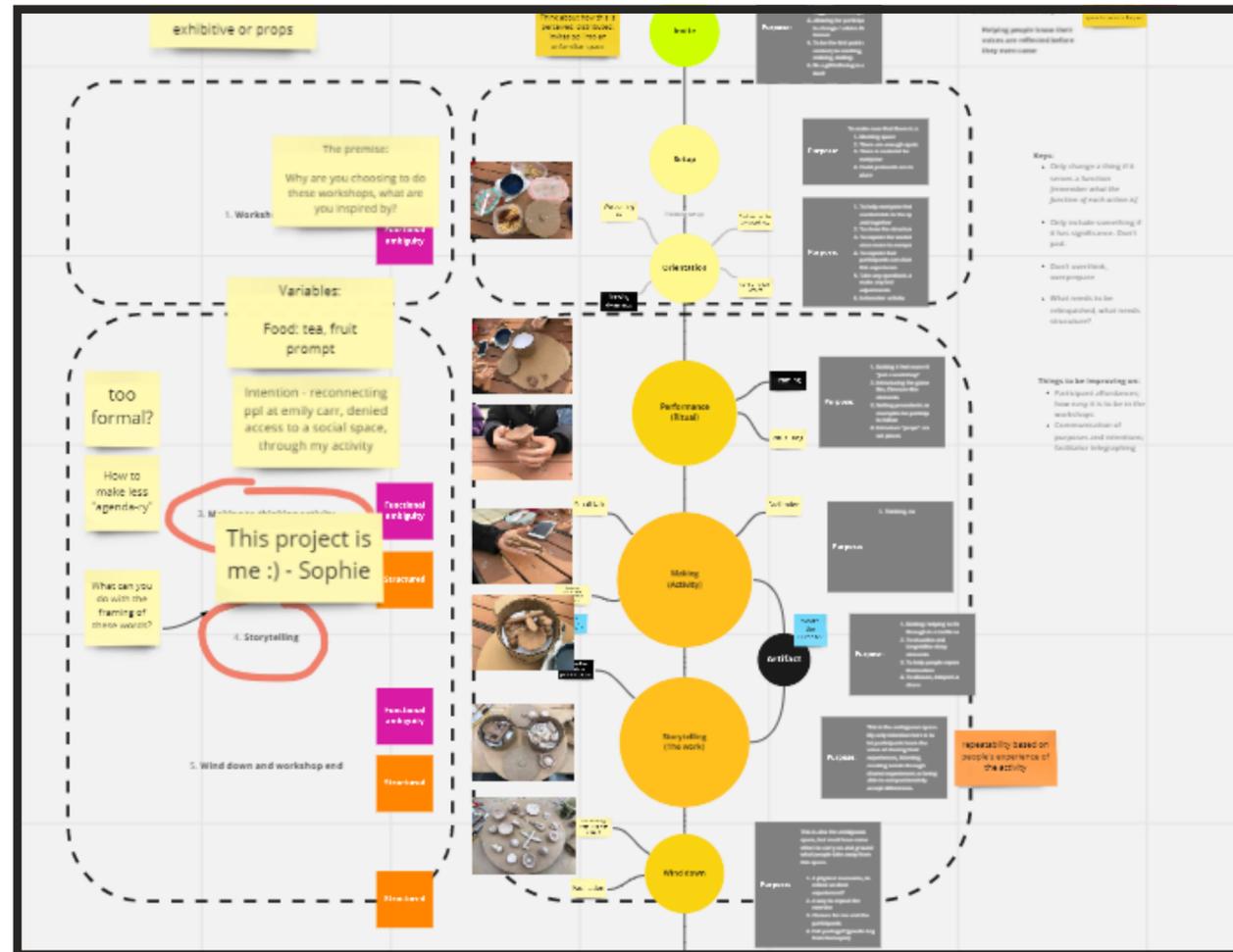
To help me develop the kinds of possible interactions, variations and iterations for my workshops, I used storyboarding as a visual method of synthesis.

I used storyboarding to both track the different iterations of my initial workshop sessions, as well as to develop and imagine different alternative explorations for these sessions.

A key way medium for documenting these explorations and the tonal, emotional qualities of each session was via a small journal I had bound to in which I could reflect upon my workshop sessions.





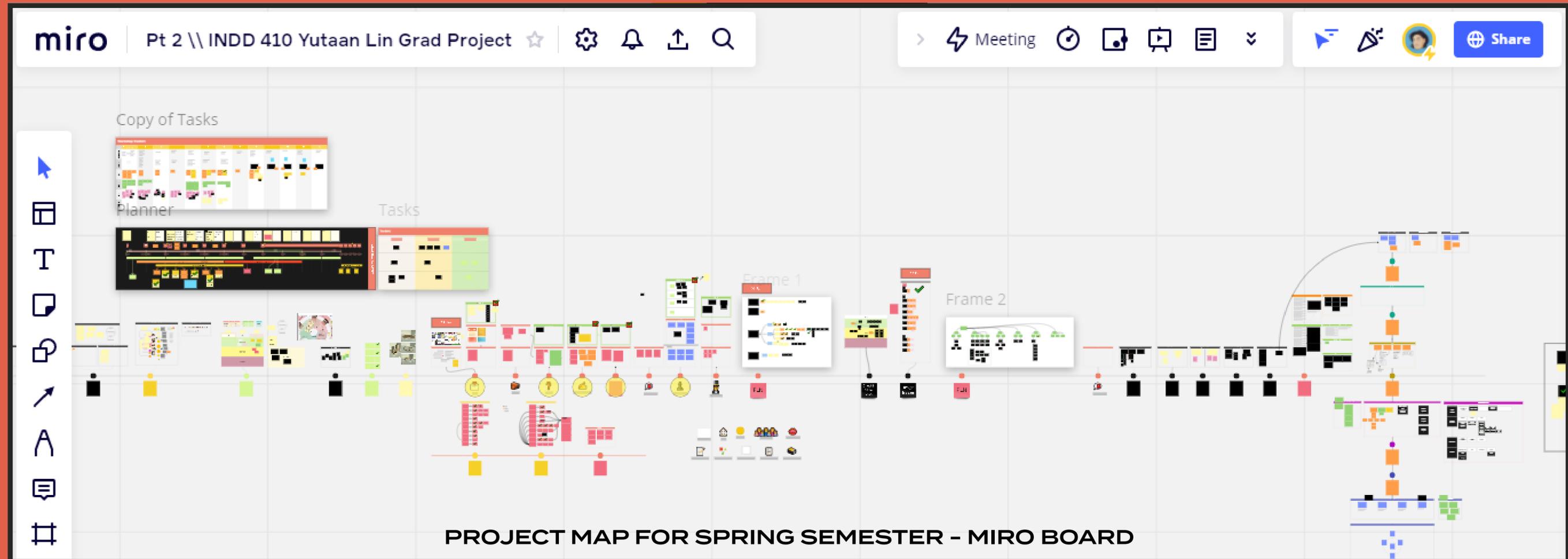


## 5.2 DESIGN METHODS → Mapping

I have always been a very extensive system mapper. With any project, I try to honour many possible outcomes, scenarios, variables, pathways and explorations. This usually means that my maps get very complicated and very convoluted with the multitude of threads that I try to capture, and usually only make sense to me.

In this project, I used maps to track the trajectory of my work, workshop iterations, ideaion and reflection, and slowly develop what would become the basic format of my workshop practice.



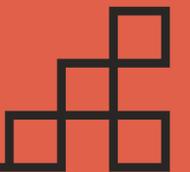
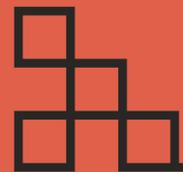
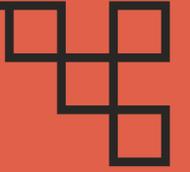


## 6.0 DEVELOPING A WORKSHOP

With these methods I would form a base framework of developing a workshop practice - a practice framed by a sense of collaboration, and slow design.

I outline how I use co-creative methods and continuous iteration to formalise a personal workshop facilitation methodology in the *second* process booklet in this series.





**[ END OF BOOKLET 1 ]**