Being Co-conspirators

PASARI Mudita\textsuperscript{a}; and JOSHI Prachi\textsuperscript{b}
\textsuperscript{a} The Design Village, Noida, India
\textsuperscript{b} Independant Consultant, Uttarakhand, India
*muditapasari@gmail.com

We live in a multidimensional pluralist world, where colonial, structuralist and industrial approaches of moulding a mind need to be questioned. Perhaps our modern educational system needs to forgo moulding a student and instead insist on developing the potential of a learner. India has long had the traditional approach of rearing a mind which is not bogged down by generalised standards. Despite this legacy, popularised design education here, is a borrowed version from ideologies of the West. The authors of this paper questioned their adopted roles as design facilitators, and conducted a social experiment to decentralise ownership of material and thought. Titled, ‘Power of space’, the experiment was an attempt at creating a series of unstructured dialogues hosted in spaces with apparent pluriverses. By shedding the rigid perception of their identities and merely being the catalyst for eliciting ideas, the scope for embracing vulnerability, humanising the interactions to being co-conspirators over administrators, and exploiting the ideas of de-tooling within educational experiences emerged. The paper collates the learnings and premise of the above experiment. Having met with multiple challenges, there were astute observations which were applicable at scale and could truly help decolonize the approach to the idea of educat-ing itself.

\textit{Keywords: detooling; decolonise; co-conspirators; social experiment}

1. Preface

The beauty of design ‘education’, as we have had the fortune of experiencing ourselves, lay in the informality, in the fluidity, in the exploration, and in the multiplicity of ‘can be’.

We are Prachi and Mudita, designers trained through adaptations of the Bauhausian philosophy of education. Apart from our shared interest in museums and spaces, we often find ourselves discussing culture, theory, philosophies, politics and multiplicity of truths.

In 2018, we found ourselves reeling under our relatively new adopted roles of being design “educators”.

\textit{doi: 10.21606/pluriversal.2021.0008}
Design having exposed us to systems embracing fluid ‘education’, and some ‘educators’ playing polymorphic roles of mentors and co-learners, we have imbibed ways of un-idealising absolutes and questioning hierarchical ways of knowing.

For many learners we encountered, our role as “educators/teachers” seemed to imply the absoluteness of knowledge and demanded a sense of reverence. These young learners, like us some years before, came from the colonial construct of our schools where the roles of the teacher and the student are defined, singular and absolute. However, we associated more with the naturalness of being simultaneous learners with others in the space, over being a teacher.

This transference of identity and obsolete dichotomy, felt alienating and made us uncomfortable. It seemed to restress the colonial construct of power and single sources of knowledge.

In the spirit of finding ways to address this conflict and of finding ways of making the “student” more visible; of sparking controversy and provocations to learn from, we extended a dialogue through a social experiment titled Power of Space. Over the course of the experiment we explored the act of becoming co-conspirators, encouraging the agency of play, of conspiring and pranking to be most ourselves.

Power of Space was a playground to explore ideas and ways of learning. It was thus never intentionally designed as a research project but an open-ended experiment. While we were hosts of the experiment, we were as much a part of it as any other participant.

The paper examines our experience from both lenses of being the observers as well as the observed. Our learnings and observations have been post-documented and analysed for future application.

1.1. Acknowledgement & Bias
We would like to start the paper by acknowledging our process. The experiment in discussion was presented as an elective to a set of design students in early 2019.

We acknowledge the impact of some design educators we have had the fortune to meet and learn from, and a world of other educationists we learnt of in the process of reflecting on this experiment.

We also acknowledge that we harbour a strong bias against the ideas of unilateral means of knowledge production and hypertooling education. In an attempt to decolonize our educational systems, we advocate de-tooling for fluidity of thought in learning experiences.

On paper we were 14 co-conspirators, a logistical constraint not a deliberate one. However, the sessions of the experiment were by nature open to anyone one who wished to join. We are deeply grateful for those sporadic co-conspirators who wove in and out of the experience of the elective, each bringing in expertise and insight pertinent to the space and context being discussed.

And finally we acknowledge that the ideas of the pluriverse have always existed within our regions—referred to as anekantvad or multiplicity of truth (in certain philosophies); diversity and plurality have always been accepted as part of the identity of India. As our education, production and economic systems have been predominantly inherited from colonial models of knowledge, our pluriversality has been distorted into unilateral ways of being and seeing.
2. Context
As noted by Bass and Good (2004), Craft (1984) has observed that “here are two different Latin roots of the English word “education.” They are educare, which means to train or to mold, and educere, meaning to lead out” and develop potential. While both these meanings have found their way to formulate the core of what education stands for today, there are many experiments across the globe re-evaluating the idea of education itself.

2.1. Colonised Education
India’s current education system follows the instruction-based, deductive reasoning method, as inheritance from the colonial rule of 200 years. “Although this was an exploitative system meant to create a middle level administrative staff to serve the needs of its British rulers, India has not been able to replace this system with a better alternative.” (Balaram, S., 2005, p. 12)

The standards of evaluating of learned knowledge through the idealisation of punctuality, adherence to syllabi, schedules, recorded deliverables and evidence of learning through examination along with hyper-tooling as part of ‘equipping learners for the future’, hinder the indulgence of the act of learning while also being colonial functions of power acting on society. This manufactures a need to be a learner, over the want to be one.

“Colonial education meant that its beneficiaries would begin to perceive themselves and their society as consumers of knowledge supplied by the colonizer and would cease to see themselves as people capable of producing knowledge. ” (Kumar, K., 1988, p. 454). The teacher was stripped of autonomy as well and made part of a centralised system of control and regulation.

Kumar (2016) notes “The wider system of education denied recognition to people’s knowledge and to the modes of thought and action prized in the culture.” (p. 4). The colonial notion of education being an act of ‘civilising’ people, assumed the prior conditioning and knowledge a ‘student’ came with needs to be overwritten in order for them to become suitable work resources who could be governed over. The hierarchy within the classroom led by the teacher reinstated the act of educating as one of civilising and one of control. Bartlett (2005) in her work Dialogue, Knowledge, and Teacher Student Relations says “Freire argued that educators should reject a “banking” model of education, in which the teacher “owns” knowledge and “deposits” it in the student.” (p. 345). In the context of decolonizing educational points of view she goes on to note that “Freire was well aware of the power imbalance between students’ local experiential knowledge and teachers’ academic knowledge, derived from and certified by official educational institutions.” (p. 346).

The educator, as popularised and reinstated through our many hierarchical educational systems sufficiently created a divide through othering (self/other) into varied binaries of the learned and the learner; the teacher and the taught; the educator and the educated; those within the classroom of learning and the unlearned without.

However, the region has long had the traditional educational approach of rearing a mind *educere*, which is not bogged down by the ideas of age and generalised standards. Rather the aim of non-western educational models of apprenticeship (in the arts) allowed for a student to move at their pace and created an environment of co-learning through discourse and cross-pollination on a breadth of ideas and subjects, rather than instructional, siloed teaching.
While rote learning has been a practice, it was also supplemented with other modes through critical thinking, debate, and questioning the perceived. As quoted by Dadhich (2014) “A society with this kind of varied interactions and exchanges over a very long period of time, and one that has survived very well in its cultural, social and intellectual states, could not help being anything but plural.” (p. 39).

In the process of breaking these hierarchical structures the authors realized, without deconstructing the balance of power within the layers of meaning-making one would not be able to make the tall claim of a decolonial approach in education— An extension of Mignolo’s (2011) epistemic disobedience as a destruction of coloniality of education in this context.

### 2.2 Design Education in India

While most designers acknowledge the multifaceted identity and non-singularity of themselves and their work; design is rarely perceived as fluid, non-bounded or organic by those with limited understanding of the field. Design education with continuing dictums from the colonial format of education restrict this indulgence more.

“Design as an activity in India is as old as its culture, but as a modern profession it started only in the late 1950s barely a decade after India became (in 1947) an independent nation and the largest democracy in the world.” (Balaram, S., 2009, p. 54)

Despite this layered legacy, popularised design education in India is an adopted version from ideologies and contexts of the West. It is limited in its understanding of complexity and plurality, rendering linear, sanitised cause-effect understandings to far richer causalities.

The perception of design as problem-solving becomes an extension of the colonial saviour syndrome, for us designers and design educators. Becoming clinical, analysed through a linear cause-effect perspective, Design lends itself to act at multiple interjections without comprehending the scenario from the multiple identities that have led to its creations. Thus, the complexities of the reality we inhabit remain distant to our being, while also limiting our thinking to siloed boxes.

A people living within plurality are forced to accept a diametric worldview of singular ways of being, causing a cognitive and performative disbalance.

The design educator further perpetuates the notion of the ‘saviour’ but unquestioningly adopting the ‘colonial positionality’ when observing their own lived reality.

Through this paper, the presence of powerful forces indoctrinating singularity are being questioned in the hope to unearth what was once culturally obvious and now seems lost. As phrased by Chatterjee (2019) in his article Design education in India: An experiment in modernity, “The challenge today is to understand whether design education in India can continue to lead as a global demonstration of quality and sustainability. Or will it instead become a follower, mimicking what others regard as ‘world-class’?”
3. The Power of Space

Power of Space was a series of unstructured dialogues\(^2\) hosted in spaces with a multilayered identity and where this obviousness in the visual language lent the experience its polyphony.

In order to break boundaries of perceived identities within an institution, this social experiment was one of decentralising ownership of material and thought. We hoped to merely be the catalyst for eliciting ideas, neither prescribing or defining the flow nor dictating what happens next.

We aimed to explore non-hierarchical co-learning environments and to understand how the different typologies of those would consequently shape the identity of the learner.

The experiment was designed to exist outside the institute- physically and metaphorically. Without the restrictions of a set agenda and other institutional requirements, the safe spaces for each session were an attempt to encourage co-learning, encouraging equilibrium, dispelling hierarchies and to facilitate the act of learning itself to find one’s own passion.

Though conceived within a design institute, the experiment was not bound by the parameters or rationale of ‘popularly accepted notions of design’.
3.1. Setup
Many aspects of the experiment were born of the intuitive need to propagate a ‘not-a-teacher’ attitude exploring ways of learning through explorative experiences. With a deliberate attempt of responding to the immediate environment and being present in the moment, the nature of space for each session was uncharted.

In order to challenge the inherited colonial notions of absolute authority and destabilise the power which was inherently part of our institutional identities, the experiment would deliberately create the dichotomy of methodologies of a conventional colonial educational model, the west-adopted model of design education, and the western perception of design itself.

3.2. Plurality of Contexts
“Plurality is a natural innate trait of the Indian mind, else it would not have survived this long.”
(Dadhich, 2014, p. 39)

With multiplicity being a part of our identity and our daily landscape, we tried to stretch the interpretations of plurality at various levels, with the aim of seeing how these might shape the nature of co-learning.

1. Ownership of the Self | reflected in participation, experience, responsibility towards engaging and of being in charge of oneself
2. Polymorphism | to account for multiple shifting identities and therein challenging the comfort with alignment, provocation, perceived authority
3. Transparency | at every level possible of decision-making.
4. CO. | no singularities- of thought/ expression/ experience/ learning or participants.
5. Ambiguity and Fluidity | a space of discomfort within the unknown.
6. Indulging in Dichotomies | to create spectrums of learning and knowing beyond unilateral absolutes

3.2. The Places
One of the obvious pluralities of context for Power of Space were the physical locations selected to anchor each session. We drafted a list of polycentric spaces which could offer a variety of lenses of seeing— time, religion, historicity, coloniality, culture, behaviour, social interactions, politics, value and heritage to understand our own experiences and the inherent power of space.

Naresh Dadhich(2014), in his work The Indian Plural Mind describes India as, “very ancient and that equips it with an adaptability that can accommodate and absorb the difference and heterogeneity in its fold.” It has also, “had very strong interaction with the rest of the world through flourishing trade and business on one hand, and invasions and campaigns on the other.” (p. 40)

While the larger structure of the experiment was focused around understanding the nature of ‘spatial typologies’ around us through their language and poetics, the content itself was never limited to architecture. Beginning from investigating the systemic relationship of a place to its surroundings it would lead to larger conversations on justice, legality, social constructs to name a few. These polyphonic dialogues permeated the boundaries of knowledge and subjects, indulging any thread of thought stemming from the experience of the place.

In allowing our individual versions of experiencing and acclimatising to these places, we hoped to lead to a shared unraveling and understanding of our textured realities.

Keeping with the original setup, these locations were also curated on the basis of various degrees of contrast to each other, while including the in-betweens and those with deliberate blurred identities.

The list of places included
1. Art spaces: The India Art Fair 2019 and The Irregulars Art Fair
2. Built Central Delhi: From the Mughals to the British Imperial Capital
3. Benaras: Identity around religion, politics, myth, history to the present
4. Borderlands: Between India and Nepal, and India and Bangladesh

Our immediate environment, of Delhi³, itself offered the best playground to explore pluriverses with the co-existence of the multiplicity of truths in its identity. Delhi has never had one identity, one way of being or sole ownership. This multidimensionality of the city is evident at every turn— in its culture, religion, language, mannerisms, environment and story— filtering down to the microcosm of the institute’s location whose identity of function and placemaking is tied to space and temporal occupancy/ function. Much like the rest of the country, for whom diversity and shifting identities are part and parcel of the everyday ethos, experience and self.
“But where Delhi was unique was that, scattered all around the city, there were human ruins too. Somehow different areas of Delhi seemed to have been preserved intact in different centuries, even different millennia.” He further adds, “All the different ages of man were represented in the people of the city. Different millennia co-existed side by side. Minds set in different ages walked the same pavements, drank the same water, returned to the same dust.” (Dalrymple, William., 2005, p. 34)

While Delhi lent a multitude of spatial typologies, we also travelled to fringe spaces, borderlands and Benaras- with a very defined religious narrative for Hindus yet beyond myth, indulges multiple ways of being. Situated on the banks of the Ganga, the city from its ghats itself, at various levels, provides us with readings into its complex identity.

The following excerpt from “Banaras: CITY OF LIGHT” crisply describes the pluriversal nature of this city:

The comparison of the sacred structure and māhātmya of Banāras with that of Jerusalem, Mecca, or Peking is in many respects obvious to historians of religion; more significant, perhaps, is the historical layering of traditions, age after age, in these centers. As for its relation to other centers in the historical layering of traditions, age after age, in these centers. As for its relation to other centers in India, let it suffice to say that because of the polycentric nature of the Hindu imagination, the sacred structure and māhātmya of a place as important as Banāras are widely duplicated and serve, therefore, to reveal something fundamental about the nature of such sacred places in India generally. (Eck, Diana L., 1982, p. 15)

4. A Non-Manifesto for being Co-Conspirators

De-tooling is a word with many inferences. We defined de-tooling as the act of getting rid of the conventional colonial educational tools which have come to define the act and limits of learning. Through de-tooling the ways of learning, we hoped to encourage ownership of thought, knowledge and experience.

Since Power of space was not bound to the institute, we were able to transition from the act of ‘being educated’ to the act of learning without creating expectations or compulsions. Our approach exploited this idea of de-tooling to frame the learning experiences, purging ideas of attendance, or punctuality; deliverables; the “production of inferences made/ “knowledge”; “evaluation”, and of validation.

This created the scope for embracing vulnerability and humanising the interactions; of being co-conspirators over administrators or facilitators.

We set a clear non-manifesto for ourselves.
Leaving space for dissent and debate among all co-learners –
1. We’re all co-participants and co-owners.
2. There is no need for explanations or permissions.
3. We come because we want to be there.
4. We participate at our own will and comfort.
The only validation is from our own sensorial experiences and inquiry.

The act of de-tooling also led to more spaces of accidental learning and learning from each other’s knowledge banks. We acknowledge that for the de-tooling approach to be effective in spaces of
learning, each co-learner must respect the cumulation of the collective lived experiences. None of the participants arrive as empty vessels waiting to be filled with information, but rather bring a lifetime of insights and imbibed knowledge, which can be pooled together for richer ways of learning.

This fluidity opened spaces for those other than the 14 to also join freely, the sporadic co-conspirators. There were times we invited others to be a part of us, there were times when an invitation did not need to be extended, but the nature of space encouraged others to become part.

We had hoped to create an equitable learning space celebrating our passion for reading and understanding spaces. But we had also anticipated a lot of uneasiness to follow. The ambiguity of the learning space and the reliance on one’s self would create discomfort. In order to be fair, and endorse the idea of a simultaneous learner alongside all others, the two of us, as facilitators, created situations for ourselves to be as out of depth as any other conspirer, thus the unscripted nature of each session.

![Figure 3 Session 2 of Power of Space at Connaught Place, Central New Delhi. source: authors](image)

### 4.1. Being co-conspirators and Other Identities

Conspiracists are often mocked for their overzealous thinking. However what is overlooked is the shared and impassioned spirit of wanting to be an ally or accomplice. It is the common love for an idea which binds them together.
While not propagating conspiracy theories, the modes we explored encouraged spaces for spontaneity, dissolving the upkeep of identities and roles to just be seen as mischief makers. Conspiracy theory merely acted as a polemic to questioning accepted truths. By dismantling these intangible and invisible hierarchies through playfulness, teasing and humour, by taking liberties with each other but also being vulnerable; the possibility of a space to come together, to question, provoke and to not know, began to appear.

This equity in speculating without being held to answers and just wondering about ‘ifs and whys’— all of the identities had shapeshifted, with merely the want of being part of the power of space as the commoning factor, making us all co-conspirators.

At each of the spaces we explored, there were various versions of conspiring. Together. The collective empowered us to depend on each other when situations were adverse, and also count on each other to be the adverse.

At the India Art Fair, this ranged from being cynical make-believe curators to being small rebels occupying private-public spaces.

While exploring Central Delhi the collective act of owning public spaces to test theories gave the sense of security. It also furthered deconstructing the power play of two past capital cities and their role in making the culture of the present day capital and India by extension.
At the international borders, in Tanakpur (bordering Nepal) and Dawki (neighbouring Bangladesh), it was in indulging conspiracy theories and speculative fiction while observing border crossings leading to conversations on human trafficking, geo-politics among others. Both these fringe places offered very different experiences tracing back to India’s political relationship with the two countries Nepal and Bangladesh.

In Banaras it ranged from being romantic tourists to indulgent observers to literal experimenters to tempered anarchists to using the ethos of the city to create elaborate pranks.

5. **Learnings**

5.1. **Observations from the Experiment**

While our aim was to create a space for being co, we realised much of the onus of setting the tone and deliberation of equity rested on us as the facilitator. Despite a pilot session of unlearning such strong pre-conditions, we realised a repetition of some of these ideas and de-tooling was needed to sustain the core intent.

While an absolute de-tooling is far from possible, the reliance of education on tools can be drastically tempered. This is needed in the increasingly hyper-tooled world, where these tools are being confused for the evidence of learning.

The impromptu decision making and the fluidity of owning who we are, the experiment also loosened the power dynamics and structures of control within the group, in doing so, the spaces for indulging in
child-like spontaneity became apparent, allowing a shift from the educator-learner dynamic, to 14 co-conspirators, including us, the two authors of this paper.

Scoping “design”, the dialogues encouraged us to also introspect on what design means for each one and to contemplate the inherent power we as those who adopt the title of a “designer” have.

While some were co-conspirators temporarily, and were comforted by the company of “faculty” in such escapades. That unlearning would need more nurturing.

Equipping a learner could encourage finding or creating cruder, imperfect and spontaneous tools over those prescribed. Indulging in the want to know encouraged the acceptance of not knowing, creating more ownership of learning– the impassioned learner over the consumer of information.

The safety within the space rests on collectively establishing the accepted decorum for the group. However, a collective not based on mutual consensus but by acknowledging and addressing conflicts, discomforts and frictions. This could be accomplished within smaller groups of co-learners, who really get to know one another.

Further this model could be thought of as scalable through local/ micro-units like hives, rather than proportionately/ exponentially increasing group size.

5.2. Shapeshifting Identities
In the experience of being exposed to the world and ideas, challenging the sense of security and comfort; the co-learners all reacted differently. While for some the discomfort was far too great and felt disorienting much too early; for others it was part of an ongoing process. For us as well, while the content was familiar, in matters of experience we were as rooted to our conditioning, as uncomfortable as our fellow co-conspirators.

While together our identity was of co-conspirators, the non-structuring, led to many situations being created- across time, across spatiality and across agencies within the group. Within a spectrum of identities, some of the commonly observed ones, which each of us had adopted at one point or the other, were:

- Enablers (E): Acting as catalysts of action and thought.
- Initiators (I): Being the spark or the pull, and challenging inaction
- Agitators (A): The discomforted or deliberate antagonists to a collective status quo to push the boundaries of thought.
- Stabilizers (S): The grounded ones or the regulators with their sense of responsibility and temperance. This identity was common and recurring, as well as the most comforting one- the loyalty to the nurtured one of being a student or facilitator, and the sense of duty which was inherently tied to it.
- Observers (O): The sponge. Being very present and aware, but absorbing more than reacting or responding. The silence of reflection would then propagate another identity.
- The Esoteric (T): The tangential which has no direct correlation to the present, but metaphorically expands the state of being and knowing.
- The Anomalies (N) | Sporadic conspirators*: While this is not an identity in itself and the bearer fell into one of the others, it was a title we created for the moments in which others joined the
group. This was for the purpose of mapping the nature of space.

*Note: However intermittent and irregular, the authors chose to not disclude the sporadic conspirators from the mapping, as it revealed the functions of the learning spaces and were a reflection on the power of space. Our larger intent of creating non-hierarchical learning spaces and an act of de-tooling itself was reflected in these experiences. The entry/exit for a co-learner was not pre-decided; the limits of the learning was not pre-defined and anyone who wanted to be there was not left out.

Shifting identities allowed varying degrees of comfort, fluidity and influence for each person. What was most importantly observed was the nature of space it created for meaning-making as each conspirator took ownership of their identity in the moment, but flowed into another version at another time.

As we mapped each of these 14 shifting positionalities against our dismantling processes of Being Co-conspirators, Detooling and Pluralism of Context, we realized the space of exchange, facilitation and discourse would be anchored differently in each.

We mapped the shifting and fluid nature of these agencies- reflecting on how the co-conspirators chose to anchor ourselves in different situations—creating a dynamic elastic fabric and discovering our individual polymorphic agencies.

6. Mandrakes and Murmurs

6.1. Polymorphic Co-Learners

Most often the common love for the context, content, approach is what attracted any existing or potential co-conspirator. There was a possibility for a range of topics and themes to be incorporated into any session.

While the content was merely a vehicle for the approach of the experiment itself, the co-conspirator as
a means to establish a purpose for each one, lent a sense of genuine passion and camaraderie between us making interactions more fluid and democratic.

Through blurring of identities, blending modalities, opening up multitudes in contexts and being, educators can acknowledge and embrace plurality that has always been inherent to the fabric of nature, thus in turn encouraging learners to own theirs.

For both the “educators” and “students” when a fluid existence of polymorphism is encouraged, no identity needs to be kept out by “designed” conventions. It is there, in the microcosms of simultaneous learning that the inherent childlike curiosity and impassioned learner, often subdued by the seriousness of absolutes of ‘must be’ or ‘should be’, find a place to appear.

Educating thus, was and continues to be a political act.
And every learner, learned, educator, facilitator— an actor within this ethos.

For learning is not confined to the times of learning, but the space, the perspectives, the safety of its openness yet confidentiality and non-judgement, through the indulgence of its passions.

6.2. Conclusion
While navigating these parallel investigations, we were able to understand that acknowledging space—whether experienced, created or lent, whether physical or social— is transformative, persuasive and non-static. It dictates behaviour, thought, & action with the ability to skew societal dynamics. It creates and disbands co-conspirators.

The journeys of each, including ours, reminded us of J.K. Rowling’s rendition of the Mandrake, and became the unofficial mascot for our experiment. A fantastical human-like plant, they cry piercingly when crudely exposed to the elements, and rest only when resettled.

The sudden exposure to new ideas, challenging and displacing familiar knowledge, and navigating uncertainties mirrored the act of pulling a young screaming-kicking mandrake out from its safe space, and repotting it.

For a few, the non-committal nature of the elective was disorienting. But in the long run it has encouraged us to adopt a lighter-footed, and more critical yet open-ended approach to inquiry.

And perhaps the most promising was the identity of being co-conspirators where the process was co-owned by all of us, and some decided to take it ahead and expand the tribe, adding their own methods to the form.

The mandrakes remain as our inner identities, and the possibilities of such an experiment incite us to ask— Could such modalities of learning be applied at scale through multiple small units? Shifting to slower and paced thinking; juxtaposing the inhabited with the experience of being? Of the porosity of thought overflowing into one another not limited by dimensions of knowledge?

Our exploration from an educational environment to a larger design community is to speculate: What if irrespective of age and blurring the boundaries of learning, we designers were encouraged to embrace our vulnerability- of provoking, of the unknown, of play and light heartedness? What if we were emboldened to find agencies over identities, and create polymorphs?
Figure 7 There was a varying range of discomfort, disbalance and emotional reaction to the nature of content, the themes of conversation and the equity in the learning space. source: sketch by Prachi Joshi

7. Footnotes

1”Epistemic disobedience leads us to decolonial options as a set of projects that have in common the effects experienced by all the inhabitants of the globe that were at the receiving end of global designs to colonize the economy (appropriation of land and natural resources), authority (management by the Monarch, the State, or the Church), and police and military enforcement (coloniality of power), to colonize knowledges (languages, categories of thoughts, belief systems, etc.) and beings (subjectivity).” (Mignolo, 2011)

2“Freire defined dialogue as “the encounter between [humans], mediated by the world, in order to name the world.” (Bartlette, 2005, pg 346)

3Delhi: This region has seen the reign of more than seven kingdoms, been the new imperial capital for the British Raj, has become the adopted home for many refugees across borders- whether it was during the time of India and Pakistan’s partition, the annexation of Tibet, or the independence of Bangladesh; and continues to be the locus for migrants from within the country and across the world- looking for livelihood and opportunities.

4Co-conspirators as accomplices against colonised educational tools, and allies in creating spaces for equitable being. Co-conspirators as an act of play/ light-hearted questioning to push layers of thought and meaning making. Being co-conspirators and of everyone adopting this identity.

5The spaces here were our shifting identities themselves- the nature of blurred boundaries.

6Action here is not literal physical engagement, but rather the act of being. At most points the content and the experiences were not different from each other.

7”Mandrake, or Mandragora, is a powerful restorative. It is used to return people who have been transfigured or cursed to their original state.” and ”The cry of the Mandrake is fatal to anyone who hears it.” -a discussion during Herbology between Pomona Sprout and Hermione Granger; as written by Rowling (1998)
8. References

Balaram, S. (2005). Design Pedagogy in India: A Perspective. Design Issues, 21(4), 11–22. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25224015
Balaram, S. (2009). Design in India: The Importance of the Ahmedabad Declaration. Design Issues, 25(4), 54–79. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20627830
Bartlett, L. (2005). Dialogue, Knowledge, and Teacher-Student Relations: Freirean Pedagogy in Theory and Practice. Comparative Education Review, 49(3), 344-364. doi: 10.1086/430261
Bass, R., & Good, J. (2004). Educare and Educere: Is a Balance Possible in the Educational System?. The Educational Forum, 68(2), 161-168. doi: 10.1080/00131720408984623
Chatterjee, A. (2005). Design in India: The Experience of Transition. Design Issues, 21(4), 4-10. Retrieved August 9, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/25224014
Chatterjee, A. (2019, September 25). Design education in India: An experiment in modernity. Retrieved 15 August 2021, from https://www.stirworld.com/think-opinions-design-education-in-india-an-experiment-in-modernity
Dadhich, N. (2014). The Indian Plural Mind. Economic and Political Weekly, 49(10), 39–46. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24479228
Dalrymple, W., & Fraser, O. (2005). City of Djinns: a year of Delhi (pp. 34). Harper Perennial.
Eck, D. L. (1982). Banāras: city of light (pp.15-16). Princeton University Press.
Kumar, K. (1988). Origins of India’s “Textbook Culture.” Comparative Education Review, 32(4), 452–464. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1188251
Kumar, K. (2016). Politics of education in colonial India. Routledge India. (pp.4)
Mignolo, W. (2011). Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto. TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World, 1(2). https://doi.org/10.5070/t412011807
Rowling, J. K. (1998). Harry Potter And The Chamber Of Secrets. Bloomsbury Publishing.

About the Authors:

**Mudita Pasari** As a designer, I largely work with educational systems and designed visual interventions through decentralized museological experiences. Working with various educational organisations, I am often involved in developing pedagogical models and effective mediums of awareness, action and learning. My ongoing research is around breaking inherited dichotomies, and pushing the boundaries of what we assume is known, making space for a true multidimensional existence. I am currently the Associate Dean of Academics at an upcoming design school in India called The Design Village, where a manifestation independent pedagogical model is encouraged and practiced. I run a small design studio, Kiviuq, which has a practice embedded in advocating bio diverse habitation, formed at the cross-section of human interaction and other ecological components in our immediate environments. My formal undergraduate training is in Exhibition + Spatial Design from the National Institute of Design, India and my Masters is in Art + Design Education from the Rhode Island School of Design, RI.

**Prachi Joshi** I am a designer and provocateur, whose practice and inquiry and sense of self have been shaped by deconstructing identity politics sustained through different systems of power (knowledge, space and medium) and meaning-making. Having lived in multiple geographies and cultures, I am irked by the concept of ‘universality’— implying a colonial hangover, and rigid, singular narratives. Through my work and social experiences, I explore modes of interaction and critical discourse to challenge these ideas and create places of equity and polyphony. I hold a Master’s in Narrative Environments from Central Saint Martins, London; and a self-styled master’s in polemics from the school of speculative life.