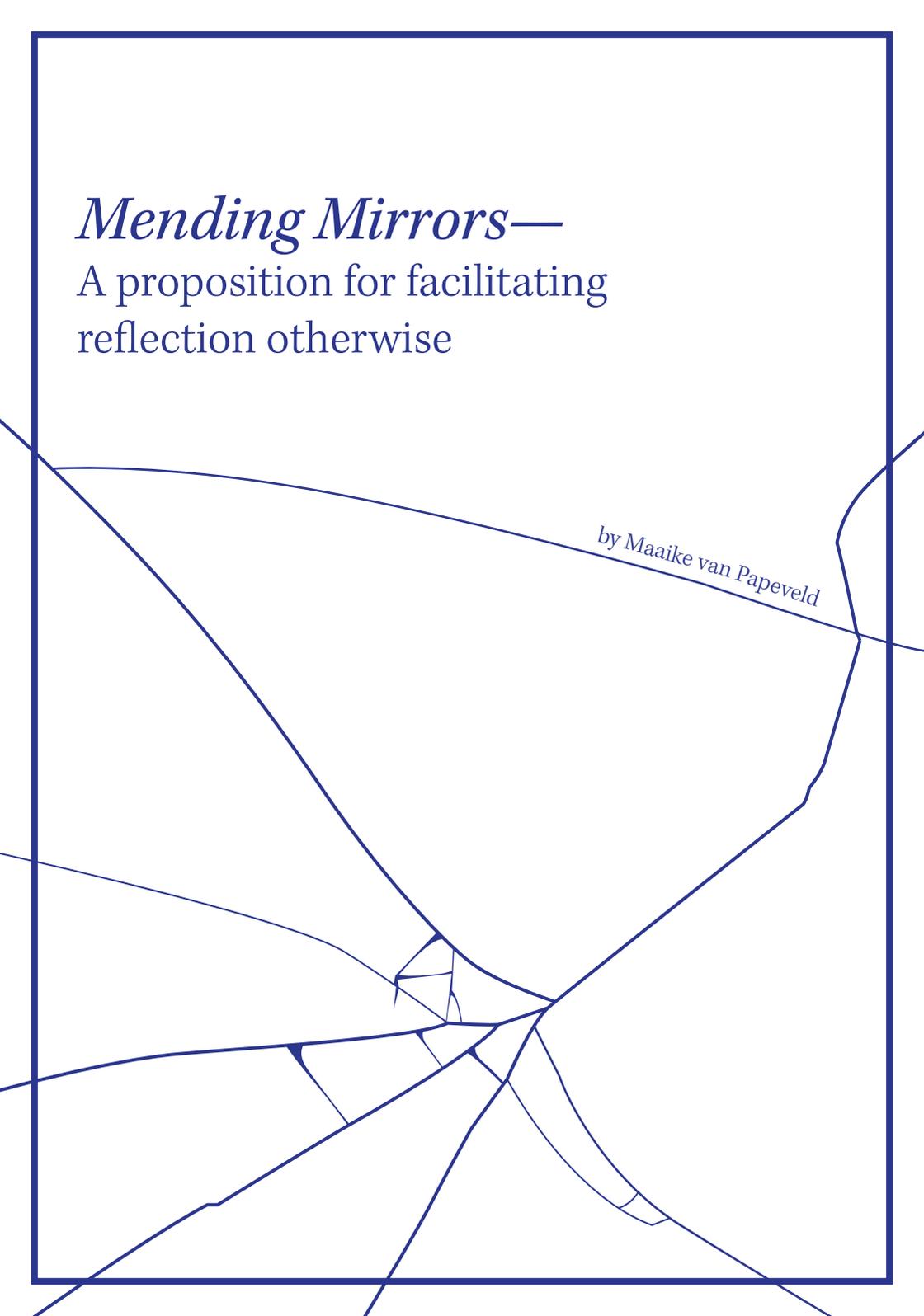# *Mending Mirrors—*
A proposition for facilitating reflection otherwise

by Maaike van Papeveld

Mending Mirrors:
A proposition for facilitating
reflection otherwise

Contents

Introduction

Mending mirrors:
A proposition for facilitating
reflection otherwise

Over the past two decades, reflection has become an immensely popular term across international educational contexts. This is not surprising because it seems to have a lot to offer: it contributes to personal and professional development, improves our ability to respond to practical challenges and deal with complexity, it helps us challenge our assumptions and expose inherent bias—and the list goes on. Some argue that the self-knowledge generated through reflection can lead to personal transformation (Mezirow, 1990) and emancipation (Habermas, 1972)—effects that may not only benefit individuals but even society at large.

In the face of today's issues that are riddled with complexity—and that urgently require well-considered decisions and meaningful actions—reflection seems to be a desirable practice. Rogers (2001), shares this sentiment, as he writes:

> Reflective practices that are intellectually credible can promote resiliency and resourcefulness in the face of life's dynamic challenges and encourage habits of individual and collective attention and analysis that can sustain higher education as it works to address the problems of society. (pp. 55)

However, there appears to be a discrepancy between the somewhat utopic intentions echoed across the literature, and its applications in higher education. Here, we all too often encounter an uncritically adopted, watered-down version of reflection that seems to have lost touch with its theoretical roots. Fook, White and Gardner (2006) attribute this phenomenon to the widespread popularity of the term. They write:

> It may be that the very popularity of critical reflection is also its undoing: it becomes difficult to develop systematically the quality and effectiveness of reflection in a climate where its meaning and value are assumed and therefore relatively unarticulated and unjustified. Perhaps also the very educational culture [...] works against its best interests by not also subjecting it to rigorous debate, systematic investigation

> [...], and informed awareness of its complexities, differences and shared understandings. (pp. 20)

Recounting my own experiences with reflection as a student and as a teacher, I have come to the conclusion that reflection has the potential to contribute greatly both to the quality of higher education and to students' lives, but it must have broken somewhere along the way of its integration into higher education. Here, in my view, reflection may be experienced by students as emotionally straining, arbitrary, intrinsically tied to assessment, and isolated from the relational reality of learning. In order to valorise its potential within higher education, the conscious development of a knowledge base and pedagogy for reflection is crucial. This research project aims to offer a starting point for doing so.

How this research came about

My curiosity about reflection stems from the idea that—to deal with today's complex issues (or *wicked problems*)—we need to develop new and critically conscious practices and approaches. I initially started exploring this

idea within the field of (product) design, in which I am formally trained. Then and there, my aim was to find a way to assist young designers in developing hybrid, socially engaged practices through research, reflection, and experimentation. My hope was that these practices would expand the scope of socially engaged design by, for example, inviting practitioners to think beyond *raising awareness* (a common ambition within art and design), or to rethink the kinds of audiences they engage and how.

I developed a project called *Designing Differently: A workbook for the reflective practitioner*. The workbook and toolkit aimed to offer young designers the tools to critically develop their own socially engaged practices. A little while later, I started to experiment with ways to translate this idea into educational activities. This is when I discovered that *reflection* was central to the process I tried to facilitate. But trying to teach it, reflection felt like a 'black box': the more I tried to wrap my head around the definition of the term and the right methods to use, the more I became tangled in the web of theories, concepts and models that constitutes its theory base.

In the meantime, I became more involved in the Rotterdam Arts and Sciences Lab (RASL), where I started teaching in the minor programme *Re-imagining Tomorrow Through Arts and Sciences* (also referred to as 'the RASL minor'). Through different educational programmes and initiatives, RASL aims to facilitate cross-fertilisation between the arts and sciences to address complex concerns. To do so, it connects three institutions in Rotterdam: the academy for visual arts and design, Willem de Kooning Academy (Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences); the academy for performance arts, Codarts Rotterdam; and the Erasmus universities, Erasmus University Rotterdam, and Erasmus University College.

Here, I learnt that complex matters of concerns (or *wicked problems*) ask for new and different approaches that are born in the productive tensions between disciplines across the (performing) arts, design, humanities, engineering, and applied sciences. In the RASL minor, we like to refer to this collaborative process as *undisciplinary*. The undisciplinary in-between space challenges students (and teachers, not to forget) to wander outside of

the safe spaces of their own disciplines. This is understandably an uncomfortable process that requires unlearning, the challenging of assumptions and values, and a constant process of repositioning. Here too, reflection comes in handy.

In the context of the master's programme *Education in arts* at Piet Zwart Institute Rotterdam, I started to try to get a grip on the meaning of reflection. This is when I became increasingly aware of its dark side. Looking back at my own encounters with reflection as a student at Willem de Kooning Academy, I concluded that there is a gap between the acclaimed benefits of reflection and the way in which it is experienced by students—including myself. I, for example, experienced reflection as a process that was isolating, emotionally straining and arbitrary, often relating to assessment of some kind.

Based on these experiences and initial research, I developed a course called *Reflecting Otherwise* that took place as part of RASL's minor between September 2022 and January 2023. The term *reflecting otherwise* is a good demonstration of my

reflex to disengage from and resist certain common practices of reflection. I positioned myself halfway in and halfway out: interested in practicing reflection, but not of this kind. With the *Reflecting Otherwise* course, I aimed to explore further how students experienced reflection and how—when given the right space and freedom—they would practice it otherwise.

Facilitating the course has been eye opening in many ways, and I am immensely grateful to the critical students who generously shared their thoughts with me. Chapter 2 offers a detailed description of the lessons I learned from them. Taking some distance to reflect on my findings and proceeding with my literature review (Chapter 1), I came to terms with the frustration and resistance that fuelled the first part of the research. Inspired by RASL minor guest lecturer Sanne Koevoets' workshop about visible mending, I adjusted my mindset towards reflection.

Instead of criticising and refusing I chose to stay with the trouble in the Harawayan sense; to work with (the shards of) what we have in a reparative way. This led me to the research

question: 'how can we repair reflection in higher education?'

The aims of this research

With this publication I hope to empower and inspire other educators to repair reflection in their educational practices. I see it as a conversation starter, and hope that through engaging in these conversations and by sharing what I have learned about (facilitating) reflection so far, I can contribute to the development of a pedagogy for reflection that can be applied in contexts across different higher education.

To delineate the aims of this research project, I think it is useful to briefly expand the notions *repair* and *higher education:*

Repair
I adopt a somewhat humble understanding of repair here. The aim is not to restore reflection to its full glory, but rather to mend it—slowly and carefully—through practice. Reflection, in my view, requires a type of repair that remains visible: that acknowledges its brokenness

instead of hiding or glorifying it. The problematic mechanisms of reflection are so engrained in our minds and systems, that they have become automatic for many students and teachers. Before being able to repair reflection, we must first notice it is *broken* and take stock of its cracks.

This research does not aim to perform this repair, as this ambition would be somewhat unrealistic. Instead, it compiles knowledge and pedagogical perspectives that may inform and inspire repair—that help us make the first stitch so to say. And hopefully, that first stitch leads to another. I speak of 'us' here and of 'we' in my research question because I see this mending as a collective kind of labour that is shared among educators and nurtured by exchange. The format of the workbook (Chapter 3) was designed to support this exchange. In the Methodology chapter, I will further clarify my reparative approach to this research.

Higher education
This research speaks of 'reflection in higher education', which, I realise, is a rather broad and ambiguous category. I am resisting

to specify the disciplinary context of this research further (such as education in arts, or scientific education), because the context of the research—my teaching practice at RASL—brings together different disciplines, and because literature on reflection is dispersed across fields and contexts. I also believe that most—if not all—higher education curricula include some form of reflection and think that it is worthwhile to consider the points made in this research. It may possibly even be of value in other contexts too (e.g., museum education, secondary education, vocational education, informal education, etc.).

It is good to acknowledge that this research is constructed around my experiences with higher education, both as a student and as a teacher. I realise that this view is partial and limited, and I am hoping to expand it through conversations with colleague educators and by engaging in educational activities elsewhere. Due to this limitation, it can be that the insights shared in this research may be less applicable to some contexts.

The structure of this research

In response to the research question: 'how can we repair reflection in higher education?', this publication offers perspectives on and questions for facilitating reflection otherwise. It is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 aims to disambiguate the fuzzy notion of reflection and takes stock of its theoretical foundations. It offers comprehensive summaries of the works of Dewey, Habermas, Schön and Kolb, and clarifies different variations of reflection, such as *critical reflection*, *reflexivity*, and *self-reflection*. It also interprets the outcomes of these reflective processes, and problematises the integration of reflection in higher education.

Chapter 2 expands on the idea that reflection in higher education is broken. Departing from the insights I gained by facilitating the *Reflecting Otherwise* course, I identify four *cracks* or pitfalls, and elaborate them in

detailed analyses that combine theory and reflections on practice. The aim of this analysis is to provide focus points that may be useful in imagining how reflection may be repaired.

Chapter 3—the workbook—offers perspectives on facilitating reflection otherwise. This chapter contains three parts: *preparing, facilitating*, and *assessing*. Each part includes perspectives on the aspect at hand, as well as questions that aim to help you consider how you might address them in your own teaching practice.

The Methodology chapter further elaborates my approach to the research activities and how they are described in this document.

Methodology

Methodology:
A reparative approach

This research project combines practical and theoretical research in response to the question: 'how can we repair reflection in higher education?' The research starts with a review of the theoretical foundations of reflection. Following is an extensive analysis of the practical research, in which light is shed on common issues or pitfalls in reflection. Finally, Chapter 3 makes a proposition for facilitating reflection otherwise, and is materialised through a workbook. This chapter briefly introduces the methodological aspects of the main research activities.

Theory/practice

This practice-led research project integrates theory and practice with the aim of contributing to the knowledge base of reflection in higher education. The practical research and the reflection thereupon are the main source of information used for the identification of the problems this research

aims to address (Chapter 2). The literature review (Chapter 1) creates a theoretical foundation that allows me to offer well-considered perspectives on how these problems may be addressed in practice (Chapter 3).

I see this research as an iterative process that will continue far beyond the timeframe of this master's programme. Reflection is elementary to the research process: reflections on theory inform practical interventions, and the reflection on practice contribute to the further development of a practice theory. Reflection thus bridges theory and practice much like it does in *praxis* or in *reflective practice*.

As you can see in the visualisation on the right, the research so far involved two iterations: based on the findings of the main study, I developed a brief case study that took place in the RASL Module. The conclusions of this case study, as well as the other perspectives included in Chapter 3, will in turn be used to develop future iterations, for example for the RASL Minor of 2023-2024.

Preparatory research

09 '21

structure main study

Main study: Reflecting Otherwise

reflections on practice

research proposal

09 '22

11 '22

theoretical underpinnings

Literature Review

Iteration 1: Workshop RASL Module

reflections on practice

04 '23

C2

06 '23

case study

C3

chapter

C1

Thesis Mending Mirrors

Future iterations

C = chapter
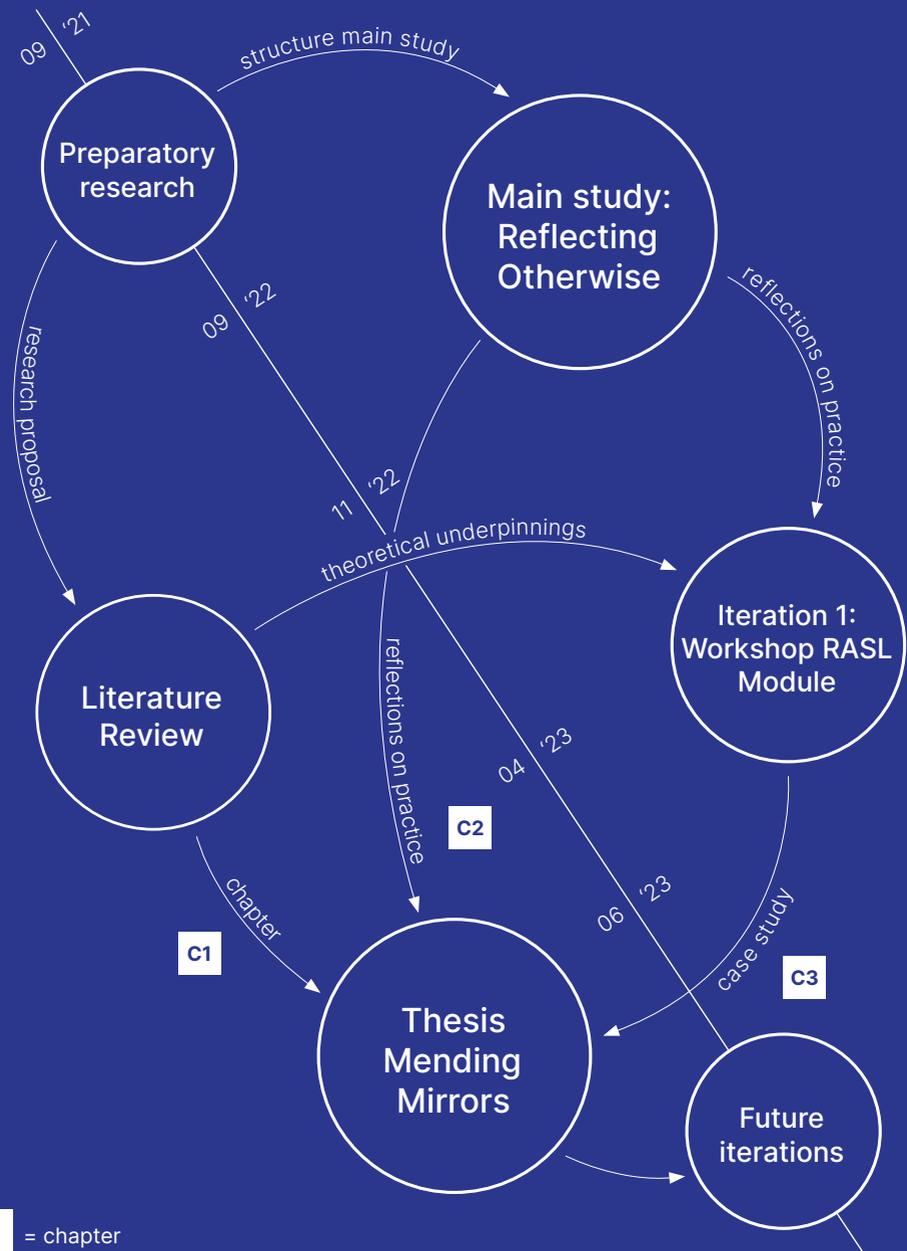
Context of the practical research

All practical components of this research project took place within the context of my teaching practice at RASL. The activities were embedded in the *RASL minor* and the *RASL dual degree module*. This section briefly introduces the two programmes.

RASL minor
The main study took place in RASL's minor programme called *Re-imagining tomorrow through arts and sciences*. This 20-week programme brings together students from the partner institutions, as well as TU Delft and Leiden University. Students work in mixed groups on a collaborative research project with the aim of learning how to learn differently together.

This was the fourth edition of the minor, which was first offered in 2019. Tamara de Groot and I have been coordinating the programme together since 2021 and taught the programme alongside our talented colleagues Claire Tio, Josué Amador, Irina Shapiro and Juliano Abramovay. A total of 47 students participated in the course.

The group was composed as following:

- 19 EUR/EUC (Liberal Arts and Sciences, Psychology, Management of International Social Challenges, etc.)
- 18 WdKA (Spatial Design, Graphic Design, Fine Art, etc.)
- 5 TU Delft (Computer Science and Industrial Design Engineering)
- 3 Codarts (Composition and DM Performance)
- 1 University of Leiden student (Political Science)

RASL dual degree module
The second iteration of the practical research—a brief case study—took place in the RASL Dual Degree Module, a programme called *In-between spaces of learning*. This course is designed for WdKA students that participate in RASL's Dual Degree track, which allows them to obtain two bachelor diplomas within five years: one in the arts and one in the sciences. The aim of the module is to help students combine the artistic and scientific knowledge they gained over the years. The course was offered by Bien van der Voorden, Martijn van Berkum, Dieuwke Boersma and me.

In the first week of the RASL dual degree module, I hosted a short workshop that I will bring into this research as a case study (see Chapter 3). Nine students participated in the workshop. They are all RASL Dual Degree students, following bachelors in e.g., Graphic Design, Advertising, Fine Art, Transformation Design, etc., as well as International Bachelor Arts and Culture Studies, Sociology, Political Science & International Relations, etc.

Because the case study was only a small research activity, I will not describe it in detail here. See Chapter 3 for more information.

Both programmes welcomed international students.

Main study: Reflecting otherwise

The main study of this research project, the *Reflecting Otherwise* course, was a six-session workshop series that took place in the RASL minor. The aim of the study was to understand how students experienced reflection, and how—when given the space and freedom— they would practice it otherwise. The weekly

sessions lasted two and a half hours each and were repeated twice to accommodate the large group. The content of the sessions will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

The course was concluded by three formal assignments. The first and second assignment required students to write—or otherwise create—an (otherwise) reflection on their experiences of the minor. The third assignment was to write—or otherwise create—a short statement in which the student expressed their view on *reflecting otherwise* and its role in their practice. The grades for these assignments made up students' individual grades for the minor.

Facilitating the course offered a large amount of input, which I documented in the following ways:

- I recorded and transcribed parts of conversations.
- I photographed some of the work created by students during the workshops.
- I archived and indexed the reflection assignments submitted by students.
- I kept a journal in which I documented

anecdotes, thoughts, impressions, and reflections at the end of each teaching day.

I reserved a period of about two months for reflection on and processing the insights gained during the study. I started by reading the material several times to familiarise myself with the content. Then, I sorted selections of the material and identified commonly appearing themes or topics. This allowed me to see the relationships between the selected material and formulate four main problems, later referred to as *cracks*. Finally, I created a coherent narrative, analysing the findings and relating them to prior experiences and theoretical insights.

Reparative approach

The term *repair* used in this research can be interpreted as an aim, an attitude, and a method. I find it useful here to briefly unpack Sedgwick's notion of *reparative reading*.

In her book *Touching Feeling* (2003), Sedgwick compares two reading positions: *paranoid*

reading and *reparative reading*. *Paranoid reading* is a kind of reading that is defensive and suspicious. It seeks to critique and debunk thoughts and theories to defend its acclaimed status quo. *Reparative reading,* on the other hand, is concerned with "the seeking of pleasure" and makes it possible to "unpack the local, contingent relations between any given piece of knowledge and its narrative/ epistemological entailments for the seeker, knower or teller" (pp. 124). In reparative reading, one chooses not to focus on critiquing an idea or a text, but rather aims to interpret it in such a way that it can be applied productively within their own context.

Good to add here, is that midway through the research—shortly after undertaking the main study—I switched from a paranoid to a reparative mindset. The approach to the *Reflecting Otherwise* course is a good demonstration of the suspicious motive I started this research with; the course was motivated by feelings of resistance and frustration with reflection, attitudes that did not prove very helpful in educational practice. I was too busy discussing what reflection should and should not be, that I lost track of what

really mattered: developing fruitful alternatives.

In that spirit, I chose to return to the foundational theories of reflection (Chapter 1). Reading them reparatively, I can see how they might inform a new pedagogy for facilitating reflection. In Chapter 2 I will take stock of the problems, pitfalls or *cracks* present in reflection in higher education. My intention here is to approach this chapter in a generative rather than a critical way. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the repairing of reflection and offers perspectives and questions that might inform a reparative approach to facilitating reflection.

Positioning

A brief positioning statement might be helpful to understand the choices made throughout the research project. As I wrote before, I am formally trained as a product designer but operate within an undisciplinary space within my teaching practice. So far, I have resisted placing myself within a category but my participation in the master's *Education in arts* has challenged me to revisit this attitude. If

my work was not at least to some extent to be considered artistic, I probably would not be participating in this particular programme. This got me wondering: where then is the 'art' in my practice?

Reflecting on this question throughout different stages of my research together with my supervisors, Marek van de Watering and Ingrid Commandeur, I have been able to better understand my position as a practitioner. I would label this position something along the lines of a *designing educator*. Design, to me, is not only a medium but also an attitude. I use design as a means to create compelling educational experiences—through well-considered and visually attractive prompts, tools, materials, and assignments. My designerly attitude leads to a constant urge to somehow make my research practically applicable and useful to others. The workbook, Chapter 3, is the result of this.

The decision to address this research to colleague educators seemed to be a logical step in the research. Throughout the process, it became clear to me that colleagues were facing similar dilemmas when facilitating

reflection in their education, but neither had the time nor the resources to investigate them in depth. Sharing the insights of this research with them, and inviting them to share theirs, seems to be a useful step.

It is good to add here, that my educational practice only started to unfold a few years ago. In a way, being a young educator is an advantage because having been a bachelor student myself not too long ago, I can empathise better with the experiences and feelings of my students. On the other hand, I do realise that I am in no way ready to offer concrete answers or advice on how to facilitate reflection otherwise. I see this research as a starting point or an invitation to collectively think and talk about what repairing reflection might entail.

Chapter 1

First things first:
An attempt at understanding reflection

Introduction

Over the past decades, reflection has gained popularity in different professional fields and national contexts (Fook, et. al., 2006; Van Seggelen – Damen et al., 2017). A vast body of literature developed across disciplines, resulting in a range of (sometimes contrasting) perspectives on the term. Consequently, the concept has become rather *fuzzy*; reflection is understood and practiced in disparate ways. Different variations of reflection have emerged, such as *critical reflection, reflexivity,* and *self-reflection*. Each of these notions originate from specific theoretical traditions and contexts, yet they are often used interchangeably or simply referred to as 'reflection'. In short: reflection has become a container concept, making it difficult to get a grip on what it really means.

This chapter aims to disambiguate reflection and its variations through a brief review of relevant literature. It also zooms in on the outcomes of reflection and on its applications

within higher education. The literature review aims to be brief and should not be regarded as exhaustive. For example, the myriad of available models and methods used in practice, are left out of consideration for now.

Foundational theories

The concept of reflection is nothing new. In fact, some authors trace it all the way back to the great thinkers of ancient times, such as Plato and Socrates (e.g. Prasko, et al., 2012; Van Seggelen – Damen, et al., 2017; Lilienfeld & Basterfield, 2020). The more recent surge of interest in reflection—and consequently, the development of a vast body of literature—is commonly attributed to the works of Dewey, Habermas, Schön and Kolb. This section briefly summarises the main ideas presented in these works.

Dewey
In his book *How we think* (1910), Dewey elaborates reflection as a specific form of thinking that he defines as the "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the

light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 6). In other words: reflection is the questioning of (the grounds of) held beliefs and assumed knowledge.

In Dewey's view, reflective thinking is triggered by a "state of perplexity, hesitation or doubt" and involves an active process of investigation by which further facts regarding the beliefs are brought to light (p. 9). This process requires the learner to make connections between memories and new observations (p. 10). He sees this as a continuous process that enables individual (and eventually societal) progress, one that is social in nature and often happens in interaction with others (Rodgers, 2002, pp. 845).

Habermas
Habermas sees (self-)reflection as a movement of emancipation (Habermas, 1972, p. 212). He later writes:

> The experience of reflection articulates itself substantially in the concept of a self-formative process. Methodically, it leads to a standpoint from which the identity of reason with the will to

reason freely arises. In self-reflection, knowledge for the sake of knowledge comes to coincide with the interest in autonomy and responsibility (Mündigkeit). For the pursuit of reflection knows itself as a movement of emancipation. (p. 197-198)

His work *Knowledge and human interests* (1972) is concerned with the different processes by which particular forms of knowledge are produced. He speaks of *knowledge constitutive interest*: "the nature of the knowledge man has selected to adopt or the nature of the knowledge that human beings, by the reason of their human condition, have been motivated to generate" (Moon, 1999, p. 13). He distinguishes three interests: t*echnical, practical,* and *emancipatory*.

In Habermas' view, positivist research methods (associated with the *technical knowledge constitutive interests*) are not adequate in the social sciences because the process of knowledge production is always subjectively influenced and should therefore be continuously exposed to critical evaluation (Moon, 1999, p. 14). This process of evaluation is key to the *emancipatory interests*, in which

knowledge is produced through "critical or evaluative modes of thought and enquiry" with the aim of "understand[ing] the self, the human condition and self in the human context" (Moon, 1999, p. 14).

There is a lot more to learn and write about reflection in Habermas' extensive (and complex) body of work, such as how exactly reflection is used to challenge assumptions, ideologies and power-structures, and its applications in discourse ethics and deliberative democracy.

Schön
The work of Schön played a major role in the development of reflection for professional development. In his book *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action* (1983), Schön elaborates the relationship between professional knowledge and practice, arguing that a good degree of artistry is needed to articulate the connections between theory and practice. Here he emphasizes that professional knowledge (or 'practice theory') can be constructed not only through the consumption of theory (that is, adhering to 'objective' scientific knowledge), but also

through an individual's reflection on practice (Fook & Askeland, 2006, pp. 40).

In his model for reflective practice, Schön distinguishes two reflective processes: *reflection-on-action* and *reflection-in-action*. *Reflection-on-action* is a kind of reflection that happens after the act and opts to make sense out of an experience in order to learn from it. *Reflection-in-action* is the kind of responsive reflection that happens in practice, one that is influenced by (tacit) knowledge and prior experiences. Ideally, these two modes should interact (Thompson & Thompson, 2018, p. 27-28). Reflective practice also involves exposing the gap between the theory we aim to enact and the theory we are actually enacting, and changing one's theory or practice accordingly (Fook & Askeland, 2006, p. 41).

Kolb
Kolb incorporates reflection in his model for experiential learning. *In his book* Experiential learning: *Experience as the source of learning and development* (1984) Kolb poses that new knowledge, skills and attitudes are distilled from experience through an interplay of four modes or phases: 1) concrete

experience, 2) reflective observation, 3) abstract conceptualisation, and 4) active experimentation (Kolb, 1984, p. 30). Together, these phases form a cyclical process.

Reflection is thus described as being part of the process of learning from experience, rather than a separate activity. However, Kolb does not expand on what exactly reflection means and how it is done, but this task is picked up in more recent literature on experiential learning and action research.

Based on these theoretical perspectives, we could conclude that reflection is commonly understood as *challenging assumptions and held beliefs* or as *learning from our actions and experiences*. The former may also be associated with critical reflection, which I will expand in the next section.

Variations on reflection

In the following section, we will briefly look into three different variations on reflection: *critical reflection, reflexivity*, and *self-reflection*. These terms are often used interchangeably, or simply referred to as 'reflection', leading to the further dilution of its meaning. Although it is difficult to untangle the different variations of reflection (they overlap to a great extent), this section opts to distinguish them as clearly as possible and work towards a general understanding of each variation. The visualisation on the right is an attempt at clarifying the overlap of the diffent terms, and maps associated concepts encountered in the literature.

praxis
(critically) reflective practice
Challenging assumptions
Challenging assumptions, reflecting through the lens of critical theory

transformative learning
action research
Questioning paradigms and technologies of power

Critical Reflection

challenging assumptions and beliefs; learning from/through experiences

Reflection

Reflexivity

Situating ourselves and our knowledge
positionality
situatedness

experiential learning

Evaluative

Self-Reflection

Analysing our feelings, experiences, and identity

The 'self' as object for reflection

introspection
meta-cognition

Critical reflection
The terms reflection and critical reflection are perhaps used interchangeably most often. Considering the critical nature of the foundational theories discussed here, this is not surprising. For the sake of accuracy, it may be useful to articulate the differences between the two. What makes reflection *critical*, is a difference in emphasis or aim: "critical reflection involves social and political analyses which enable transformative changes, whereas reflection may remain at the level of relatively undisruptive changes in techniques or superficial thinking" (Fook, et. al. 2006. pp. 9).

In the context of transformative learning, Mezirow (1990) makes a clear distinction between reflection and critical reflection. He posits that unlike reflection, critical reflection is not about analysing the "*how* or *how-to* of action", but rather with the "*why*" (p. 13). This process involves "becoming critically aware of our own presuppositions" by "challenging our established and habitual patterns of expectation [and] the meaning perspectives with which we have made sense out of our encounters with the world, others, and ourselves" (p. 13).

According to Mezirow, critical reflection can lead to transformative learning or "perspective transformation", and possibly even to societal transformation or paradigm shift. He writes: "perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 15).

Fook and Askeland (2006) see critical reflection as "reflect[ing] through the lens of critical theory" (pp. 41). Critical theory, here, is broadly defined as "social theories that challenge the positivistic understanding of the world and the society" (pp. 42). This includes traditional critical theory as well as contemporary theories such as posthumanism and feminist theory. The authors include Habermas' ideas on knowledge and Foucault's ideas on power as underpinnings for their understanding of critical reflection, which aims to "expose or unsettle dominant assumptions with the expressed purpose of challenging and changing dominant power relations" (pp. 47).

The central tenet in critical reflection is that social change begins in the daily life of individuals, and that "people have personal and collective power to change the society when they obtain insight through new knowledge" (Fook & Askeland, 2006, pp. 42). Critical reflection can thus be seen as a process that enables transformative or emancipatory action (Fook, et. al. 2006. pp. 9), or as the authors describe in more detail:

> Critical reflection [...] is about understanding the technologies of power, language and practice that produce and legitimate forms of moral and political regulation. To reflect critically [...], practitioners need to understand the historically contingent nature of their ideas. The familiar theories and practices need somehow to be 'made strange', so that they can be properly interrogated and so that people can build their own ethics out of this analytic process. That is, they can develop the capacity to resist and transgress. (Fook, et. al., 2006, p. 10)

Reflexivity
The ideas and theoretical underpinnings of reflexivity are very close to those of critical reflection. Reflexivity, however, emphasises the role of the individual or researcher in the situation. The term is mainly used in the context of research methodology. Fook (1999) describes reflexivity as simultaneously a position—the ability to locate oneself "squarely into the research act"—and a process by one reflects on their assumptions and actions and their effect on the research (pp. 11).

As Fook later explains: "If we recognise ourselves wholistically, that we as researchers are whole people, who experience in context, then reflexivity quite simply becomes the influence of any aspect of ourselves and our context which influences the research." (pp. 12) In other words, reflexivity helps the researcher acknowledge that and investigate how their knowledge is situated (Fook, 1999, pp. 14) or socially constructed (Smith, 2011, pp. 214). Reflexivity as a critical research practice is scrutinised in posthumanist research, where *diffraction* is proposed as an alternative approach.

Self-reflection
The theories discussed so far mostly approach reflection as a mechanism in or for professional development. However, we also encounter reflection in the realm of personal development, for example in the context of counselling or therapy:

> Most methods of counselling and therapy could be characterised as situations in which clients, either alone with a therapist or in groups, voluntarily reflect on their histories, views of the world, behaviour, human and material environments, and beliefs and values. The intention is to learn to feel or act differently with respect to an element or elements in their lives. (Moon, 1999, p. 79)

Unexpectedly, the term *reflection* is not commonly used in the literature of counselling and psychology to describe the process described in the rest of this review. We may encounter the term in a different sense to describe a technique used by counsellors of repeating or paraphrasing words used by clients to trigger reflection in clients on the use or meaning of chosen phrases (Moon, 1999, p. 79). Instead, terms such as *introspection*, *metacognition* or even *mindfulness* may be used to describe reflection in this context (Rogers, 2001, pp. 38).

In this research, I find it helpful to name this kind of reflection 'self-reflection'. Although I realise this term may be generically used to describe a kind of reflection directed at one's own actions, to me it also seems to emphasise the *sense of self* that is central to reflection for personal development.

Although it is debatable whether personal and professional development are in fact separable, I believe it is important to acknowledge that they involve different kinds of processes that may or may not be desirable in the context of higher education. Teachers are not trained as therapists and may not be equipped to facilitate such processes nor to foresee their potentially negative effects on students' emotional wellbeing. I further elaborate this point in Chapter 2.

The outcomes of reflection

There seems to be a lack of clarity or consensus not only on the definition of reflection, but also on its outcomes (Rogers, 2001, pp. 38). In the literature, generic terms such as *learning* or *knowledge construction* may be used to describe these outcomes, leaving its specific benefits up to interpretation. Reparatively reading the theories discussed in this chapter, I can imagine a more extensive and specific list of outcomes:

- Reflection, as *learning from and through experience or practice* (see Schön and Kolb) could lead to improved ability to respond to practical challenges and uncertainty, and increased effectiveness in achieving goals. Additionally, reflective practice could lead to the development of theory derived from practice.
- Critical reflection could lead to transformative learning as it challenges us to create new meaning perspectives (see Mezirow) or to emancipation as it helps us gain self-knowledge and understand our human condition (see

Habermas).
- Reflexivity could lead to an increased consciousness of bias and to improved (research) ethics.
- (Self-)reflection could lead to self-development, which according to Habermas, is a prerequisite of emancipation. In the therapeutic context, reflection could also be used as a technique for self-improvement or coping with emotional experiences.

Although these outcomes to me seem logical results of the discussed ideas, there is little to no (empirical) evidence to back up these claims. Up to date, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding quantitative or empirical research of the outcomes of reflection (Fook, et. al., 2006, pp. 7, pp. 20).

Reflection in higher education

Despite the availability of a variety of theoretical frameworks for reflection, we often encounter unthoughtfully appropriated versions of reflection in higher education (Fook, et. al., 2006, pp. 1). One logical

explanation is that the immense popularity of reflection has watered-down the original meaning of the term, to repeat the earlier used quote by Fook, White and Gardner:

> It may be that the very popularity of critical reflection is also its undoing: it becomes difficult to develop systematically the quality and effectiveness of reflection in a climate where its meaning and value are assumed and therefore relatively unarticulated and unjustified. (Fook, et. al., 2006, pp. 20)

This phenomenon could quite simply be the result of the fact that the available literature is difficult to translate into practice. Smith (2011) points out that the language used in literature is complex and that terminology is used in different contexts where it may carry different meanings, and that theory is dispersed among different disciplinary contexts making it difficult to access (pp. 212). I can confirm this fact, given that compiling this short literature review was a complex and time-consuming task.

Besides, most educational institutions cannot allocate time and resources to the development of a pedagogy for reflection, leaving this aspect up to the initiative of the individual teacher (who herself is often already under a lot of time pressure). And this process—in my experience—exposes doubts and uncertainties that are often left undiscussed. This quote by Rabikowska is a good example of doubts regarding teaching methods that I think will be highly relatable:

> Some very fundamental doubts accompany the attempts of implementation of self-reflective assignments: do we need to explain the abstractness of self-reflection to the students and then require putting it into practice in an essay, presentation or a project, or should we rather do self-reflective teaching in the class and hope that students will follow our example? Or, perhaps, we should rely that they will learn how to self-reflect on their own? (2008)

Additionally, there also seems to be a mismatch between the original intentions and aims for reflection described in the theories included in this chapter, and the purposes it serves in education. Some authors (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2016; Reynolds, 1997) use the term 'instrumental reflection', which I find a suitable term to describe the kind of reflection that we often encounter in higher education. Aims of instrumental reflection are efficiency, objectivity, and control (Reynolds, 1997, pp. 314). You might recognise it by the questions: *what went well and what could be improved?* and *how can I do this better next time?*

Instrumental reflection is particularly useful as a tool for assessment because it makes visible students' learning and decision-making processes. Written reflections offer a unique point of access to students' inner thoughts and makes it easier to assess their progress. This way of using reflection is particularly helpful in educational systems that use, for example, competency-based or project-based assessment styles that are often found in art and design education. I also believe that this instrumental use of reflection is common to a knowledge-centred approach to education. I will expand on this in Chapter 2 (Crack #1).

If we are to implement reflection more thoughtfully and intentionally within higher education—that is, doing justice to its complex theoretical origins—if we are to *repair* reflection in higher education—I believe we need to invest in the development of a well-considered pedagogy. This research aims to offer starting points for doing so.

Conclusion

The field of reflection is made up by a vast body of literature that is dispersed among various disciplinary contexts. This literature review touched upon the ideas of Dewey, Habermas, Schön and Kolb to sketch a picture of the theoretical foundations of the field:

- Dewey discussed reflection as a specific kind of thinking aimed at the questioning of (the grounds of) held beliefs and assumed knowledge. According to Dewey, this process was often set in motion by a state of perplexity or doubt.
- Habermas speaks of reflection as a movement of emancipation. He discusses reflection in relation to knowledge production, where it is key to what he describes as *emancipatory knowledge interest,* that relies on critical thinking to produce knowledge about oneself and the human condition.
- Schön writes about reflective practice in the context of professional development. He argues that theory cannot only be produced through inquiry, but also through the interplay between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action.
- Kolb incorporates reflection, or *reflective observation* into his cycle of experiential learning, positioning reflection as being part of the learning process rather than a separate activity.

The literature review also aimed to clarify the different variations of reflection, e.g., *critical reflection, reflexivity,* and *self-reflection:*

- The general term *reflection* can be understood in various ways, following the theories listed above. In higher education, reflection is sometimes used in an instrumental way that can be seen as the evaluation of an experience aimed at its improvement.
- *Critical reflection* can be described as the challenging of assumptions and reflecting through the lens of critical theory.
- *Reflexivity* can be seen as a (research) position or the process of acknowledging one's role in the research and how knowledge is situated.

- *Self-reflection* is here described as the affective analysis of one's histories, worldviews, behaviour, etc., through a process that is common to counselling or therapy.

Clarity about the outcomes of the reflective process seems to be lacking in the literature. Reparatively reading the selected theories, I can imagine reflection could lead to, i.e., the improved ability to respond to practical challenges and uncertainty, and increased effectiveness in achieving goals, increased consciousness of bias and to improved (research) ethics, or even to transformative learning and emancipation.

In spite of the vast body of literature, reflection in higher education seems to be appropriated in an unthoughtful manner. Possible explanations of this phenomenon are that the popularity of the term may have led to the dilution of its theoretical basis, or that available literature is simply too complex and inaccessible for educators to work with, and that there seems an inherent lack of time and resources to invest in developing a pedagogy

for reflection. Additionally, we encounter reflection in higher education as an instrument for assessment, which seems to be in contrast with the intentions behind reflection as originally conceptualised by the authors mentioned in this review.

This research project argues that a well-considered pedagogy is needed to repair the notion of reflection in higher education. In the next chapter, I will pinpoint specific issues with reflection in the context of higher education, departing from my experiences facilitating the *Reflecting Otherwise* course.

Chapter 2

Reflecting on reflection:
Learning from practice

Introduction

This research project was born from the tension between, on one hand, my curiosity about reflection and its transformative potential, and my frustration with the ways in which reflection is facilitated within higher education on the other. Positioned halfway in and halfway out, I was interested in practicing reflection, but not of this kind. In that spirit, I developed the *Reflecting Otherwise* course as part of the minor programme *Re-imagining tomorrow through arts and sciences* offered by RASL.

The main aim of the course was to empower students to form a critical and informed vision on how an alternative approach to reflection might serve their practice. We looked at reflection from different angles—discussing for example, the aspects of place, affect and relationality—and experimented with different ways of reflecting. Facilitating the *Reflecting Otherwise* course rendered a clear image of

the issues students encounter when engaging in reflective activities. This chapter first offers a detailed description of the course content, and then proceeds to examine my main takeaways of facilitating the course and shed light on the issues or *cracks* that I believe need to be addressed in order to repair reflection.

Course Content

To develop the content of the course in the late summer of 2022, I departed from a thorough reflection on my own past experiences with reflection in higher education as a bachelor student. Supporting these reflections with initial research, I identified five directions for the further examination of the idea of reflecting otherwise, including:

1. The disambiguation of existing approaches to reflection
2. Reflection as/for transformative practice(s)
3. The affective aspect of reflection and its consequences for education
4. The times and spaces of reflection
5. The relational aspect of reflection

Following these starting points and adapting them to the aims of the RASL minor, I came up with six workshops (see the Methodology chapter for practical information regarding the length of the sessions, programme and student body). Each session typically started with a check-in exercise. This gave the students time and space to reflect on their experiences of the past week and share things if they wanted. After the check-in, I introduced the theme of the day by asking a question, such as 'where does reflection happen?' or 'how does reflection feel?'. The main body of the sessions was dedicated to individual or group exercises, concluded by a sharing round.

The following pages contain summaries of the six sessions, and the notes I took right after facilitating them.

Session 1: reflecting on reflection
6 September 2022

The first workshop was aimed at understanding what reflection is, and that it can mean many different things within different disciplinary contexts. We explored how students encountered reflection within their own educational context. In groups, students analysed a sample of reflective writing they did for their studies and reflected on what the function of the reflective activity was and they experienced it.

Landing Routine:
_____

3: writing prompt (2 min.)

What does reflection mean to you?

Exercise:
_____

Discussing the reflections

Briefly discuss the samples of reflective writing you brought (approx. 4-5 minutes per person).

You can think about the following questions:

1. What was the assignment?
2. (How) did writing this reflection help you?
3. How did it make you feel?
4. What do you think was the aim of the reflection in the context of your study programme?
5. How could this reflective activity be more helpful to your learning process?

Notes & reflections:
- Students seemed to be aware of how reflection is applied within their educational context, and many critical points were brought up, such as:
  - Reflection is absent in some of the academic programmes; it seems as if reflection is an undesirable thing.
  - The 'competency assessment' is the main moment for WdKA students to reflect. Students say their reflections are not always genuine, because when a reflection is being assessed, you may not always feel comfortable disclosing incompetence. It is also easy to "bullshit your way out".
  - Some reflection assignments are rather 'reporting' and their main aim is to document course outcomes. Students doubt whether these reflections are even read by their teachers.
- Many students also brought up their own ways or approaches to reflection outside of the educational context. Here, the line between reflection and overthinking seemed to become blurry.
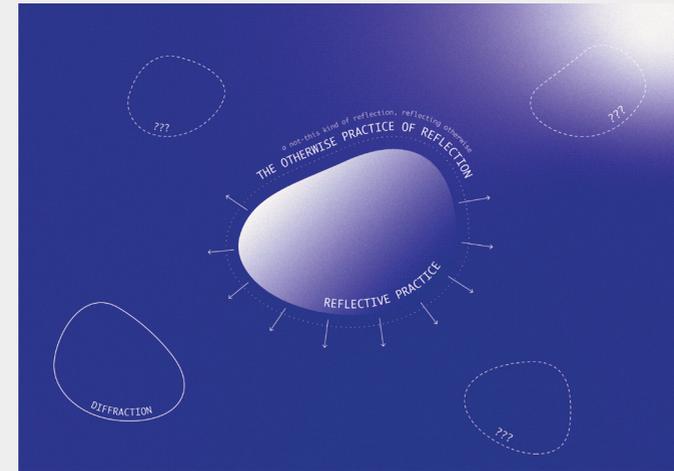
Wrap-up Routine:

1: distilling (3 min.)

What did you learn today, and how can you apply it in developing your own otherwise practice of reflection?
Write down a tactic, principle, rule or instruction.

2: journaling (2 min.)

What else are you taking away with you today?

Session 2: The times and spaces of reflecting otherwise
13 September

The aim of this session was to explore where reflection takes place (considering it does not only happen in the classroom), and which different shapes and forms reflective thoughts can take on. We started with a sharing round in which each student shared where and when they tend to reflect, followed by a brief discussion. The rest of the session, students worked on small, playful exercises related to the theme. The medium for the exercises was free, but students could also roll a dice to get a medium assigned randomly. We ended the day with a mini-exhibition.

Exercises:

Do as many or as few as you like in one hour. Make sure to take a break! You can choose any medium or use the randomiser.

6. Wandering reflective space
listen to the soundpiece while wandering around the building, sitting or lying down. then describe (in any medium) what your reflective space looks like. what does this mean for the way you reflect (otherwise)?

3. Tracing back
make a timeline of all of the events that led you to take part in the RASL Minor. start at your day of birth. the timeline does not need to be linear.

5. Homage to a teacher
pay homage to a teacher that had a profound influence on your life. it doesn't need to be a human being. describe how they/it influenced you.

1. Reflection as ritual
design a reflective ritual based on where and when you are best able to reflect

2. Eureka!
describe a eureka moment you experienced at any point in your life. do some detective work: map the unlinear thoughts, conversations, feelings, experiences, hopes, etc. that you think may have led to the epiphany. go as far back as possible.

4. Contemplative dream
turn a recent experience or situation at the RASL Minor into a script of a contemplative dream. the dream can be as absurd, scary or random as you like. the script should give insight into your experience of and reflection on the situation.

✨ Randomizer ✨

1. Performance	1. Haiku
2. Concrete poem	2. Video
3. Collage	3. Fictional story
4. Diagram	4. Dance
5. Sound piece	5. Drawing
6. Sculpture	6. Essay

Notes & reflections:

- Some students expressed the need for more framing/clarification of what reflection is exactly.
- Discussing where reflection takes place (and acknowledging it happens mostly outside of the classroom) seemed to be emotionally triggering to some students. Many students indicate that they already reflect a lot, maybe even too much.
- Relatively few people felt comfortable sharing the outcome of the exercises they had been working on, because the outcomes were of personal nature. This was surprising to me because I tried to create a safe distance in the exercises.
- Based on this, I felt that I needed to adjust my plan for the next session, making the session less frontal and addressing two topics that emerged:
  - What is the difference between reflection and rumination, and how can we stimulate positive/ constructive reflective habits?
  - When (in the process) is reflection useful, and how can reflection and action complement each other? (Thinking about Freire's praxis)

- Students seemed to have a negative connotation with reflection. One student (with a background in cognitive psychology) even said he believed reflection should not be used in education at all. On one hand, this was a good sign as it showed the urgency of the need to change the way we facilitate and use reflection, but on the other hand it was also a challenging situation. I later had a good discussion with the student, and understood that, given his background, he likely understands reflection as the kind of 'self-reflection' used in therapeutic settings.
- *Later addition:* looking back, I think it may be useful to clarify the different approaches and traditions within reflection (for example *critical reflection*, *self-reflection, reflexivity*, etc.) more clearly at the beginning of the course. I could also offer them as approaches that students can experiment with. It also seems to be crucial that the relationship between reflection and action/practice is maintained to avoid getting stuck on a meta level.

Session 3: Beyond rationality: emotional experiences and self-disclosure
20 September

The focus of this session was a topic that appeared to be urgent among students: the difference between *reflection* and *rumination*. We started the session with an openhearted reflection on the sessions so far, in which I shared my reflections. We then tried the new landing exercises. After that, I invited students to research the differences between rumination and reflection in small groups and share their findings. Then, each student shared one trick for dealing with rumination by means of an anonymous mentimeter poll. We ended the session by reading out all the tricks, followed by a short discussion.

Landing exercises:

Choose one of the exercises below or create your own! Email me your exercise and I will add it.
Each exercise is followed by 5 min. of journaling or other form of documentation (drawing, mindmapping, etc.)

1. Check-in Diagram
(previous check-in) - draw a circle. place 6 dots on the circle and connect them with straight lines. next to each dot, write down one aspect that is important in your life right now. how connected do you feel to each aspect? towards the centre = less connected, towards the outside = more connected. draw the web in the circle.

2. Your week in Emojis
make a selection of 5 emojis that give insight in your experiences of the past week.

3. Your week in a quote
select one quote that somehow connects to your experiences of the past week. it can be a quote from literature, or you can recall something you heard someone say.

4. Actualities
choose a page from one of the newspapers. turn it into an artwork that somehow says something about your experiences of the past week. you can use any medium/artform.

5. Self portrait
create a self-portrait (in the broadest sense of the word) in any medium you like. the portrait is a snapshot of who/how you are today.

6. ???
create your own check-in exercise! email me your exercise and I will add it to this overview.

Rumination vs Reflection:

How do you shift from rumination to reflection? Share a trick that works for you.

Notes & reflections:

- Based on students' feedback, I added different check-in exercises to choose from. Students seemed to enjoy being able to choose between different options.
- I sometimes felt anxious to facilitate (potentially) emotional discussions, because I am aware that I am not equipped to help students with psychological issues. Therefore, I chose to approach the topic of rumination by departing from students' (and my own) experiences and sharing tricks.
- *Later addition:* most students were unfamiliar with the term rumination before this session. After this session, many students started using the word when speaking about their unhealthy reflection habits. This happened often, which led me to believe that the simple act of recognising the difference between rumination and reflection helped students foster a healthier relationship to reflection.

Some of the tricks shared by students:

GOING OUT FOR A WALK

TALKING ABOUT IT WITH FRIENDS

TAKING A STEP BACK: WHAT IS MY ULTIMATE FEAR ABOUT THIS MATTER?
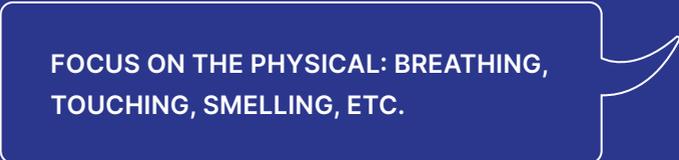
FOCUS ON THE PHYSICAL: BREATHING, TOUCHING, SMELLING, ETC.

GETTING OUT OF MY HEAD BY WRITING THOUGHTS DOWN OR SAYING THEM OUT LOUD

WRITING IT DOWN IN STORY FORMAT

Session 4: Beyond the self: climates, assemblages, and positions
27 September

This session explored which human and non-human actors and factors are involved in the students' projects, and how students may reflect with/on them. We did this in the form of a stakeholder mapping. After the weekly landing routine, I gave some examples of the kinds of (non-human) stakeholders they could think about, and of existing methods for stakeholder mapping. The students then worked on the mapping in their groups. We ended the session with short presentations of the created mappings.

Exercise:

What are examples of (more-than-human) actors and factors that can play a role in your inquiry?

Internal:	**Direct environment:**	**System:**
• Feelings	• Specific communities/groups	• Laws/regulations
• Ambitions	• Species of plants/animals	• Emerging technologies
• Group dynamics	• The furniture in this room	• Viruses
• ...	• ...	• ...

Exercise:

1: (more-than-human stakeholder map

Map the (more-than-human) actors and factors that hold a stake in your collaborative undisciplinary inquiry. The map doesn't need to be exhaustive (±10 is enough), you can always expand it later! Also think about the form of the map (see examples mentioned before):
• How is the map structured (e.g. in quadrants, as a Venn diagram, as a geographic map, etc.)
• Where on the map do you position yourself/your team?
• Will you categorise your stakeholders? How?
• Will you indicate the relations between the stakeholders and your project? How?

2: reflecting-with

Brainstorm about how you can reflect (with) the mapped stakeholders

Notes & reflections:
- I realised that stakeholder mapping may emphasize a different interpretation of the theme than the one I am interested in. Now, I put the focus on reflecting with non-human others, and I noticed the risk of getting stuck in the debate around anthropomorphic representation of non-human voices. This is not a direction I feel I should head in. What I am rather interested in, is how reflection can 1) become a relational activity instead of an isolated one (acknowledging the role of others (including non-humans) in our learning experiences), and 2) help students position themselves within the larger social-political context they are operating in. I feel like the session in its current form did not convey this yet.
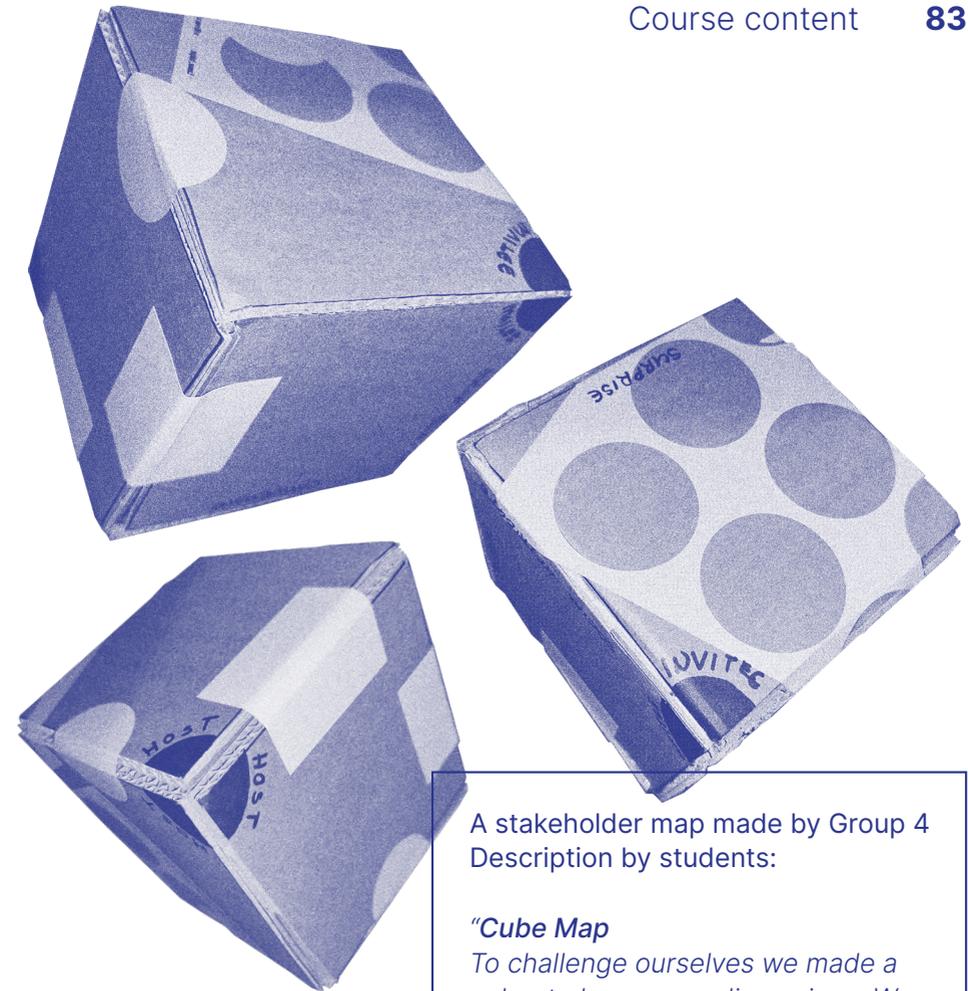
A stakeholder map made by Group 4
Description by students:

"Cube Map
To challenge ourselves we made a cube, to have more dimensions. We never finished it but we wanted to the whole time (it was very hard but interesting). The topic of this cube was invitation. We decided host and invitee should be opposites. In the middle there is consensus and surprise. The cube makes a sound if you shake it."

Session 5: Rethinking feedback protocols
4 October

In preparation of the Feedback Day (A midterm event where each group presented their work and collected feedback) on 6 October, this session explored how we can facilitate moments of peer feedback better. We started with two inventory rounds to generate input for the creation of students' own peer feedback protocol. In the first inventory round, students identified and shared what made peer feedback they received in the past positive/helpful, and what made it negative/unhelpful. Then, we discussed the methods presented in the documentary *A documentary on feedback* by DASarts. Finally, students developed their own feedback protocol.

Because this research does not discuss (peer)feedback further, I am omitting the notes and reflections. However, feedback is often associated with reflection (both by students and by colleagues). This would be an interesting aspect to investigate in the future.
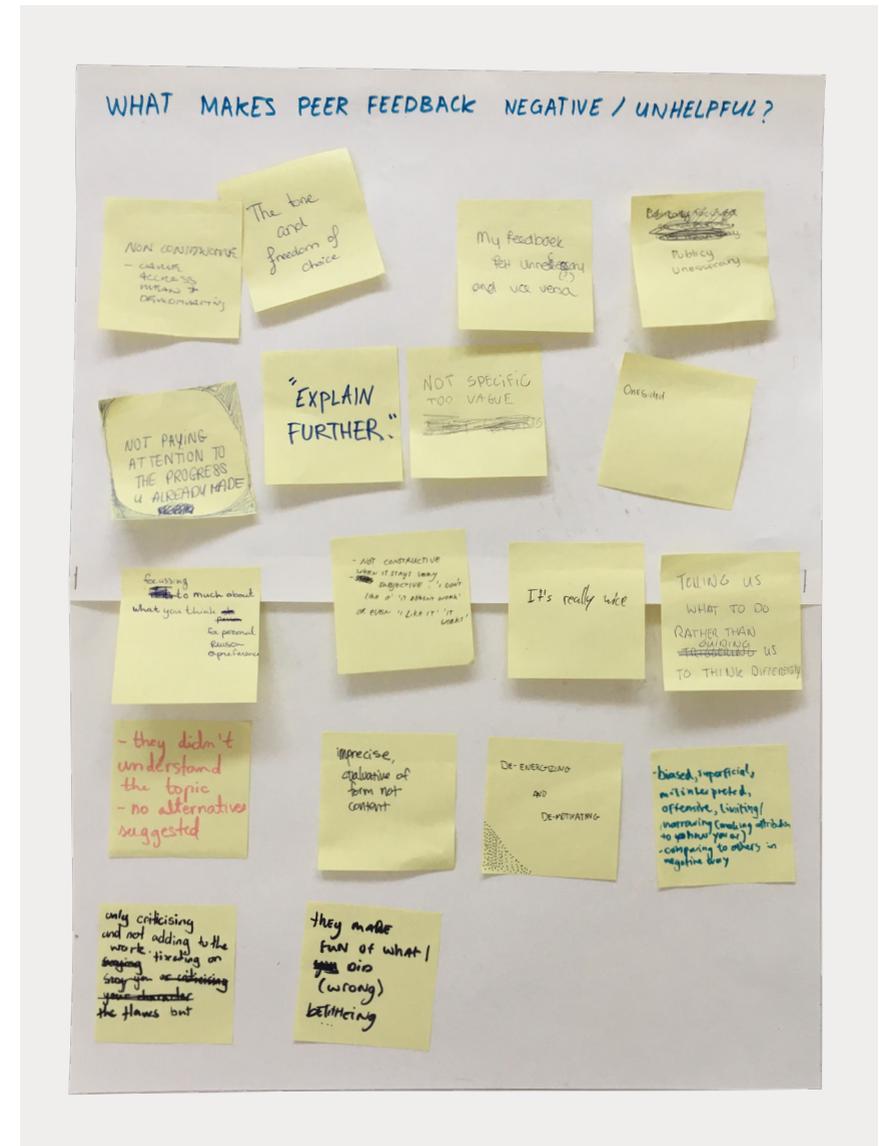
Session 6: Reflection as/for transformative practice(s)
18 October

The focus of the last session of the course was on the development of students' own working definition of reflecting otherwise. A working definition here is understood in two ways: 1) a definition that is under construction, and 2) a definition that works for you (so: how could reflecting otherwise work for your practice?). This could also imply getting rid of reflection completely or replacing it by another mechanism students find more useful.

We had two guests this session: Jesse van Oosten and Adriana Mockovcakova. Adriana gave a short lecture about the role of reflection in addressing wicked issues. Jesse was present as a peer observer and shared her own views on reflection. The session was concluded by a discussion about the various ways in which reflection can contribute to practices that revolve around wicked problems or that seek to bring about a transformation of some kind.

Reflecting Otherwise
Thoughts & tactics

FEATURING:
ADRIANA MOCKOVCAKOVA
& JESSE VAN OOSTEN

Exercise:

Working definition:

A definition that is under construction as it is put to practice

A definition that works for you

Notes & reflections:

- The working definition exercise was useful, as it directly contributed to one of the course assignments. Hearing the definitions of Jesse van Oosten, Adriana Mockovcakova and myself seemed to inspire students. A few students concluded that this session should have taken place at the beginning of the course.

- *Later addition:* reflecting on the significance of this theme to the larger research, I can see that the transformative aspect of reflection is a motivation for the research, instead of a theme on its own account. It can be understood in two ways: 1) it is about how reflection can become transformative rather than performative, to the student as an individual, and 2) it is about the ways in which reflection can contribute to societal transformation.

Exercise:

Formulate your own working definition of reflecting otherwise. How does reflecting otherwise work for your practice? Write a short justification.

Working definition Adriana:

Awareness of the self

Pedagogical starting points

Reflecting on the choices I made and the positions I adopted while developing the course, I can see a clear influence of the work of Freire and hooks. I aligned with Freire's idea on how knowledge comes about, i.e. not through passive knowledge transfer, but through "invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other." (1970, p. 72) Departing from this idea, I reckoned that simply offering reflective space and open-ended prompts would already be enough to help students develop their own ways of reflecting.

This idea, to me, related strongly to Harney and Moten's idea on *study*. Study, according to them, does not happen only once class has started, it is already going on:

> It's talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice. [...] being in a kind of workshop, playing in a band, in a jam session,

> or old men sitting on a porch, or people working together in a factory – there are these various modes of activity. The point of calling it 'study' is to mark that the incessant and irreversible intellectuality of these activities is already present. (2013, p. 110)

I believe the same is true for reflection: it does not happen only in the classroom and does not belong exclusively to the realm of education. Reflection happens everywhere and all the time: while taking a walk in nature, enjoying a hot shower at the end of the day or talking to a good friend. I came to see reflection as an inherently social and affective process.

The affective dimension of reflection became an especially significant theme in my initial research. When I first started teaching, I was surprised by how many students deal with complex personal situations or conditions such as anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder, and that personal narratives sometimes found their way into the classroom in unexpected ways. I saw this as a very complex matter, which raised the lingering question: 'how can I address emotional experiences and affirm the emotional wellbeing

of students, without turning to pseudo-therapeutic methods?'

I found great guidance in the works of hooks, and in particular her ideas on *teaching with love:*

> When teachers work to affirm the emotional wellbeing of students we are doing the work of love. Teachers are not therapists. However, there are times when conscious teaching—teaching with love—brings us the insight that we will not be able to have a meaningful experience in the classroom without reading the emotional climate of our students and attending to it. (2003, p. 133)

I interpreted teaching with love as an open-minded attitude that includes listening to students' needs, taking away competitive and performance-driven dynamics and empowering students to find their own voice or approach. Considering the emotional aspects of facilitating reflection also urged me to think about the ethics of sharing in the classroom. In relation to this, I explored topics such as confession culture and self-disclosure. Here again, the work of hooks offered guidance:

> When professors bring narratives of their experiences into classrooms it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing, silent interrogators. It is often productive if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material. (1994, p. 21)

In addition, I drew inspiration from a number of works by, e.g., Fook and Askeland (2007), Thompson and Thompson (2018) and Swan & Bailey (2016). Analysing the influences of these ideas, I can identify three major pedagogical decisions that shaped the course and its outcomes:

1. I chose to depart from students' own experiences and uses of reflection, rather than from a pre-determined definition. By doing so, I hoped to leave them plenty of room for them to develop their own approach to reflection.
2. I decided that the prompts I offered should be light on the heart and inclusive to different ways of thinking (e.g. through making, writing, moving, etc.) and personal conditions.

3. I chose to work with ground rules as a way of safeguarding students' emotional wellbeing and to create a trusted learning environment. The ground rules were:
    *   You always have the agency to decide what you want to share and what you don't. Shared information stays between us.
    *   You are always welcome to refuse or suggest a different way.
    *   You are always welcome to use another medium for the exercises.
    *   You are a body in a space, you are always permitted to do what you need to be comfortable.

Experiences gained through facilitating the *Reflecting Otherwise* course allowed me to adjust my position as an educator, which will become visible in the next section.

Examining the cracks: where did it break?

Throughout the *Reflecting Otherwise* course and in their reflection assignments, students generously shared their (often critical) perspectives on reflection. Understanding their experiences enabled me to grasp more clearly how exactly reflection can be considered *broken* in higher education. By connecting students' responses to my own reflections on the course and theoretical insights, I have been able to identify four problems, or *cracks*, that I will elaborate in the remaining part of this chapter:

1. The meaning and scope of reflection can become distorted when the concept is not sufficiently delineated.
2. Reflection can have negative effects on students' emotional wellbeing.
3. Reflection can feel arbitrary when instrumentalised for assessment.
4. Reflection isolates individual actions and experiences from its relational context.
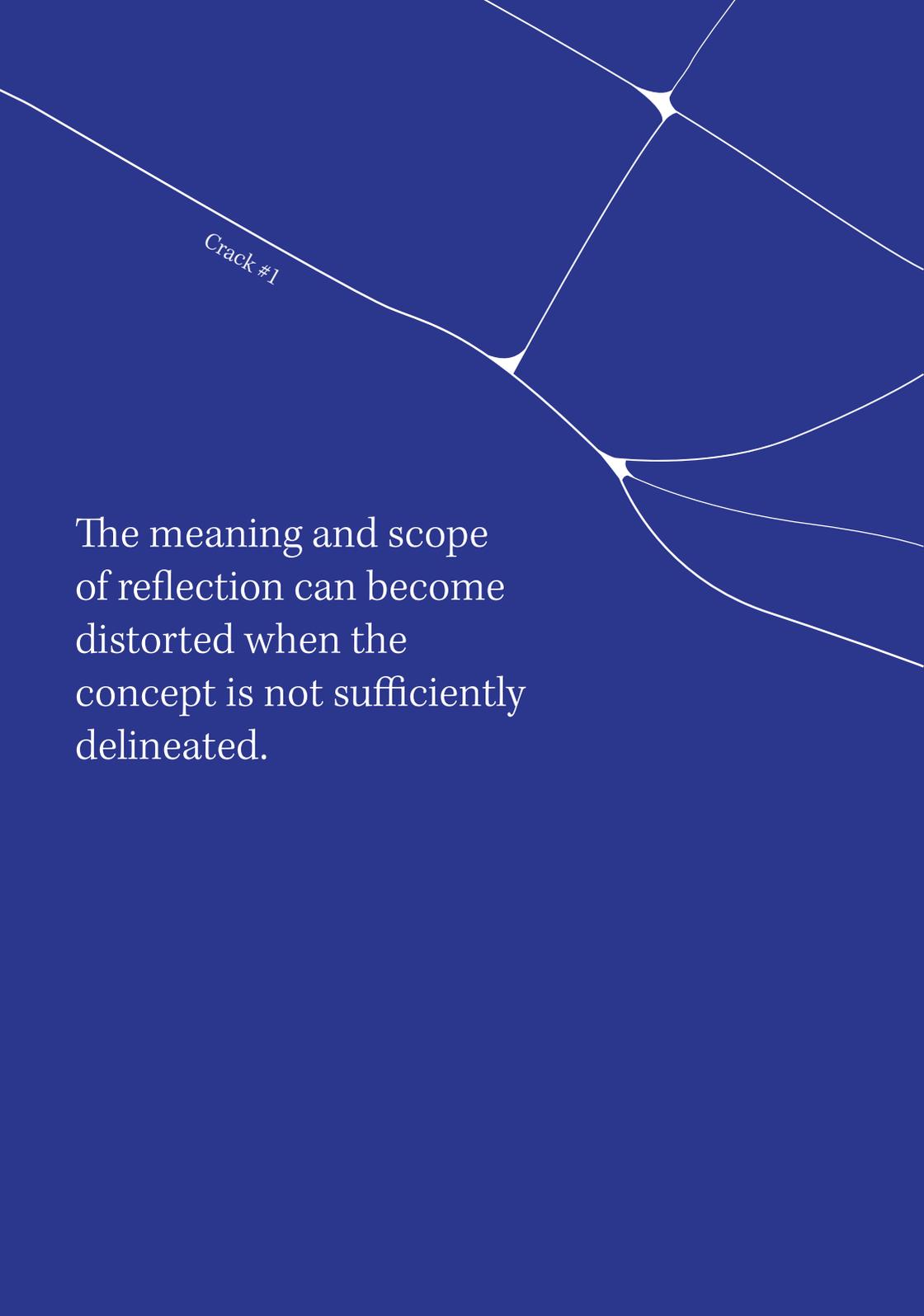
Crack #1

The meaning and scope of reflection can become distorted when the concept is not sufficiently delineated.

In the *Reflecting Otherwise* course, I actively encouraged students to depart from their own definitions of reflection. This seemed to be a logical choice in line with the pedagogical beliefs described before, and I was convinced that giving students the freedom to define reflection for themselves would stimulate them to experiment with forms of reflection that were more fruitful to them. The opposite seemed to be true.

As we could see in Chapter 1, reflection is a *fuzzy concept* with a complex and diverse theoretical grounding. In practice, the concept can carry even more diverse meanings, because here it is also subjected to personal associations and interpretations. Moon (1999) offers a concise overview of the common-sensical views we might encounter in practice, which can be summarised as:

- Considering something in more detail; or representing it in oral or written form.
- Processing an experience for a specific purpose, in a way that leads to a useful outcome.
- A more complicated or 'deeper' kind of thinking or recalling. (p. 4)

As a result of the freedom to adhere to their own definitions of reflection, most students seemed to draw either on earlier experiences with reflection or on common-sensical interpretations when asked to provide their own definition of the term. For some students, this 'default mode' took on the form of rumination (as expanded under crack 2), and for others it seemed to be influenced by *knowledge-centred* dynamics within the educational system (I will explain this further later on).

These influences are visible in many of the definitions shared by students during the first session, that often include words such as *mistakes, improvement, growth,* etc. The following pages give an overview of the shared definitions.

TO ACKNOWLEDGE ACHIEVEMENTS AND EXCUSE MISTAKES.

GENERALLY A GOOD THING, BUT CAN ALSO BECOME OVERTHINKING.

USUALLY DONE FROM AFAR, TAKING A STEP BACK. IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO COME UP WITH GOALS OR AREAS TO IMPROVE. IT IS THE TIME FOR GROWTH AND BETTER UNDERSTANDING.

KNOWING YOURSELF AND YOUR SURROUNDINGS, THE ABILITY TO FORM UNFINISHED CONCLUSIONS OF ACTIONS AND MAKE CONNECTIONS.

ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PAST.

THE EVALUATION OF ALL ASPECTS YOU HAVE THOUGHT.

LOOSE IMPRESSIONS, FEELINGS, UN-INTELLECTUALIZED EXPERIENCE.

REFLECTION ALLOWS ME TO BE A BETTER PERSON.

THINKING BACK TO HOW THINGS WENT, REFLECTING ON THE PAST. WHAT WAS GOOD, WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED. BEING ABLE TO SEE A SITUATION FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE.

THE ABILITY TO FEEL AND THINK WITHOUT LIMITS, EXPLORING THINGS I NORMALLY DON'T DARE TO EXPLORE.

LANDING, GROUNDING, NOT OVERTHINKING BUT LOOKING AT SOMETHING FROM A WIDE PERSPECTIVE, MAYBE GETTING SOMETHING BACK FROM SOMEONE ELSE, THEIR INTERPRETATION, LIKE A MIRROR; REFLECTING.

LOOKING BACK IN ORDER TO GO FORWARD. A MOMENT TO THINK ABOUT WHAT ACTUALLY YOU MEANT TO DO.

BEING CRITICAL ON YOURSELF, THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

THINKING ABOUT YOUR THINKING. LEARNING THROUGH ACKNOWLEDGING YOUR MISTAKES. GROWTH IS AN ESSENTIAL OUTCOME OF THIS PROCESS, AND THAT'S WHY IT'S IMPORTANT IN ALL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS.

REFLECTION IS NECESSARY TO GROW.

SOMETHING I DO ON MY OWN AND DON'T WANT TO SHARE. IT CAN BE HELPFUL TO REFLECT BUT SOMETIMES BUT SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE IT COMES WITH OVERTHINKING.

LOOKING CLOSELY AT YOUR ACTIONS, BEHAVIOUR, AND EMOTIONS. FLOATING, LETTING YOUR THOUGHTS RUN A BIT.

DETACHING FROM THE IMMEDIATE AND SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE. LOOKING BACK AT WHAT YOU SAW FROM THE SECOND OR THIRD PERSON PERSPECTIVE. ALLOWING EMOTIONS TO RE-EMERGE BUT NOT OCCUPY YOU IN THE WAY THEY DID IN THE VERY MOMENT OF EXPERIENCING THEM, SO THAT YOU CAN PROCESS THEM.

CHECKING IN WITH MYSELF, IN WHETHER I'M STILL FOLLOWING THE WAY I WANT TO MOVE IN LIFE OR THIS PARTICULAR DAY. AND TO REMIND MYSELF TO BE KIND TO MYSELF DURING THESE REFLECTIONS AND NOT BE TOO CRITICAL.

SELF-CARE, SELF-IMPROVEMENT AND 'RELATIVATION'. TO REALLY TAKE SOMETHING IN AND TO GIVE IT MEANING, TO UNDERSTAND IT BETTER AND THUS UNDERSTAND YOURSELF BETTER. WITH THIS CAN COME NEGATIVITY.

TAKING A MOMENT, SLOWING DOWN, EVALUATING, DECIDING WHERE YOU ARE, HOW YOU GOT THERE AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN. REFLECTION IS JUST A DECONSTRUCTION OF THOUGHTS.

My conclusion is that the lack of a clear definition or delineation of the term, greatly compromises the application and potential outcomes of reflection. The following anecdote by student L is a good example. In this acecdote, L describes how reflection is often seen as a formal requirement rather than something valuable. What she also (perhaps unintentionally) demonstrates, is how—without further introduction—reflection is reduced to the mere act of reporting:

> Reflection: a word everyone is familiar with, but few pay mind to...
>> *Teacher:* Aside from the readings and assignment, please write a short reflection of your topic choice for tomorrow.
>> *Student 1:* What do they mean by reflection?
>> *Student 2:* I don't know just write whatever... why you like your topic and how you came up with it... like a short summary of what you thought.
>> *Student 1:* Ah yeah, I'll just do that... It's not like anyone's going to read it anyways
> * the class after that the reflections were never addressed * (L.G.R., RASL minor student)

In addition, I believe it is important to recognise here that reflection can have a completely different orientation depending on the educational system it contributes to. Ceder (2015) gives a clear description of the differences between *knowledge-centred* and *student-centred* approaches within education. The *knowledge-centred* approach aligns with neoliberal, right wing ideals and focuses on control, performance, and producing "the kind of inhabitants that society requires" (p. 15-16). Reflection that might be associated with this approach may be of evaluative, evidence-producing, and regulatory nature.

The *student-centred* approach, on the other hand, associates with a left wing, democratic political view. This approach focuses on students' emancipation and involves a rather 'soft' teaching style using for example dialogical methods, formative evaluation, and (self) reflection (p.16). In such systems, we might encounter a kind of reflection that resonates with the ideas of Habermas and Mezirow described in Chapter 1 and is directed at individual and societal transformation. This

kind of reflection aims to serve the student, rather than the labour market.

Both views can be recognised in the definitions listed on the previous pages, but the *knowledge-centred* approach seemed to have a stronger influence on the ways in which students engaged in reflection throughout the course and in the formal assignments. This is not surprising, because students mostly encountered reflection while writing course evaluations, reports, or competency assessment portfolios. In the *Reflecting Otherwise* course, my aim was to instead implement a *student-centred* approach to reflection, empowering students to develop a way of reflecting that was useful to them, rather than to the system.

In line with this ambition and the pedagogical position described earlier in this chapter, a logical step seemed to be to expand *where* and *how* reflection takes place. Students already develop themselves through reflection all the time, and most of this process takes place outside of the institutional space. Seeing reflection as something that does not only happen *at* and *for* school validates other-

than-rational ways of thinking that are often overlooked in education, such as sensory, emotional, embodied, and intuitive ones. Although these alternative forms of (self-) knowledge indeed deserve more attention in reflection, this stance made the definition and process of reflection even more broad.

As a consequence, students started viewing reflection as almost any kind of contemplative activity: walking, meditating, drawing, sculpting, journaling, etc. In fact, I think this is a common tendency within art education in general. Although such activities can indeed be reflective, it is important to pinpoint where exactly the act of reflection takes place and what it requires. For example: walking as embodied practice can be reflective, but it is not reflection on its own account. Seeing reflection as 'learning through and from experience', we could argue that it is the meaning-making that happens during or after the walk—articulating the significance of the experience in relation to our subjective reality—that makes the activity reflective. Reflection thus requires a specific conscious and intellectual process.

To harness the benefits of reflection—and specifically the 'good' kind of benefits that serve students and not (only) systems—we must be stricter about what reflection is and what it involves. To me, this also includes revisiting the idea that students already know how to reflect and practice reflection continuously on their own initiative. Nuancing this statement, I would add that we must acknowledge that students' understandings of reflection might be based on a dated system or unhealthy thought patterns, and that it is likely that they have not yet been offered the tools to reflect otherwise.

Crack #2

Reflection can have negative effects on students' emotional wellbeing.

In the development of the course, extensive attention was given to the emotional aspects of reflection. Aware of the fact that reflection can (re-)generate emotions in problematic and unexpected ways (Swan & Bailey, 2016, pp. 120), I implemented a set of ground rules to create a trusted learning environment and to affirm students' agency (see page 94). I carefully considered my role and attitude as a teacher, which needed to be friendly, affirmative, and open; using self-disclosure to make students feel that it is safe to take a risk. I designed prompts and exercises with students' integrity in mind and tried to make them light on the heart and accommodate different needs, realities, and sensitivities.

Despite these conscious efforts, the course—or perhaps the task of reflecting in general—seemed to be confronting or emotionally straining to many students. As hinted in Crack #1, I mainly attribute this phenomenon to the lack of delineation of reflection at the start of the course. The openness of the course caused students to resort to the kinds of reflection they were most familiar with, which were mainly situated in the personal realm. This was especially the case for students

who did not encounter reflection in their educational context, as student E explains:

> 'Reflection' was a key point of difference I found between my native pedagogical frame and this new, alien RASL pedagogy. Why were we talking about reflection in a classroom? Back in my history program, there is no reflection. [...] When I think of reflection, I think of therapy, once-monthly, over zoom. This is why some of my reflection exercises I made over the course of the minor referenced body dysmorphia. If therapy was my reference point for reflection—because I don't know what else it could look like, especially in education—then it made sense that I was employing the kind of language one uses in therapy. (E.D., RASL minor student)

Unfortunately, *rumination* is a mechanism many students are all too familiar with, and it is commonly mistaken for reflection. *Rumination* is a way of thinking about oneself and past events that is negative and judgemental, and that may be described as *brooding* or *dwelling* (Shrimpton, et al., 2017). It is repetitive in nature and "evades constructive meaning and resolution" (Marin & Rotondo, 2015. P. 2). The causes and effects of rumination can

be severe: it can induce anxiety, reduce self-esteem (Hagen et al., 2020), and is a common co-occurring symptom of OCD, Generalised Anxiety Disorder, or depression (Scolan, 2021).

The line between self-reflection and rumination is thin. To some students, simply being faced with time and space to reflect can already be enough to set in motion such negative thought patterns:

> In the beginning, I found the thought of reflecting [...] very confronting and even anxiety inducing. I think this is mainly because reflection for me has always been pretty negative in the past. As a person, I tend to be someone who is very harsh on themselves, and is constantly evaluating their life in a super critical and negative way, [...]. This is exactly why I think I struggled with reflecting at first, because it had such a negative and terrifying connotation for me. I hated the thought of it and I often felt like it pushed me into a self destructive state. (W.V., RASL minor student)

I see these responses as reminders that we must not forget that students may be facing personal difficulties or mental conditions, or that they may experience activities differently due to neurodivergence. Each student brings a backpack to school with them, and reflection may feel like the obligation to empty that backpack onto the table and analyse its contents. Another student noted that reflection is an exclusive practice that favours those with good mental health. I see this as an invitation to consider how we can make reflective activities more accessible.

To me these statements also indicate a need for school to be a place where students can temporarily "detach from their normal positions" (Masschelein & Simons, 2013, p.61), and where they can simply participate in an equal way. Although we cannot take away the aspect of risk and avoid emotional harm in education, I reckon these aspects should be taken into account when designing and facilitating reflective activities.

Reflection can feel arbitrary when instrumentalised for assessment.

Crack #3

In Chapter 1, I briefly touched upon the use of reflection in assessment, where it offers a unique glimpse at students' inner thoughts and decision-making process. This point of access is especially important when we assess learning outcomes rather than obtained (testable) knowledge. But it leaves us with a dilemma: *how and to what extent can we ask students to make their thought-processes visible and accessible?* Before discussing this dilemma further in Chapter 3, I will first expand on my observations of the effects of assessment on students' experience of reflective activities.

In my view, the instrumentalization of reflection for the purpose of assessment can trigger a problematic dynamic that I can best characterise as *arbitrary*, in lack of a better word. By discussing this topic with students and observing their reflection assignments, I identified two common mechanisms that are triggered once reflections are being graded: *confessional* and *performative*.

The *confessional* mechanism comes about when the assessment causes students to feel pressured to disclose narratives of failure

or justify their decisions and mistakes. Such confessions create vulnerability: the student's work and sense of self are scrutinised and made available for judgement. In the context of art education, this mechanism may be even more prominent because creative work is often deeply rooted in students' life experiences or sense of identity. These effects may be amplified within educational institutions that still maintain a competitive culture in which "students are encouraged to demonstrate only their best abilities and are indeed assessed on these, and it is therefore embarrassing or foolhardy to reveal incompetence or ignorance." (Fook & Askeland, 2007, pp. 528).

The *performative* mechanism is even more commonly described by students, who admit they sometimes just write what the assessor wants to hear. Talking about the annual competency assessments at WdKA, one student noted that he could just "bullshit" his way out of it, but that it was not a genuine reflection. Although some WdKA students said that writing such reflections can be a useful experience, most students agreed that this kind of reflection is perceived as "more of a requirement than something we find real value

in." (L.G.R., RASL minor student). This quote from one of the students' assignments is very telling:

> In my own experience with reflection in higher education, I concluded that reflection is seen more like an obligation than a personal asset. For example, I've always viewed reflection as a part of the assignment that I get graded on. When writing a reflection, I think about the questions I should answer according to the format that is given and I think about being critical, but in a cautious way, so I don't get a bad grade. This way of reflecting doesn't work for me. It works for the educational system. [...] I feel like people who reflect, just because it is an assignment, don't really invest and therefore don't learn something from it. (L.M., RASL minor student)

An interesting insight to consider in the context of Crack #4, is that students sometimes feel like their reflections are not even read—let alone responded to—by their teacher. This may contribute to the interpretation of reflection as an isolated activity, and I see this as an invitation to consider the meaning of reciprocity in the context of reflection assignments.

Crack #4

Reflection isolates individual actions and experiences from its relational context.

Throughout this research project I often think back at my own experiences with reflection as a bachelor student a few years ago. I remember being faced with the daunting task of writing competency portfolios each year. What struck me every time, was how difficult it was for me to *write others out of the picture;* to include only my own actions and experiences as if they happened in a vacuum, untouched by others. I see learning as an inherently social process that happens through interactions with others and our surroundings. Individual reflections are always somehow related to the larger social, cultural, or political context we are part of. Yet, reflection (both in the literature and in practice), seems to be mostly interested in individual experiences and actions.

Observing students' reactions to the activities of the *Reflecting Otherwise* course, I see that the most useful endeavours to them seemed to be moments of interaction, feedback, or exchange. A few students wrote about the importance of social interaction in reflection:

Reflection can be enhanced when you meet different world views, perceptions and

interpretations. Learning from the experience of others is not always reciprocal, but when you discuss these topics, other ideas arise. And those ideas can offer a completely new perspective to reflect through. (A.R., RASL minor student)

It would be worthwhile to consider how we can make reflection a relational activity. This could involve stimulating reflective dialogue and acknowledging the role others play in our learning process. Inspired by the new materialist theory of *diffraction*, I believe that the notion of *others*, here, should be expanded beyond the human realm. Experimenting with this idea, session 4 of the *Reflecting Otherwise* course invited students to reflect through the more-than-human constellations they are part of.

For the other-than-human stakeholder mapping exercise, students were asked to map which stakeholders (other-than-human *actors* and *factors*) were involved in or affected by their projects. Then, they thought about how they might reflect with these stakeholders. Although the mapping offered a good start in thinking about the relational contexts students

were part of, it appeared to be too ambitious to reflect *with* these more-than-human others. Besides, doing so may lead us back to the all-too-familiar debate about representation of non-human voices, a discussion that is not very productive here.

Instead, I think it would be interesting to return to the reflective narrative discussed at the beginning of this section. A relational approach to reflection would require us to *write others into the picture*. That includes not only the people surrounding us that we learn from, but more-than-human others as well. For example: how are we influenced by environmental conditions such as furniture, textures, sounds, or the weather? Which affects—hopes, intuitions, or memories—are we bringing with us in our work? And how are we aided or obstructed by material, legal, or technological matters?

In short: the relational aspect of reflection deserves further investigation. Reflecting in/through dialogue with others and acknowledging the role of (more-than-human) others in reflective narratives may be interesting starting points.

Conclusion

Reflection is a complicated notion; not only from a conceptual perspective, but also from a practical one. Facilitating reflection comes with doubts, unwanted side effects, and misunderstandings. In this chapter, I reflected on my experiences developing and teaching the *Reflecting Otherwise* course and identified a series of *cracks*—or issues—that need to be addressed if we wish to repair reflection in higher education.

Crack #1 posits that the benefits and meaning of reflection risk to be compromised by the broadness and fuzziness of the term. If we are not specific enough, any contemplative activity can be called reflection, which makes it difficult to understand how reflection differs from other forms of thinking. Lacking a clear definition, students are more likely to resort to ways of reflecting they are most familiar with, including *rumination* and methods dictated by *knowledge-centred* systems. Another risk may be that reflection is reduced to mere contemplation or thinking, broadening the concept to the extent that it becomes undone.

Crack #2 discusses the negative effects reflection can have on students' wellbeing. We must not forget that students may be dealing with complex personal situations, mental conditions, or neurodivergence, making reflection a potentially triggering activity. Here again, a clear delineation might be helpful.

Crack #3 states that reflection can feel *arbitrary* when used as an instrument for assessment. In my teaching practice, I observed two common dynamics: *confessional* and *performative*. In a *confessional* dynamic, students feel pressured to disclose incompetence and justify their choices. The *performative* dynamic is more common and implies that students write what they think the assessor wants to hear, rather than reflecting genuinely. Reflection here becomes a residual account of learning, rather than an important part of learning itself.

Crack #4 zooms in on the *relational* aspects of reflection and scrutinises how reflection tends to isolate individual actions and experiences. Learning happens through interaction with each other and with the world, but reflection

does not emphasise the multiple ways in which we are affected by these encounters. Expanding reflection beyond the human self allows us to think through the more-than-human constellations we are part of.

This chapter did not cover all *cracks* one might possibly observe in practice, but rather offers a starting point. Areas that require further scrutiny are, for example, the dominance of writing as a medium for reflection, the understanding of reflection as a linear, graspable process and the complex relationship between affective and embodied experiences and the intellectual reflective process. I am hoping to better understand the extent and implications of these (and other) cracks through conversations with colleagues based on this research.

Certainly, this chapter raised more questions than answers. How can we, for example, delineate reflection while leaving room for students to experiment with their own methods of reflection? How can we design inclusive reflective activities and assignments with students' emotional wellbeing in mind?

(How) can reflection and assessment work together better? And how can we acknowledge the influence of (more-than-human) others in reflections? I will attempt to address some of these questions in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

Repairing reflection:
A workbook for making amends

Introduction

I chose to include this chapter in the form of a workbook. As a *designing educator*, I am fascinated by this format and the way it can disseminate knowledge, but also facilitate the creation of new knowledge. Workbooks present carefully curated input and invite the reader to somehow engage with that content to make it their own. This 'making something your own', to me, has great pedagogical value that not all publication formats permit. It invites you to somehow engage in a dialogue with the content. In its physical format, this value is even more prominent because you can write in the margins, underline, cross out words, tear out pages, and so forth.

This relates to the underlying intention of the research question: 'how can we repair reflection in higher education?'. With 'we' in this question, I mean us, *colleague educators*. Repairing reflection, I believe, requires the exchange of experiences, ideas and methods

that contribute to a collective knowledge base and pedagogy for reflection. I hope that the perspectives and questions included in the workbook will prompt such discussions, and that they might generate more questions for the expansion of this research.

To continue the narrative of this research, I now invite you to <u>jump to the workbook</u> and wander through its pages as you like. You can later return here to read the conclusion and consult the list of references.

Conclusion

Conclusion

This conclusion marks the end of this initial exploration of the (somewhat troubled) notion of reflection in higher education and how it might be facilitated otherwise. Departing from the question: 'how can we repair reflection in higher education?', this research project has taken stock of the theoretical foundations of reflection as well as the issues that arise when facilitating it, and how they might be addressed. The research perhaps did not achieve a clear set of answers, but instead offered perspectives and questions that may nourish insightful conversations. After all, repairing reflection is something we cannot do alone, but that requires a collaborative approach.

A brief recap

As demonstrated throughout this research, understanding reflection is more challenging than it seems at first glance. The body of literature on reflection is vast and complex, making it almost impossible to formulate a

single definition for the term. In Chapter 1, I briefly touched upon the ideas of Dewey, Habermas, Schön and Kolb and imagined what their approaches have to offer. The chapter continues to address that the definition of reflection is further diluted by the multiple variations on the term, such as *critical reflection, reflexivity*, and *self-reflection,* which are often used interchangeably. By clarifying these variations, the chapter aimed to offer a better understanding of the various ways reflection could be applied. Finally, the chapter touched upon the integration of reflection in the context of higher education.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed account of my experience of facilitating the *Reflecting Otherwise* course. After thoroughly reflecting on the outcomes of the sessions and connecting these reflections to insights from the literature, I was able to identify four *cracks* or pitfalls in facilitating reflection. The first crack warned for the consequences of the absence of a clear definition or delineation of reflection. This might cause students to resort to a 'default understanding' of reflection that may be informed by the knowledge-centred system, it may be reduced to contemplation

or thinking, or even worse: it may be confused with *rumination*. The latter was further expanded under the second crack, which discussed the negative emotional effects reflection may have on students' emotional wellbeing.

The third crack analysed the relationship between reflection and assessment and posed that reflection—once instrumentalised for assessment—can be experienced as arbitrary and trigger *confessional* or *performative* dynamics in students. Finally, the fourth crack briefly touched upon the fact that reflection is often seen as an activity that isolates individual experiences from the social learning context. It then offered first directions for the development of a relational approach to reflection.

Chapter 3 can be seen as an invitation to collectively imagine how we might repair the notion of reflection in higher education. The workbook format aimed to invite you to engage with the content and *make it your own*. Doing so, it hopes to spark conversations that will continue far beyond the scope and timeframe of this research project. The workbook

consists of three parts: *preparing*, *facilitating*, and *assessing*. The first part offered perspectives on how to define or delineate the notion of reflection and on how to create the 'right' space for reflection. The second part invited you to think about approaches to facilitating reflection, both in terms of concrete exercises and assignment, and in terms of pedagogical gestures. Finally, the workbook briefly touched upon the dilemma of the assessment of reflections, and suspensefully ended with the question: should reflections be assessed at all?

Afterthoughts

The summaries of the theoretical foundations discussed in Chapter 1 are somewhat superficial. I in no way master these theories and will engage in further readings of these works to enable myself to apply them better. I am aware that the use of secondary sources in this chapter compromises its thoroughness. The main reason for this choice was that some of the primary sources (i.e., the work of Dewey and Habermas) is complex and extensive, and the time constraints of this research

did not permit an in-depth review of these texts. Perhaps this confirms the point made in Chapter 1 that some of the literature on reflection is difficult to access.

It is also worth mentioning that the discussed theories are dated, and they have been subject to much scrutiny over the years. To sketch an accurate picture of the body of literature currently most prominent in the field, I left such perspectives out of consideration for now. Reading the texts in a reparative manner, I mainly focussed on the ways in which they could be made useful. Disregarding critical perspectives for now also meant I had to exclude feminist, posthuman, indigenous, and other voices from the narrative of this research. A next step for this research would be to consider these perspectives and investigate further how they might inform the process of repair.

The experience of combining research with teaching and simultaneously being a student allowed me to experience some of the challenges my students went through. For example, I experienced the negative effects of reflection while writing about

them, as the period following the *Reflecting Otherwise* course was characterised by lots of overthinking and ruminating. And I experienced how we may bring personal struggles with us to school, and how this might negatively affect our experience of reflective activities. The layeredness of the research and my experience of it sometimes made it challenging to maintain overview.

Little before the end of this project, I was diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, which added another layer of complexity. The brainfog and physical fatigue I experienced made it challenging for me to find the energy to write, articulate my thoughts or even find the words I was looking for. Reflecting on reflection and simultaneously writing about it was cognitively strenuous. To me, this was an interesting reminder that the timeline of reflecting on our experiences sometimes does not match up with the academic agenda. Perhaps this is an interesting point to elaborate further. Going through this experience and learning from other disabled or neurodivergent people, also helped me understand better how reflection can be exclusive towards certain groups and motivates me to develop more

inclusive reflective activities.

That being said, I would like to take a brief detour to acknowledge that I could not have finished this research if it was not for the support of my supervisors, Marek van de Watering and Ingrid Commandeur—whose compassion and support has truly made a difference for me—and my classmates and friends at the masters, who have been a true inspiration the past years.

At times throughout the research, I wondered how it was even possible to spend nearly two years of my life learning about reflection, yet still feel as if I barely know anything about it. Perhaps this is another indication of the vastness of its theory base, and the complexity of its practice. Certainly, the questions posed in Chapter 3 remain open ended. I hope that these (and other) questions will spark interesting discussions that will inform our joint efforts to repair reflection in our educational practices.

And so forth

Besides prompting discussions among educators, I hope this research will be a useful resource for rethinking the applications of reflection in assessment. I intend to investigate this further in the context of my workplace at WdKA and RASL. Another exciting direction for this project would be to continue the development of a resource for educators (departing from the workbook) but also for students. The latter has not yet been covered in this research, but generates many new ideas, such as the development of a reflection handout or an elective (extracurricular) course. Within the context of WdKA, I believe such interventions should be directly related to the competency assessments, as this seems to be where students mostly experience the dark side of reflection.

Perhaps I could even develop a resource that can be applied outside of the context of higher education. I see potential, for example, in developing the list of questions for reflection further into a card deck that may be of use to practitioners across different fields. Here, it may be interesting to return to the source of my interest in reflection: the socially engaged practice. A question to explore in this context may be something along the lines of: 'how can reflection contribute to socially engaged practices?' This project could depart from socially engaged art and design but could also include practices that are embedded in other disciplines across the humanities and sciences.

Above all, I am looking forward to engaging in conversations about reflection and how it might be practiced or facilitated otherwise. I am curious to learn more about the experiences of students and educators, and which questions or urgencies emerged from their encounters with reflection. I am certain these conversations will uncover additional *cracks*, and hopefully even more ideas on how they might be mended.

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Repairing reflection—
A workbook for making amends

by Maaike van Papeveld
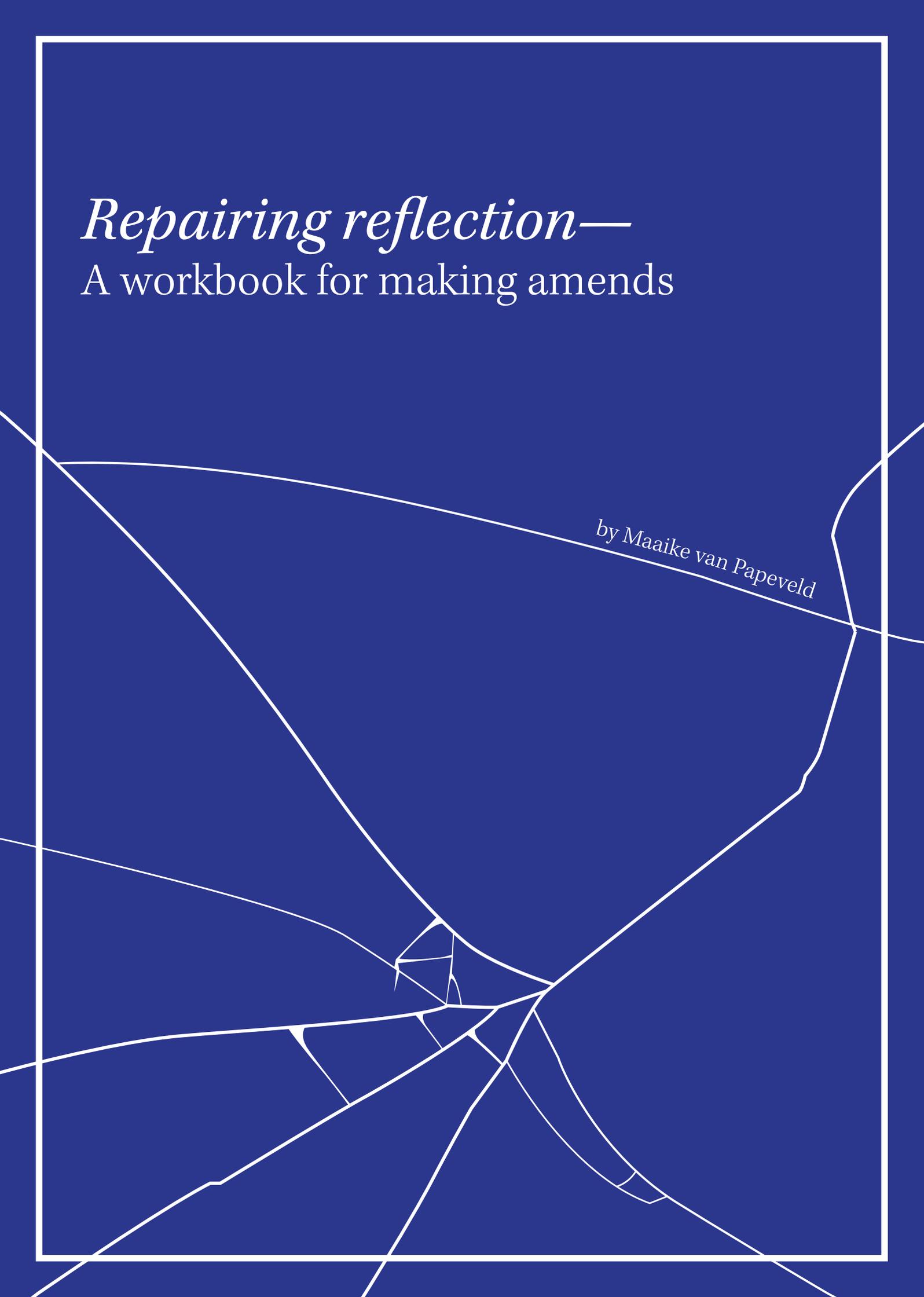
This workbook belongs to:

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Contents

Introduction:
A workbook for repairing reflection

Dear colleague,

If you are reading this, you are probably looking for a way to facilitate reflection otherwise. Most likely, your curiosity—like my own—comes from a feeling of friction, frustration, or heartfelt concern about the effects reflection has on the students it ought to serve. Or perhaps you are confused—like me—by the discrepancy between the intended functions of reflection and the ones you observe in practice. Or perhaps, you simply want to know more about reflection and expand the way you facilitate it in your teaching practice. Whatever your reason may be for opening this workbook, I hope it will offer you what you need to develop your own reparative pedagogy for reflection.

This workbook invites you to think about each aspect of teaching reflection; from *preparing,* to *facilitating,* and to *assessing* a reflective activity. Each section departs from my own practical perspectives. It is written from educator to educator, from heart to heart. I would like to invite you to use its contents as you like. Feel free to cross out words, rephrase, underline, and scribble your thoughts in the margins, to take it apart, add content found elsewhere, and to copy parts to use in your own educational endeavours. I hope it will offer a source of inspiration, and especially, that it will prompt many more discussions on what repairing reflection might involve.

This workbook is the first step towards a resource for facilitating reflection otherwise. The resource may keep its original form of the workbook or may grow into something else, alongside to or independent from the thesis. I therefore see this publication not only as a materialisation of my thoughts, but also as a conversation tool that will help me collect new perspectives on facilitating reflection. If you like to contribute to its development, please consider sharing your answers to the questions or other thoughts, tips, and feedback. Any input is highly appreciated!

All the best,
Maaike van Papeveld
info@designingdifferently.org

Part 1: *Preparing*

Facilitating reflection otherwise requires careful preparation. This part of the workbook zooms in on some aspects to consider when preparing reflective activities. Questions we will discuss here are:

- How do you define and delineate reflection?
- How do you create the 'right' space for reflection?

1.1 How do you define and/or delineate reflection?

Based on the insights gained during this research project, I would highly recommend delineating the meaning of reflection at least to some extent. In Chapter 2, I explained that I avoided delineating the term in the Reflecting Otherwise course, because I believed that this would leave more room for experimentation. This approach did not at all achieve the result I hoped: at worst it led to increased rumination among students, and at best to a slightly more conscious application of already familiar approaches to reflection.

I learned that, to enable students to experiment with different ways of reflecting, they need to be better informed about what reflection is (and what it is not) and be offered the tools and freedom to experiment with these newly acquired approaches. Smith (2011) draws a similar conclusion:

> [...] an appreciation for the different theoretical underpinnings of critical reflection may help to moderate self-criticism and self-regulatory aspects of reflectivity (Bleakley 1999). By teaching that critical reflection can take different forms students may find it is easier to make use of reflective techniques and to explain how they have made use of reflectivity. (pp. 216)

At the end of this section, we will look at strategies for defining or delineating reflection.

1.1.1: *Do you think it is important or helpful to define or delineate reflection in your educational activities? Why (not)?*

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Case study: make a mirror

I conducted a small case study in the context of the RASL dual degree module to test how a more elaborate introduction into reflection, including theoretical perspectives, would influence the ways in which students applied reflection throughout the course. See the Methodology Chapter for more information about the course and its context.

In the first week of the module, I gave a short workshop with the aim of encouraging students to start thinking about how they might reflect on their projects, and to offer them some ideas and tools to do so differently, avoiding the problematic mechanisms identified in this research. The workshop started with the creative prompt: 'make a mirror'. To do so, students had access to various kinds of materials including pieces of plexiglass, wood veneer, cork, straws, fabrics, wool, coloured paper, collage material, cardboard and more. But there was one catch: there were no reflective materials included. This challenged students to think about the symbolic and practical function of a mirror.

After selecting their materials, students had about half an hour to craft their mirrors. As they were crafting, I gave a short discursive lecture about common issues with reflection (the cracks) and the different strategies for reflection (the literature review). We ended the workshop with the writing prompt: *How might you bring your mirror along with you into your practice? Write down some first wishes and intentions for reflecting in/on your project.* Students passed their notes onto one of their classmates as a gift.

Asking students about six weeks later whether they experienced a difference in the ways in which they engaged in reflection throughout the module, some of them mentioned they were more aware of the potentially negative consequences of reflection. Students also mentioned they enjoyed the format of the workshop. The programme is still ongoing at the moment of writing this, so it is unfortunately too soon to observe the effect of the workshop on students' written reflections on/for the course.
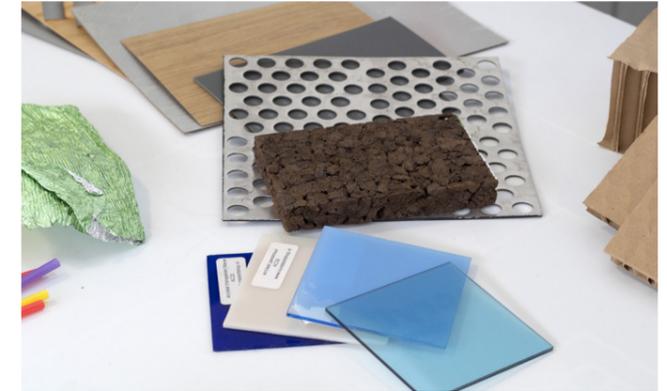
Reflecting is not:
- Ruminating
- Reporting
- Confessing
- Evidence Producing
- Just any kind of contemplation

Writing prompt:
How might you bring your mirror along with you into your practice? Write down some first wishes and intentions for reflecting in/on your project.

Pictures and slides of the workshop on 6 April 2023

Defining or delineating?
There are different ways of narrowing down the meaning and scope of reflection. I envision two different approaches: *defining* and *delineating*. They can also be combined.

Defining
Offering a concrete definition helps make sure that students understand what is expected from them. The risk of this approach is that the offered definition is too restrictive and dismisses students' own ideas and methods. Offering a definition that is too vague or open-ended, on the other hand, may lead students to resort to the (sometimes problematic) ways of reflecting they are most familiar with. In addition, it seems unrealistic to capture the conceptual depth and variety offered by the large body of literature in a single cure-all definition.

Delineating
With delineating, I mean clarifying what reflection is not. This can help students avoid some of the pitfalls identified in this research. For example, reflection is not:

- Rumination
- Reporting, confessing, evidence-producing
- Just any kind of contemplation

This approach may leave students wondering what reflection is then. And in my experience, it is good to have a clear answer to this question.

1.1.2: *How would you define reflection?*

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1.1.3: *Which experiences or theoretical references is your definition based on?*

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1.1.3: *How and to what extent will you define and/or delineate reflection in your reflective activity? Describe your strategy as concretely as possible. What do you hope the effect of this will be?*

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1.2 How do you create the 'right' space for reflection?

Upon asking over fifty students and colleagues where they reflect, rarely any of them mentioned the classroom. Most of us reflect at home, in our bedroom or when taking a hot shower, or outside in nature, taking a walk in the forest or at the beach, or in the company of others, when talking to a close friend. As discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, it is questionable whether the kind of reflection we do in the personal realm is the same as the one we are opting to evoke in the context of education. But what I do take out from this is that spaces that put us at ease—that allow for some form of mental disengagement, wandering, relaxation— are more hospitable places for reflection. Perhaps, the classroom is the opposite of that. When we enter it, we are expected to be mentally engaged, alert and productive.

So, how can we create the 'right' space for reflection in the classroom? In large part, I think this space is created through the gestures we make when facilitating. I believe it is important to create a trusted learning environment that allows us to foster

supportive relationships with students. In Part 2 of this workbook, I will briefly touch upon such gestures. Here, I would like to zoom in on the physical environment.

I believe that inviting students to engage with the classroom differently can already make a big difference. Being coordinator of the *RASL Spaces*, I greatly cared that students of the RASL minor would feel a sense of ownership over the learning spaces. To encourage this, I set up a hosting schedule in which each student group (and teachers' team) would take care of each other and the space for one week.

We decided together what the hosting could include, such as preparing beverages and snacks, washing the dishes, watering the plants, putting on music and organising extra activities. The hosting activated a habit of care and acknowledged student's needs, but also created a sense of ownership that allowed them to act upon their needs. I believe this is an important precondition for reflection to take place.

Working at the different institutions within RASL, I learned that each space has its own affordances: it activates or discontinues specific ways of thinking, learning, and collaborating. Whereas WdKA sparks students to think with their hands and through materials, Codarts invites them to think through the body and sound, and the Erasmus university activates an intellectual but more passive approach. The RASL Spaces seem to prompt more informal and creative interactions, influenced by the interior lay-out, facilities and available material.

The latter is an interesting thing to keep in mind when preparing reflective activities: outcomes may be influenced greatly by the availability of creative materials, tools, and equipment. The RASL Spaces are equipped with simple materials and tools, such as paper, markers, scissors, cardboard, and collage material. Consequently, students' creations mostly took on the form of written pieces, drawings, collages, etc. (see images on the next page). If you wish to stimulate students to reflect in media other than writing, it may be interesting to rethink the offered materials and tools.

WHY I THINK

The Mind
→ Things and matters we mind hold a power.
Power, both helpful, hopeful but also a heavy power
when used without caution can sink you into
spaces you maybe didnt ever want to be in.

THE POWER:
→ Well the power, in my opinion is the power of potential.
Where your mind goes
Energy flows

It can be
scary → knowing the power of potential lies at the
base of youre thoughts
→ lies in the potential of youre reality
CRAZY

REFLECTION
Exhausts our mind in all
of its efforts to make
sense of the reality we are
experiancing → We draw on memory, emotion
Analytics and we create our
understanding.

→ AN OUTLOOK
We assign a standard of how this
understanding makes us feel.
GOOD BAD or SAD.
We compare how it makes us feel to how
we want to feel

WANTS IN A
POWERFUL MIND

When we recognize our mind
acts as both the interpretor and
creator of our reality
WANTS become Boarderless

A GREEDY THOUGHT OF REASON
"If we create our reality then Im going to always want
better then I think…so I dont stagnate."

However, in wanting the
Power of the mind may make you sink
into a space that is infact trapped
by a boarder.

BOARDER OF WANTS
DISSATISFACTION

When we constantly want
while we Reflect and make sense
of our space and Experiance with a
was approach to growing that is
rooted in moving away from our
Present and towards a better
future, we Never Accept our
Present

Sometimes we like to choose to
focus on things we wish to change
because it pumps us with motivation
and feels like productive thinking.

EUREKA ⇒ Pay attention to positive thinking in reflection.
Pay attention to the life you are experiencing
Pay GRATITUDE to the life you
Because. Then you realize your living a life you WANTED
Positive thinking and Gratitude, even in critical reflection brings
Clarity, appreciation and Happiness to a growing experiance
Peace of reflection.

KEEP YOUR BALANCE
of POWER

Works made by RASL minor students during the Reflecting Otherwise
course. Above: T.S. Page on the right: W.V. & N.S.H.L.

Rethinking the importance of the learning environment in reflection invites us to consider a relational approach that takes into account the more-than-human entanglements that touch us as much as we touch them. Here it would be worthwhile to experiment with expanding the classroom beyond the walls of the institution.

Inviting students for a walk or moving the class to a park, garden or art space inevitably leads to different kinds of reflections. Many colleagues already do this in their education, and I am curious to learn more about the effects they observe.

1.2.1: *Use the following pages to visualise your reflective 'classroom'. You can include spatial and material aspects as well as immaterial ones such as gestures, attitudes, hopes, etc. Feel free to revisit the visualisation after completing Part 2.*

Reflective classroom:

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Reflective classroom:

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Part 2:
Facilitating

This second part of the workbook zooms in on the content of reflective activities and how they might be facilitated. Questions we will discuss here are:

- How do you design reflective activities and assignments?
- How do you facilitate reflective activities?

2.1 How do you design reflective activities and assignments?

This section discusses *premises* and *prompts* that can help to make the insights presented in this research applicable in practice. They can be used to create exercises to help students exercise and expand their reflective abilities, or they can be combined to formulate formal reflection assignments. They can also be adapted to function as an addition to another exercise or assignment. The premises and prompts included here should be seen as experiments in facilitating reflection. I am curious to hear what thoughts or ideas they evoke in you, and how you envision they might work in your teaching practice.

Premises
The phrases and fragments below can be used in the formulation of assignments or exercises to emphasise some of the perspectives and pitfalls identified in this research. At the end of this section, you can find an example of how they might be combined into an assignment description.

Premise	Aim
The reflection does not need to be written; you can use any medium you consider suitable, for example [insert selection], etc. If the piece is not self-explanatory, please add a short description of what it aims to convey/articulate.	Challenge students to experiment with media other than the standard written reflection report. See the list of alternative media in the appendix for more inspiration.
The main aim of this assignment/ exercise is not to assess your performance and produce evidence, but rather to help you articulate what you have learned from your experiences, and what the significance of that knowledge is to your self-development.	Emphasise a student-centred approach instead of a knowledge-centred one
The term reflection can be defined in many ways and involve a variety of methods or techniques. Consider which form of reflection you want to apply, and what this implies in practice.	Prompt students to consider what reflection is or could be more deeply (beyond common-sensical understandings).

This assignment/exercise aims to be accessible to everyone. You are encouraged to approach this assignment/exercise in a way that works for you, especially if you have the tendency to ruminate, if you face a mental condition or if you identify as neurodivergent. Please reach out if you would like to receive guidance.	Safeguard students' emotional wellbeing, increase accessibility of the assignment
It is up to you to determine which information you want to share in your reflection. Writing about your personal experiences can be a vulnerable activity; you are encouraged to protect your boundaries while doing so.	Guide students in determining which information to disclose.
Pay mind not only to your own thoughts and actions, but opt to make visible how (more-than-human) others influenced your process. Write them into the narrative.	Stimulate a relational approach to reflective writing.
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....	....

Example:

Alongside your project, you are asked to keep a reflective journal in which you document the most significant learning experiences. Journal entries can be on a daily or weekly basis and do not need to be written; you can use any medium you consider suitable, for example sound recordings, memes, visual essays, haikus, animations, letters, etc. If the entries are not self-explanatory, please add a short description of what it aims to convey/ articulate.

The main aim of this assignment/exercise is not to assess your performance and produce evidence, but rather to help you articulate what you have learned from your experiences, and what the significance of that knowledge is to your self-development and to that of your project.

It is up to you to determine which information you would like to share in your journal. Writing about your personal experiences can be a vulnerable activity; you are encouraged to protect your boundaries while doing so.

2.1.1: *Now you! Use the following pages to formulate different variations of reflection assignments. Feel free to use some of the suggested premises, or come up with your own.*

Reflection assignment #1:

_____ (title)

Reflection assignment #2:

_____ (title)

Reflection assignment #3:

_____ (title)

Reflection assignment #4:

_____ (title)

Prompts
Reflection prompts may be used to help students reflect on specific aspects of their work or to help them exercise their reflective abilities that they can then apply in practice. This section will expand on two types of prompts: *questions* and *exercises*.

<u>Questions</u>
I see facilitating reflection as the art of asking the right questions at the right time. Actively responding to situations in the classroom with appropriate and challenging reflection questions helps students learn how to question their own work. But finding the right questions can be a challenging task. It often requires improvisation, because reflection is always related to a specific situation or experience and therefore questions should be adapted on the spot.

Developing a set of (generic) questions for reflection may help us come up with more profound or specific questions on the spot. Reparatively reading the theoretical insights included in Chapter 1, I came up with a list of questions that may help implementing them:

Reflective practice and instrumental reflection

- What theoretical frameworks or 'knowledge base' did you draw upon to inform your actions and decisions?
- How did you translate or adapt the theories in response to challenges in practice?

- How do experiences from practice inform the further development of your knowledge base?
- What 'practical knowledge' can you distil from these experiences?

Reflection-in-action:
- What is the problem or challenge at hand?
- How can prior experiences inform your approach to addressing the problem/challenge?
- How can you adjust your approach in response to feedback and new information?
- What is the best course of action to achieve your goals?

Reflection-on-action:
- What was your original goal or intention, and what actions did you take to achieve that goal?
- Which other approaches could you try to achieve the goal?
- What did you learn from this experience that you can apply to future situations?

- What were the strengths and limitations of your approach, and how might you build on those strengths and overcome those limitations in the future?

- What are the potential consequences of your (in) actions, and how might they affect others?

Critical reflection

- What political, cultural, social, or historical factors have influenced the situation or topic at hand?

- Which theories or knowledges inform your understanding of the topic?
- What are the sources of this knowledge?
- How is this knowledge perceived in the field, and what are the common critiques?
- What gaps or blind spots exist in your knowledge base, and why do you think that is?

- What dominant ideas or paradigms exist in your field of operation?
- How do you relate to them?
- Which ideas or paradigms seem to be underrepresented or excluded, and why do you think that is?

- What assumptions do you hold about the topic or situation?
- Which meaning perspectives (see Mezirow, 1990), theories, personal experiences or socio-political influences may have led to these assumptions?
- How might they influence your perspective and decision-making?

- What power structures are at play within your field of operation?
- Who benefits from them, and who is disadvantaged or oppressed by them?
- How do you position yourself within them? How do they influence your ability to act? And how may you influence the agency of others?

Reflexivity

- What do you already know about your topic and how did you obtain this knowledge?
  See also critical reflection

- How do your personal background, life experiences and worldview influence your research topic or approach?
- How do you see the role of subjectivity in your research?
- How will you reflect on and learn from the research process, and how might this influence the development of the research project?

- How do you position yourself as a practitioner/researcher?
- How do you carry out this position?
- How do you think your research may be perceived by others?
- How can you ensure that your research is inclusive and representative of diverse perspectives and experiences?

- What potential ethical issues might arise from your research, and how can you address them?
- How do you interact with participants to the research?
- How do you collect and process data?

- How do you disseminate your work, and what may be its effects on others, the field, or on society at large?

Questions relating to the kind of self-reflection described in Chapter 1 are perhaps not suitable for the educational context. However, it is still important to acknowledge the emotional dimension of our existence when reflecting. Emotions not only influence how we perceive situations and what decisions we make; they can also be an important source of knowledge about ourselves, our ambitions, preferences, and challenges. Questions to add could be:

- What were you (emotionally) feeling in the situation?
- How might this feeling have influenced your perception or decision making?
- What information does this feeling hold about the situation, yourself, or your decision-making?

Some of the perspectives included in Chapter 2 are not represented in this set of questions. For example, about how we may reflect on/through embodied and intuitive encounters and how we can make reflection a relational activity.

My first ideas for questions to ask regarding these topics are:

- What were you (physically) feeling, smelling, hearing, observing in the situation?
- (How) did you act upon that sensation?
- What ideas, words or phrases did the experience bring about in you?
- What could be their significance, connecting them to the bigger picture (your project, life, etc.)?

- Which physical or intuitive (first) response did you observe in yourself?
- (How) did you act upon this response?

- How did (more-than-human) others engage, interact or intersect with your process or activities?
- How did they touch (or influence, affect) you, and how did you touch them?
- How did you acknowledge their presence, influence or stakes in your process?

2.1.2: *Which reflection questions would you add here? They can be as general or as specific as you like.*

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2. ....

3. ....

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7. ....

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10. ....

2.1.3: *Case study: think of a specific situation or educational activity. Which reflection questions could be relevant in this situation? You can choose questions from the list or come up with new ones.*

Case study #1:   *Description of the situation/activity:*

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Relevant questions for reflection:

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Case study #2:   *Description of the situation/activity:*

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Relevant questions for reflection:

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5. ....   6. ....

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Exercises

Sadly, reflection exercises are often perceived by students as boring or a distraction from the 'real' work. To be honest, this is how I remember experiencing such exercises too back when I was a bachelor student. But I am confident we can change that. For the *Reflecting Otherwise* course,

I tried to come up with short prompts that were engaging and insightful. I even added a digital dice that would randomly assign a medium for students to work with, hoping to make the exercises more playful. Below is a selection of prompts that were used in the course (slightly adapted for a more general application).

Knowledge traces
Map everything you know about your topic of inquiry. There is one catch: you cannot include any factual knowledge. Collect hunches, experiences, feelings, anecdotes, and other encounters.

How did I get here?
Make a timeline of all the events that led you to take part in the [insert programme/course title]. Start at your day of birth. The timeline does not need to be linear.

Contemplative dream
Turn a recent experience or situation into a script of a contemplative dream. The dream can be as absurd, scary or random as you like. The script should give insight into your experience of and reflection on the situation.

Actualities
Choose a page from one of the newspapers. Turn it into an artwork that somehow says something about your experiences of the past week. You can use any medium/artform.

Self portrait
Create a self- portrait (in the broadest sense of the word) in any medium you like. The portrait is a snapshot of who/how you are today.

Homage to a teacher
Pay homage to a teacher that had a profound influence on your project. It does not need to be a human being. Describe how they/it influenced you.

The insights of this research offer fertile ground for generating new and more profound prompts. Unfortunately, this is a kind of labour that neither fits the time restrictions of finishing this research project nor my brain capacity while doing so. I am hoping to pick up this task after a restful break. Questions I would like to explore are:

- How can I prompt students to reflect in a relational way? This includes the acknowledgement of 1) writing others into the narrative (learning is a social activity) and 2) acknowledging how we touch and are touched by (more-than-human) others.
- Which exercises could help students learn from other-than-rational experiences (embodied, intuitive, sensory, etc.) without reducing them into merely intellectual activities?

- What can I learn from the practices of colleagues and techniques/models proposed in literature? This research does not take into account the many existing models and methods, which is something I would like to expand upon.
- How can I translate the theoretical insights listed in Chapter 1 into accessible and engaging prompts?

Maybe you would like to think along?

2.1.4: *Now you! Use the following pages to craft experimental reflection exercises.*

Reflection exercises:

2.2 How do you facilitate reflective activities?

This section discusses the facilitation of reflection and briefly touches upon two aspects: *the emotional dimension* and *the pedagogical dimension.*

The emotional dimension of facilitating reflection (otherwise)

Facilitating reflection is a testing task. It asks for very specific qualities that possibly go beyond what most of us learned during our professional training. It requires us to be emotionally available; attentive to and able to address the (negative) effects reflection may have on students. This may feel like a big responsibility that we are not always prepared for. After all, we are teachers and not therapists.

It aslo requires us to be reflective on ourselves. A common approach to helping students develop a critical attitude is to embody this attitude in our own teaching: by practicing what we preach. For example, by disclosing our own reflections or openly questioning our own methods and assumptions. But doing this can put us in a vulnerable position. Additionally, such critical discussions may backfire; students may direct their scrutiny at the course or teacher instead.

I experienced the latter while facilitating the *Reflecting Otherwise* course. Although I actively engaged in critical discussions about reflection and aimed to empower students to develop a way of reflecting that best served their individual practices, a handful of students saw the course as the culprit. Some of their feedback—such as

that the course made them 'suffer', or that it would have made more sense if it had been offered by someone with a background in psychology—was quite disheartening to receive.

It took me some time to process the gathered input and feedback—not to forget my own reflections on the course, which tended to be even fiercer. I am grateful for the support I have received from my dear colleagues and supervisors at the master's programme. Their generosity and positive perspectives helped me tremendously in navigating these challenges. I wish for anyone reading this to be surrounded by such supportive and understanding colleagues.

Finally, I would like to briefly address the fact that us teachers may too experience hardships in our lives beyond work, just like our students do. I believe it is important to acknowledge the conditions under which we are expected to do the work of love and at what expense we do so. Perhaps these are challenges inherent to education at large, rather than to facilitating reflection in specific. Nonetheless, I hope that acknowledging these challenges may help us take care of ourselves (and each other) better.

2.2.1: *Which challenges, questions or insecurities do you think you might encounter when facilitating reflection? And how can you address them?*

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The didactic dimension of facilitating reflection (otherwise)

Literature in the field of (critical) pedagogy is rich in practical wisdom and may offer fruitful perspectives on facilitating reflection otherwise. I find it useful to consider how I might translate such sources of inspiration to pedagogical gestures, or, if I may borrow a beautiful term coined by Manning: to *minor gestures*. Manning writes:

> Yet while the grand gestures of a micropolitics most easily sum up the changes that occurred to alter the field, it is the minoritarian tendencies that initiate the subtle shifts that created the conditions for this, and any change. (Manning, 2016, p. 1)

I envision that the process of mending reflection needs the same kind of subtlety.

In Chapter 2 I already listed a few sources of pedagogical inspiration and demonstrated how I translated them into pedagogical gestures. Expanding this list, or 'toolbox' of practical wisdoms, I would like to further explore the following ideas:

- Refusal, as conceptualised by Moten and Harney in *The undercommons: Fugitive planning & black study* (2013) and Halberstam in *The queer art of failure* (2011)
- Diversity and inclusion discussed by Ahmed in *On being included: racism and diversity in institutional Life* (2012)
- Failure, in Halberstam's *The queer art of failure* (2011)
- Affective and emotion, for example by Snaza in *Love and bewilderment: On education as affective encounter* (2020) and Ahmed in *The cultural politics of emotion* (2014).

2.2.2: *Which (pedagogical) ideas or texts might offer guidance? How can you translate them into pedagogical gestures?*

Idea/text: Gesture:

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4. ....
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Should reflections be assessed at all, and if so, how?

This section does not discuss concrete methods for assessing reflection. Although this would be interesting (and important) include here, I do not have sufficient practical experience with assessment to make statements about this aspect. If you do, I would love to hear your thoughts. Instead, I would like to address a dilemma I encountered when assessing the assignments of the *Reflecting Otherwise* course.

While assessing the students' assignments, it suddenly hit me that—once the assessment card is on the table—reflection seems to be at risk of no longer being in service of students' self-development (as in *student-centred* systems), but rather in service of the institutional agenda or the rubric (as in *knowledge-centred* systems). It can also evoke problematic mechanisms as described in Chapter 2. This got me wondering: should we even assess reflections? Facilitating various workshops, I learned that students

inevitably relate the word reflection to assessment, which is far removed from my own (reparative) understanding of the term. It seems to me that reflection for self-development and the kind of reflection that is instrumentalised for assessment are two completely different things.

I have wondered at times whether—in efforts to repair the notion—we should come up with a new name for the *reflecting otherwise* I am opting for. The concept of *diffraction* is sometimes proposed as an alternative term that departs from feminist new materialist values. Yet, finding an alternative name could contribute to the further diffusion of the concept. It also would be in contrast with a reparative approach that rather opts to stay with the trouble. In any case, repairing reflection requires us to somehow express the different understandings of and difficulties with reflection. Openly discussing them with students allows us to make amends; it makes the repair *visible*.

Part 3:
Assessing

This final part of the workbook discusses the assessment of reflection assignments. The main question we will discuss here is: should reflections be assessed at all, and if so, how?

3.1.1: *Do you think reflections should be assessed? Why (not)?*

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3.1.2: *Which assessment methods might be suitable for the assessment of reflections?*

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3.1.3: *Which assessment criteria would you use to assess a reflection assignment? Create a speculative rubric below. You can use the one of the assignments you wrote in Part 1 as a context.*

And so forth!
A brief conclusion

This workbook aimed to offer perspectives and pose questions that may set in motion fruitful discussions about how we might collectively repair reflection in higher education. I see the format of the workbook as an invitation to engage in a dialogue with its content: not only by responding to the questions it poses, but also by writing in the margins, underlining, crossing out and adding your own thoughts to mine.

The perspectives included in the workbook aim to cover three areas where repairing reflection could be performed: *preparing, facilitating,* and *assessing*.

In Part 1: Preparing, I underlined the importance of offering some form of delineation of the *fuzzy notion* of reflection and offered two approaches: defining (offering a specific definition) and delineating (defining the concept more loosely by means of exclusion). I also included a brief case study in which I researched the effect of a more elaborate introduction of the term on students' way of engaging in reflection. Part 1 also discussed the spatial aspects of reflection. Taking the RASL Spaces as an example, I aimed to demonstrate how care for the classroom and for one another can improve students' engagement, autonomy and comfort.

Part 2: Facilitating, discussed the didactic and pedagogical aspects of facilitating reflection. It started by offering premises, or short phrases that may be used to formulate reflection assignments reparatively. It also offered some examples of prompts and suggested expanding the media used for reflection beyond that of writing. This part also touched upon the difficulties of facilitating reflection, which can be a mentally challenging process that requires a specific set of skills. Finally, it suggested that repairing reflection might require *minor gestures* that could be based on wisdoms found in literature on (critical) pedagogy.

The last part, Part 3: Assessing briefly discussed the dilemma of assessing reflection assignments. In my experience, this can be tricky because it confronts us with the discrepancy between reflection for self-development and reflection for assessment. This part closes with an open ending by posing the question: should reflection be assessed at all, and if so, how?

I hope these questions and perspectives were inspiring to you, and I am curious if and how its ramifications will find a way into your teaching practice. In the near future, I aim to engage in conversations with colleagues about facilitating reflection otherwise. I hope such conversations will help me not only become a better educator, but also to develop resources that may empower teachers and students to repair reflection in their own practices.

Please feel free to reach out in case you like to continue this conversation or if you have any recommendations or feedback on this first version of the workbook.

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Appendix

Following is a list of alternative media for reflection assignments or exercises. Please note that some of the listed media might require an additional description in which students briefly describe what they are trying to convey or articulate through the piece.

A
AI-generated artwork
Animation
Artefact
Autobiography

B
Blog post

C
Collage
Concrete poem

D
Dance
Diagram
Diary
Discography

E
Essay
Exhibition

F
Fictional story

G
Game
Garment
Glossary

H
Haiku
Herbarium

I
Illustration
Infographic
Installation

J
Journal

L
Letter

M
Magazine
Map
Meme
Mixtape
Musical composition

N
Newspaper article

P
Painting
Performance
Photo reportage
Poetry (collection)

R
(Role) play

S
Scrapbook
Script
Sculpture
Short documentary
Sound piece
Spoken word

V
Video collage
Video portrait
Visual essay

W
Website (page)