

Becoming Learners in Laboratories of Learning: A Rhizomatic Assemblage of Nomadic Pedagogies

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Abstract The disruption caused by the pandemic to the delivery of our higher education degrees has offered many opportunities for rethinking what it means to learn and what conditions are needed for learning to occur. Our students renewed interest in belonging and coming together has been pivotal to this rethinking process and prompted the emergence of the Laboratories of Learning project as a means of co-designing communities of learning practice, rhizomatically and nomadically. This chapter offers a methodology to test how the emergence of such hybrid eventful spaces affords the process of becoming learners and forming communities of learning practice within wider institutional systems and structures. As an exploratory study underpinned by participatory action research Laboratories of Learning draws on nomadic learning (Semetsky 2008) as a process of collaboration, dialogue and construction, where both staff and students can ask the fundamental question of how they learn. We argue that this approach can create safe and daring spaces where questioning can become fruitful, and the process of learning can be tested and experimented with. This is supported by Deleuze's idea that 'pedagogy is ... not something that is "done to one" or "is done by one to others," but is something that one participates in, it is a mode of co-construction, [where] teaching and learning become fused...' (Cole 2016). Doing with, and learning from, are key concepts in our thinking about these Laboratories of Learning and how they form and operate, whilst illuminating emergence of communities of learning practice. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, these eventful spaces will create cartographies of learning, new maps, not tracings of the past that perpetuate stubborn myths about how we learn best (Deleuze and Guattari 1980/1994).

Key Words Communities of Learning Practice - Co-designing – Belonging – Learning – Laboratory – Nomadic - Rhizomatic

1.1 Introduction

At our creative arts and design university, we have noticed that in the day-to-day rush of teaching delivery, we often make assumptions about how we/our students learn and therefore how we teach. The impact of the pandemic has brought this realisation into sharp focus and with urgency. To tackle this, questions on how do we know when we learn and how do we know we have become part of a community of learning practice, we have designed a research project that explores what would be needed for staff and students to test ideas about learning in safe, brave and daring spaces (Arao & Clemens, 2013 and Vogel, 2020). We are calling these spaces 'Laboratories of Learning'.

The two of us write this chapter together as an assemblage of our diverse thoughts on learning through the Laboratories of Learning project. We utilise Laboratories of Learning as a platform of interrogation mirroring the notion of lab experiment where the levels of our inquiry become the different tests in the experiment. Therefore, the chapter is structured as a record of this process from a *testing pilot* to *testing* to the *test results*. In the *testing pilot*, we offer an example that took place prior to the launch of Laboratories of Learning but already explores rhizomatic learning and nomadic

pedagogies highlighting our growing interest in these debates. In *Test 1* we outline what we mean by rhizomatic learning and what nomadic lenses are there for us to apply. In *Test 2* we explore why the Laboratories of Learning need to become rhizomatic and nomadic for us to investigate and understand how our students learn to learn and how communities of learning practice coalesce around these processes. *Test 3* is dedicated to interrogating the *Course Designer* guidelines to explore how course teams are guided at our creative arts and design university in creating learning environments and what focus on learning to learn is given. Here we pay particular attention to ways in which the *Course Designer* recognises the emergence of communities of learning practice. Finally, we conclude with the examination of the *tests results* where we reflect on what results emerged from this interrogation.

Such an approach enables us to stay in keeping with the experimentation that is at the heart of Laboratories of Learning whilst sitting at the crossroads of the need for rigorous research process and the theoretical framing stemming from rhizomatic learning and nomadic pedagogies that inherently do not follow linear patterns. Moreover, we argue that the structure of the chapter becomes a blueprint for a inquiry methodology that can be applied in the Laboratories of Learning to enable research that itself is rhizomatic and nomadic in its process.

1.2 Testing pilot: Becoming Lost and Found in Translation as a nomadic rhizomatic space for learning

Before setting up the research project Laboratories of Learning the idea that learning is, ‘...continuous, dynamic process, making connections, using multiple paths, without beginnings and ends in a nomadic style (Khine, 2022) was explored in a 4-year research project *Becoming Lost and Found in Translation* (Ingham, 2021). This project was about how we learn through translation and how this is politically and socially charged concept. One aspect of this project was that it happened in the corridors, walls, galleries, the liminal spaces of our creative arts and design university. It was nomadic by design. It inhabited the spaces of flow and flux and was highly visible to students and staff who transitioned through these open common environments.



Figure 1. Translation table(s) in Education in Progress Exhibition, Image by Author. (2019).

Figure 2. Translation table(s) occupied in Education in Progress Exhibition. Image by Author. (2019)

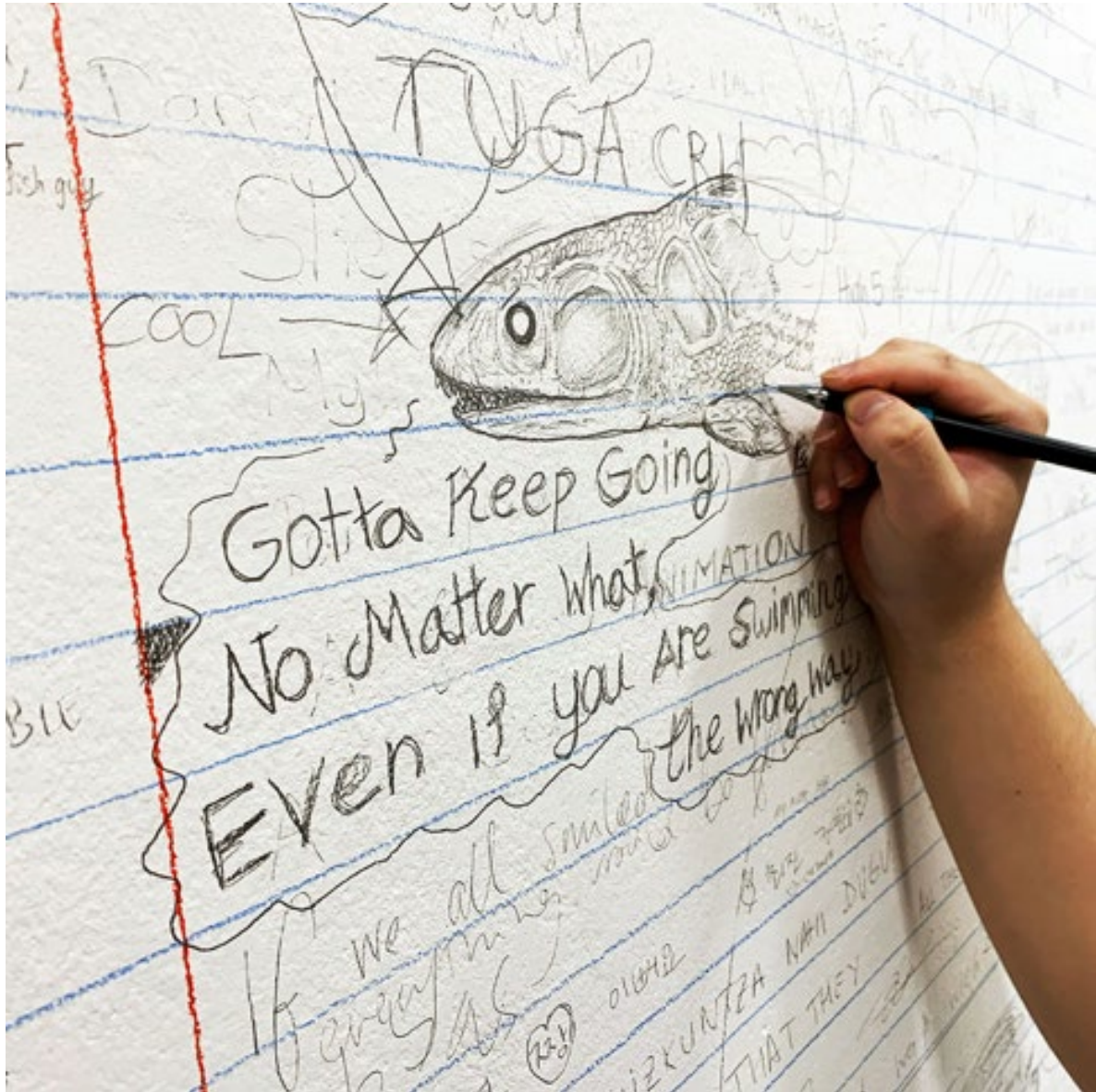


Figure 3. The Design School Manifesto being translated and redrawn on walls in our creative arts and design university. Image by Author. (2019).

Inclusivity and critical thinking were central to this project as its aim was to give a sense of belonging and ownership to the students at our university (Freire 1990, hooks 1993). Criticisms emerged as the project developed and were voiced by the students who took part in the research. One solution the students proposed was for the content of their audio/visual recordings to come from asking questions about the manifesto, to criticise it, to ask people to translate them on the spot, ask them about their culture and stereotypes (Cowden & Singh 2013). As we want Laboratories of Learning to be student centred and led, this project showed us how this was possible and how successful it was when students had the agency to take control of their own learning and learning environments.

The spaces the students occupied throughout this project became, ‘...nomadic – smooth – space [as] an open territory, providing emancipatory potential to those who are situated in this space in contrast to striated, or gridded, space...’ (Semetsky, 2008, p. vii-viii). They became, ‘... “probe-heads”; ... [becoming] cutting edges of deterritorialization [that] become operative and lines of deterritorialization positive and absolute, forming strange new becomings, new polyvocalities’ (Deleuze & Guattari 2004. p. 2011). As with this project we want the participants in our Laboratories of Learning to create new ways of learning, and new ways of thinking about learning, as well as demarcate communities of learning practice students and staff can belong to.

2.1 Test 1: Understanding rhizomatic learning and rethinking what it means to learn with nomadic lenses, considering what theories and practices can serve as a guide

Here we map out where the ideas of the rhizomatic learning and nomadic pedagogy emanate from and how they can be used in contemporary educational thinking. Both metaphors, the rhizomatic and the nomadic, have been employed in multiple ways and in various guises in ideas of how we best learn over the last 20 years. From directly thinking of rhizomes as spreading root systems in relation to the way we learn and nomads being wanderers as in learners that are becoming, to the more complex philosophical, political and pedagogical ideas Deleuze and Guattari develop in their individual and co-authored books. Dave Cromier (2011) uses both of their concepts when he argues that '[n]omads have the ability to learn rhizomatically, to 'self-reproduce', to grow and change ideas as they explore new contexts. They are not looking for 'the accepted way', they are not looking to receive instructions, but rather to create' (Cromier, 2011). We see our Laboratories of Learning as being inhabited by nomadic thinkers who are encouraged to think differently and to create and learn rhizomatically.

In their book *A Thousand Plateaus: The Second Volume of Capitalism and Schizophrenia* written in 1980, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (2004) start with a discussion around different ways of thinking about thought, from the arboreal to the rhizomatic. This is set out in their first 'plateau', *Introduction: Rhizome* (2004 pp 3-28). Educational thinkers have used this alluring text to challenge ways we think about how we think in general, and specifically the ways we think about how we learn (Cromier, 2008, 2011). It posits the idea that we should look at thought acting, not in terms of hierarchical tree structures, but through the principles of a rhizomatic way of thinking that is a more articulate and a more productive way of understanding thought. As they say, '... the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectible, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight.' (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, pp. 13-14)

Radical ideas in books like *A Thousand Plateaus* can seem at first too difficult, too different, too farfetched, from what we think we know to be useful to utilise in our educational endeavours. This challenge of showing how these types of ideas can be put into practice in education has been taken up, over the last twenty years by many educational authors and thinkers, including Semetsky (2008, 2013), Masny (2013) Bogue (2004, 2013), Cole (2008), Roy (2008), Strom (2018, 2020), Mycroft & Sidebottom, (2018) and many others. They have used Deleuze and Guattari's work to create new ways of thinking about and practicing education, as recognised by Andrew Murphie (2013), Associate Professor, from the University of New South Wales, Sydney in his review of the multi-authored book *Deleuze and Education* (Semetsky & Masny 2013). '[this book] ...returns us to a belief in learning's connection with the world, in all its complexity and joy. With both pragmatism and philosophical rigour, it details an adventurous understanding of what education could become, set free from much of the paraphernalia of educational bureaucracy. This is Deleuze's philosophy put to work in the best possible way' (Murphie 2013 in Semetsky & Masny 2013).

This idea of an adventurous understanding of what education could become is at the heart of why we are developing our Laboratories of Learning at our creative arts and design university. We aspire it to be along the lines of flight that Erin Manning's SenseLab (2022) (... a laboratory for thought in motion) at Concordia University has done so successfully over the last 18 years. They '...consider research to be creation in germ, and creation to produce its own concepts for thought ... in an effort to conceive a working and thinking environment for the creation of new modes of encounter' (SenseLab 22).

The disruptions brought about by the pandemic had an effect of making us teach and learn in ways many had not experienced or even recognised before. In this post-pandemic, or at least post-

COVID-19/SARS-CoV-2 early mutations era of the pandemic, we ask ourselves what have we learnt from these multiple experiences? Have we deterritorialized (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, pp 10-11, 421-424) our ways of working so that ‘...learning can occur anywhere, anytime, and anyhow in our interconnected world? (Khine 2022). Or are we now in the process of reterritorializing (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, pp 320-321) back to the fixed spaces and previously known methods of teaching we occupied before 2020? Did we at that point enter the ‘smooth space’s’ of the Nomad Territories (Deleuze & Guattari 2004 pp 445-448) only now in 2022 to go back to the ‘striated spaces’ of bricks and mortar and inflexible timetabling?

Lou Mycroft and Kay Sidebottom (2018) allude to this in their text *Constellations of Practice* when they say ‘[w]e began to question conventional patterns in education and how they were shaped by structures designed for another age. Rhizomatic working has energy, it brings an activist focus ... crossing disciplines ... it is essentially democratising, revealing unseen demarcation lines before breaching them’ (pp.170-178). Written before the pandemic this and other texts on posthuman pedagogies (Bayley 2018) had shown us already different ways education could be conceived and practiced. Our Laboratories of Learning takes up Mycroft’s and Sidebottom’s (2018) call to question the thinking or non-thinking about how we might break disciplinary boundaries and create spaces and places to test out how we learn and how communities of learning practice can coalesce around these processes.

We see our Laboratories of Learning characteristics as nomadic in where it can physically and virtually wander and nomadic in terms of creating a space where we can wonder about how we learn to learn. As a nomadic entity, ‘...it can engage with radical politics as a spatial and (creative) intervention’ (Beck, 2017). As Deleuze and Guattari (2004) say, nomadism for them is a state of ‘becoming, heterogeneity, infinitesimal, passage to the limit, continuous variation’. We concur with the idea that the Laboratories of Learning will be a ‘...nomadic classroom, [and] through the process of deterritorialization [will] puncture the academic, institutionalized educational space and lays bare the vast amount of possibilities found, very literally, outside of the classroom and a place that remakes the space that is occupied, [and] makes anew the identities that inhabit the new classroom space’ (Beck 2017).

In our Laboratories of Learning we are using ‘Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of a ‘people-yet-to-come’ as people in-becoming is more mundane because for them the ‘people-yet-to-come’ are the people who are already here (rather than an *other* radical people who are waiting in an *other* future time and place). These concepts are yet more radical because rather than locate potentiality in far-off futures, Deleuze and Guattari ask us to see potentiality in what is imminent, in the already-existing processes of becoming around us and indeed, throughout us here and now (Hroch, p. 50. 2014).

2.2 Test 2: Laboratories of Learning becoming rhizomatic and nomadic

‘Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter.’ (Deleuze 1997, p 139)

Our project, Laboratories of Learning had several questions to start it off. These were, what conditions would prompt students to 1) talk about learning as a practice beyond subject knowledge; 2) what conditions would be needed for students to want to share with others insights about their learning, and 3) what conditions would be needed to create student communities of learning? (Sadowska & Ingham, 2021). In responding to those questions, we adopted Dave Cormier’s (2008) idea of ‘...a rhizomatic model of learning [and a] rhizomatic model of knowledge [which] is negotiated, and the learning experience is a social as well as a personal knowledge-creation process with mutable goals and constantly negotiated premises.’

To contextualise Laboratories of Learning we look in more detail at how and why we use Deleuzoguattarian ideas of the rhizomatic and nomadic. As Gilles Deleuze (1968/1997) argues in *Difference and Repetition* ‘[w]e learn nothing from those who say: ‘Do as I do’. Our only teachers are

those who tell us to ‘do with me’ and are able to emit signs to be developed in heterogeneity rather than propose gestures for us to reproduce’ (Deleuze, 1997 p. 23). David Cole articulates this further when he says, ‘pedagogy is ... not something that is “done to one” or “is done by one to others,” but is something that one participates in, it is a mode of co-construction, [where] teaching and learning become fused...’ (Cole, 2016). Our aim with Laboratories of Learning is precisely to have a place where there is a fusion of how we learn and how we teach, to create spaces that allow for these collective collaborations. We argue that these fusions and collaborations give rise to communities of learners that thrive in nomadic pedagogies but often struggle to conform to strictly defined structured and transmissional educational approaches.

The emancipatory nature of Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking in relation to pedagogy and learning are exemplified by their concepts of the rhizome and the nomadic. In this chapter we develop their ideas to help us understand further how our Laboratories of Learning can be places and spaces where we can ‘...bring students and teachers more fully into dialogue about assessment (and about education more broadly) [...] and most radical, change we can work toward. If students don’t show up to these conversations, ask what systemic harm is making them unwelcome’ (Stommel (2022)).

One other inspiration worth mentioning comes from the authors of *Steal This Classroom* Jody Cohen and Anne Dalke (2019) who in the concluding epilogue on their website sum up what a classroom could be by saying it is ‘[a] bird sanctuary, guerrilla cell, resistance group. An ecotone, on the border, high density, high diversity. A testing ground: random discoveries, edge effects. A wildscape, ruin, liminal space, boxed in-but-not enclosable, ripe for breaking through. In restraint, bursting out, faithless. Neither this nor that but piercing, intense, unpredictable’. We see our Laboratories of Learning as having many of these attributes as eventful spaces of fundamental encounters where students take ownership of their learning by experimenting with others and others’ ideas about how we learn. We want these safe and daring spaces to be places where they test, experiment, and collaborate collectively to enhance their creative endeavours and adventures.

In the following section, we build on our initial rethinking of what it means to learn and what conditions are needed for learning to occur that prompted the Laboratories of Learning project. In the second part of this chapter, we examine how the courses we design can also become Laboratories of Learning, prompting students to develop an understanding of who they are as learners and more importantly what communities of learning practice emerge. To ask these questions we utilise a *Course Designer* guidance produced by colleagues at our creative arts and design university.

3.1 Test 3: Interrogating ‘Course Designer’ for evidence of how courses can become Laboratories of Learning

Often the site for communities of learning practice to emerge is already designated and bounded by the existing systems and frameworks set up by the institutional structures. The systems and frameworks can be implicit (disciplinary associations or creative processes) and explicit such as curriculum design and course structures (Cole, 2016, Cohen, & Dalke, 2019). In all cases how communities of learning practice are co-designed in those spaces is a process that can stay within the boundaries of the systems or can cross these boundaries and enable much more rhizomatic set of connections and networks (Cromier, 2008, 2011). As Rosi Braidotti argues ‘[c]reativity is a nomadic process in that it entails the active displacement of dominant formation of identity, memory and identification. Becoming has to do with emptying out the self, opening it out to possible encounters with the “outside” ’ (Braidotti 2011, p.235).

In *Test 3* we interrogate a set of guidelines (*Course Designer*) produced by our institution to assist course teams to develop degrees. In this process, we acknowledge this publication as an example of the aforementioned existing systems and institutional structures. However, in our test, we examine in what way these institutional systems and structures support students in becoming learners and acknowledge the existence of communities of learning practice, fostering their growth and development.

3.1.1 Course Designer 1: Introduction and Resources List

https://www.arts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/190392/Course-Designer-1-Introduction-and-Resources-PDF-257KB.pdf

Curriculum design and course structures often become systems and frameworks that define the territory and tend to dictate and influence the opportunity for co-design of communities of learning practice (Bayley, 2018). Thus, to understand how curriculum design and resulting structures engage with co-design of communities of learning we turn to an artefact entitled the *Course Designer* a curriculum design tool created by colleagues from Teaching and Learning Exchange (TLE) at our creative arts and design university. The *Course Designer* is a guide for course teams to design or review courses for (re)validations. The tool is divided into six sections each represented by a document publicly accessible on the Teaching, Learning and Employability Exchange (2022) site. Each section consists of a definition of the key component followed by guidelines on best practices, supported by practical exercises. The intention is to design a curriculum that is student-centred but also complies with the UK higher education quality requirements. In our testing we argue, the emerging course systems and structures directly inform how communities of learning practice come together within a course between students as peers, staff as peers and staff and students. Whereas the authors of this publication explain:

‘The overall aim of the Course Designer is to facilitate key moments in planning an effective curriculum. Each section can be used separately to focus on discrete standardised tasks. These might include institutional and sector requirements, such as producing programme specifications or communicating the course profile or unique features, whilst meeting sector-wide benchmark and quality standards’ (Stephens and Staddon, 2022).

3.1.2 Course Designer 2: Vision and Values

https://www.arts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/190393/Course-Designer-2-Vision-and-Values-PDF-227KB.pdf

When shaping the vision and values that need to underpin a course design, teams are guided to consider their own standpoint alongside a wider context of disciplinary knowledges and skillsets, industry standards and quality frameworks. The document also advises the need to factor in educational philosophies that can shape course design. The role of the guidance is to invite teams to explore and reflect upon the values and beliefs that are drawn upon to shape the course design through the process of checking where the course should be positioned but also to recognise assumptions and possible biases that might affect the design. The guidance also highlights the importance of students’ engagement in shaping the future curriculum of the course. This is focused predominantly in two ways 1) the graduate attributes that students will develop by the end of the course, and 2) the agency that students will be given while undertaking the course to influence their own learning journey.

In particular, the *Course Designer* guidance on students’ agency is telling in the way the teams are advised to co-design learning on the course. As the document states student agency stems from creating ‘[a] space for student agency in the curriculum – e.g. student-led contributions, student well-being, student choice in assessment and co-marking, peer learning, students co-creating content, choosing texts, and co-evaluating courses each contribute to course culture’ (Stephens & Staddon, 2022).

Interestingly the guidance advises teams to consider students learning experience as individuals and ensure they have agency to influence it but does not engage with the fact that course design also influences how a community of learning practice forms through various stakeholders coming together in learning and teaching. The guidance appears not to consider the opportunities a course design could draw at its conception to see itself as a community of learning practice. In advising teams to reflect on their values and beliefs it falls short to recognise that a course design shapes communities of learning practice just as much as those values and beliefs interact and shape learning experiences. We argue that by recognising this process not only at the individual level

ensuring student and staff voice counts, there is also a need to recognise how these individuals come together and create synergies that shape and inform the ways in which students and staff learn on the course.

As Kaustuv Roy (2003) puts it in *Teachers in Nomadic Spaces: Deleuze and Curriculum* ‘the pragmatic purpose [of Laboratories of Learning is] to introduce a ‘swerve’ or deviation in the plane of taken-for-granted assumptions by means of which a new experiment of thought could be inserted in the interstices that might help teachers get an insight into the generative possibilities of the situation’ (p. 2).

3.1.3 Course Designer 3: Defining Course Aims

https://www.arts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/190394/Course-Designer-3-Defining-Course-Aims-PDF-213KB.pdf

In creating the course aims teams are advised to consider the purpose of the course and the intentions it is meant to fulfil. The guidance clarifies that aims indicate ‘who the prospective students are and where they might be going when they finish the course’ (Stephens, Salinas and Warner, 2022). The guidance indicates that course aims are a way for the course design to be mapped within a wider territory to manage various stakeholders’ expectations. The document outlines the scope of course aims ranging from communicating overall purpose, students’ learning, context such as industry and socio-cultural influences, quality benchmarks, graduate attributes as well as a learning journey. The course aims effectively act as the guide to the course’s strategic direction.

This section of the *Course Designer* acknowledges the importance of shaping learning to meet different students’ needs and in particular their learning journey but it approaches students very much as individuals with ‘... wide range of backgrounds and cultures, and curricula are designed with this range in mind’. Although we are keen to support such an approach, seeing it as the core of student-centred learning, it is important to highlight that the guidance does not acknowledge that these individual students also come together and form a community of learning practice. Interestingly the *Course Designer* recommends that teams ‘[create] personas in order to visualise students [which in turn] can assist in writing the overarching purpose and intentions of the course design. Course designers consider ‘who’ the students are, or would be, as well as their contribution to the course’ (Stephens, Salinas, Warner, 2022). Thus such consideration of students as individuals means that there is no particular guidance on how to draft specific aims that acknowledge the course as a community of learning practice.

We argue that recognising in the aims the individuality of students as learners only goes so far and misses on the opportunities co-design learning can provide when students and staff come together in communities of learners. It also means that teams are advised to focus on designing aims for students and miss out on the opportunities that co-design with students in these wider communities could lead to more diverse and richer learning experiences for all. The synergies that stem from these interactions offer numerous opportunities for learning and ultimately focus on what shapes students’ learning and what overall learning journey the course offers in a much more engaging, dynamic and adaptive manner. We argue that such synergies are more reflective of the needs of the current and future students and are reflected far more in rhizomatic learning and nomadic pedagogies.

Moreover, there is no mention of the way that course aims play a role in creating boundaries to the way the community of learning practice comes together and is able to operate within as well as without itself and wider institutional structures and systems. This is particularly important considering the strategic role aims play in shaping the overall student learning experience.

3.1.4 Course Designer 4: Crafting Learning Outcomes

https://www.arts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0027/190395/Course-Designer-4-Crafting-Learning-Outcomes-PDF-255KB.pdf

The section guiding teams on how to develop learning outcomes (LOs) indicates that the purpose of LOs is to highlight what ‘... students should be able to do on completion ... [t]hese outcomes can be worded in terms of demonstrable knowledge, skills or behaviours’ (Currant, Stephens & Staddon, 2022). The document outlines what the role of LOs is as follows: 1) what is expected of students, 2) how staff need to design and deliver the learning, teaching and assessment on the course, 3) how to create a coherent learning journey for the students, 4) how to recognise student achievement in terms of credit framework, 5) how to meet the institutional validation and benchmark obligations (Currant, Stephens & Staddon, 2022). The guidance on LOs design recognises that course design engages in shaping students’ learning by highlighting the need to outline in LOs what is expected of students, how teams need to shape a coherent learning journey and how to measure students’ achievement.

Through their inherent role LOs are very operational and tend to focus on defining the relationships between different elements within the course design. Moreover, they indicate the nature of the relationships between student engagement with the course and the offered learning and the staff approaches to teaching. The LOs indicate the responsibilities both staff and students have in shaping learning practices. What the guidance does not acknowledge is how the LOs through the definition of the responsibilities towards learning have effectively co-designed the community of learners.

Despite defining those relationships towards the curriculum design and those responsibilities the guidance does not engage with the fact that LOs are shaping communities of learning practice. The LOs mark the scope within which these communities can function and operate as well as the boundaries to indicate the edges of the communities, but the guidance does not engage with this process.

The guidance also does not explore learning as a collective endeavour but rather positions it as individual interactions and whereas in previous *Course Designer* sections make some reference to agency students have to inform these interactions, in LOs the nature of guidance is a lot more prescriptive. Contrary to the *Course Designer* recommendations, we see our Laboratories of Learning in a similar way as Christian Beck’s ‘...nomadic classroom, where the agency of the nomad is appended to the class and not to singular students or the instructor, [and] deterritorializes striated space so as to grant the class participants with a higher degree of determinacy’ (Beck, 2017).

3.1.5 Course Designer 5: Designing Inclusive Assessment

https://www.arts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0028/190396/Course-Designer-5-Designing-Inclusive-Assessment-PDF-296KB.pdf

The *Designing Inclusive Assessment* section in the *Course Designer* is dedicated to guidance outlining the key considerations in the process of designing assessments. The section outlines what makes a good assessment followed by highlighting the difference between summative and formative assessment processes. Interestingly, when designing curricula, course teams often dedicate a substantial amount of time to creating assessments that are authentic and enable students to find meaning in their learning. However, the *Course Designer* guidance seems to focus more on the functionality of the assessment as the priority not so much on the learning it can support.

Nonetheless, this section of *Course Designer* also more readily recognises students’ learning journey and the role assessment can play in it. ‘[a]ssessment has a major impact on students and their learning. Summative assessment in particular has the potential to define a student’s self-belief and future prospects’ (Stephens and Staddon, 2022). Designing inclusive assessment keeps in mind individual differences between students for the purpose of accessibility, differences between cohorts of students, and differences between the function of assessment and its role in the scheduled activities of a course (Stephens and Staddon, 2022).

In this section of the *Course Designer* more than any other the guidance highlights the role assessment plays in fostering individual students learning alongside the way different cohorts of students demonstrate their learning through assessments. Although the guidance does not make the leap to consider that assessments are evidence of the way student communities become communities of learning practice, this section of *Course Designer* is effectively the first that refers to students learning as a cohort. It also recognises this learning can be shaped by assessment through inclusive

approaches. Moreover, it acknowledges that formative assessment enables both staff and students to recognise in what way learning takes place for individual students and monitor the progress of that learning. However, this section of the *Course Designer* guidelines also comes closest to highlighting the rhizomatic nature of learning.

We need to both vary and diversify assessment for inclusivity. In creative arts courses, assessment needs to be flexible: it should be adaptive to include and capture the actual learning that takes place in practice, especially where students' learning has divergent, original and creative outputs, and cannot always be planned or intended in advance' (Stephens and Staddon, 2022).

Upon reflection, we argue that assessments when considered in the context of nomadic pedagogies and rhizomatic learning become moments of evidence where communities of learning practice are seen, reorganise, or transform. We argue that assessments become artefacts of those communities of learning practice marking their journeys not as individual students but rather as communities and nowhere is it as evident in the way we design learning experiences for our students as it is in the assessment process.

3.1.6 Course Designer 6: Course Structure.

https://www.arts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0029/190397/Course-designer-6-Course-Structure-PDF-207KB.pdf

The section of the Course Designer dedicated to the course structure focuses on the functionality of the course, in particular, it is a means of communicating about the course with various stakeholders. 'A well-designed course structure will communicate itself clearly to stakeholders, including potential students, registry, validating committees, and the wider academic community' (Stephens and Staddon, 2022).

Within the process of designing the course the structure can also assist students and staff to make decisions about the learning journey the course entails. The key areas that involve course structure as highlighted in the *Course Designer* are 1) sequencing of the content, 2) wayfinding through the learning experience and 3) a holistic narrative of the course. Interestingly, the *Course Designer* assigned the responsibility of the sequencing and narrative building to staff and the wayfinding to students. What is not explicit is how this could be a collaborative responsibility where staff and students can share the responsibility to different degrees depending on the stage of the course development.

Upon reflection, we argue that the role of the course structure has the potential to extend beyond what the *Course Designer* guidance outlines. In the context of rhizomatic learning and nomadic pedagogies, a course structure is an essential tool for a community of learning practice 1) to orientate around the learning experience, 2) to identify any navigational markers and 3) to spot anchoring points.

In this section, the *Course Designer* guides teams in considering how individual students learning journeys can be visualised through diagrams or communicated to prospective applicants. 'Recent innovative approaches to course design use the student journey to emphasise student experience and a process model of curriculum design. This approach meets the requirements of different individuals and a broad spectrum of student identities' (Stephens and Staddon, 2022). We argue the structure can also communicate the learning journey of the community of learning practice.

In *Education Needs to Get a Grip on Life* in Carlin & Wallin (2014), Jason J. Wallin, introduces us to the idea of a 'lived curriculum', that moves away from a calcified idea of curricula that is guided by a bureaucratic idea of what 'ought to be run' (p. 124). He uses the idea of a supple line, that, '...becomes a way to begin thinking about the composition of a people whose production is not simply reflected in the planned curriculum but whose desire cuts across the molar line of standardization and conformism...' (p. 124). We see the Laboratories of Learning as one way for the creative student's experience in our creative arts and design university to be transdisciplinary. To help

us go beyond the content of a given curriculum and enable our staff and students to look more closely at the processes of learning and how we can enhance our student's experiences of their chosen course.

4.1 Conclusions from our test results

In conducting our interrogation of *Course Designer* guidance we have learned that typical guidance on how to create a learning environment for our students has quite an ambivalent relationship with recognising how students learn to learn and how these frameworks underpin and shape the emergence of communities of learning practice. Despite the purpose of such guidance to create opportunities for learning, we note that it is not always made explicit to the course teams how important it is to ask about how students become learners and understand how they learn, which we argue is a fundamental question.

As Rachel Fendler (2013) argues in her article *Becoming-Learner: Coordinates for Mapping the Space and Subject of Nomadic Pedagogy*:

[t]he eventful space emerges as a useful concept, referring to a territory defined by practice-based learning, inhabited by a network of people, ideas, and objects in movement. Thinking of place in terms of practice is a strategy for uprooting the inquiry and setting it in motion, to better follow the mobile and transitory learning trajectories of young people.

Both in the project *Becoming Lost and Found in Translation* and our current research project *Laboratories of Learning* we create eventful spaces that give students the opportunity to explore, unencumbered by regimes of assessment, how they learn. They will create their own maps of learning and not just rely on the tracings of what their past learning experiences have taught them. However, the interrogation of the *Course Designer* guidance has also enabled us to understand that institutional structures and systems with the associated guidance are deeply ingrained in the environment we create for our students to support their learning. As the *Course Designer* evidenced, these structures and systems are not shaped around rhizomatic learning nor utilise nomadic lenses to consider how and where learning happens. The significant focus on individual students and the formatting of their learning experience might ask a question *What is suitable learning in this case?* but rarely asks *How students learn?* and even more sporadic is the question *How staff and students become a community of learning practice?*

Upon reflection, we do not challenge the broad elements the *Course Designer* guidance identifies nor the role these elements play in designing an effective degree. However, we argue that it is critical for such guidance to acknowledge when designing a course, that course teams effectively shape and influence the emergence of communities of learning practice. These emergent communities can influence the learning experience for the individuals as much as create synergies that shape the learning of these groups as a whole. Those synergies, we argue, can only operate through rhizomatic learning processes and need to be scaffolded by nomadic pedagogies.

Our laboratory experiment narrated in this chapter has illuminated that giving students the opportunity to understand for themselves how they are learning is the first step in the process of benefiting from rhizomatic learning. The second step, we argue, is nurturing of processes that enable communities of learning to emerge from the synergies that result from the encounters of the students and the shared journeys they undertake on a course. The third step in this process is the need to underpin steps one and two by nomadic pedagogies to enable emergence, adaptability and dynamic engagement with the learning process. These three elements we argue can lead to an ecology of learning where students are as much participants as contributors, making their learning experience much more authentic as well as transformative.

The empirical proof of whether our *Laboratories of Learning* will help our students become more of what they want to be is in the application of the testing methodology we narrated here, such as testing out of ideas, testing of others, testing of spaces and testing of moments. We have learnt to

be as open as possible and open to the critiques staff and students will offer and at the same time be aware of the dangers of always going back to what is already known. To combat and resist the forces of conventional wisdoms about learning we have used ideas from the poststructural thinking of Deleuze and Guattari to help us put into practice nomadic pedagogy so that we can start on the path to learning rhizomatically. As Deleuze (1997) said in 1968, '[w]hat does it mean "to learn"?' and argued that, '[l]earning takes place not in the relation between a representation and an action (reproduction of the Same) but in the relation between a sign and a response (encounter with the Other)'. He wanted us to learn through contemplation not just action (Deleuze 1997, p.22). Our Laboratories of Learning aim to be spaces where new ideas about learning are contemplated and generated and put into practice and co-produced by all our agents of learning, human and non-human at our creative art and design university and beyond. Moreover, we invite readers to join our Laboratories of Learning and collaboratively create their experiments to test how they learn to learn and how communities of learning practice come together in their contexts.

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