

How social and political motivations informed methodological choices in the Applied Comics Collaborations project

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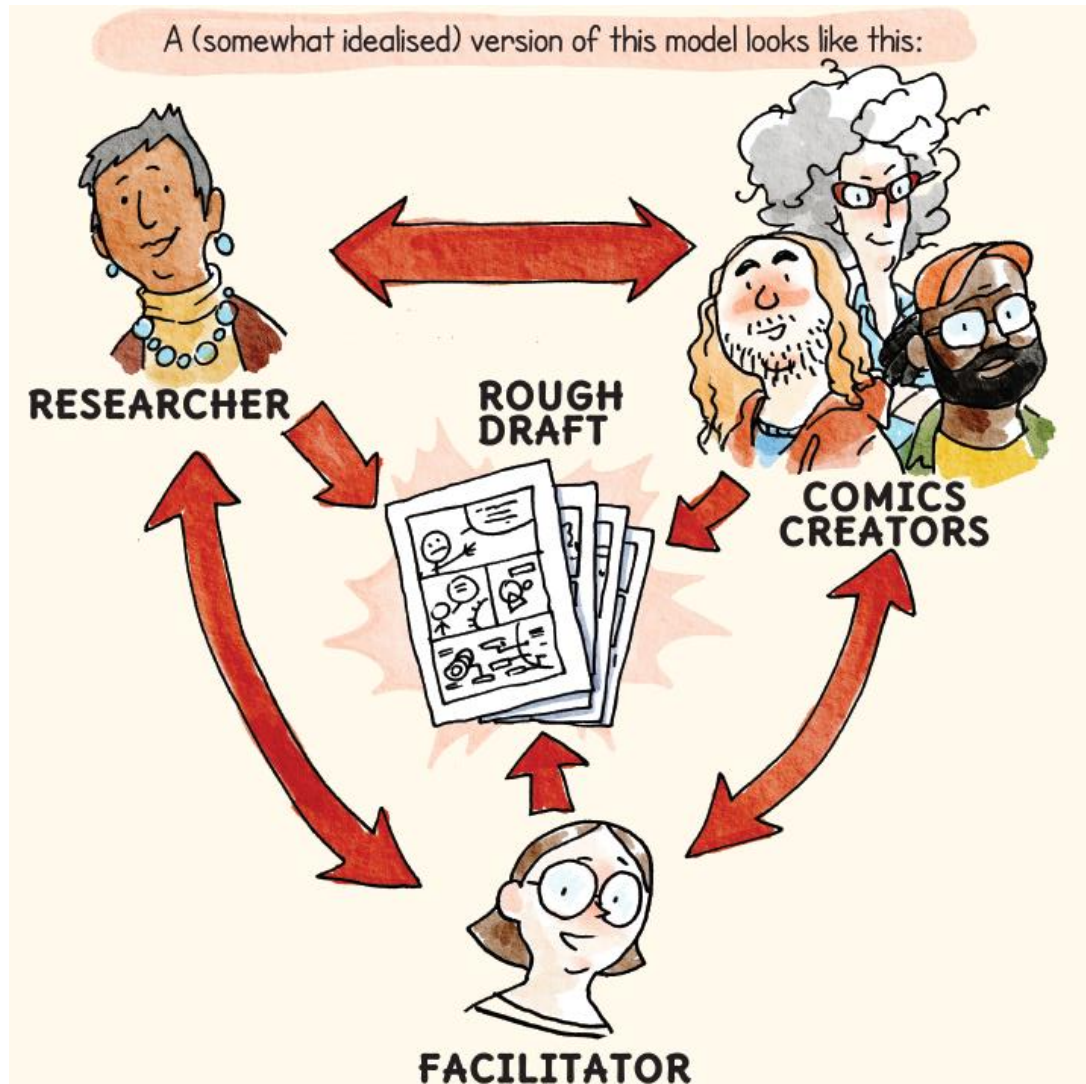
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Wysocki, L, Murphy, A, and Murphy, L. 2021. Applied Comics Collaborations: Ways for humanities and social science researchers to work together with comics creators. Available at: <http://AppliedComicsEtc.com/collaborations>

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Today:

- Overview of the methodology
- Overview of the project
- Reasons why this methodology is political

1 free comic to present this methodology

2 linked strands to my research:

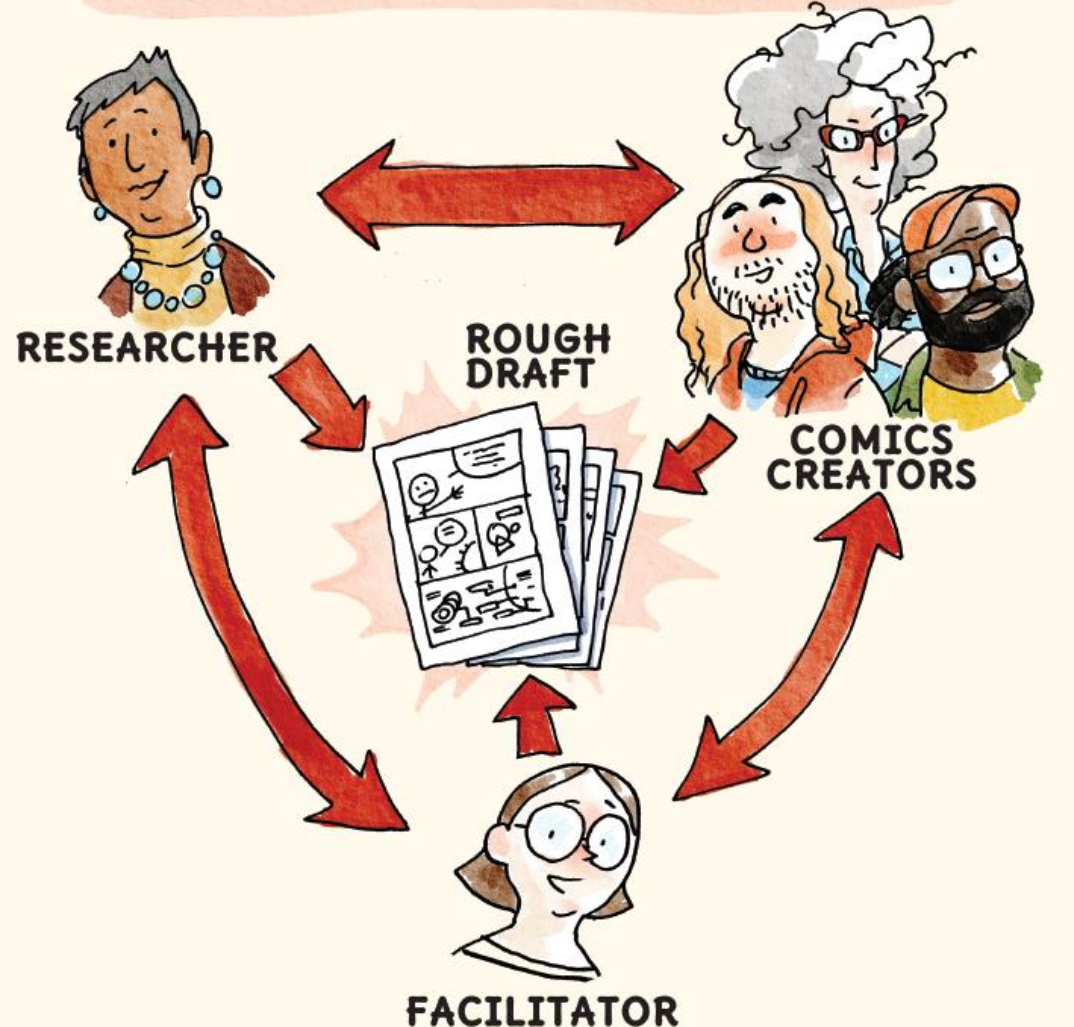
- ☺ how to use comics, esp. in research
- ☹ the role of cultural products in constructions of understanding

3 pilot projects, each with 1 researcher's research & 3 comics creators

<http://appliedcomicsetc.com/collaborations>

Applied Comics Collaborations methodology

A (somewhat idealised) version of this model looks like this:



But there may well be times when it feels more like this:



It is normal and expected for the model to get stretched, bent and updated to fit new ways of working.

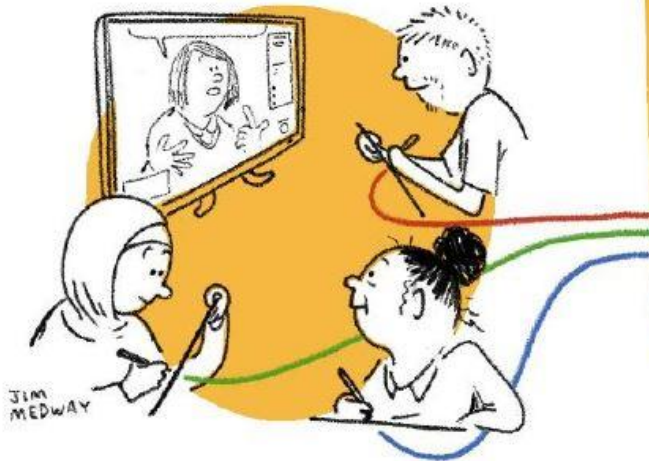
Applied Comics Collaborations project

APPLIED COMICS COLLABORATIONS



The team at *Applied Comics Etc* wants to work with 3 comics artist-writers for a new pilot project called *Applied Comics Collaborations*.

Listen to the invited researcher's needs for their project. Individually rough out a comic as your first ideas for a comic that meets their needs.



We'll work together online to collectively discuss, edit, and combine these versions into one collaborative draft.

Work will be scheduled as 1 to 2 hours per day, over the course of 1 week.

All 3 comics creators will be paid for their involvement in Applied Comics Collaborations.

This is not a competition - the aim is to work together to develop one draft comic.

INTERESTED? FOR MORE INFO PLEASE SEE

<https://appliedcomicsetc.com/collaborations/>



Economic
and Social
Research Council



Newcastle
University

Applied Comics Collaborations project: 3 pilots



Love and marriage

Researcher: Raksha Pande

Comics creators: Hannah Sackett, Jim Medway, Mark Stafford

'This was different to my work with a regular collaborator on fiction comics – it was good to subsume yourself to what you're trying to get across with no agenda or ego, just to get the researcher's content across' (Mark)

'This was fantastic, really enjoyable and eye-opening. I've worked collaboratively before in writing grants and papers, but this approach to creative collaboration was different. We all wanted to do something together, and with a bit of moderation and structure we found ways to do it.' (Raksha)



The It Girl

Researcher: Stacy Gillis

Comics creators: Anja Uhren, Hannah Cawardine, Rachael Ball



Hot Property

Researcher: Audrey Verma

Comics creators: Irina Richards, John Cei Douglas, Nate Sterling

<http://appliedcomicsetc.com/collaborations>

Reason 1: being realistic during Covid-19 lockdown(s)

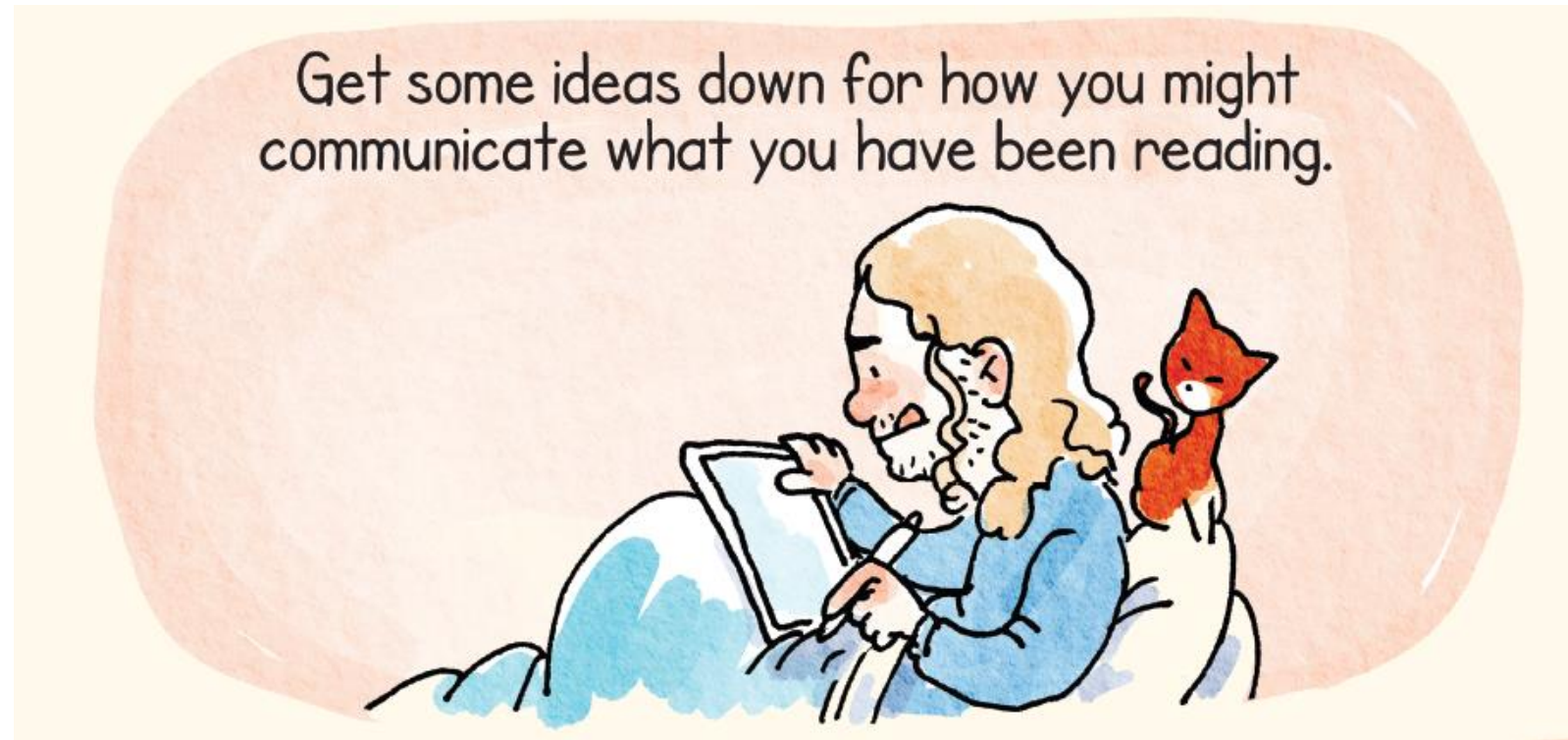


Reason 1: being realistic during Covid-19 lockdown(s)

- Some flexibility, some structure
- Paid work
- Skills development; portfolio project
- Networking (in the absence of in-person events)
- Focusing on drafts, not finished work
- We're probably all a bit stressed

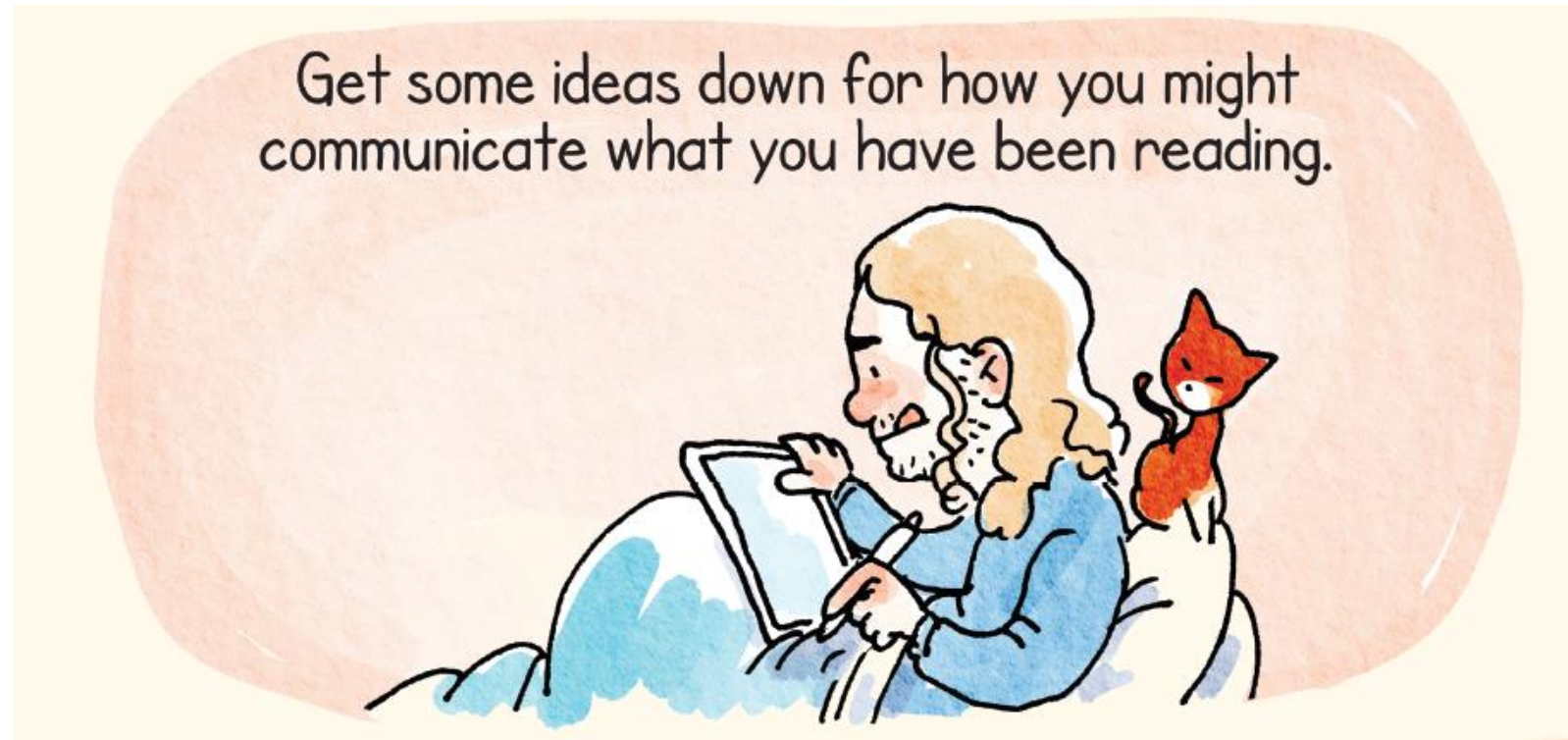


Reason 2: enabling agentic collaboration

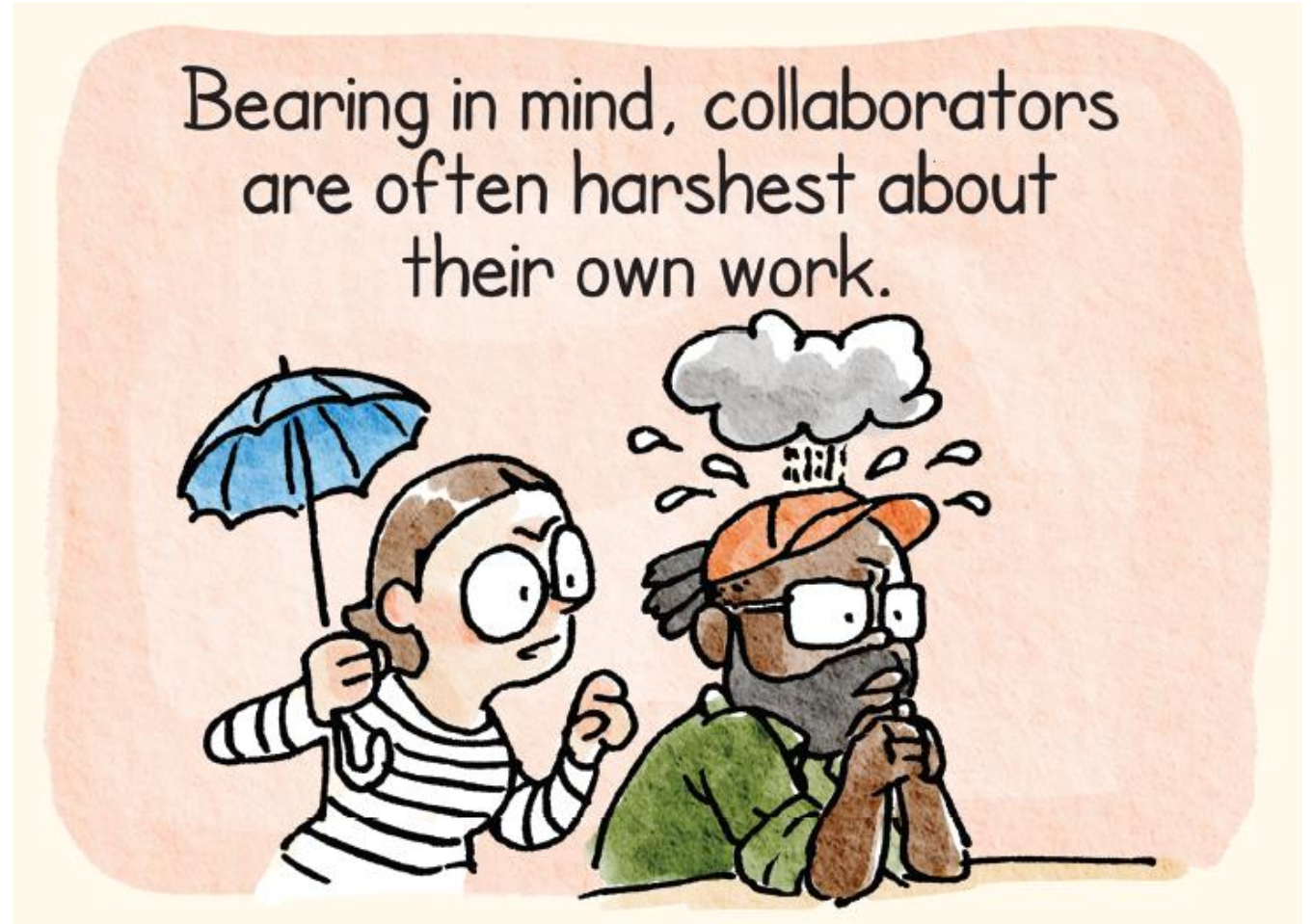


Reason 2: enabling agentic collaboration

- Time/instructions that enable preparation, focussed discussions, & sharing
- Collaboration not competition (all 3 comics creators get paid)
- Researcher steers the focus, with facilitator's support
- Facilitator provides structure and encouragement (same but different to previous projects – there are multiple ways forward)

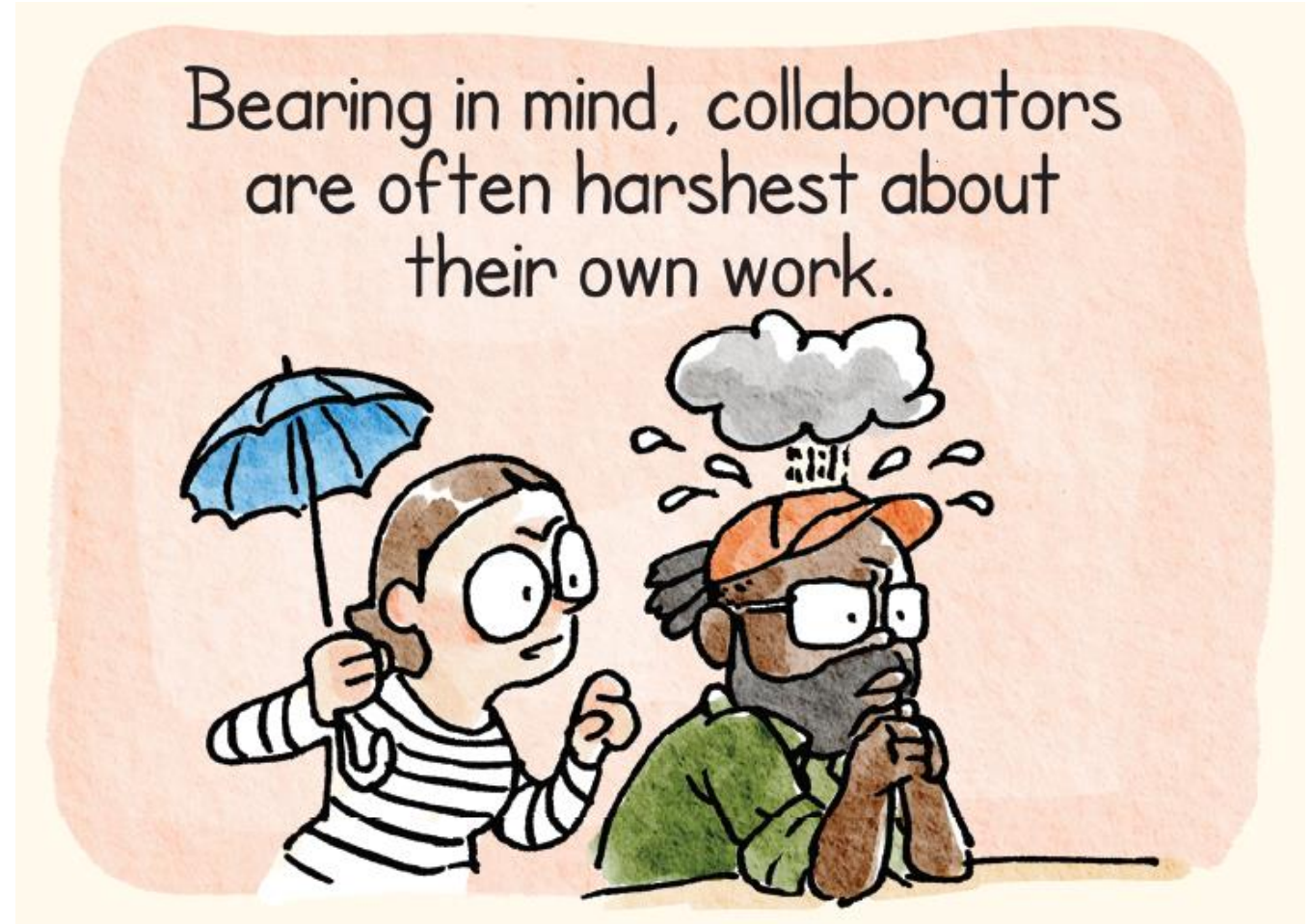


Reason 3: being aware of people as people, not only as workers



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- Feedback emphasises constructive honesty
- Informed by Megan Boler's pedagogy of discomfort, but...
 - ...as a pedagogy-informed way of steering collaboration in a group (not teaching)
 - ...aiming to find tricky issues of representation and do something about it at draft stage (for multiple facets of identity, with awareness of the structural forces of race and class)



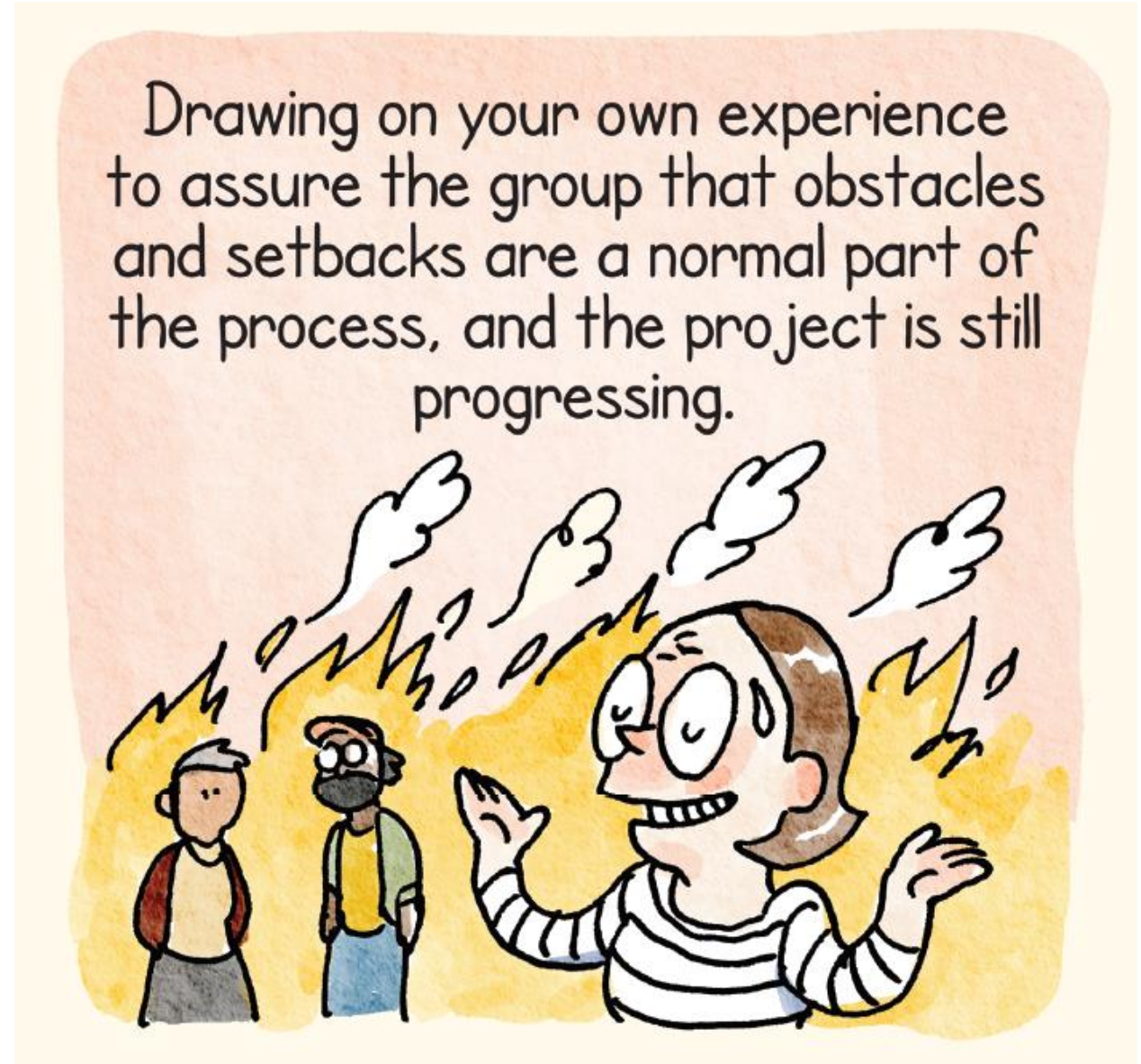
Reason 4: making tools available for free

Drawing on your own experience to assure the group that obstacles and setbacks are a normal part of the process, and the project is still progressing.

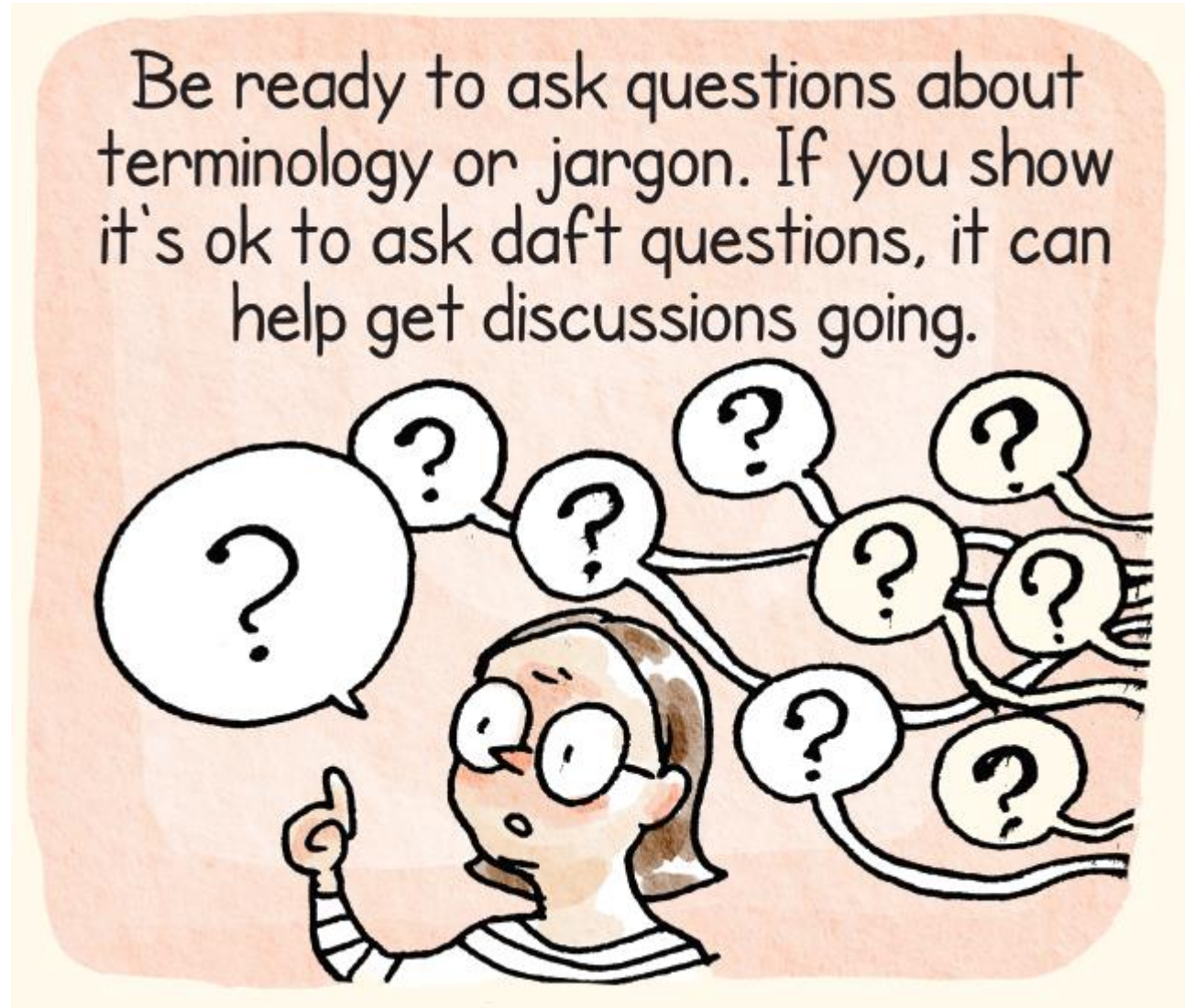


Reason 4: making tools available for free

- Free how-to guide; free example timetable, prompts, and activities
- Precarity is a structural problem for freelance creative arts professionals, as well as for academic researchers
- Previous projects emphasised research dissemination; this project provides tools to help people do useful work
- Sharing knowledge, not building up trade secrets

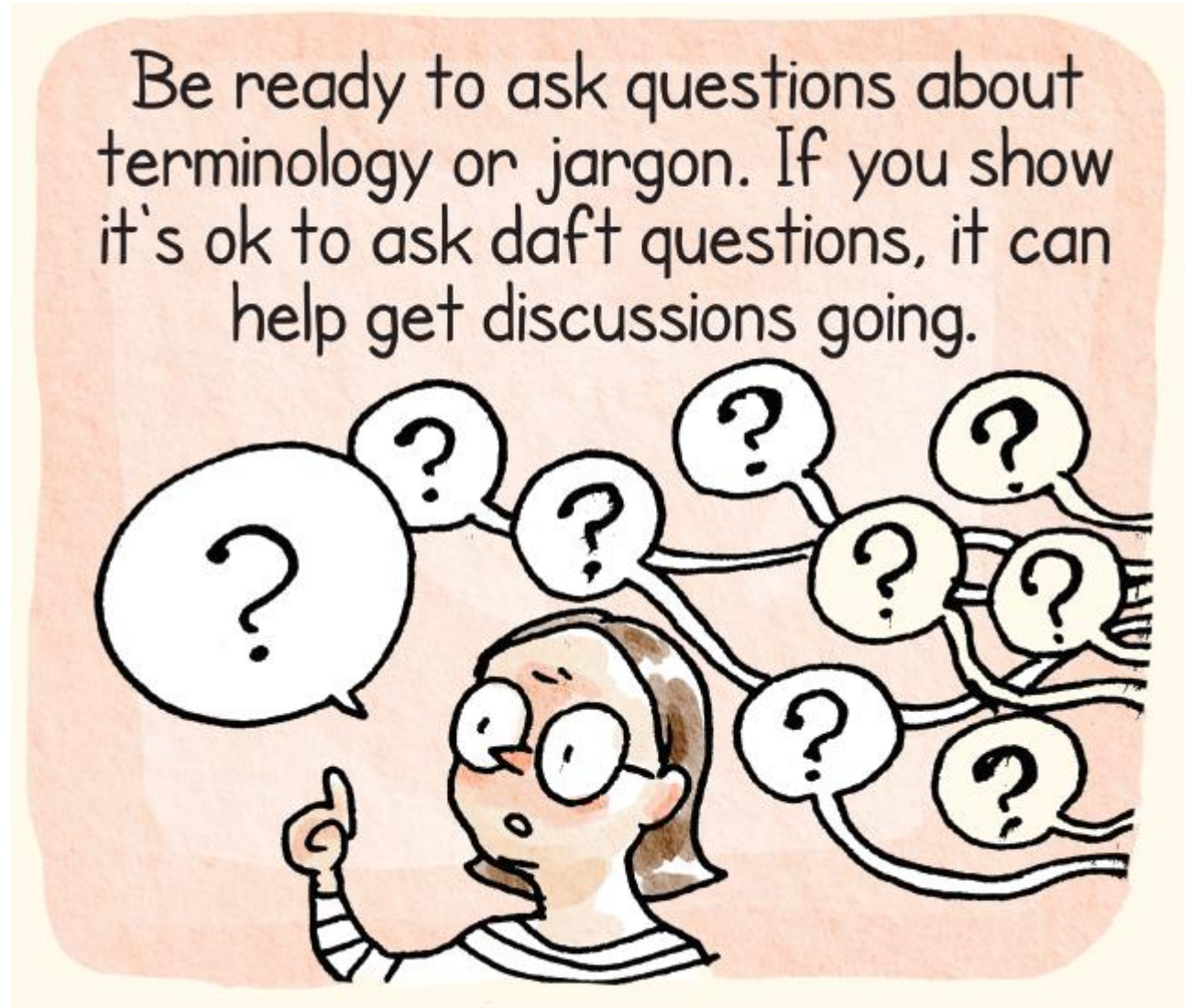


Reason 5: finding ways of working together



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- Interdisciplinary (cross-faculty)
- Links with (cottage) industry
- Impact of my own research; impact of 3 researchers' research; portfolio/skills development for comics creators, as well as paid work
- Networking, especially with more-experienced colleagues, as a way of showing leadership
- Finding ways to build a career and still sleep at night (literally and metaphorically)



- Boler, M., 1999. *Feeling power: Emotions and education*. Psychology Press.
- Wysocki L, Leat D. (2019) Collaborative comic as Boundary Object: the creation, reading, and uses of Freedom City Comics Cómic colaborativo como Objeto de Frontera: la creación, lectura y usos de Freedom City Comics. Tebeosfera, 3(10).
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