

Systems Scribing

An Exploratory Studio Session

April 14, 2018
Toronto, Canada



Sponsored by the Presencing Institute

Purpose

This document is intended to synthesize the process, output, and learning of the April 14, 2018 workshop: Applying Systems Thinking to Scribing, where twelve participants gathered on an icy day in Toronto, Canada to push the boundaries of their practice. This session was held as a part of the ongoing Visual Practice Workshops, convened by Kelvy Bird and facilitated by Aaron Williamson and Jessica Riehl.

Intent

Scribes—visual practitioners who draw while people talk, making dynamics visible—are now supporting groups, organizations, institutions, countries, and global settings daily, all over the world. By placement alone, we inhabit an unusual leverage point for change, where we span and embedded within systems all over the planet, across divides of culture, race, socio-economics, and learning styles.

Many scribes have been exposed to areas of Systems Thinking throughout our careers. But how have we actively taken the knowledge and brought it back into how we listen, make choices, and represent ideas? How are scribes explicitly incorporating mental models, feedback loops, behavioral graphs, and leverage points into our thinking while at a wall?

This workshop was a unique occasion to pool our resource through the following process:

Explore: Scan group knowledge and download experience

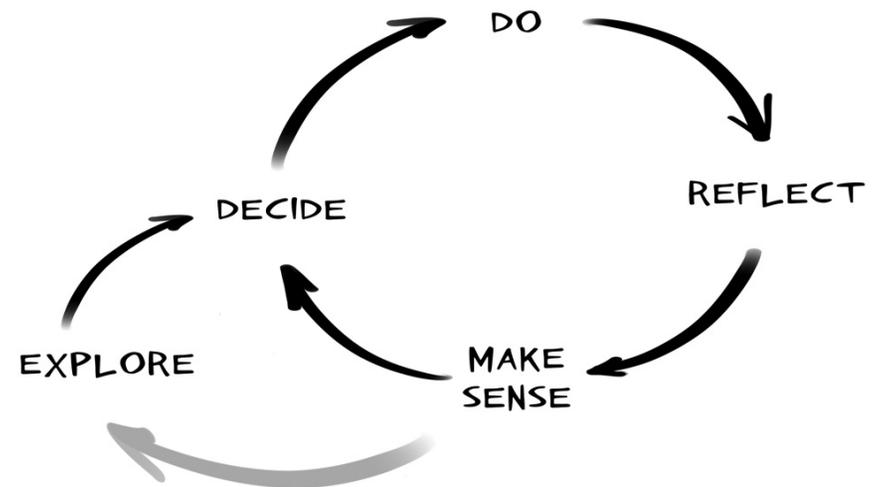
Decide: Agree what to dive into and who shares what

Do: Share knowledge and apply into practice

Reflect: Observe our experience

Sense-making: Converse and document Insights

We came together to learn from our individual paths, and venture into what we might embrace as new possibility within, and for, our practice at large. One specific intent of the session was to document what we did along the way and share our insights back with the broader community of visual practitioners.



Approach

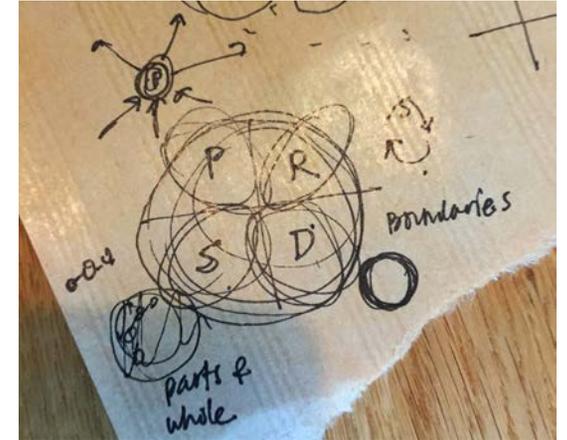
After reviewing several different traditions of systems thinking, we choose to work with the DSRP framework from Derek Cabrera and Laura Cabrera, as their model offered a clear orientation for live systems scribing. Other resources we considered were cybernetics, resilience theory/panarchy, systems mapping, and habits of a systems thinker.

Flow

We began the day with a brief welcome, framing of the day, and check-in amongst the gathered practitioners. The group then moved into an exercise called Terms of Art, where we identified eight different systems thinking terms and collaboratively defined and illustrated each one.

From there we moved into a brief overview of the DSRP framework, and small groups collaboratively brainstormed the application to scribing for each element of the framework. For hands-on practice, we scribed to the same four-minute clip four times, each with a different lens of the framework. The next practice round was to scribe through an overall systems thinking lens to a new six minute clip.

The final part of our time together involved reflecting on the experiences of the day. This document showcases the results.



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This document was designed in collaboration with Kelvy Bird by Jessica Riehl, www.jessicariehl.com

Terms of Art

Boundary: An intentional, artificially-defined parameter that identifies what is in vs. out.

Complexity: Interconnection, uncertainty/unpredictable, multiple directions.

Elements: Visible and invisible parts that create a whole, a network or form relationships.

Emergence: Emergence is an unpredictable process of becoming.

Feedback: Response to a stimuli.

Model: A possible representation of how elements relate.

System: A set of interconnected parts, existing in a specific boundary, that fulfills a purpose and is influenced by conditions and dynamics.

Theory of Change: How we think/suspect change happens.



DSRP: A Quick Introduction

Based on the work of Derek Cabrera and Laura Cabrera. For a deep dive into the DSRP model, check out their book *Systems Thinking Made Simple: New Hope for Solving Wicked Problems*.

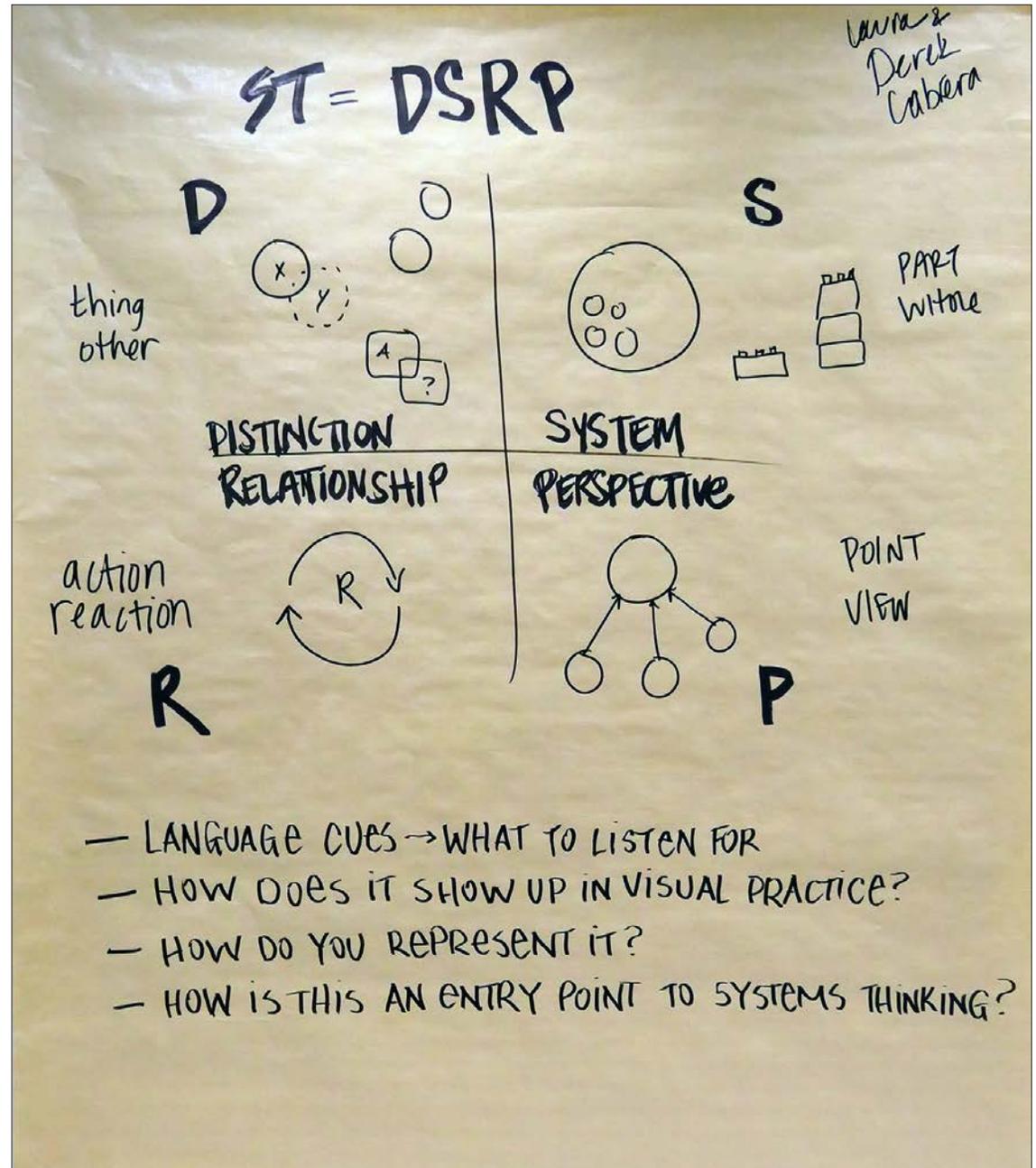
The simple rules for systems thinking from the book are:

Distinction: Any idea or thing can be distinguished from other ideas or thing it is with.

System: Any idea or thing can be split into parts or lumped into a whole.

Relationship: Any idea or thing can relate to other things or ideas.

Perspective: Any thing or idea can be the point or view of a perspective.

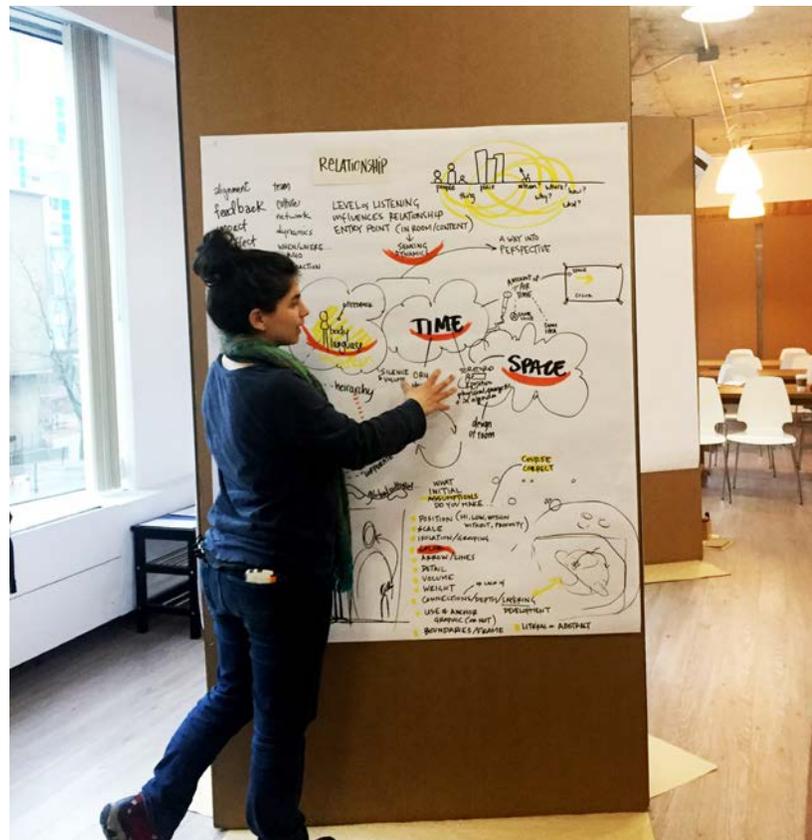


- LANGUAGE CUES → WHAT TO LISTEN FOR
- HOW DOES IT SHOW UP IN VISUAL PRACTICE?
- HOW DO YOU REPRESENT IT?
- HOW IS THIS AN ENTRY POINT TO SYSTEMS THINKING?

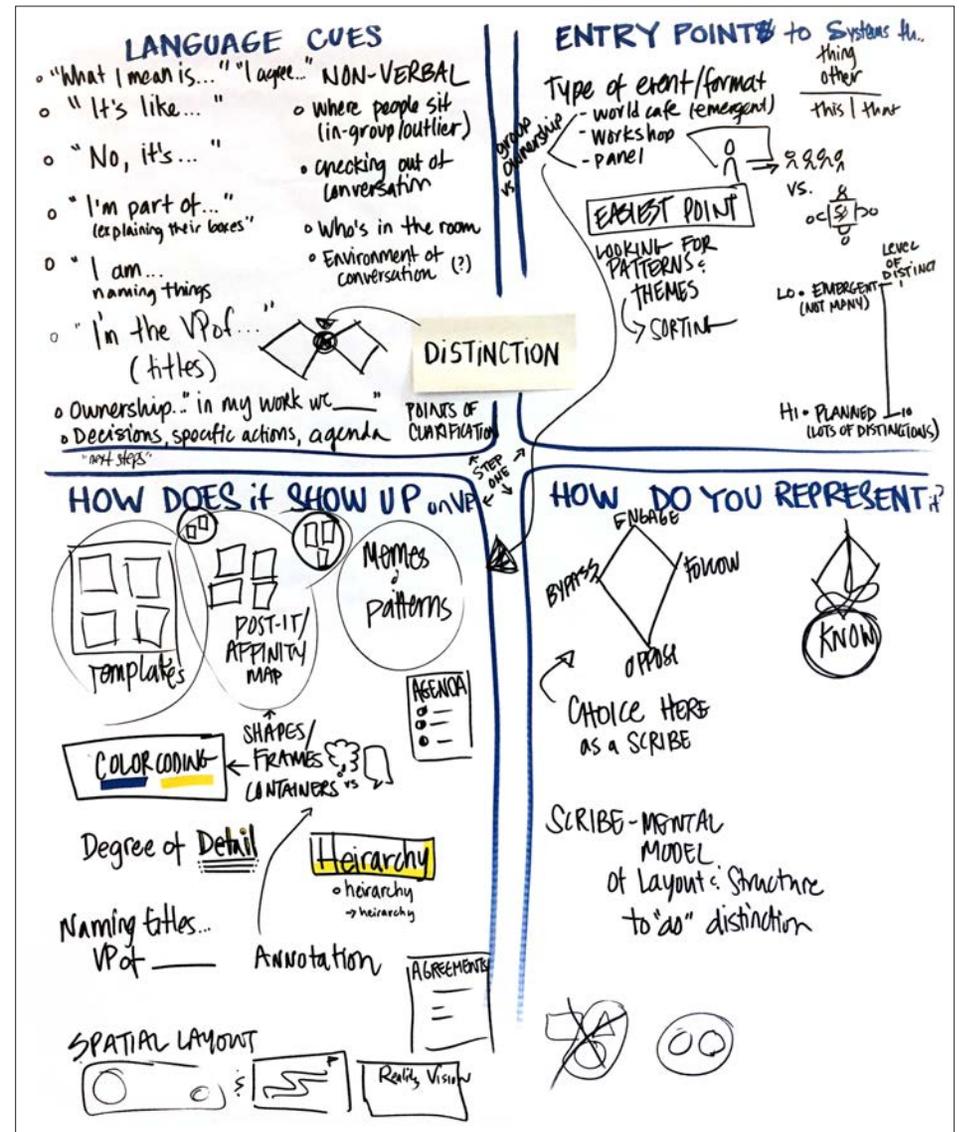
DSRP: Group Explorations

Each group explored an element of the DSRP framework focusing on four questions:

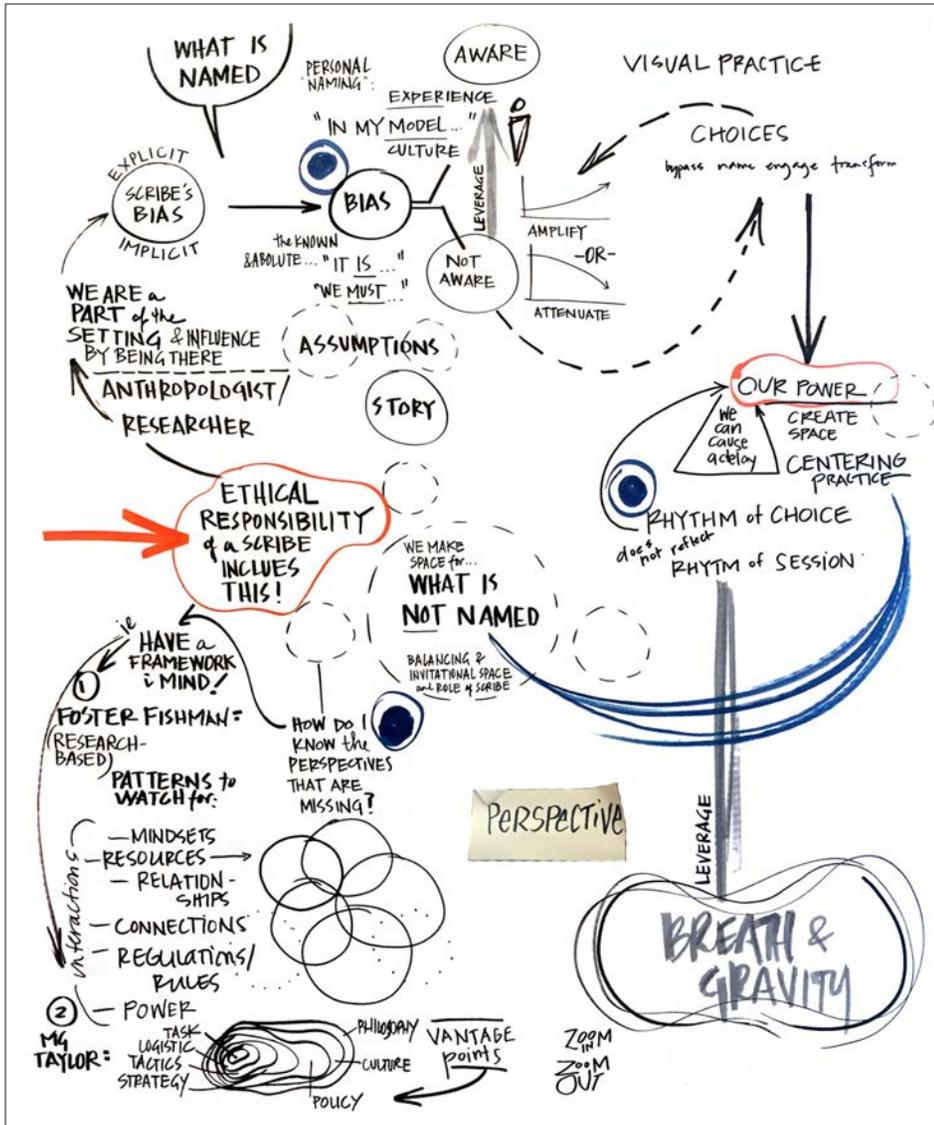
1. How does the element show up in visual practice?
2. Language cues - what do you listen for?
3. How do you represent it?
4. How is this an entry point to systems thinking?



Distinction:



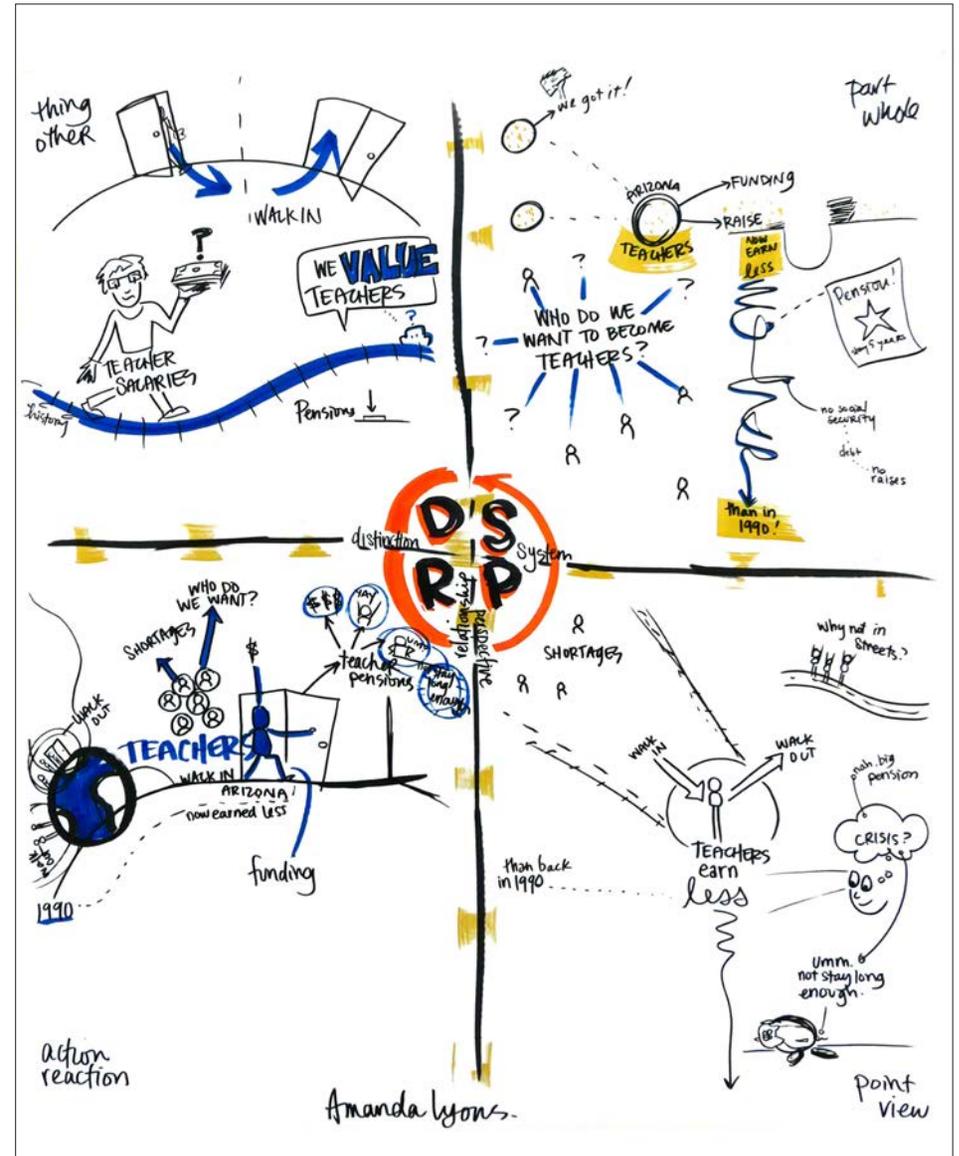
Perspective:



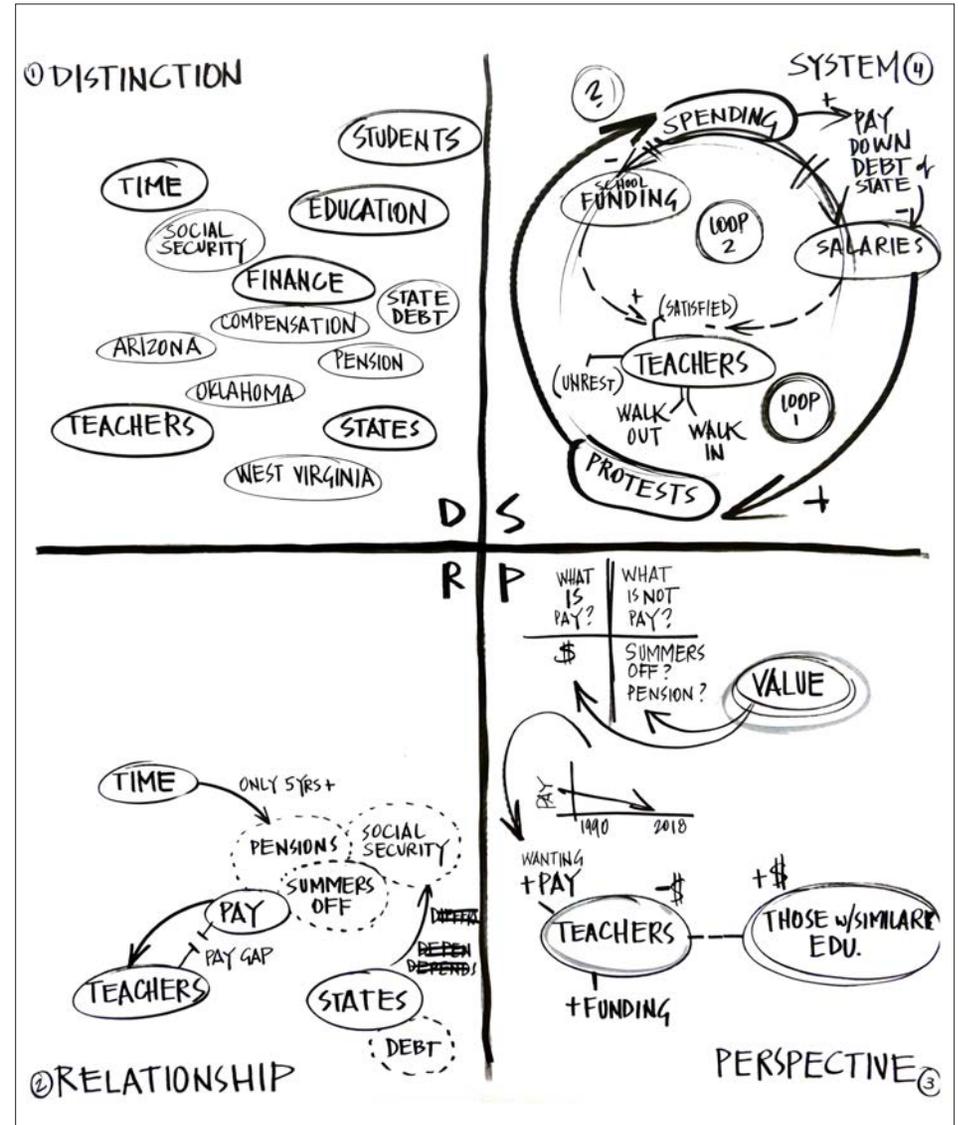
DSRP: Individual Element Scribing

For this exercise, each individual drew a grid on their paper and labeled the quadrants with a D, S, R, and P. We then played the following clip and asked everyone to scribe the clip through the lens of a particular element.

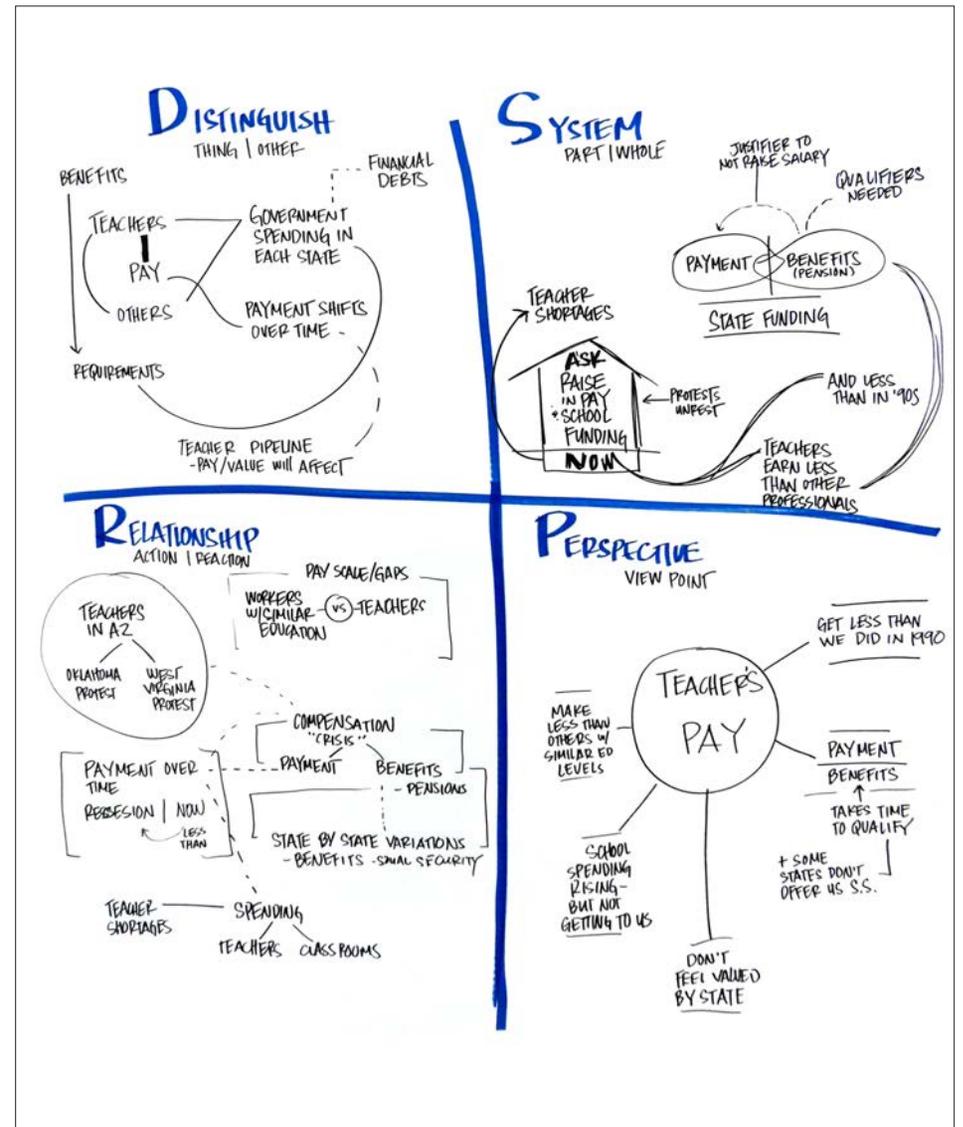
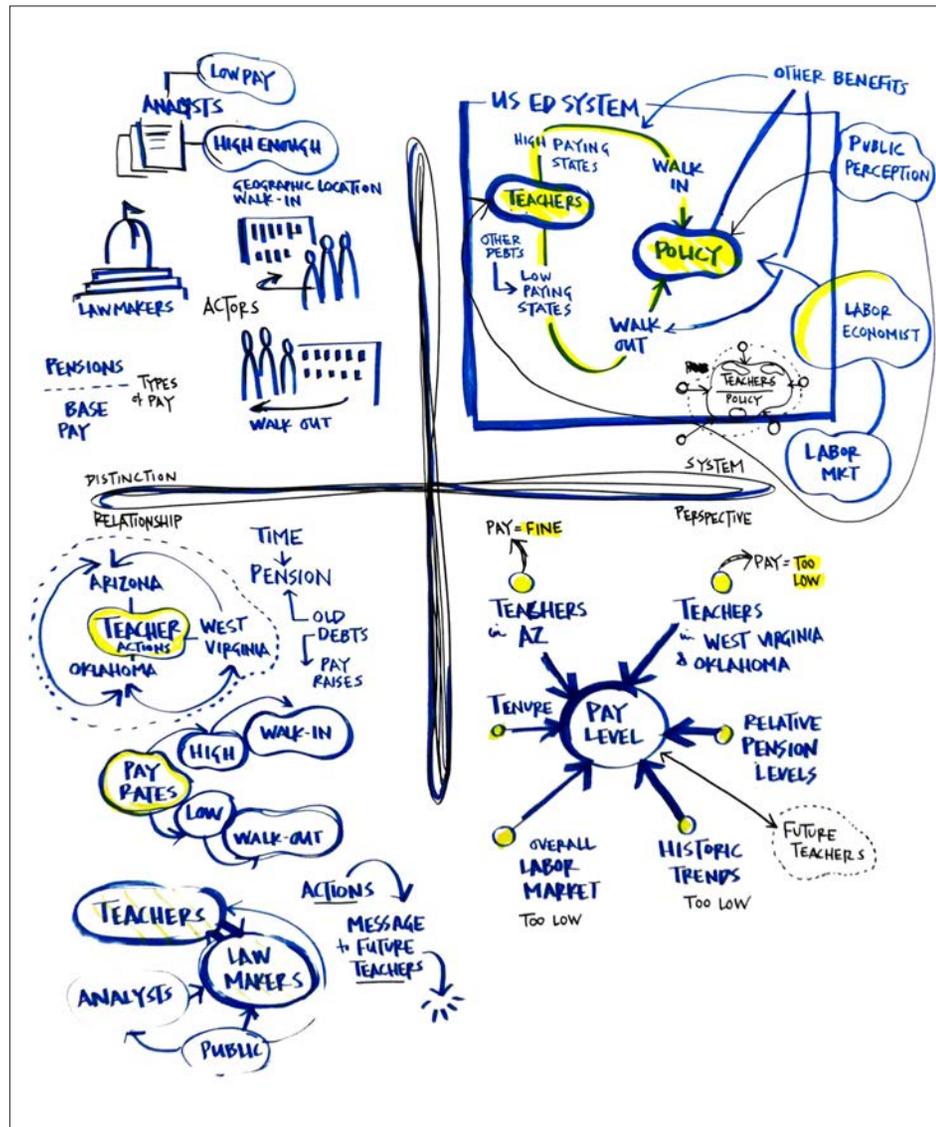
Here's the link to the clip: <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/04/11/600832090/walkouts-and-teacher-pay-how-did-we-get-here>



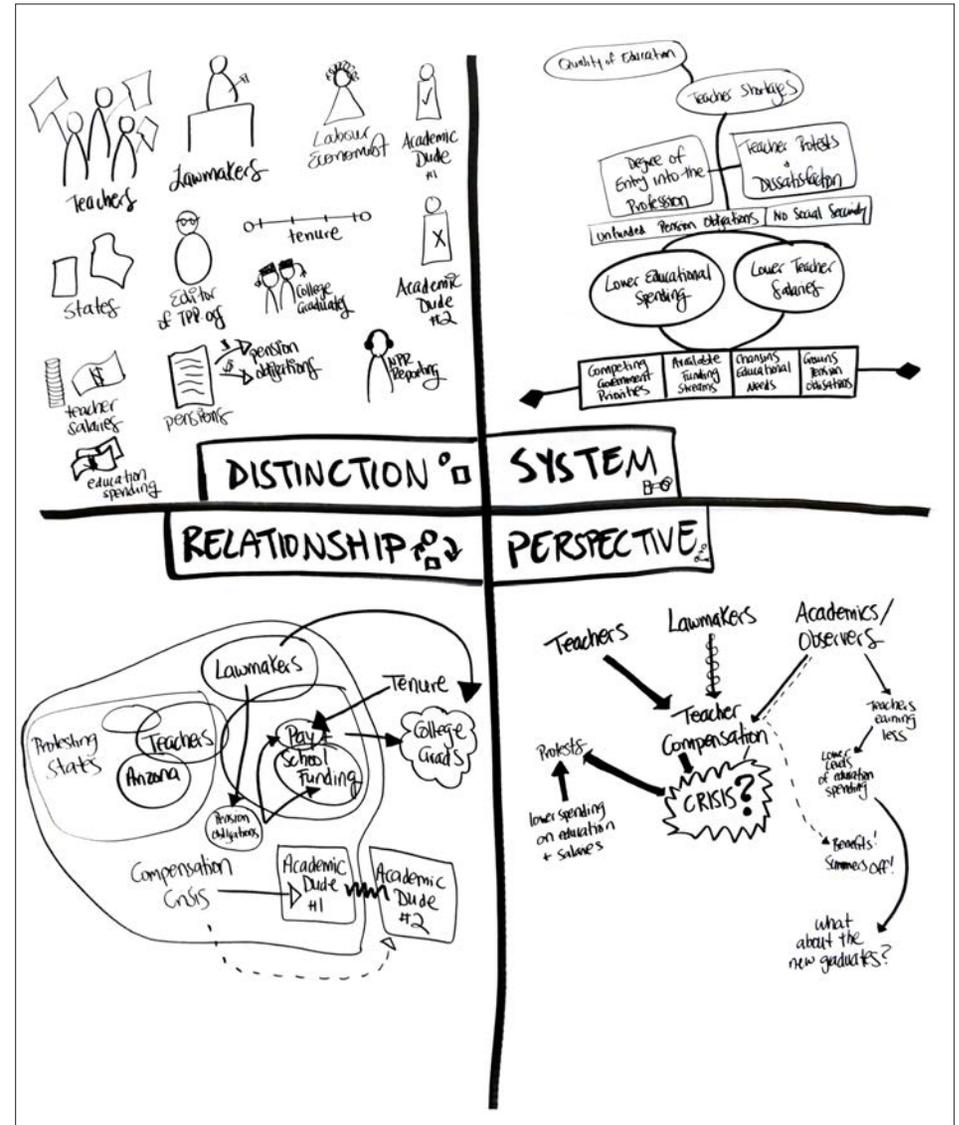
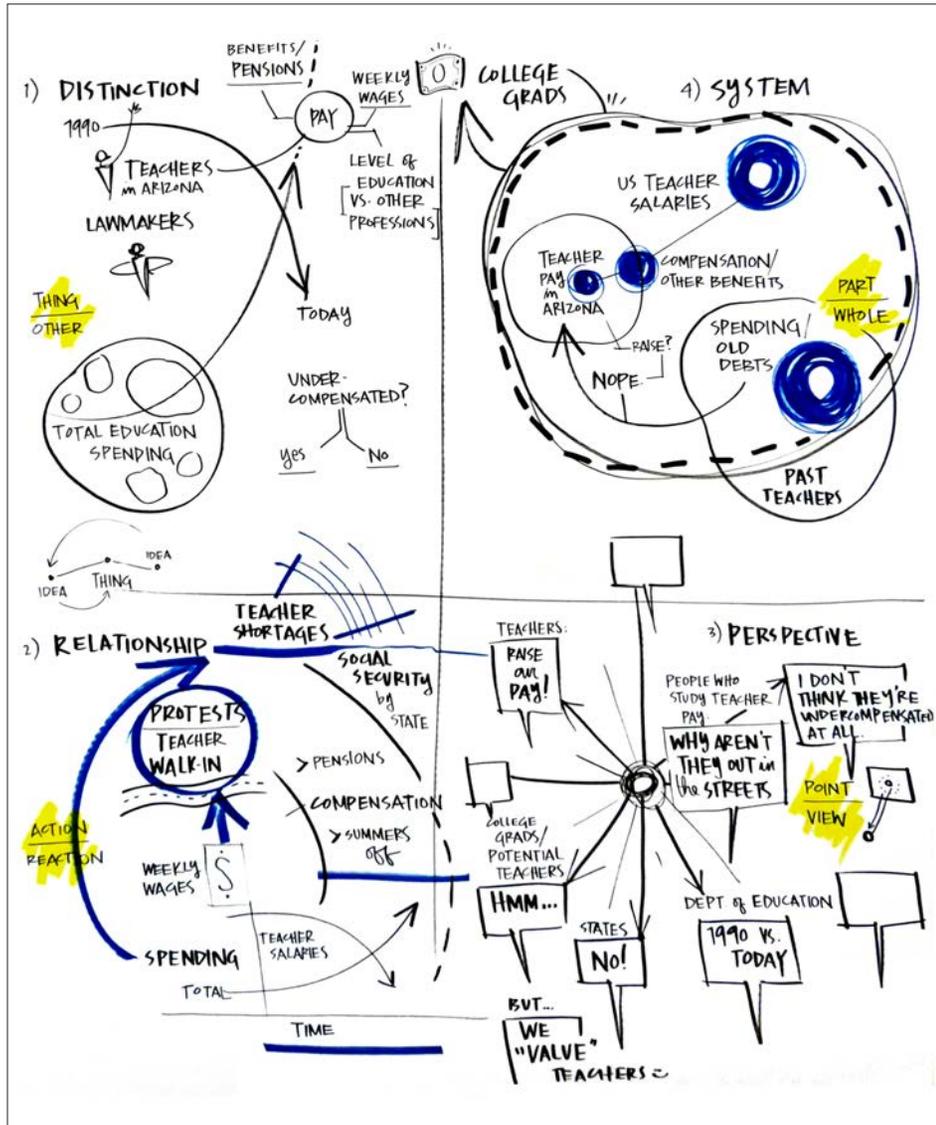
DSRP: Individual Element Scribing



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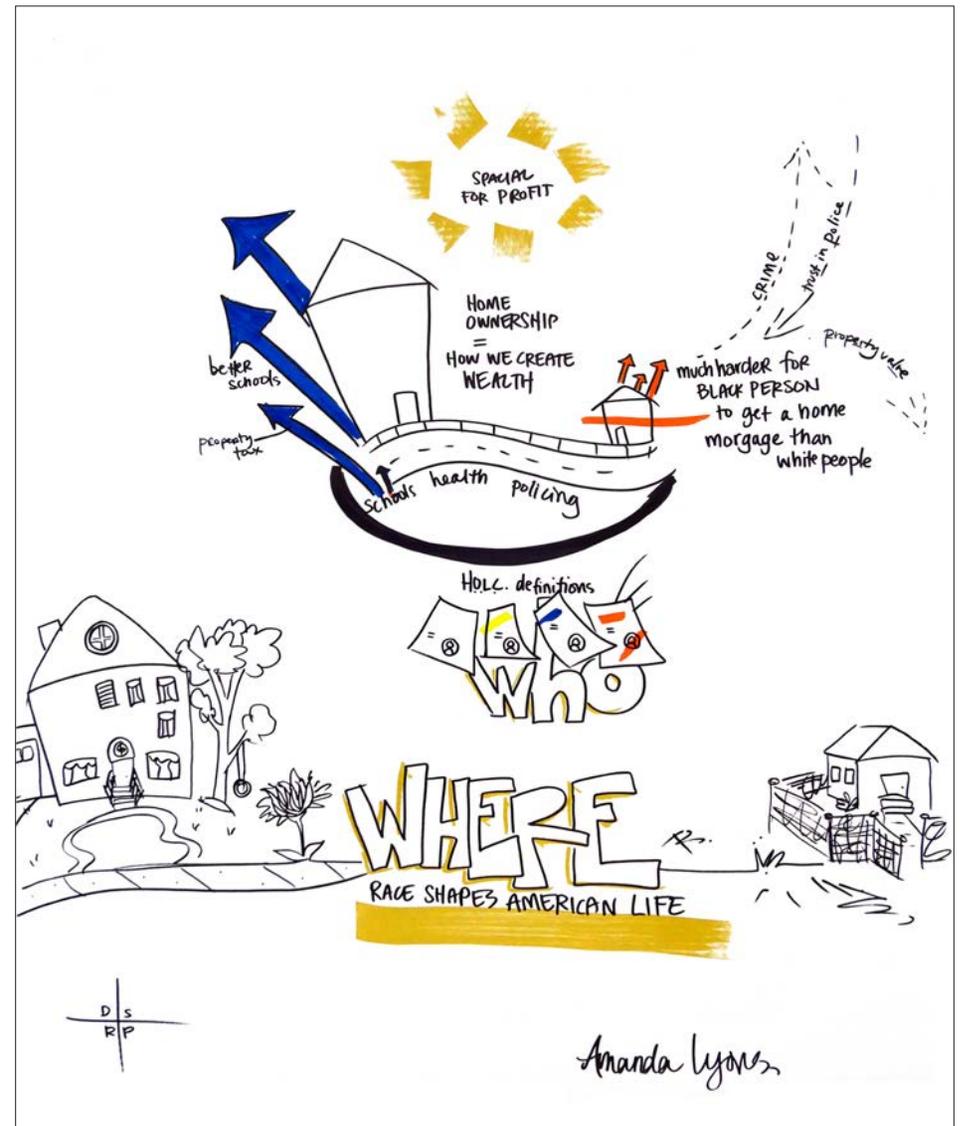
DSRP: Individual Element Scribing



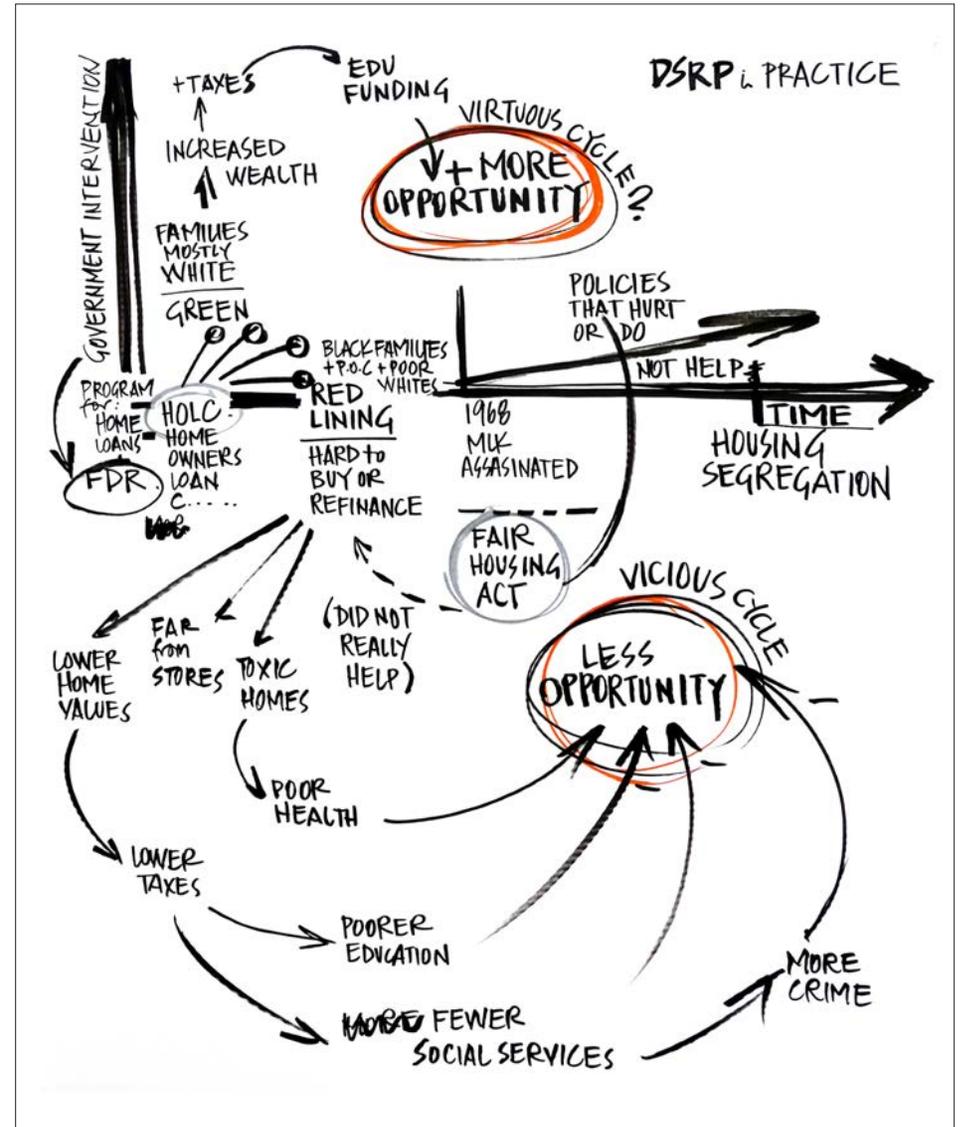
Scribing with the DSRP Lens

After a quick immersion into the elements of DSRP, participants then scribed with a full "DSRP" lens to the following segment:

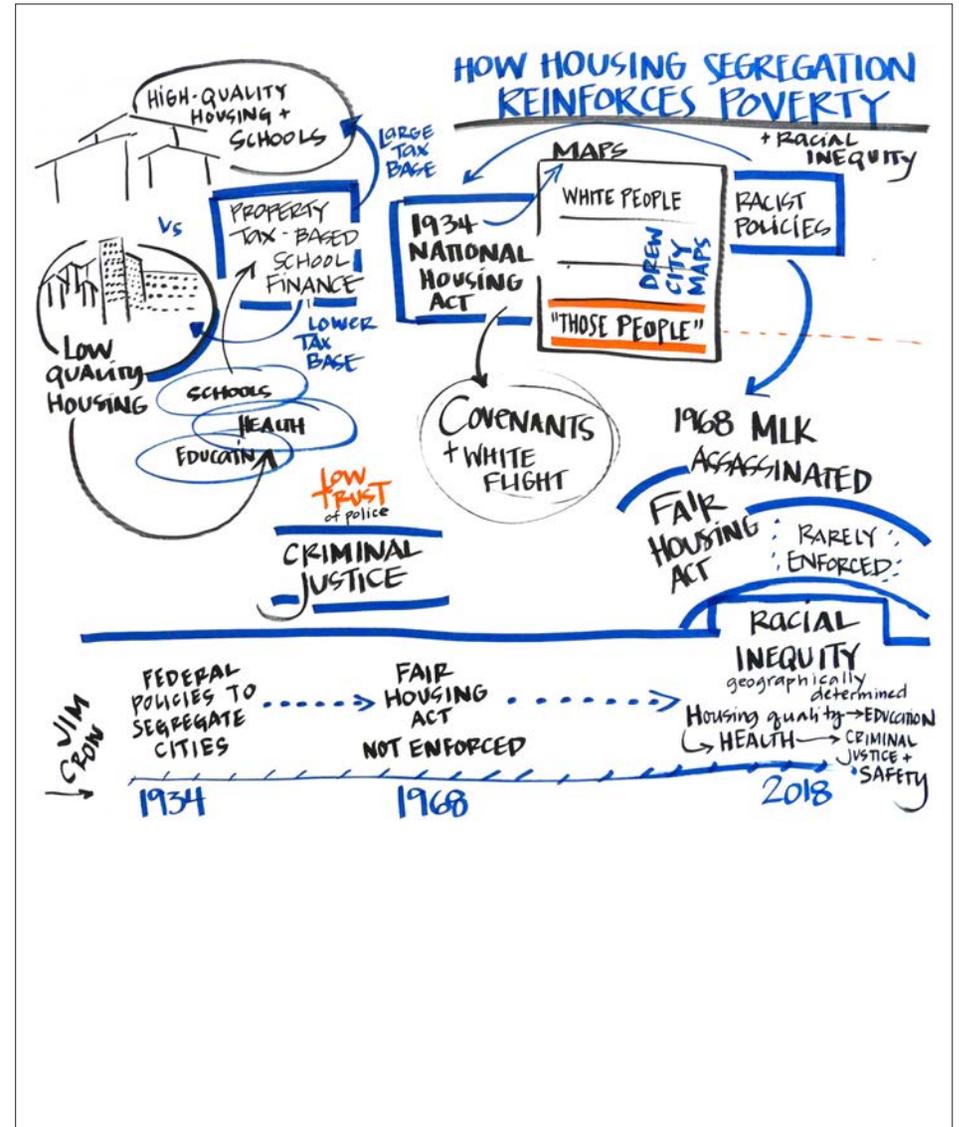
<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2018/04/11/601494521/video-housing-segregation-in-everything>



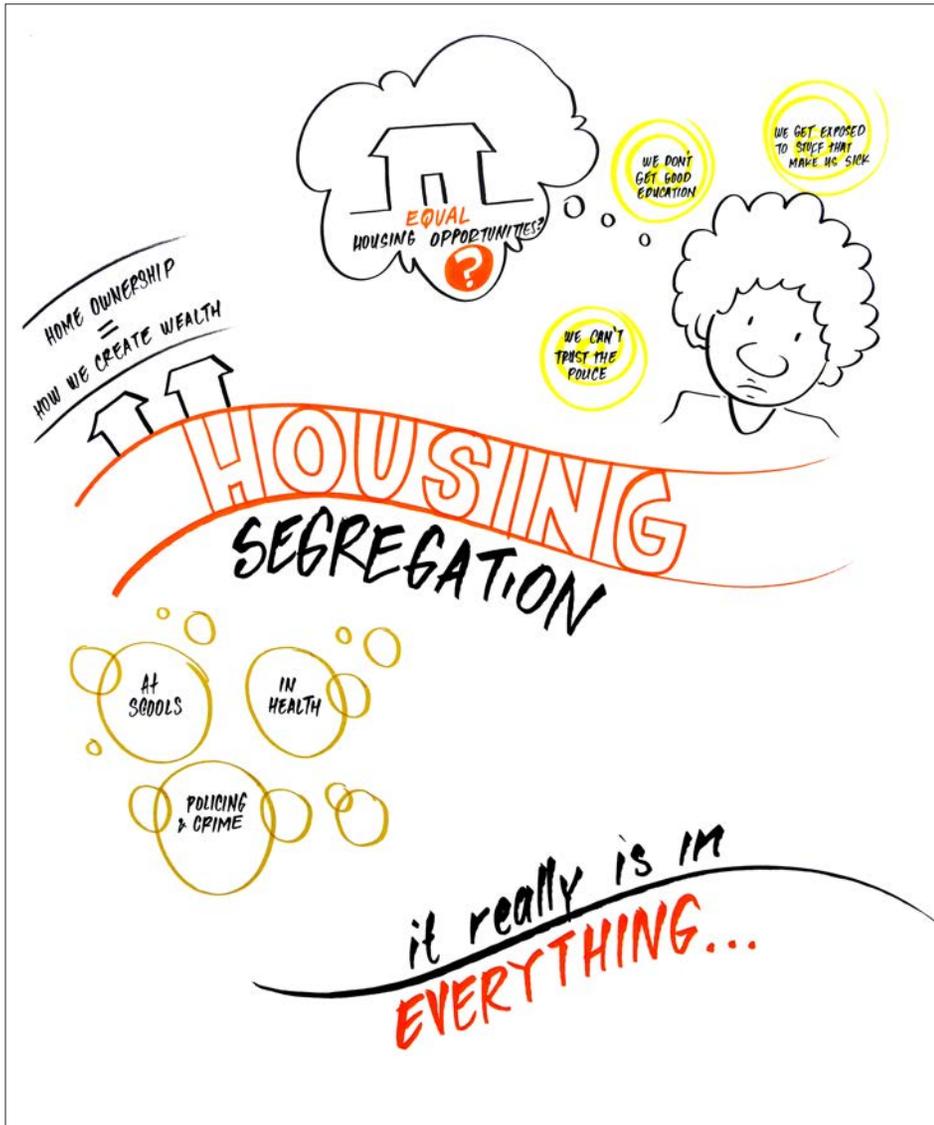
Scribing with the DSRP Lens



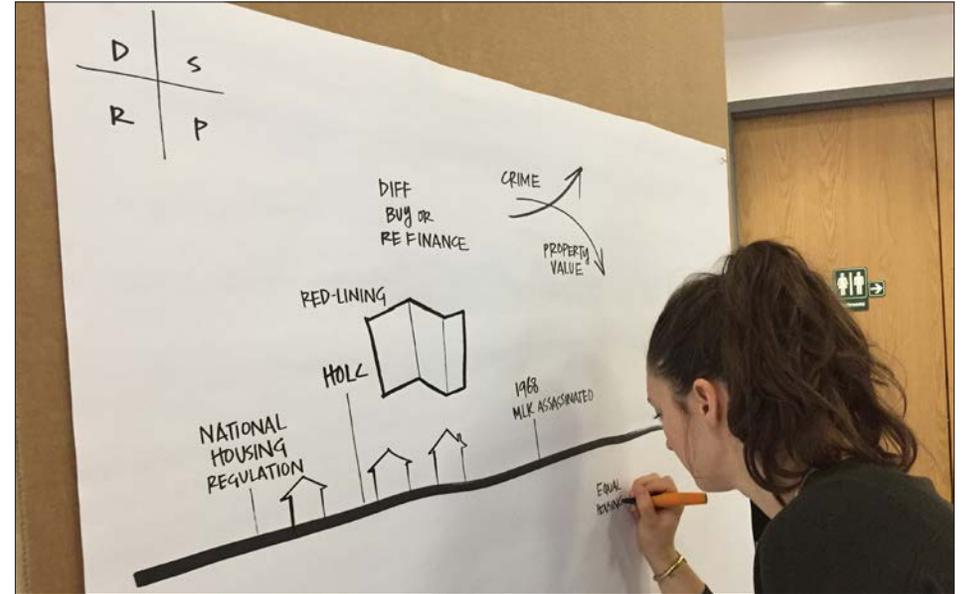
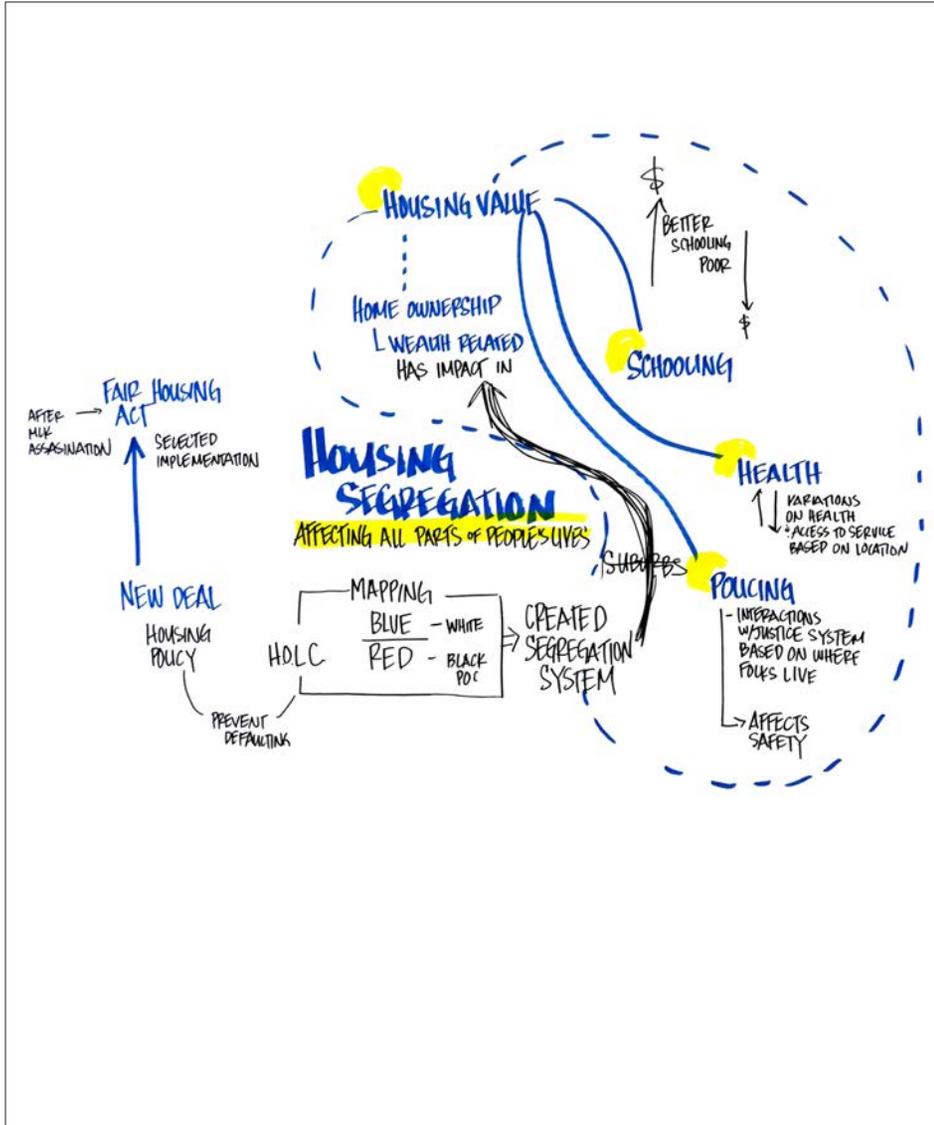
Scribing with the DSRP Lens



Scribing with the DSRP Lens



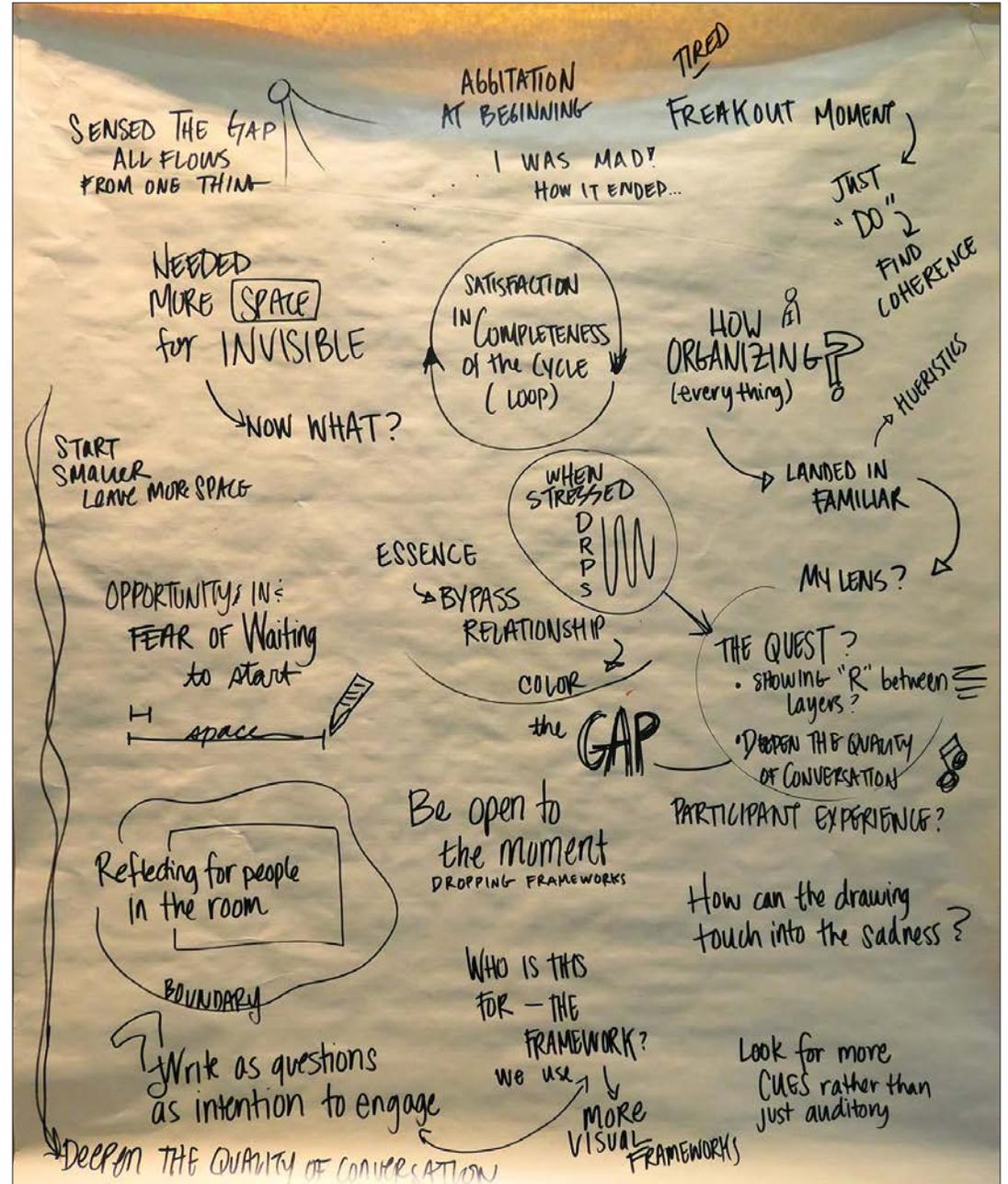
Scribing with the DSRP Lens



Scribing with the DSRP Lens

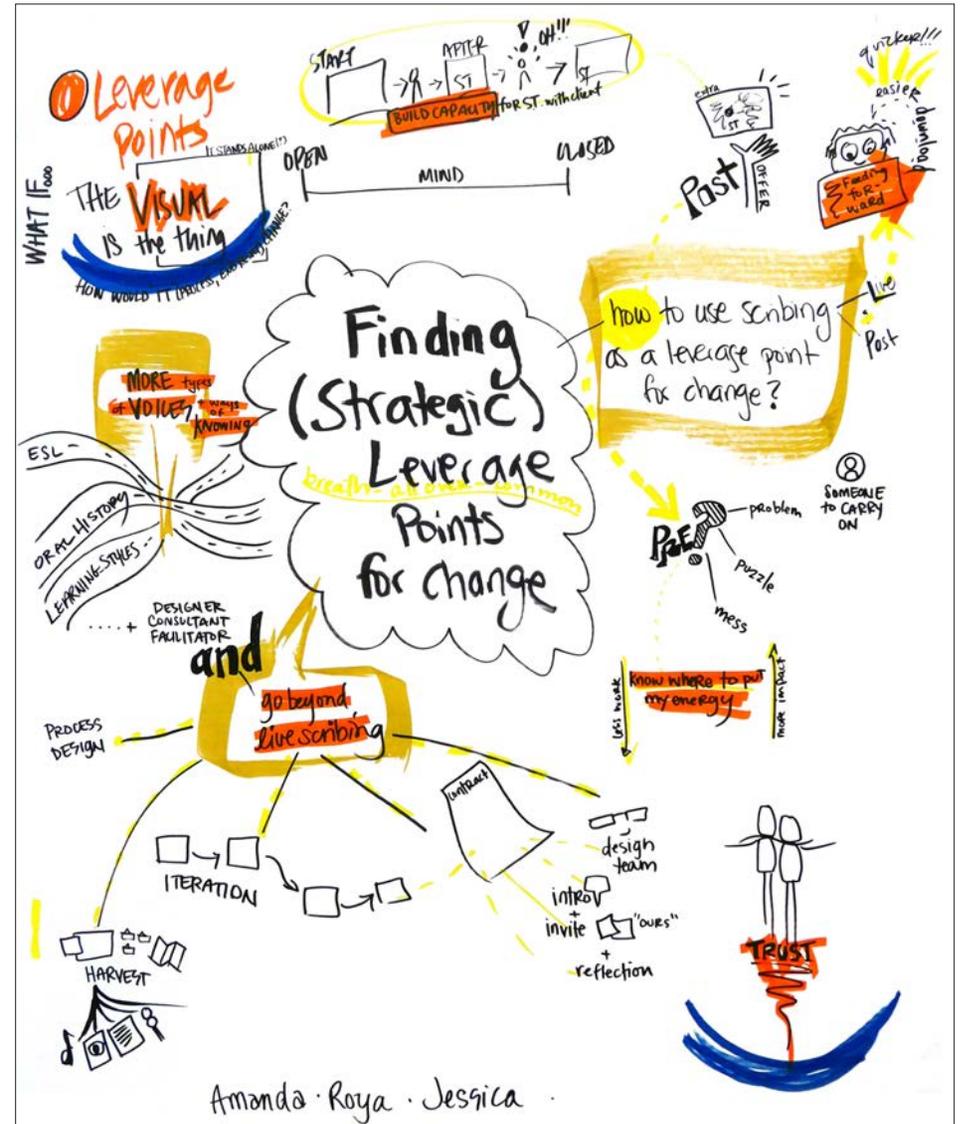
This graphic recording documents our reflections on scribing with a full DSRP lens. The conversation ranged from the emotions elicited while scribing to the challenges of working with a new framework that was underpinning the listening.

We talked about the information density of the audio recording that led to certain drawing choices, both positive and wanting of change. The group also discussed the purpose of the drawing, absent an audience, and what might be the participant's experience of the scribing.

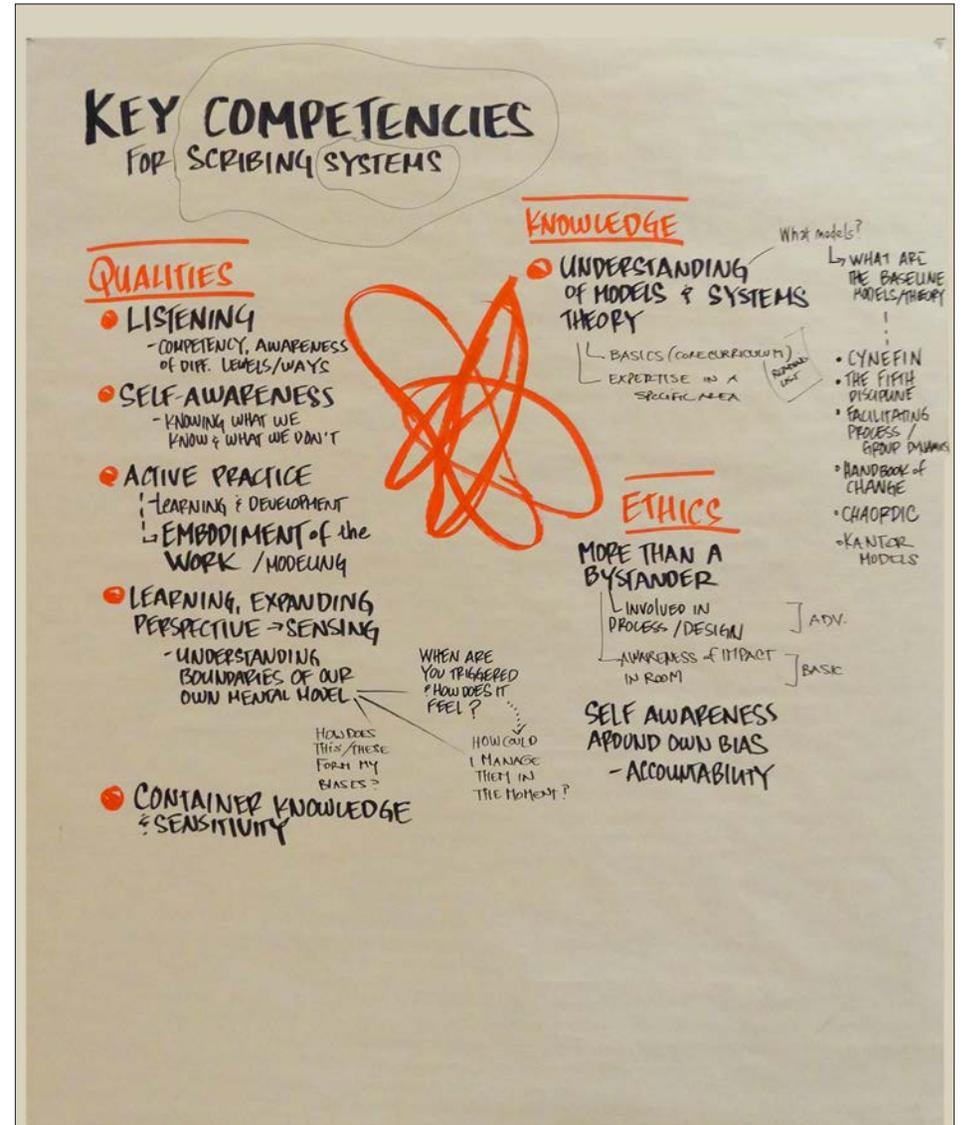
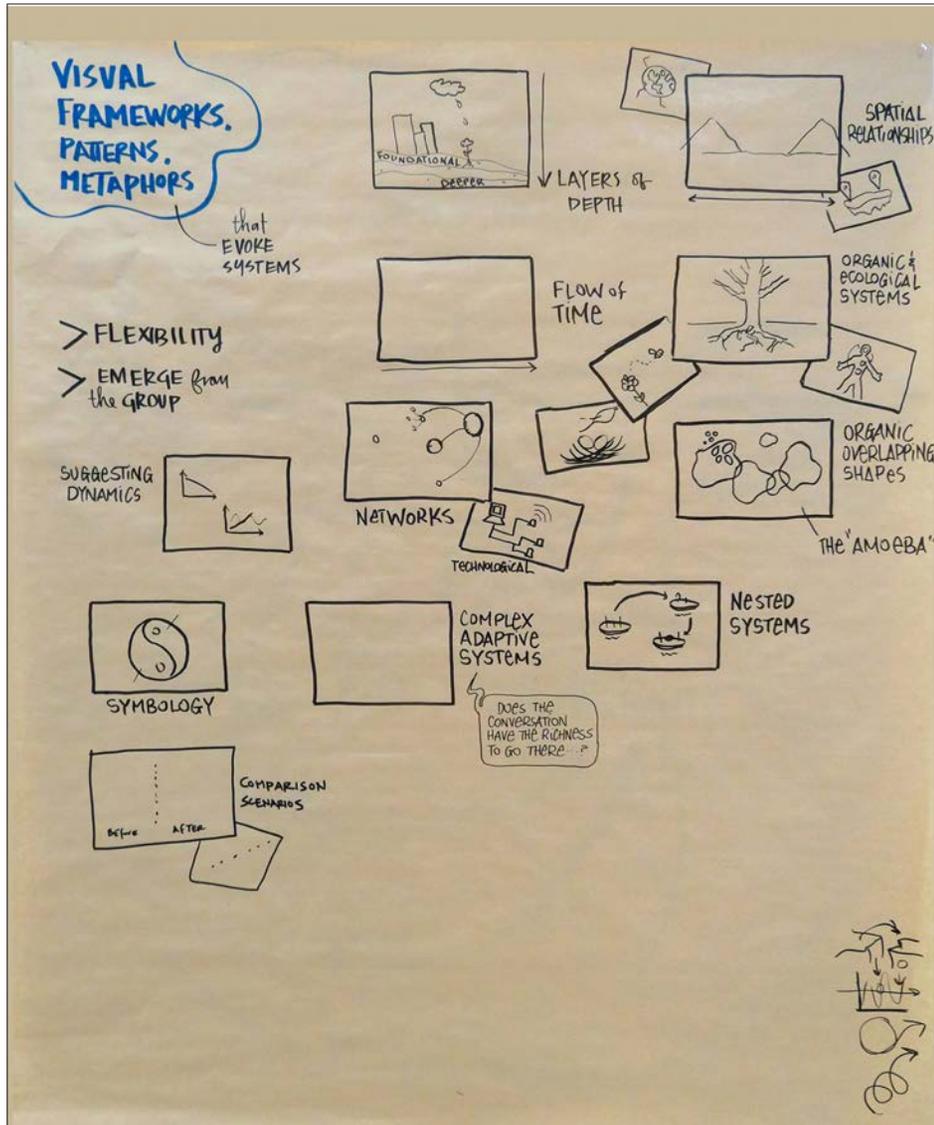


What Else?

Our final conversation explored what else we wanted to know about scribing systems, using the open space model.



What Else?



A Huge Thank You to Our Intrepid Scribes!



Back Row: Roya Damabi, Mary Michaud, Reilly Dow, Hannah Sanford, Kelvy Bird, Aaron Williamson, Jessica Riehl
Front Row: Marsha Dunn, Barbara Berry, Amanda Lyons, Zulma Sophia Patarroyo, Claudia Lopez