

Self-publishing of children's picture book

"Who likes slugs?"

A permaculture story with the message "live and let live" for kids and their parents



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| <b>Date Apprentice started Diploma</b>         | <b>01. February 2020</b>                      |
| <b>Project Title</b>                           | <b>Self-publishing children picture book</b>  |
| <b>Design Number</b>                           | <b>3 of 10</b>                                |
| <b>Date Design Started</b>                     | <b>10.11.21</b>                               |
| <b>Date Design Completed</b>                   | <b>31.06.22</b>                               |
| <b>Has the Design been implemented?</b>        | <b>Yes</b>                                    |
| <b>Online Link to Design (if available)</b>    |   |
| <b>Type of Design</b>                          | <b>Non Land Based</b>                         |
| <b>Design Category</b>                         | <b>Education &amp; Culture</b>                |
| <b>Name of Personal Tutor</b>                  | <b>Looby Macnamara &amp; Delvin Solkinson</b> |
| <b>Ready for Presentation</b>                  | <b>Yes Ready</b>                              |
| <b>Name &amp; Signature of Assessing Tutor</b> |   |
| <b>Date of Assessment</b>                      |   |

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## Design Brief

This design is about publishing a book. And as it turned out to be it is also about writing and illustrating, formatting and selling, starting a company and fulfilling a dream.

The goal of this design was to move us from the current point “having a story and a few illustrations” to the desired point “selling the first published copy”.



## Introduction

A bit about the structure, to allow easier navigation.

- Background            This section is about “why slugs?” What does this have to do with permaculture?
- Process Framework        In this section I introduce the chosen framework, Looby Macnamara’s Design Web and show how it was applied.

Thereafter I follow the design web in the order that makes sense to me and this project. Starting with Visions, Ethics and Principles and closing with Integration and Reflections.

All the materials used and developed can be found in the appendices.

The client for this design is myself.

## Background

Many years ago, I wrote a short story for small kids about slugs. And not just any slugs, but the Spanish slug. In Danish they have a very sonorous name “dræbersnegl”, which stands for “killer snail”. You might wonder why, why a book about the Spanish slug. Well, that was my way to cope with something I was so disgusted by and couldn’t do much about.

Spanish slugs are probably the most hated pest animal in Denmark. They’ve given so many gardeners desire to pull out their hair. Now and then (depending on the year) you can come across photos on social media of buckets with hundreds and thousands of slugs collected from the garden. There are numerous methods from more humane to less humane for getting rid of them.

I first got acquainted with them when we were on vacation in Denmark (at that time we were living in Ukraine). We stayed in a summerhouse with a small garden. One day I was out in the garden and there they were. Frankly, back then I didn’t know it was them. I remember wondering what are these big brown things lying around. That cannot be dog pooh. Can it?

I encountered the slugs for real once we bought a house and moved to Denmark. Our house is nearby a creek and some bewildered areas, so there were plenty of them. I always loved gardening, growing own herbs and veggies. I was disgusted and frustrated. You couldn't walk barefoot in the grass, they were everywhere. The parsley, the leeks, the squash, everything was eaten or covered in slime. Keeping them under control was endless and gross work.

Some years later, I noticed that my two-year-old was quite fond of them. He liked watching them and even asked if he can pet them. PET?! That gave the book its' ending. Well, almost. I must say that for a long time I was not entirely satisfied or convinced. Is that what I have to offer, kind of a give up idea. Luckily few years later my permaculture journey started, and I realized that this is not about giving up, but about "accepting every life form as valuable no matter how inconvenient they are to us or to other life forms that we value" (D. Holmgren). It is about having cold mind and not jumping into rush decisions. It is about "the problem is the solution".

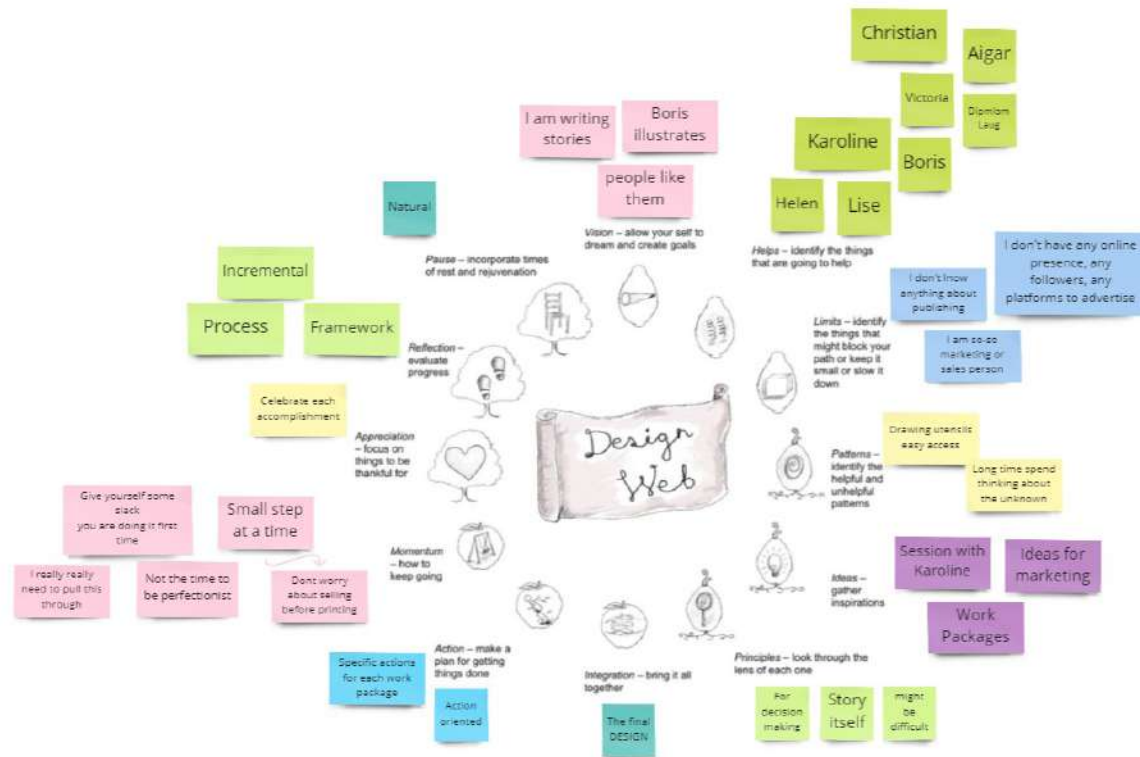
For myself with time I worked out some tactics that allow me to accept them. I am growing a lot of what they don't like (e.g. garlic, berries, fruits). I have also noticed that perennials on their second year (after they survived the first winter) are much more robust and are almost not attacked. We strive to create conditions for biodiversity as much as possible, relying on wild birds. And if it gets really bad, I do use scissors now and then. And of course, one day we will introduce chickens, as unfortunately we are not allowed to have ducks in the center of the town due to local legislation.

## Framework

At first, I attempted applying PRIME framework. I thought I had one concrete problem, i.e. how to publish. What I didn't realize is that this project had many more dimensions. I was spinning in the same place between Research and Ideas, not being able to move forward and make sense of the many issues, questions, topics I had in my head.

I decided to try the Design web. It was my first time applying this framework. All my previous designs were land-based and largely built around several variations of SADIM.

So, the first thing I did, I took the framework and brainstormed using sticky notes (see below). What a relief it was! It was stimulating. After I was done, I had a bunch of new insights and an inspiration kick. It took me three days to write up the project plus I had a clear action plan to carry it out.



To mention a couple of insights:

✂ Helps

I didn't realize how many people are helping me to make my dream come true. Here we shall draw a dotted line to the "Appreciation".

✂ Momentum

I was surprised how much I had on my mind in relation to "how to keep going" and what a relief it was to let the first ideas out.

I also had few doubts:

🔦 Principles

How do I apply principles? I couldn't immediately connect them or pick the ones that are most visible in that design. So, I decided it needed more thinking time and in the worst-case scenario I would stick to the ETHICS. They are not mentioned explicitly in the Design Web so maybe it could be my tweaking of the framework.

🔦 Integrate

At first, I was in doubt what shall be done in this phase. After a few iterations I figured that was the design itself!

## Vision and Ethics

### People care: Boris and I

When I am daydreaming about the future, it goes like this:

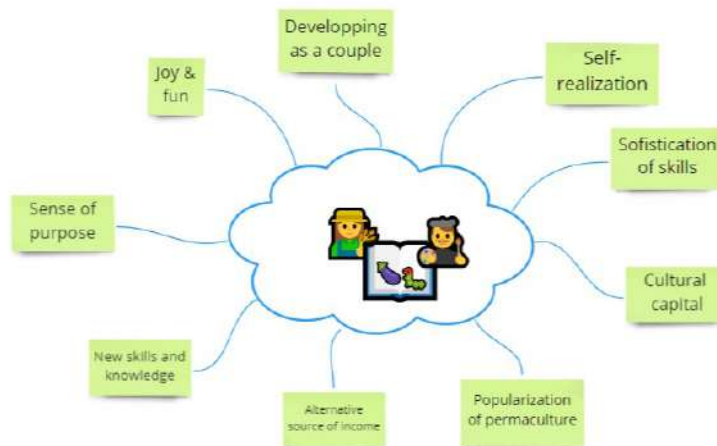
*“Kids are grown up. Boris and I live in Israel in a tiny house with a biiiiiig garden. Perhaps we also run a café that serves green shakshukas for breakfast. Boris is painting a lot. And together we are writing and illustrating books for children and comics for adults.”*

We always enjoyed doing something together, but especially in the beginning of our relationship we fantasized about jointly starting a business, an agency – “A & B events”. I think we are a good team and support very much each other’s interests and encourage to advance in these. Boris is very talented. Self-taught, he is very skillful in painting. I would very much like to support him and find a way where he spends more time painting and drawing.

One of my biggest interest is gardening. I really like plants and being out in the nature: observing, planting, smelling, tasting. And when it’s dark and cold, I like to be creative.

This project is great and unique because we are realizing both our own interests equally. (For example, arranging an exhibition for Boris is more directed at his interest, while establishing a new area in the garden is more my domain.)

I have made this small sketch listing all the good things that are happening to us because of this undertaking. That is People care.



### Earth care: The message of the book

So, what is this book really about? I believe the key message is “Live and let live”. It is about earth care.

Valuing biodiversity means accepting all life forms, not dependent on their usefulness. D. Holmgren:

“We accept all life forms as valuable no matter how inconvenient they are to us or to other life forms

that we value”<sup>1</sup>. That does not mean that the Spanish slug may not be exterminated. “In meeting our needs, the killing of other life is inevitable. When we harm and kill, we should do it in a conscious and respectful way”<sup>2</sup>. But we must learn to accept all the life forms. For me that means there is no need to hate and be disgusted about Spanish slugs; no need to feel upset, angered or frustrated when you encounter them. They too can be a source of inspiration for arts and science (slugs mucus). I’ve heard from several people that changing attitude to Spanish slugs brings you half-way to resolving that issue completely. Dealing with pest animals requires creativity and a cold mind. To be able to apply the well-known design thinking guideline “the problem is the solution”, one needs to feel at least neutral about the problem, to ensure “an open and inquiring attitude rather than an urgent demand for solution”.

I hope with this book to raise this awareness to some extent in readers, i.e. parents.



### Fair share: The decision making

The Fair share ethic is guiding my decisions regarding the accessibility, the pricing, the future translations of the book, the selection of service providers, the donations of the book. Thus, e.g. when attending different festivals along with books for sale we bring a stand with a whole story, so all interested can read it without buying a book.

The Fair share ethic is also about the redistribution of surplus. What we choose to support with our surplus time, resources and wealth is very important. D. Holmgren: "Even arts and culture which have no strong marketplace value, can be seen as current expression of redistribution of surplus". And that's what we do!

<sup>1</sup> Holmgren, David, 2020, *Permaculture Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability*, Melliodora (all references to Holmgren refer to this book)

<sup>2</sup>



## Principles

In this design I cover a few principles that help me steer towards the goal. These are covered in the different sections.

- ⊗ Observe and interact (p. 7, section Patterns)
- ⊗ Obtain a yield (p. 10, section Momentum)
- ⊗ Use small slow solutions (p. 10, section Momentum)
- ⊗ Self-regulate: Accept feedback (p.10, section Momentum)
- ⊗ Relative placement (p. 7, section Patterns)

## Helps

Here I would like to mention and thank people who helped me along the way:

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| ☞ Boris              | Illustrations and always willing to try out my ideas               |
| ☞ Karoline           | Shared her experience and knowledge in the area of self-publishing |
| ☞ Christian          | Shared his experience in the area of self-publishing               |
| ☞ Helen              | Digitization, formatting and retouching                            |
| ☞ Lise & Bodil       | Proof-reading  |
| ☞ Trine, Elin & Lise | General feedback, support and encouragement                        |
| ☞ Victoria           | Shared her knowledge re. company creation & accounting             |
| ☞ Aigar              | Website & webshop design and set-up                                |

I think the biggest intrinsic help was the project management skills that I possess from my everyday work as the project manager.

## Limits

My main limits were related to an absolute absence of any knowledge or experience in the area of publishing. To gain that over the internet was very difficult and overwhelming. I was ping-ponged across different sites and Facebook groups reading about ISBNs and EAC, the common mistakes and the dangers of self-publishing, step-by-step and know-your-audience guides, file formats and tips for good story writing. I was struggling to get an overview and structure.

Another limit was related to sales activities. I've never been very keen on or good at sales and marketing. I know a big portion of small business is done with the help of social media, using the connections and the followers. I didn't have these. So, in the worst case, I thought, I could get the books printed and stand and sell them at some permaculture events, festivals and get-togethers.

## Patterns

I have observed one helpful pattern that enabled Boris progress with illustrations whenever he felt like it and had time. All the drawing utensils and the paper should be left at the dining table. The table is very long, and we normally only use just a half of it for eating. I tended though to clean-up and put things in order when Boris was done painting, normally moving everything to another room. By leaving it and making it easily accessible in the central room enabled him to progress faster with it as he could spend



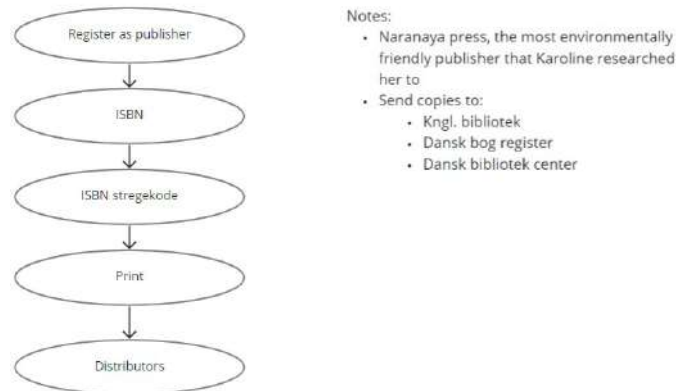
on it 15-20 minutes now and then. This I should remember for next time as well (Mollison's principle on "Relative placement" and Holmgren's "Observe and Interact").

I have also noticed one unhelpful pattern that I tend to spend much time thinking and overthinking, kind of getting hung up in the unknown aspects, that in most cases results in wasted time rather than in workable solutions. So, I wanted to be more action-oriented this time. For example, reaching out to people for advice more, picking up the phone and conversing, rather than surfing the internet for answers and writing e-mails.

## Ideas

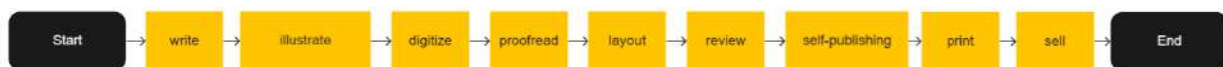
As mentioned, it was somewhat tough with the ideas in the beginning, given the missing knowledge.

In the attempt to move forward, I asked Karoline for the advice, as she has published a few books on her own. She was so open and so clear, that I had a feeling that she shared with me everything she knew in that area. Needless to say, how grateful I felt. Based on her explanation, I drafted the below flow and took a few notes. I felt it was enough and that I would be able to take it from here.



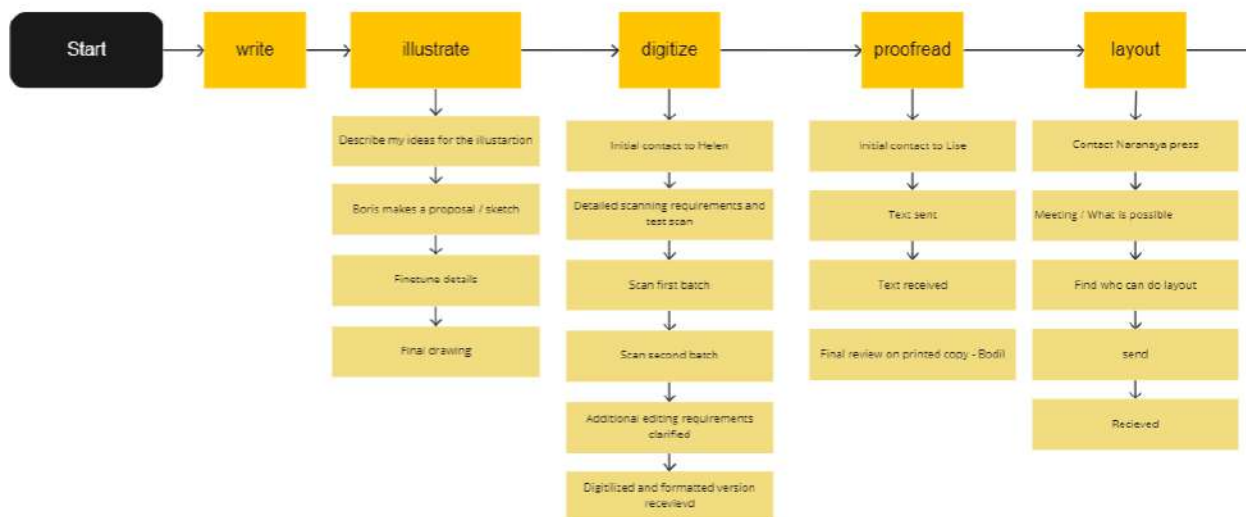
I have also had a call with Helen, to discuss the digitization of the images. She made me aware of yet an additional step – the layout. This is when a professional (or not) takes the images and the text and puts it all together following certain rules and requirements.

To proceed I needed some ideas for structuring the work. After playing a bit with it, I came to the following flow of work packages. Now I was set to continue.

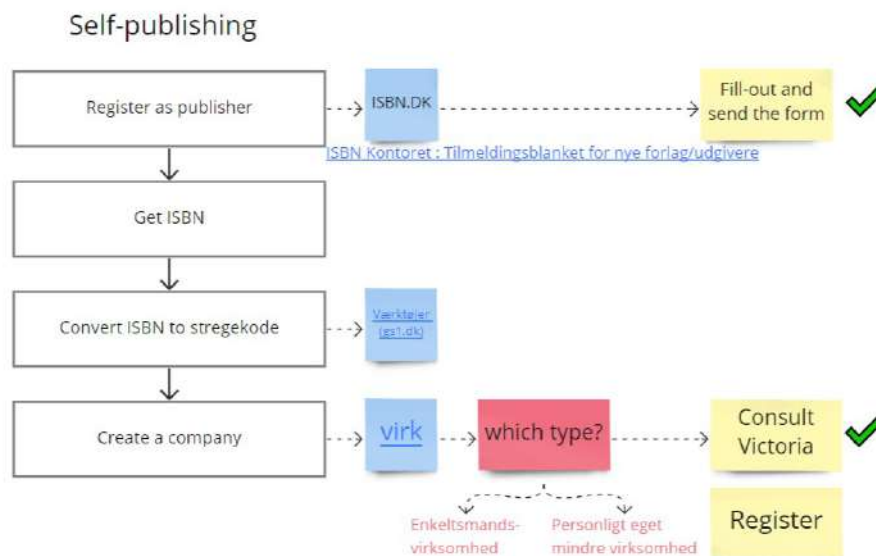


## Action plan

For each set of the work package, I have developed an action list as detailed as possible, so it was easy to progress. Small steps at a time! Not to feel overwhelmed. Below is an extract and the complete flow is attached in the Appendix



As I was tackling one work package after another, I was feeding it with relevant information: links, forms, specific to-dos, as well as doubts, if there were any, and how to resolve them. For example:



## Momentum

I realized that to keep going it would be helpful with some kind of a set of principles or even affirmations, as the reason for stopping often times was related to the “this is too much” sensation and not knowing what to do. When I was drafting my principles, I couldn’t help but notice the relation to permaculture principles!

*Momentum principles*

*Permaculture principles*

*When in doubt reach out for help.*

*Use your energy where it gives highest yield.*

E.g. if Karoline advised an environmental publisher, no need to go around and waste time worrying about “I should probably do my own research.”

*Small step at a time.*

Do not worry about selling before printing. Appreciate small accomplishments.

*Give yourself some slack, you are doing it first time.*

*Mistakes will be made. It’s the learning that counts and that is valuable.*

D. Holmgren | Self-regulate: accept feedback

D. Holmgren | Obtain Yield  
focus energy and effort on what provides most important yield

D. Holmgren | Use small and slow solutions  
“Slow and steady wins the race”

D. Holmgren | Observe and interact  
“Failure is useful so long as we learn”

## Appreciation

I think this is an important step, that also helps to keep going. I must say that during this project I came to it naturally (before I applied the Design web). When Boris was done illustrating, I told my family that we would be celebrating this, because it’s an important milestone; and because so much work was put in it and it’s very important to take a break and celebrate. We had a dessert with drinks, laid out all the drawings, I was telling the story, Jonathan asked to repeat it a few times. Happy cozy family quality time.



All illustrations completed



First customer!

After the first celebration, we have planned for the following ones:

- ✿ All drawings are formatted and digitized
- ✿ Book layout completed
- ✿ Book printed and received
- ✿ First book sold
- ✿ All stock sold

And a few small appreciations:

- ✿ Company and publishing company registered
- ✿ Person for doing the book layout found
- ✿ Successful negotiations with a publishing company

## Pause

Hmmm...pauses...

There were pauses, but these were not ones incorporated for recreation and rejuvenation. These were natural breaks. The first pause was roughly 5 years, since the story was written and a few illustrations drawn, after our youngest one arrived and became our priority. Then there were “I am stuck” pauses, “I am doing parallel projects” pauses and “I am waiting for someone to finish something” pauses.

In this project I didn’t have that feeling of being exhausted, which I had experienced in the other projects. But I would like to be mindful about the importance of taking breaks for rejuvenation. I think pausing should also be incorporated into the “momentum” principles, along with appreciation.

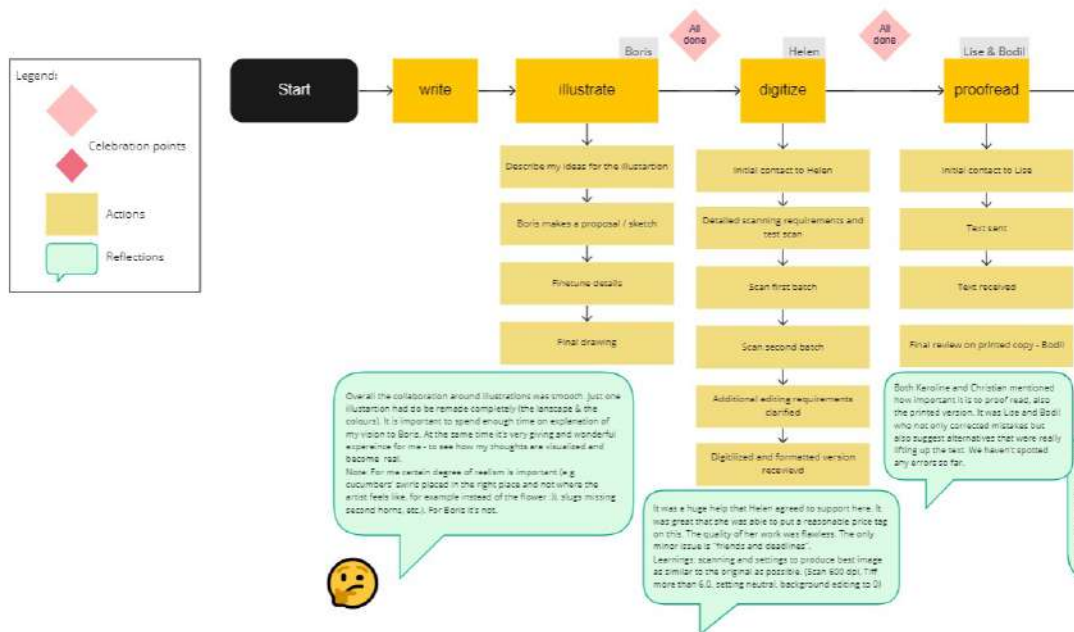
## Integrate

The integration anchor point addresses the needs / functions of the design. And how these were met with decisions / actions / systems that the design created.

The needs were clarified throughout the design and primarily refer to:

- getting more certainty, clarity in how to progress (solve the feeling of being lost, not knowing what to do, where to start)
- focus on action orientation
- getting more support for keeping going

It became clear during design that partially these needs can be addressed via creating a thorough action-oriented system focusing on incremental steps and achievements. The work packages, the actions (in small steps!), people helping, big and small appreciations, the reflections, all put together. This is my red thread. (Please see Appendix for a complete flow)



It emerged as well during the design that working out the momentum principles also addresses the needs. These were very helpful and gave the support needed to move forwards.

## Evaluation

Did we fulfil our aims? Yes, I believe we did.

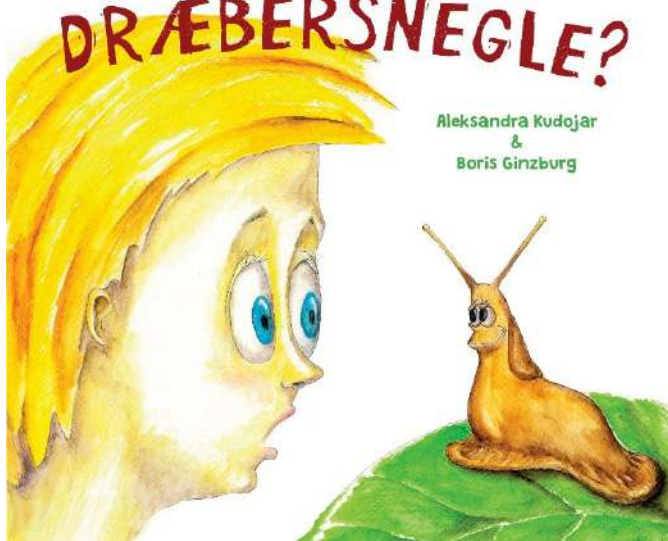
I've included individual evaluations for each work package in the appendix, this is also a way to capture lessons learnt for each stage.

Many things took a long time. Or a lot longer than needed due to the fact that we were doing it for the first time. Every time we passed a new obstacle, we looked at each other and said, "next time it will be so much easier". Layout, color adjustments, book spine widths, printer settings – peanuts! It roughly took us a year. Now when we are starting a new book, we have an indication to what to expect and that's really reassuring.



# HVEM KAN LI' DRÆBERSNEGLE?

Aleksandra Kudojar  
&  
Boris Ginzburg



Mor, far og deres to børn er glade for at flytte  
på landet, indtil de en dag opdager ubudne gæster,  
der spiser løv af frugt og grønt i deres have!  
Måske skal familien være skrappe og gå i kamp  
mod angriberne, eller måske er der en anden måde...  
En bog for store og små, om at al slags  
liv er vigtigt. Selv hvis det er en DRÆBERSNEGL!

