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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Memory, urgency, practice: Essayistic comics-making as method and intervention

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Abstract

This article adopts an integrated practice-led and practice-based methodology, framed through an essayistic approach to comics-based research, using our own artistic practices, one from Serbia and one from India, as case studies. Through works addressing the fall of democratic values, memories of conflicts, rise of nationalism, and ecological devastation, we examine how urgency shapes creation, reflection, and the mediation of memory in comics-making. Rather than a reactionary impulse, we conceptualize urgency as a relational and iterative condition that unfolds through political-ethical, epistemic, and aesthetic dimensions, and one that structures how artists act, think, and draw in response to crises. In our practices, drawing functions as both an act of remembering and a form of thinking: essayistic comics-making materializes a dialogue between immediacy and reflection, as well as between lived experience and its critical rearticulation. We argue that through this interplay, comics-making becomes a mode of situated knowledge production, where memory, testimony, and critique are interwoven. The essayistic form enables urgency to be inhabited rather than merely depicted, turning the creative process itself into a reflective space of resistance and inquiry. By tracing how these dynamics operate within specific socio-political contexts, this paper expands the understanding of comics-making as a medium of embodied memory and a method of research that translates lived urgency into thought and form.

Keywords: comics; practice-led methodology; essayistic inquiry; urgency; artistic research

Introduction

In recent decades, non-fiction comics have emerged as powerful forms of witnessing, documentation, and critique. From Spiegelman's *Maus* (1987) and Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2000) to Sacco's *Palestine* (1996) and *Safe Area Goražde* (2000), the comics medium has proven its capacity to convey historical trauma, political conflict, and multiple forms of memory through visual narration. Following Kuhn (2010), memory is understood as a dynamic process and performative activity: it is socially and culturally mediated, constructed through narrative, ritual, and material culture, and always situated at the intersection of the personal, the private, and the collective. In this sense, comics function as memory texts,

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where fragmentation, montage, and visual metaphor enact the structure of remembering rather than simply recounting historical events. Memory in this context can be conceptualized as personal (individual recollection), collective (shared social narratives), political (contested or ideologically mediated histories), and embodied (trauma or experience inscribed in the body and affect). These works have established the comics form as a legitimate mode of historical and autobiographical inquiry (Chute 2016; Gardner 2020). *Maus* combines visual metaphor and narrative fragmentation to explore intergenerational trauma caused by the Holocaust. *Persepolis* documents personal and political memory of Iran during the Islamic Revolution, through a blend of diary-like reflection and historical contextualization. Sacco's reportage works render firsthand experiences of conflict, merging journalistic observation with sequential art to convey both factual and emotional truths.

While much has been written about the role of literature, film, journalism, and comics in preserving marginalized histories and challenging authoritarian regimes (Neria and Aspinwall 2016; George and Liew 2021; Dragomir 2023; Coby, J. and Davis-McElligatt 2024), less attention has been given to comics-making itself and how it engages with urgency. Whether through rapid response or reflective storytelling, the potential of comics-making as a process and site of resistance remains underexplored, particularly in how urgency shapes aesthetic, narrative, and mnemonic strategies of artists.

Comics can capture the ambiguity between individual and collective memory, which Halbwachs (1992) suggests is rooted in intersubjective remembering where histories are not only documented but also reconstructed and reframed, actively shaping collective consciousness, a dynamic that, in comics, unfolds through visual storytelling. In this sense, comics-making shares key characteristics with another form of artistic resistance: the essay, which operates at the intersection of personal reflection and collective historical context (Arthur 2003). Its hybrid nature, which merges knowledge and art (Adorno *et al.* 1984), along with its exploratory approach, makes it particularly suited for revisiting and reinterpreting lived experiences, much like how comics layer past and present through visual storytelling. Film critic Paul Arthur observes that the essay form in film has been used by women and artists of colour as an instrument of creative struggle (Arthur, cited in Rascaroli 2008). This parallel provides a foundation for understanding how comics-making can embody the essayistic tradition of resistance that merges introspection, critique, and reimagination of dominant narratives (Magnussen *et al.* 2015). A growing body of scholarship has identified essayistic tendencies in both comics-making and the ways comics are discussed (Hatfield 2009; Fischer 2010; Wilde 2023).

Craig Fischer (2010) identifies three dominant modes of writing about comics, namely, fan appreciation, essayistic criticism, and academic criticism. For Fischer, the essayistic criticism occupies a middle ground between the enthusiasm of fan writing and the theoretical rigour of academic analysis. It combines personal reflection with critical evaluation, often adopting the tone of personal essay to engage both affectively and intellectually with comics as a medium. Charles Hatfield traces the rise of alternative and autobiographical comics in the North American post-underground scene as a reaction against commercial superhero genres, emphasizing their embrace of realism, reflexivity, and cultural critique. While he does not define the 'essay comic' as a distinct form, his observation that post-underground comics often 'refuse fiction altogether, favouring history, reportage, the essay, and the memoir' (2009, 11) anticipates later notions of essayistic comics as reflective, discursive practices grounded in lived experience and social engagement. He similarly reads *Maus* as an essay, highlighting its self-reflexive engagement with history, memory, and representation (2009, 139).

While the notion of the essayistic has entered both critical and creative discussions of comics, its conceptual boundaries remain unsettled. Johannes Schmid (2021) references essayistic comics alongside autobiographical and documentary works, yet the discussion

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remains illustrative rather than definitional. Elizabeth Woock (2023) invokes the notion of the *essayistic* when describing the tone and the scope of *research comics* but does not offer a systematic account of what constitutes the essayistic approach. Instead, she focuses on the researcher's embodiment in comics-based academic communication and explores how the author-artist might appear as narrator, character, or visual presence on the page. Similarly, in Japan, Yoshiko Okuyama (2022) identifies *tōjisha manga*, autobiographical comics recounting experiences of mental or neurological conditions, as a form of essay manga. She defines essayistic comics as works that blend narrative and reflection through the interplay of image and text to convey personal insights and humanize experiences, particularly those marginalized in society. While Schmid, Woock, and Okuyama foreground content-specific qualities of essayistic comics, highlighting reflexivity, self-inscription, and engagement with personal or marginalized experiences, Lukas Wilde (2023) complements this view by focusing on the formal and semiotic dimensions of the medium. Rather than asking what essayistic comics *contain*, Wilde interrogates how they *work*: coherence emerges not from diegetic continuity or stable storyworlds but from discursive reflection, thematic juxtaposition, and verbal-visual argumentation. Wilde demonstrates how authorial subjectivity, rhetorical play, and diagrammatic visualization can replace story-driven logic.

Building on these frameworks, our research extends the notion of the essayistic beyond its semiotic or narratological features, and towards understanding essayistic comics-making as a methodological approach that operates at the intersection of practice-led and practice-based inquiry. In doing so, we acknowledge and mobilize the distinction between these two research paradigms. Our work is practice-led insofar as the creative process, the iterative acts of drawing, reflecting, and revising, serves as the primary mode of inquiry through which new understandings of practice emerge. At the same time, it is practice-based in that the completed comics themselves function as research outputs, embodying knowledge in their visual and narrative forms. As several authors have noted, the terminology surrounding artistic research, particularly the distinctions between practice-based, practice-led, and practice-as-research, remains fluid and contested. Rather than treating these categories as fixed, our approach mobilizes them heuristically to articulate how essayistic comics-making operates simultaneously as a site of inquiry and as a form in which knowledge is materially embodied (Borgdorff 2006; Candy 2006; Cerezo 2016). Within this integrated framework, we introduce the concept of urgency to articulate the specific conditions under which such practice unfolds. Urgency allows us to account for the political-ethical, epistemic, and aesthetic pressures that shape artistic decision-making in real time, transforming immediacy into sustained inquiry. The essayistic mode, in this sense, enables the artist to hold together multiple temporalities, perspectives, and narrative possibilities, accommodating uncertainty, contradiction, and layered meanings.

Essayistic practice as research

This project adopts a practice-led and practice-based essayistic approach, where comics-making is not merely a creative act but a method of research and knowledge production. Understanding emerges through doing, reflecting, and iterating, with the act of drawing itself shaping perception and thought. Through sequential art, the research engages with complex social, political, and personal phenomena, embracing ambiguity, dialogic reflection, and open-ended experimentation as essential components of the process.

While this approach resonates with the broader field of comics-based research (CBR), which explores the communicative, semiotic, and narrative affordances of comics across disciplines (Kuttner *et al.* 2021), our approach departs from the instrumental use of comics as a representational tool. Instead, drawing, sketching, and sequencing are treated as epistemic practices, forms of thinking-in-action through which understanding emerges. This

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distinction aligns with the essayistic mode, which privileges exploration over conclusion and invites the artist-researcher to engage critically and emotionally with the world they study (Caduff 2014). In this sense, comics-making becomes both a site and method of research, where creation itself constitutes argument.

Practice-led research acknowledges that sketches, drafts, visual experiments, and narrative decisions function simultaneously as expressive artefacts and research data (Ingold 2013; Kuttner *et al.* 2017; Leavy 2020; Radanović *et al.* 2025). Drawing has long been recognized as a fundamental mode of thinking and inquiry. Lynda Barry emphasizes that drawing is one of our oldest ways of 'working things out' (2010, 223), allowing ideas to emerge through the act itself rather than solely through language. Similarly, Nick Sousanis reflects on his creative process, noting that in rough sketches, a hybrid of notes and drawings, ideas begin to take shape (Kuttner, Sousanis and Weaver-Hightower 2017). In these visual experiments, the act of drawing enables him to perceive connections and patterns that might otherwise remain unseen, and the direction of his inquiry is guided by the drawings themselves rather than predetermined outcomes. In this sense, drawing functions as both a reflective and generative tool, allowing the researcher to think through, rather than merely represent, complex ideas. Building on this, the essayistic attitude introduces an epistemic openness that privileges process over polished output. Sketches, annotations, and sequential drafts serve not only as a preparatory work but as moments of discursive reflection and spaces where the artist negotiates between observation and interpretation. This resonates with Ingold's (2007, 2013) notion of 'taking the line for a walk' and Klee's (1953) idea of a line developing freely, without predetermined endpoints. The structural affordances of comics, sequencing, framing, layout, and the interplay of image and text enable the construction of visual arguments, allowing knowledge to emerge from the interplay of practice, reflection, and representation (Lefèvre 2011; Chute 2012; Kuttner *et al.* 2017).

Data emerge through multiple interrelated forms: primary materials (sketches, storyboards, drafts, final comics pages) document decision-making and the evolution of the work; secondary materials (historical accounts, media reports, scholarly texts) provide contextual grounding and inform narrative framing; and reflexive notes (research diaries, annotations) capture ongoing processes, choices, and reflections. The research procedure is cyclical and reflexive: conceptualization defines the guiding questions, visual experimentation explores narrative and formal strategies, drafting and peer feedback iteratively refine both artwork and argument, and reflexive annotation captures emergent insights and shifting perspectives (Newbigging 2017; Radanović *et al.* 2025).

Analysis is thus inseparable from creation, emphasizing reflection and emergent understanding rather than purely post hoc evaluation. Strategies include the following: visual and narrative analysis, which examines how sequences, panels, and text–image relationships convey argument, emotion, or insight (McCloud 1993; Chute 2012, 2016; Szép 2020); thematic mapping, identifying recurring motifs, conceptual juxtapositions, or reflective interventions across iterations (Radanović *et al.* 2025); and processual insight, considering how iterative drafting and revision shape understanding and allow emergent knowledge to guide the work (Ingold 2013; Kuttner *et al.* 2017, 2021). This approach reframes production as a form of reasoning, as an ongoing negotiation between knowledge, affect, and material practice. As Berger (1976) reminds us, to draw is to 'look', to engage ethically with the world, and to notice what might otherwise go unseen. Such attentiveness constitutes a critical mode of research, one that acknowledges that artistic choices are never neutral but are shaped by moral, intellectual, and aesthetic pressures.

Moments of immediacy and responsiveness naturally arise, as the artist-researcher navigates both ethical and conceptual stakes of the work. These moments reveal that creative decisions are not neutral but often guided by pressing concerns and demand attention and action in the moment of making. It is from this dynamic interplay between

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reflection and responsiveness that the concept of an *ecology of urgency* emerges. Political-ethical, epistemic, and aesthetic pressures shape not only the content of the work but also the manner, intention, and engagement of the audience. Essayistic comics-making can thus be understood as a manifestation of this ecology of urgency, where immediacy, reflection, and material experimentation co-exist.

While the visual-textual affordances of comics enable the layering of personal and collective memories, narrative, and reflection, their critical or resistant potential is not inherent to the medium. Rather, these capacities are activated through situated practice, iterative decision-making, and the ethical and political commitments of the artist-researcher. In other words, comics do not automatically resist hegemonic narratives or convey counter-memory; their transformative power emerges through the interplay of formal experimentation, reflective practice, and contextually informed artistic choices. Seen in this light, practice-based inquiry in comics highlights the inseparability of medium, method, and context: the act of making is simultaneously an epistemic, ethical, and political engagement.

It is important to note that the medium itself is politically malleable and equally capable of serving hegemonic ends, as evidenced by the *Bal Narendra* comic series in India, which mythologized Prime Minister Narendra Modi's childhood to cultivate a nationalist persona. From wartime propaganda comics to commercial advertising, the persuasive power of the form is ideologically neutral (Murray 2011). The works of Satrapi, Spiegelman, and Sacco are powerful not because of any innate property of the comics medium but because of the specific artistic, ethical, and political commitments they embody. A sharper analysis must, therefore, distinguish between the potential of the medium's formal features, its capacity to juxtapose, layer, and subjectivize, and the actual political work achieved by particular comics within their contexts. Recognizing this tension is essential to move beyond romanticism and towards a more rigorous understanding of how artistic practices can sustain resistance in the face of co-option and simplification.

Ecology of urgency

In our practice, urgency unfolds as a dynamic process, emerging with our engagement with crises, knowledge, and material form. Rather than proposing a unified or exhaustive taxonomy, we frame urgency as a series of relational and iterative dimensions that shape how we act, think, and draw. These dimensions, political-ethical, epistemic, and aesthetic, reflect patterns we have recognized in our own artistic practices, rather than discrete or universally applicable categories. They are phases or modes of responsiveness that emerge in relation to context, reflection, and form-making. Each dimension draws on distinct intellectual lineages such as rhetorical theory (Bitzer 1968; Hatfield 2010), moral philosophy (Porter 2024), and sociological and phenomenological accounts of temporality (Rosa 2018; Wolf and Weber 2023), and it reflects a particular mode of responsiveness to crises, knowledge, or lived experience.

Through our artistic practices, we noticed that urgency is not a singular concept but manifests through multiple, entangled forms of responsiveness. Essayistic approaches to comics-making provide a material site, where these heterogeneous urgencies converge, overlap, and become visible through practice. Operating between reflection and immediacy, the essayistic mode allows artists to linger in tension, contradiction, and incompleteness and enable them to respond to crises ethically and reflectively without subsuming lived complexity under fixed meaning. Political-ethical urgency often emerges first in response to social, environmental, or political crises. It manifests as a call to act that is situated within contested ethical and political terrains and prompts conscientious engagement rather than purely reactive action. Drawing on Hatfield's (2010) engagement with Bitzer's (1968) notion

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of *exigence*, we understand urgency as a rhetorical and ethical construct, a perceived rather than an intrinsic condition that calls for creative and responsible response. Translated into the field of comics and visual research, this sense of urgency becomes palpable in how artists navigate witnessing, testimony, and advocacy, balancing the imperative to speak with the responsibility to reflect.

The cinematic essay, which became a key form of responding to the urgency of the post-war period and within the Third Cinema Movement, was described by Solanas and Getino as a 'militant form of expression' enabling 'discovery through transformation' (Alter and Corrigan 2017, 11). Similarly, the essay comic can be a potent tool for imagining more nuanced ways of engaging with the most pressing urgencies of our times.

Examples of politically and ethically urgent comics include Indian cartoonists like Manjul and Rohan Chakravarty (Green Humour), who critique authoritarianism, environmental degradation, and caste-based and other forms of inequality, and Serbian cartoonists such as Dušan Petričić, Marko Somborac, and Predrag Koraksić (Corax), who expose political corruption and media manipulation. Beyond satire, Orijit Sen's *River of Stories* (2019), supported by NGO Kalpavriksh, pioneered comics as a unique space for critical engagement (Sedgwick 2003; Chute 2020; Laing 2020), while initiatives like the People's Archive of Rural India (PARI) use comics to address ecological justice and self-governance. Graphic novels such as Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam's *Bhimyana* (2011) and Srividya Natarajan and Aparajita Ninan's *A Gardner in the Wasteland* (2022) dismantle dominant caste histories, myths, and ideologies from an anti-caste perspective. *Bhimyana* not only tells the story of Dr. Ambedkar, the anti-caste leader and architect of the Indian Constitution, but reclaims it through the indigenous Gond art form, integrating narrative and the aesthetic intervention (Patil and Kesur 2025). Rachita Taneja's webcomics *Sanitary Panels* critiques socio-political issues through stick-figure comics, gaining viral attention and legal backlash, while Sharad Sharma's Grassroots Comics equip marginalized communities to tell their own stories in local languages, amplifying subaltern voices from villages to protest sites (Packalen and Sharma 2008; Manivannan 2025).

In Serbia and the region, works like *Vratiti svoje vr(ij)eme* (2021) expose gendered labour inequalities, while associations such as Stripotetke (2020) foster feminist and socially engaged comics across the Balkans. Valentina Talijan's project *Umetnost* Cveta (2025) blends comics, music, and video to raise awareness of species endangered by lithium mining in Serbia's Jadar Valley. Sanja Djordjević's List and Kist (2025) initially focused on positive stories but now address environmental and political crises through socially conscious comics. Political-ethical urgencies foreground the demand to act or intervene, but they inevitably raise questions about how and what can be known under such conditions, leading naturally into the epistemic dimension of urgency.

Epistemic urgency arises from the need to understand, interpret, and testify amidst uncertainty. Following the initial trigger of political-ethical concerns, the artist engages in iterative, reflective practices of sketching, annotating, and redrawing that transform the rush to know into a practice of *thinking through drawing.* In this process, the drawing implements itself becoming a transducer, translating bodily gestures and attention into material traces on the page so that thought and hand co-emerge in the act of drawing (Ingold 2013, 128). As Barry reminds us, 'drawing is something that has to come out of your body', emphasizing that it is not only the mind but also the body that thinks and knows through the hand (2019). Additionally, Barry emphasizes that creative thinking unfolds in the body: by allowing oneself to stand in uncertainty, stories, and images can gradually take shape under the hands, highlighting the embodied and exploratory nature of cognition. Porter (2024) conceptualizes urgency as a meta-normative demand that pre-empts deliberation: in urgent situations, individuals are expected to act decisively, and further reflection on less urgent considerations is not only unnecessary but inappropriate. Even when one does the 'right

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thing', excessive deliberation can constitute a failure to respond properly, a phenomenon Porter describes as doing the right thing in the wrong way. In contrast, essayistic approaches to comics-making reconfigure this dynamic by embedding reflection within action itself. Drawing on Bolt's and Barrett's conception of artistic practice as 'the production of knowledge or philosophy in action' (2014, 1), knowledge in this context is generated through doing and through the senses, a form of *thinking-in-action* that positions practice as both generative and reflective. As they argue, such practice-led inquiry constitutes a *'new species of research, a generative enquiry*' (2014, 1), in which knowledge emerges reflexively from material engagement. Each mark, sequence, and page turn becomes a negotiation between immediacy and reflective thinking, allowing the artist-researcher to respond to aesthetic urgency iteratively while cultivating epistemic and ethical attentiveness.

Aesthetic urgency emerges through the temporal, material, and sensory dimensions of comics-making and shapes how reflection and action are embodied in form. Following epistemic engagement, attention to panel composition, visual pacing, and iterative drawing cultivate *resonant* relations with the world (Rosa 2018), a mode of engagements that sustains attention, care, and embodied awareness. Philosophical accounts of existential urgency (Wolf and Weber 2023) reinforce this stance, describing urgency not as a demand for instant action but as an ethical provocation to think otherwise, an embodied impulse to respond to pressure with care and deliberation.

In our artistic practice, these dimensions form part of an ecology of urgency, where political-ethical triggers, epistemic reflection, and aesthetic embodiment are dynamically entangled, while acknowledging that other dimensions may also emerge in different contexts or practices. Rather than forming a hierarchy or a linear sequence, they operate in a mutually interdependent manner: ethical engagement, reflective knowledge-making, and material realization unfold simultaneously and continuously, shaping one another. Essayistic comics-making provides the space in which this interplay manifests, allowing immediacy and reflection to coexist. Urgency thus becomes a lived, iterative, and reflective condition, where artists stay with crises long enough to think, feel, and draw through it. This reasoning resonates with Donna Haraway's notion of 'staying with the trouble', a method of engaging with complex and urgent realities while also rebuilding spaces of quiet attention and care (2016). The process of essay comics-making embodies what Haraway calls 'tentacular thinking': an embrace of complexity, interconnectedness, and the blurring of boundaries. This approach, which stands in opposition to hierarchical structures, mirrors the tactile, exploratory nature of essay comics-making. Together, they exemplify the essay form as defined by Georg Lukács and later theorists: a mode of 'criticism as art' that operates between knowledge and creative practice (Adorno *et al.* 1984). By transgressing generic, formal, and aesthetic boundaries (Rascaroli 2008; Alter 2018), the essayistic comic becomes a fluid and dynamic medium. It resists rigid categorization, creating a space where urgency is not only captured in the moment of drawing but continuously mediated through a reflective engagement between personal, collective, and political memories and the ethics of representation.

To explore how these intertwined urgencies unfold in practice, we draw on our own comics-making as case studies, examining how reflection, action, and material experimentation are continuously negotiated.

Ecology of urgency in our practices

When we first met, Dragana Radanović and Poorva Goel, we noticed striking parallels in our comics-making, despite coming from different political and cultural contexts, namely, Serbia and India. In both cases, comics became a medium for responding to political repression, ecological destruction, and media suppression. Our works exemplify the ecology

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of urgency described above: political-ethical crises trigger creative action, epistemic reflection shapes understanding and testimony, and aesthetic attention to form enacts that knowledge through drawing. Our practices range from expressive, real-time reactions to slow, research-intensive explorations of personal and collective memories and political circumstances and pressures, demonstrating that urgency in comics can be embodied in both immediacy and methodical, reflective processes.

Now both of us based in Belgium, we reflect on our home countries' struggles from a comparative vantage point, which provides both critical distance and a safer space for addressing these crises. Our work focuses on 'urgent stories', narratives that demand immediate attention yet are often silenced or overlooked. In the context of rising authoritarianism, ecological exploitation, and media suppression, comics become tools for both immediate artistic interventions and sustained counter-narratives to the official discourse. The artistic choices we make illustrate how urgency can be navigated ethically, epistemically, and aesthetically.

Artistic practice of Dragana Radanović

For Radanović, urgency manifests across two interrelated temporal and aesthetic registers: the immediacy of reactive, short-form comics, and the reflective, essayistic slowness of long-form graphic exploration. Her digitally drawn short comics respond directly to Serbia's ongoing political crises, functioning as acts of civic witnessing that demonstrate how political-ethical urgency translates into an aesthetic economy of immediacy. Created swiftly in response to recent events such as the collapse of a train station canopy that killed 16 people in Novi Sad in 2024 or the imprisonments of activists, these works exemplify political-ethical urgency by making visible and mobilizing public attention. Using simple digital tools and a reduced colour palette, Radanović communicates quickly and makes comics widely accessible. Their rapid online circulation embodies the interconnection of political-ethical and epistemic urgency, showing how immediacy can enable awareness and collective reflection (Figure 1).

While these fast, digital interventions exemplify responsiveness, Radanović's long-form narrative (2024), developed as part of her PhD research, partly operates in a contrasting register of aesthetic and epistemic urgency through essayistic practice. Rather than reacting to the deterioration of democratic values in Serbia in real-time, this graphic novel about childhood during the 1999 bombing of Serbia reconstructs memory through a slow,



Figure 1. Radanović's cartoon: The cartoon critiques the government's orchestration of violence to distract from public outrage over the deaths of 14 (soon to be 15 and then 16) individuals, who perished under the rubble of a collapsed canopy, a direct consequence of corruption and negligence (translated from Serbian for this article) (2024).

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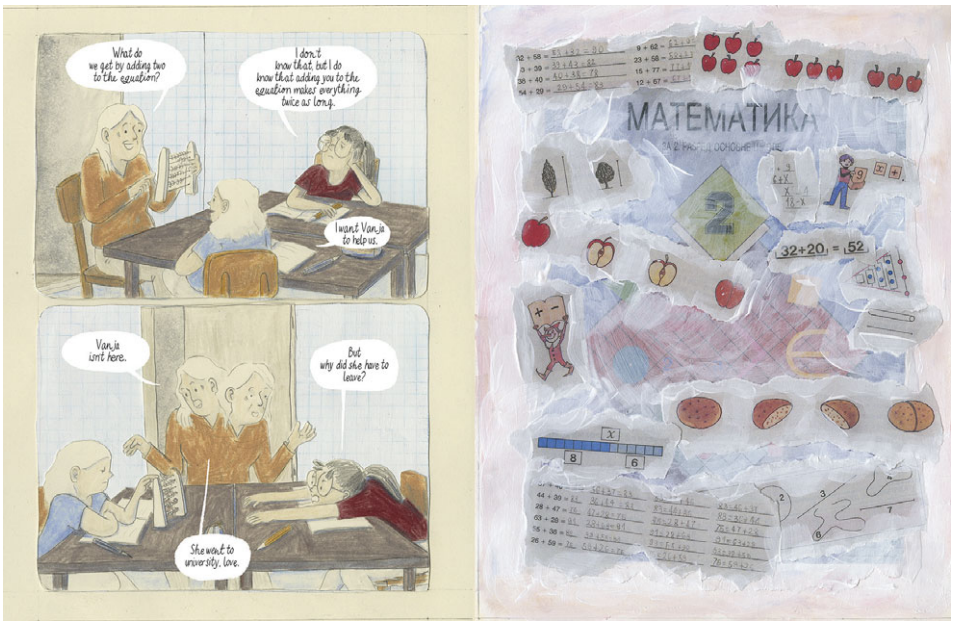


Figure 2. Spreads from Radanović's graphic novel What Should We Tell Them? (2024). Pages show layered composition of drawing, collage, and archival fragments.

reiterating practice of drawing, layering, and collage. Fragments of personal and collective memory, archival material, and personal reflection are assembled and reassembled in an open-ended search for meaning (Figure 2). Background grids evoke the squared math paper and schoolwork, while cut-out drawings and collaged textbook fragments emphasize the layered, constructed, and mediated nature of memory. Veiled layers of gesso lend a dream-like, foggy quality, suggesting the drift of remembered details, as if suspended in the artist's mind rather than ordered on a page. These tactile gestures transform the act of remembering into an embodied epistemic process, where drawing functions as both mnemonic and epistemic tool. In this sense, the work resonates with Maheen Ahmed's (2020) concept of *media memories*, which describes how images, tropes, and material traces travel across media and time, carrying affective and cultural residues. The grids, collaged fragments, and layered surfaces can thus be read as *mnemonic layers*, visual echoes of cultural memory that reveal how personal recollection intertwines with the materials and forms through which we learn, see, and remember.

Through such strategies, Radanović demonstrates how aesthetic form mediates urgency. Her practice complicates the expectation of speed by replacing instantaneous reaction with layered reflection. Urgency, here, accumulates through attention, density, and duration rather than immediacy, inviting the reader to experience the persistence of crises and the idea that the past continues to press upon the present.

Sequences such as a border-crossing scene (Figure 3) stretch moments across full spreads, turning bureaucratic inspection into a reflection on precarity and mobility. As the scene escalates and Radanović's character is asked to leave the bus, a diagonal panel sequence shows her sinking into the ground from shame, each frame a subtle shift in her collapse. Collaged passport pages follow, layered and overpainted, evoking the psychological weight of navigating mobility laws as a Serbian citizen. These formal strategies embody both aesthetic and epistemic urgency, demanding sustained attention while mediating understanding of systemic pressures.

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Figure 3. The border-crossing sequence from Radanović's graphic novel What Should We Tell Them? (2024).

Radanović's work articulates urgency as a sustained, accumulative condition. Childhood memories of the 1999 bombing of Serbia and the political aftermath of the Yugoslav conflicts are rendered through the juxtaposition of playful moments against the backdrop of conflict, complicating simplistic narratives of victimhood and creating a space for ethical and reflective engagement. Rather than offering a neatly resolved historical account, her comics foreground the act of meaning-making itself, acknowledging the fluid and constructed nature of both personal and collective histories.

From the opening, Radanović establishes essayistic reflectivity, where the main character engages the reader directly in a self-aware monologue. The first spread shows the artist's desk surrounded by notes, and the next places her at the drawing table, breaking the fourth wall with a playful, introspective remark: *'Oh, you are already here! You caught me in the middle of work'.* This self-referential narration does not simply introduce the story; it highlights the very process of storytelling, framing drawing as a mode of thinking. The character-artist continues to ruminate about 'lines as threads of connection', visually literalizing the idea by balancing on one leg while holding a line that extends from her unfinished foot, visually performing the philosophical reflection on how lines (and lives) are continuously made and remade (Figure 4).

This meditation on lines extends into a cartographic reflection on borders and belonging (Figure 5). Mapping Europe, the artist marks some borders as solid, others dashed, some easy, some difficult to cross; a dotted line between Serbia and Kosovo is labelled: *'Needs a whole other book to explain'.* She reflects, *'From my birth until now, I've lived in four different countries, yet I've never moved out of my hometown. It is strange to belong to a generation that has travelled without moving. Born in one country, raised in several'.* The map becomes both geographical and existential, embodying lived instability and situated knowledge drawn from within rather than observed from afar.

Radanović's artistic traces, such as construction lines, margin notes, and unfinished sketches, make her iterative mark-making a mode of trying to understand her own

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Figure 4. Opening sequence from Radanović's graphic novel What Should We Tell Them? (2024).

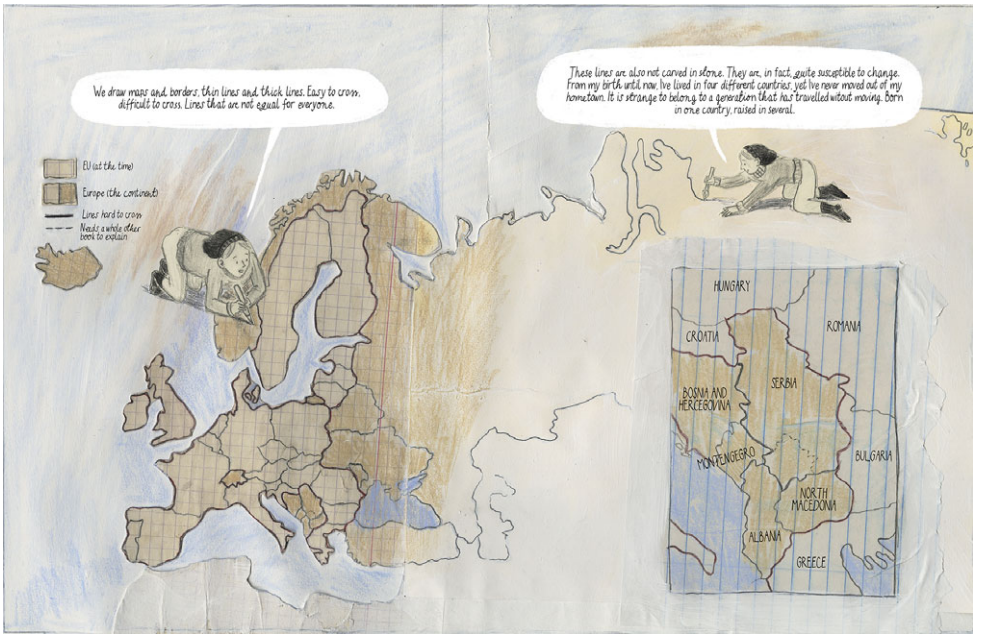


Figure 5. Cartographic sequence mapping Europe through differentiated border lines, combining geographical representation with personal reflection from Radanović's graphic novel What Should We Tell Them? (2024).

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Figure 6. Spread from Radanović's graphic novel What Should We Tell Them? (2024).

reality visible on the page. Such gestures enact an essayistic way of creating in which knowledge remains provisional and self-critical, constantly reworked in the process of making (Figure 6).

By comparing her personal memories of war with current conflicts, Radanović's responds to the political-ethical urgency of contemporary crises. At the same time, the dialogue between past and present renders epistemic urgency legible, and it shows that understanding of the world depends on how histories of violence and care are represented and that this knowledge continues to shape the present.

In Figure 7, this interconnectedness is explicit: one page combines hand-drawn memories, factual annotations of military technology, and sardonic self-insert. At the bottom, Radanović draws herself leaning against an imaginary wall, arms crossed, saying with sarcasm: 'Invisible bomber, cluster bombs, not cowardly at all'. Her drawn self serves as a critical voice within the narrative, blending testimony with direct socio-political critique and insisting on situated knowledge production, where meaning emerges through personal engagement, memory, and reflection.

The facing page juxtaposes a collaged photo of a bombed oil refinery with Radanović's drawn self, bridging personal memory and environmental catastrophe. The caption recalls: 'That night, NATO bombed the oil refinery. The sky was black for ages...' Reframed through contemporary environmental consciousness, the sequence extends urgency to encompass environmental and intergenerational consequences of war, integrating political, ethical, and aesthetic registers.

In the final panel, the artist's drawn self appears visibly agitated, clenching her fists and shouting, 'CEASE THE BLOODY FIRE'. While the comic's narrative focus remains on the 1999 bombing of Serbia and the political aftermath of the Yugoslav conflicts, the page was drawn amid the unfolding violence in Gaza. Dated February 8, 2024, the moment when reports of atrocities there became unbearable for Radanović, the panel registers how the contemporary crisis directly shaped the act of drawing. In this way, reflections on past conflicts in

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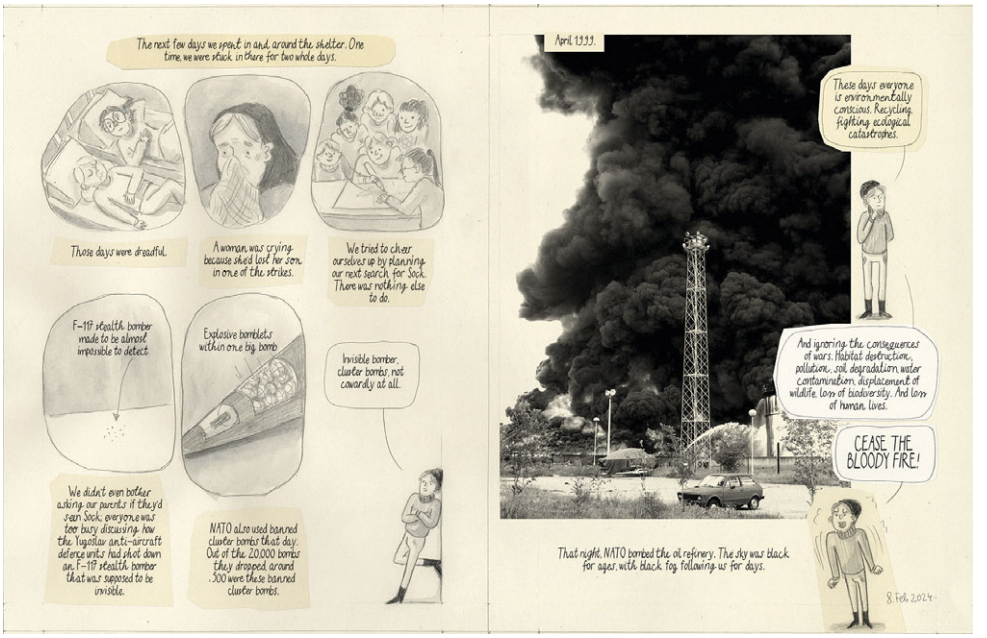


Figure 7. Spread combining hand-drawn memories, factual annotations, and a self-reflexive authorial presence from Radanović's graphic novel What Should We Tell Them? (2024).

Serbia are shaped by the present moment of their articulation, connecting past wars with contemporary crises and challenging the notion of history as closed, while emphasizing war's persistent and unresolved nature that continues to demand urgent intervention.

Instead of focusing solely on the finalized page, attention to Radanović's iterative process reveals the essayistic and epistemically urgent dimensions of her practice. The date was initially absent from her sketches, and she experimented with multiple versions, one of which depicted her character holding a slice of watermelon, later choosing an angry pose with clenched fists. She feared that the metaphor and the now widely recognised symbol of Palestinian struggle might be unclear and would seem to reference only one of many ongoing conflicts at the time. The hesitations and revisions make visible how meaning is negotiated through drawing, illustrating the complexities of representing political-ethical urgency and solidarity in global context. By foregrounding this process, the work becomes a process and site of inquiry and reflection, challenging dominant narratives and first impressions.

Artistic practice of Poorva Goel

For Goel, the tension between fast and slow registers of comics-making is central to her artistic evolution. As violence against marginalized groups and nature intensified under India's Hindu nationalist regime, Goel's cartoons shifted from everyday life to political-ethical engagement (Figure 8). This political-ethical urgency materialized in quick drawings, usually without colour or elaborate drawing styles. In response to the ethical urgency to bear witness responsibly and question her role as both observer and participant, she adopted the graphic reportage approach, in the tradition of Joe Sacco while retaining her rapid mark-making.

Her graphic novel *Objects in the Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear* (2024) developed as part of her Master's year is a part-reportage, part-autobiographical account of a young Hindu woman confronting the rise of Hindu Nationalism in India. One chapter depicts the

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Figure 8. Goel's cartoon: They're fighting over me! (2017).

celebration of a Hindu temple built atop the Babri Mosque that was demolished by Hindu right-wing mobs (Figure 9). Here, Goel interrogates whether rapid ink-brush strokes might compromise an 'ethical encounter' with the pain of others (in this case: Indian Muslims), probing how urgency can be rendered in visual form in comics.

Goel examines how the shift from rough storyboards to final pages materializes a tension between communicative mark-making and technically refined 'good' drawings, tracing how temporal, aesthetic, and ethical urgency manifest visually.

Aesthetic urgency surfaces in the first marks made to tell a story, which are often quick, raw, and intuitive, and carry the emotional residue of the artist's immediate encounter with events. These initial drawings embody what Goel describes as a certain 'aliveness', 'tension', and 'dynamism' which stem from the internal affect of the artist, translated directly onto paper. Temporal urgency, meanwhile, manifests in the speed of execution, because first sketches must capture ideas before they fade, functioning as traces of thought-in-motion.



Figure 9. Scenes from the temple celebration in the market. Pages from Goel Master's graduation graphic novel Objects in the Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear (2024).

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This temporal pressure produces an immediacy that resists the stillness of finished images. Yet, as she observes, this embodied urgency tends to dissipate in the process of redrawing, when time stretches and gestures are reinterpreted rather than relived.

Finally, an ethical urgency underlies the author's dilemma: how to preserve the integrity of lived experience while refining it into communicable form. In revisiting and redrawing her pages, she confronts the risk that reiteration may aestheticize suffering or dilute its emotional truth. Her concern echoes Susan Sontag's (2003) reflections on representation and suffering, and relates directly to the ethics of witnessing in visual storytelling. This tension leads Goel to reflect on the sensory and bodily dimensions of drawing. Esther Szép (2020), expanding on Sousanis' notion of 'the drawn line', argues that the viewer understands a line's movement by comparing it to their own bodily experiences, such as the movements they make when they draw. Building on Szép's theory that the haptic texture of Sacco's painstakingly cross-hatched drawings guides viewers to submerge themselves in his subjects' graveness, Goel wonders whether certain textures can instead evoke a felt urgency. In her work, this aesthetic urgency becomes epistemic, whether the immediacy of a mark can embody not just emotion but the politics of attention.

Essayistic self-awareness emerges explicitly in the prologue of Goel's graphic novel, where the artist-character appears as a carpenter (Figures 10 and 11). While establishing the book's purpose of 'putting up a mirror' metaphorically, the carpenter-character simultaneously nails a mirror to the wall in the panels. Here, in the process of putting up a mirror to the state of affairs in the country, the author (I) also comes face to face with her reflection in that mirror. Becoming both the one who looks and the one who is looked at, Goel transforms the mirror she mounts into a recursive surface, inviting both artist and reader to question their own gaze. The comic thus performs what Adorno *et al.* (2017) called the 'movement of

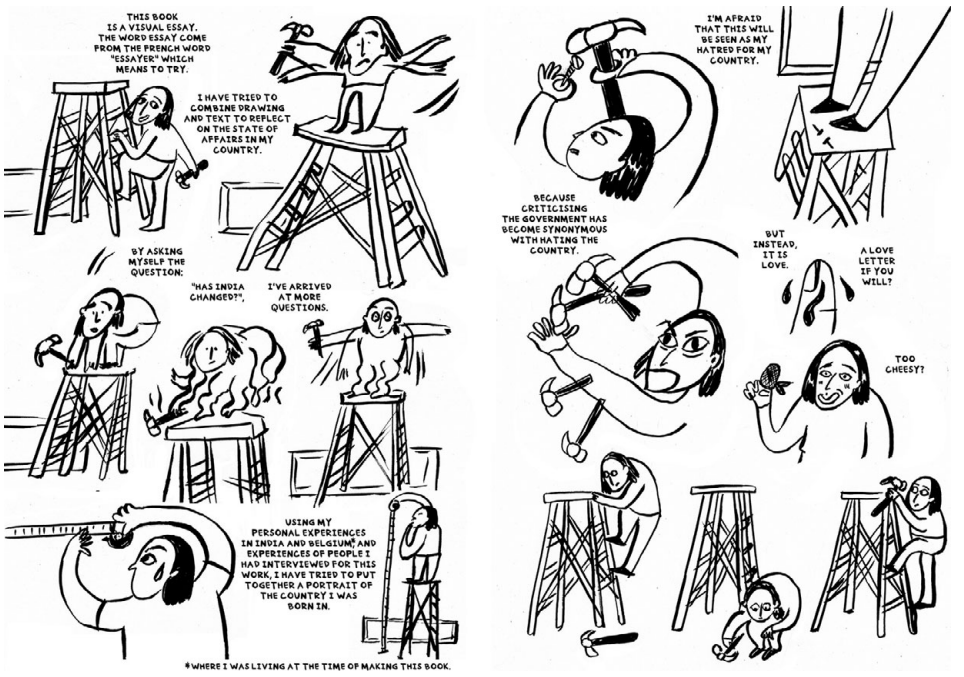


Figure 10. Pages from the prologue of Goel's graphic novel Objects in the Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear (2024).

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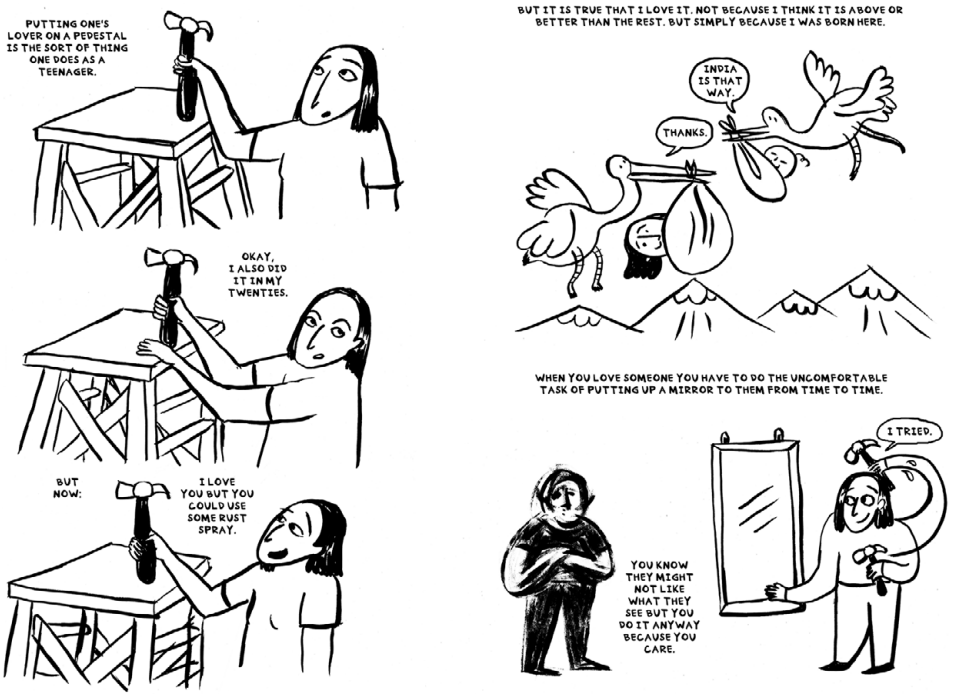


Figure 11. Pages from the prologue of Goel's graphic novel Objects in the Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear (2024).

the concept', an active, unfinished process of thinking that resists reduction and instead values the provisional, the fragmentary, and the self-critical.

Her reflexivity also shifts from representing urgency to reflecting through urgency. Goel's work, rooted in a personal confrontation with Hindu nationalism, positions her, a young caste-Hindu woman, as both observer and participant. This dual position echoes the structure of the essayistic as an ongoing negotiation between inside and outside, knowing and not knowing. Like Krug (2019), Goel's narrative interlaces autobiography and historical reflection, revealing how self-reflection can become an ethical and epistemological tool. Rather than claiming a stable position of critique, Goel's comic reveals how understanding itself is contingent, situated, and evolving.

With the normalization of hate against minorities, Goel felt a growing dissonance between her childhood memories of India and its present state, urging her to re-examine artefacts of a more tolerant past, like her school's secular prayer book and Bollywood. These recollections are not presented as nostalgia but as provisional moments of inquiry. Her explorations extend across geographies, contrasting Goel's experiences as an outsider in Brussels with her majority identity in India. This double perspective defines the essayistic structure of her work. Rather than seeking resolution, her comics stage an ongoing negotiation between different selves and cultural contexts. She visualizes this through compositional juxtapositions, placing scenes from Brussels and India in dialogue to frame the tensions between nostalgia, privilege, and political realities.

In a striking sequence, Goel depicts a Muslim neighbourhood in Brussels that feels like home to her, creating a direct irony with the Hindu nationalist narrative that disowns Islamic heritage as 'outsider'. In the following scene, she listens to her dorm mates' describing the same neighbourhood as 'filthy', 'unsafe', and 'does not feel like Europe' (Figures 12 and 13).

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Figure 12. Spreads reflecting on the Muslim neighbourhood, belonging and otherness; in Goel's graphic novel Objects in the Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear (2024).

Crystallizing the tension between belonging and otherness, the narration shifts inward to show her internalizing these judgements. If the place that reminds her most of home is considered dirty, unsafe, and non-European, does that mean she is seen the same way? The visual storytelling deepens this emotional impact: rather than explicitly countering their

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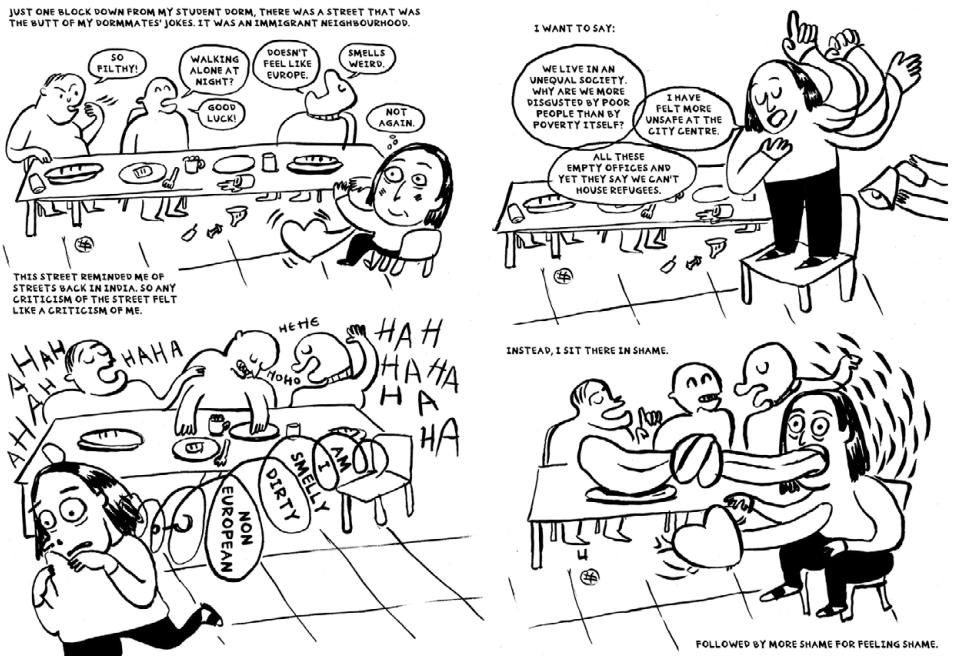


Figure 13. Pages with the dorm mates; from Goel's graphic novel Objects in the Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear (2024).

statements, Goel is rendered caught between wanting to voice her thoughts and feeling the weight of shame. The audience sees that she remains silent, her tongue twisted, and her heart jumping out of her chest. This sequence makes visible the process of realization and self-questioning to show how, sometimes, self-awareness manifests as internal conflict and emotional labour and does not always translate into immediate resistance or resolution.

Goel's graphic novel navigates the intersections of autobiography and journalism. The non-linear graphic narrative ties together memory, religion, and politics suspended in India's collective history since Independence. One segment of the narrative traces Goel's Hindu grandfather enduring a 70-year friendship with Ansariji, a Muslim, which prompts Goel to question the paradox: how does her family foster affection for an individual while simultaneously harbouring xenophobic sentiments towards the community? Goel juxtaposes intimate, warm scenes of life with Ansariji and her family against anti-Muslim sentiment voiced by family members, highlighting how nationalist narratives can overwrite personal histories of coexistence (Figure 14).

Additionally, at 86, Ansariji is older than independent India, offering a unique perspective on its transformation. Interviews with him and others from Goel's hometown reveal the contrast between India's founding socialist ideals and its present state.

The transition between modes of storytelling, time, space, and sources of information is made visible through the distinct styles and visual strategies used to render each section. For instance, Goel employs a more realistic drawing style to depict historical events like the Babri Mosque demolition (Figure 15). In contrast (Figure 16), a cartoon-like aesthetic retells a folk tale about a monkey unfairly dividing bread as an allegory for the British 'divide and rule' strategy and current Hindu–Muslim politics. Goel frames her critique through the concept of an 'ecological niche', using a Cat-monkey folk tale to illustrate how the removal of one oppressive force simply allows another to take its place.

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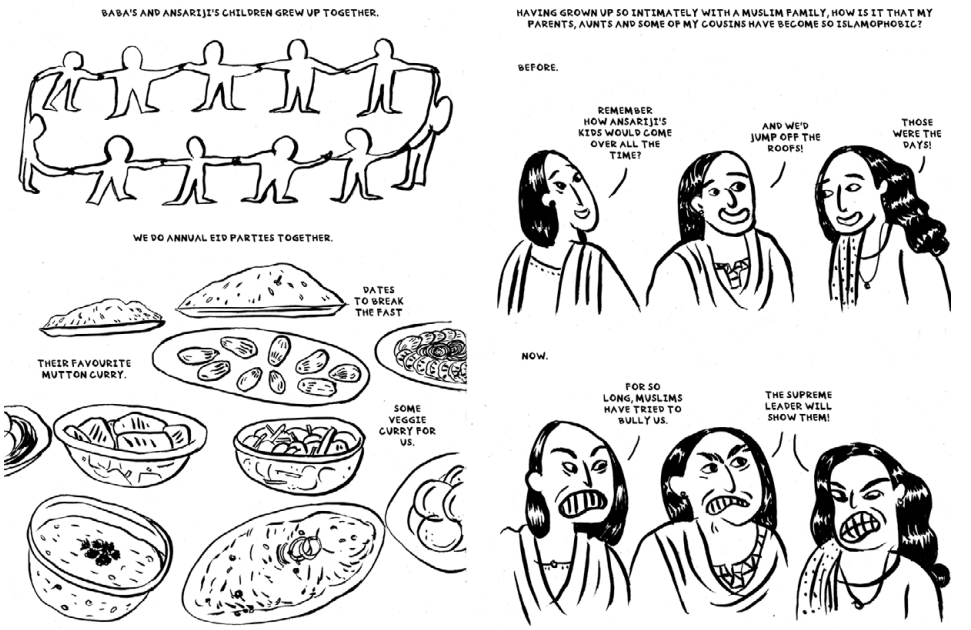


Figure 14. Pages reflecting on shifting attitudes; Goel's graphic novel Objects in the Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear (2024).



Figure 15. Demolition scenes from Goel's graphic novel Objects in the Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear (2024).

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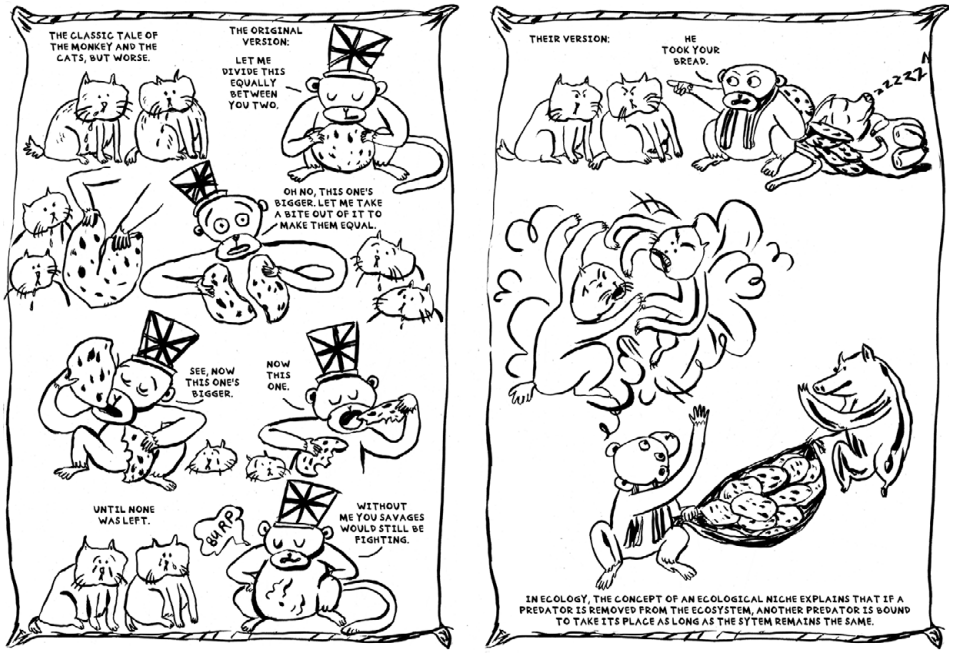


Figure 16. Indian folk tale from Goel's graphic novel Objects in the Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear (2024).

In reflective segments, Goel depicts herself as a floating head, omitting backgrounds to centre her reflections on her subject and her engagement with it through the comics-making process. This act models what Corrigan (2011) describes as the essay-film gesture, 'thinking out loud', translated into sequential art. For reportage segments like the temple celebration (Figure 9), she shifts to comics journalism-like detailed backgrounds, creating a drawn record of a specific time and place. These strategic shifts in visual style highlight the importance of comics as an essayistic practice, where meaning emerges through the process of artistic inquiry itself. Through a hybridized approach that combines personal anecdotes, historical reflection, interviews, and analytical commentary, her work explores the rise of Hindu nationalism and personal identity in a way that reveals connections between the 'personal-autobiographical', the 'concrete-particular', and the 'abstract-universal' (Huxley 1971).

Comparing artistic practices: Convergences and drifts

The case studies of Radanović and Goel demonstrate how essayistic comics-making mediates the interplay of political-ethical, epistemic, and aesthetic urgency, through reflexive artistic practice. Despite divergent cultural, political, and temporal contexts, Serbia and India, both practices exemplify how urgency not only triggers creative response but also shapes processes of reflection and knowledge production. Their comparison reveals methodological affinities and context-specific divergences, offering insight into both the potential and the epistemic limits of essayistic comics as a research practice. In both cases, political-ethical urgency functions as the initial catalyst for creative action. For Radanović, this manifests in rapid-response digital cartoons addressing Serbia's political crises, such as civic unrest or infrastructural neglect. These works enact immediacy as a mode of civic witnessing and articulate the artist-researcher's ethical imperative to respond publicly. Yet, as

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Radanović's work also suggests, the persuasive capacity of comics is not inherently emancipatory: used in another manner, it could reinforce dominant narratives. The ethical and political significance of these interventions, therefore, resides in the author's deliberate positionality, not in the medium itself.

Similarly, Goel's engagement with the rise of Hindu nationalism in India situates her within an environment of systemic violence and contested representation. Here, political-ethical urgency demands a careful negotiation between responsible witnessing and communicative effectiveness. The resulting tension, between affective immediacy and ethical restraint, shapes both her mark-making and narrative strategies. These cases underscore that essayistic reflection alone does not guarantee criticality; rather, resistance to hegemonic discourse emerges through sustained attention, iterative evaluation, and self-critical representation within the artistic process itself.

While both artists respond to political-ethical provocation, their contexts differ in scope and temporality. Serbia's crises are acute, event-driven, and locally mediated, whereas India's shifts are embedded in long-term structural and ideological transformations. This contrast highlights how urgency is historically and geographically contingent: its manifestations depend on the temporal rhythms of crises and the infrastructures of visibility that frame artistic response. For the purposes of this discussion, we focus on these particular configurations while acknowledging that such distinctions are not absolute.

In responding to political-ethical pressures to depict events, both artists confront an epistemic urgency: the demand to make knowledge visible through drawing. This epistemic dimension involves iterative reflection that links archives, personal memory, and dominant narratives. Radanović's graphic novel transforms autobiographical and archival material into an essayistic reconstruction of the past, generating new insights through the act of drawing itself. Goel, by integrating reportage with reflective narration, similarly aligns testimonial and analytical registers. In both practices, drawing operates as a cognitive tool, a means of thinking-in-action that negotiates immediacy and deliberation, and mediates between observation, and reflection.

Differences emerge in temporal registers, Radanović's work exemplifies slow, accumulative reflection over historical memory, while Goel balances near-immediate political reporting with essayistic exploration. This highlights a methodological insight: epistemic urgency is not monolithic, and it adapts to temporal, social, and personal contexts, demonstrating flexibility in essayistic practice. A limitation is that these examples may not account for forms of epistemic urgency in collaborative or large-scale participatory comics-making, which could diversify the ways knowledge is negotiated.

Aesthetic urgency seen in attention to material form, pacing, and sequentiality mediates both political-ethical and epistemic urgencies. Radanović's collages, layered spreads, and tactile interventions render memory and crises as an embodied, visual argument, whereas Goel's juxtaposition of cartoonlike and realistic styles negotiates immediacy and reflection. In both cases, aesthetic choices are inseparable from ethical and epistemic considerations, reinforcing the framework that urgency in essayistic comics is multidimensional and relational.

Finally, reflexivity functions as a central mechanism through which both artists negotiate uncertainty, ethical responsibility, and positionality. In Radanović's work, visible construction lines, annotations, and direct address foreground the process of research and situate the artist within her own inquiry. Goel's self-reflexive prologue and alternating perspectives similarly enact a dialogue between insider and outsider viewpoints, foregrounding the instability of perspective as an ethical and epistemological condition. These cases thus demonstrate that reflexivity is not merely descriptive but constitutive: it shapes both the content and the form of the knowledge produced. However, the highly situated nature of these reflexive engagements also constrains their generalizability, suggesting that

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insights into urgency and reflexivity remain context-bound and contingent, an intrinsic feature of essayistic research itself.

Conclusion

This article has explored how the concept of urgency can illuminate the epistemic and methodological dimensions of essayistic comics-making. Through a comparative study of the practices of Radanović and Goel, we have examined how political-ethical, epistemic, and aesthetic urgencies intersect to shape artistic decision-making, reflexive engagement, and knowledge production. The analysis suggests that urgency functions not merely as an external condition that compels artistic response but as an internal principle of inquiry, informing how artists think, feel, and construct meaning through the act of drawing.

The framework of *political-ethical, epistemic, and aesthetic urgency* proposed here is not exhaustive, but is shared across the two artistic practices analysed here. These dimensions emerge through our situated reflections and are shaped by specific contexts of production and resistance. Other dimensions may well appear in different practices or collaborative constellations, further enriching this ecology of urgency. What remains consistent, however, is the essayistic commitment to sustained reflection within and through making and an ongoing negotiation between action and thought.

A traditional analytical lens often falls short in accounting for these complexities. It risks treating the practices of Radanović and Goel as distinct realities, shaped by separate systems, and thus as isolated phenomena. Yet, such separation obscures the connective tissue of shared urgency, reflection, and resistance that animates both. The critical question, therefore, is not how to quantify the discrete effects of a single comic, but how to collect and connect artistic practices that embody resistance, how to make them visible, trace their recurrent strategies, and multiply their transformative potential. Future research could extend this inquiry through additional case studies, identifying further patterns in how essayistic approaches and urgencies are negotiated across diverse comics-making contexts.

By situating essayistic comics within traditions of non-fiction and practice-based research, this study contributes to ongoing discussions about how artistic methods generate knowledge through means not reducible to purely textual or discursive forms. The essayistic mode, understood here as a reflective, exploratory, and iterative process, offers a framework for understanding how artists work through complexity, contradiction, and doubt by making these visible on the page. Rather than presenting finished statements or stable truths, essayistic comics foreground the practice-led *thinking-in-process*, revealing how understanding evolves through visual, affective, and material experimentation. Within this framework, urgency functions as both impetus and method: it propels the artist into action while structuring the temporal, ethical, and aesthetic conditions of that action.

Across both case studies, urgency emerges as a multi-scalar phenomenon. At the political-ethical level, it motivates acts of witnessing, protest, and care, transforming comics into processes and sites of civic and moral engagement. At the epistemic level, it manifests in iterative reflection, through drawing, revising, and layering, as artists grapple with how to represent histories of violence, loss, and resistance. At the aesthetic level, urgency is materialized in the textures, rhythms, and compositional tensions of the page, revealing how form and ethics are mutually constitutive. These overlapping registers demonstrate that urgency is not simply an affective state but a structuring condition of knowledge production within artistic research.

While these three dimensions, political-ethical, epistemic, and aesthetic, emerged as central within our respective practices, they do not represent an exhaustive framework. Rather, they are shared and dialogically developed through our own engagement with essayistic comics-making. It is entirely possible, and indeed desirable, that other dimensions

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of urgency might surface through different practices, contexts, or collaborative modes of inquiry. This openness reflects the situated, evolving character of artistic research itself, where categories are not fixed but responsive to process, context, and encounter.

The comparison between Radanović and Goel's practices also underscores the situatedness of urgency. While both respond to crises of democracy and representation, their modes of engagement are shaped by distinct temporalities and infrastructures: Serbia's cycles of acute local crises and India's long histories of systemic oppression. These differences reveal how essayistic comics adapt to specific socio-political contexts, making visible the ways in which global concerns, such as authoritarianism, violence, or ecological destruction, are refracted through personal experience and local histories. The transnational dimension of both artists' practices, working from Belgium yet reflecting on their other homelands, further complicates notions of distance, belonging, and solidarity, suggesting that urgency can also operate through displacement and diasporic reflection.

One of the central contributions of this article is to conceptualize essayistic comics-making as a research method in its own right. Rather than treating comics as an illustration of thought, this approach understands the process of making as a form of *embodied reasoning*, a way of thinking through and with images. The iterative, self-critical nature of the essayistic mode transforms drawing into a space of negotiation between knowledge and its limits. As both case studies show, reflexivity is not simply a stylistic device but a methodological principle that sustains ethical awareness and epistemic openness. The visible traces of process – construction lines, revisions, and annotations – serve as evidence of this thinking-in-action, positioning comics as sites where theory, method, and emotion converge.

At the same time, the analysis highlights the limitations and tensions of this mode. Urgency can generate both insight and instability: the need to respond quickly may conflict with the demands of careful reflection, and the impulse to bear witness can risk aestheticizing suffering. These tensions do not undermine the validity of essayistic practice but rather constitute its epistemic value. The awareness of contradiction between immediacy and contemplation, self and other, and art and activism is what enables the essayistic mode to remain ethically responsive and intellectually generative. The reflexive negotiation of these tensions transforms urgency from a condition of crises into a condition of critical inquiry.

Looking forward, the framework of urgency developed here opens pathways for further research into comics as essayistic practice. Future studies might extend this analysis to collective or participatory forms of comics-making, where urgency is negotiated not by a single author but through collaborative processes and shared publics. Similarly, applying this framework to other contexts, such as climate activism, feminist movements, or migration narratives, could reveal how urgency operates across different scales of action and affect.

Ultimately, this article argues that essayistic comics-making, when understood through the lens of urgency, exemplifies a distinctive mode of artistic knowledge production. It unites the ethical demand to respond with the intellectual need to understand and the aesthetic impulse to make with the reflexive capacity to think. The dimensions of urgency identified here are, therefore, not definitive but provisional and generative, offering one situated articulation among many possible constellations that may emerge through other practices and contexts. Operating within the condition of urgency, as artists we not only document the world but actively *intervene* in it, producing knowledge that is at once critical, affective, and situated. The act of drawing reminds us that to think is also to act, and that making itself can be an urgent way and form of knowing.

Data availability statement. No new data were generated or analysed during this study. All relevant information is contained within the article and its cited sources. The materials (e.g. images of comics) that support the findings of

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this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Some materials may be subject to copyright or ethical restrictions.

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