

WP1 D1.3 | Framework of Analysis

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Abbreviation List

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

d@rts: dialoguing@rts (Horizon Europe project)

MLE: Multilingual Education

CBPR: Community-based participatory research

ICH: Intangible Cultural Heritage

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal



Introduction

The Deliverable (D1.3) develops a novel analytical framework for researching and analysing on cultural literacy learning in policies and practices. Related topics are: a) drawing upon indigenous knowledges and de-/postcolonial perspectives, b) emphasising cultural literacy as a dialogical practice, and c) bringing clarity to the notion of cultural literacy and its links to performing arts education and its impacts on social cohesion and inclusion.

Behind this backdrop, we aim to provide a pool of knowledge and methods for d@rts researchers to reflect on their own methods and institutional structures in their research fields. For this reason, we have chosen a double design. After a substantive and thematic discussion on the different levels of a framework (theoretical background, research methods, policies, concepts, forms of dialogue, and self-reflection), the chapters are followed by an application that allows the readers to put the acquired knowledge into practice interactively. In this way, the framework not only provides background knowledge but also supports the first practical methodological steps.

Firstly, it is important to provide an overview of postcolonial theorising in the field of arts education in *Chapter One (Step One)*. Building on this, the chapter questions will expand common methods in the field of arts education that include decolonial aspects, especially in the context of social cohesion and inclusion. The methodological spectrum ranges from artistic methods of art-based research to participant observation, qualitative and quantitative methods and approaches of self-reflection as a researcher. Recently, a number of publications with post- or decolonial perspectives have emerged in arts education research; however, links to indigenous forms of knowledge, in particular, are rare, which is why the framework also focuses on this aspect.

As the concepts of cultural literacy, social cohesion and arts education may have different meanings, the *Second Chapter (Step Two)* is dedicated to reflecting on these different understandings through UNESCO concepts. Since its foundation, UNESCO has endeavoured to adopt a multidimensional perspective, incorporating other ways of knowing, and has advanced a postcolonial discourse comparatively early on. As a research team from two UNESCO Chairs (Hildesheim, Germany, and Auckland, New Zealand), the framework primarily refers to UNESCO concepts and terms, critically reflects on them, and discusses the impulses they can provide for field research.

Chapters Three and Four (Steps Three and Four) address the results and questions arising from the two previous deliverables (D1.1, Literature Review, and D1.2, Curriculum and Policy Analysis). These deliverables are fundamental for the further development of the research framework and dialogic aspects of the d@rts project. The questions raised in the literature review, policy and curriculum analysis cannot be answered conclusively in this framework, but they can be addressed, reframed, and revisited in this deliverable. Gaps in indigenous knowledge and decolonial perspectives within policy papers on arts education and cultural literacy can be further explored.

In *Chapter Five (Step Five)*, the findings from the previous four chapters are translated into the regional (local-specific) context of the field research; visualisation is also provided. The

chapter primarily provides guidance on the processes that could follow. The areas of application discussed in the previous chapters are the preparatory steps that are taken up here.

Chapter Six (Step Six) gives insights into an artistic application design (game prototype). Since d@rts is primarily about dialogue, the research team is developing a game prototype that promotes dialogue on the topics of cultural literacy and arts education. It can be played with the most diverse groups within the field of arts education, questioning hierarchies and addressing crucial decolonial aspects, such as through joint coordination of goals, transparency, and questions about the values, obstacles, and challenges of dialogue. The first processes of this game that will be finished in WP7 (D7.2) are presented here in a visual story.

Chapter Seven (Step Seven) informs us on the digitalisation of the applications, offering a beta version of the game and an online version of the applications in a digital playground where the researchers can engage interactively online.

With the seven steps, the deliverable aims to provide researchers with a decolonial research framework that supports postcolonial reflection and offers theoretical and methodological knowledge as well as practical applications. We understand this framework as a process that is to be established or completed at the end of the project (Validated Framework of Analysis, D 7.2). Thus, in *Chapter Eight (Step Eight)*, empirical values, criticism, and a form of evaluation should be carried out after the framework has been applied in the research field.



Chapter One / Step One. Postcolonial Reflections and Research Methods from a Decolonial Perspective (Julius Heinicke)

1.1 Introduction: From Postcolonial Reflections on Theories to Decolonial Research Methods

*“The key question for postcolonial research is whether the political work of exercising the imagination could counter imperialist, racist, orientalist, anti-Semitic and heteronormative structures and practices. While decolonial scholars propose a radical break with Western aesthetics, thinkers such as Spivak invoke Kant and Schiller to rethink aesthetic education as a step towards decolonisation. Instead of rejecting the Enlightenment and its legacy, Spivak proposes to ‘sabotage’ it **in order to enable the process of de-subalternisation through aesthetic education.**” (Dhawan, 2024, pp. 319-320, translated by d@rts, emphasis by d@rts)*

*“Die Schlüsselfrage für die postkoloniale Forschung lautet, ob die politische Arbeit zur Übung der Vorstellungskraft imperialistischen, rassistischen, orientalistischen, antisemitischen und heteronormativen Strukturen und Praktiken entgegenwirken könnte. Während dekoloniale Wissenschaftler innen einen radikalen Bruch mit der westlichen Ästhetik vorschlagen, berufen sich Denker*innen wie Spivak auf Kant und Schiller, um die ästhetische Erziehung als Schritt zur Dekolonisierung ganz neu zu denken. Anstatt die Aufklärung und ihr Erbe abzulehnen, schlägt Spivak vor, sie zu »sabotieren«, um den Prozess der Entsubalternisierung durch eine ästhetische Erziehung zu ermöglichen.” (Dhawan, 2024, pp. 319-320)*

In her introduction, Nikita Dhawan (2024) sums up the tension between postcolonial and decolonising research. Considering the following, this framework sets the focus slightly differently. The attempt here is to analyse postcolonial theory formation in relation to reflections on arts education and cultural literacy. Since theory at universities is always hierarchical and colonised, the ‘post’ (in postcolonial) makes sense in all these ways of knowing. In our framework, we understand the ‘decolonial’ as a research tool to actually break through colonial strategies in methodology. To put it more succinctly, the post-colonial here refers to the diverse theories that deal with questions and reflections on colonial power structures and hierarchies in the field of arts education and cultural literacy. The decolonial refers to artistic and scientific methods of reconstructing or, at the very least, actively questioning the colonial.

Researching the connection between cultural literacy and arts education requires different scientific methods that deal with local contexts, educational and artistic structures. The inclusion of artistic methods, as well as the different assumptions and processes of diverse communities, calls for a critical and postcolonial-oriented approach. This is because artistic research and the various ways of knowing of different communities were not, or hardly, included in traditional cultural, artistic, and social sciences. Thus, this requires not only a postcolonial theoretical reflection but also a decolonial change in research methods. This reorientation cannot be understood as a methodological design that is set once and completed at a certain

point, but rather as a process, which is why the concentration here is to understand the *Decolonial Research Framework* as a decolonial journey, which the researchers carry out and actively reflect on in different steps of the framework. Regarding this, the deliverable provides systematic and structured background knowledge and concrete practical instructions.

We are aware of using two terms that are defined differently and controversially. As already mentioned, Dhawan (2024) pointed out the differences between postcolonial and decolonial approaches (pp. 22-26). The former (postcolonial) definitely see themselves in a Western academic tradition and critically question the Enlightenment as a space of knowledge. Decolonial approaches, on the other hand, are primarily concerned with establishing new structures and deconstructing Western methods. This framework takes up these approaches and evaluates 'postcolonial' and 'decolonial' as directions rather than mutually exclusive methods. The framework defines postcolonial as an examination of theory and methodological approaches that are aware of (neo)colonial structures, attempt to identify them, and critically confront them. In contrast, the decolonial strategy refers to actual changes in the choice and orientation of scientific methodology, which leads to actual changes in design. This form of deconstruction is a process that we describe as a journey.

The first version of the *Decolonial Research Framework* primarily refers to field research within the case studies, thus encompassing qualitative and artistic methods. However, the d@rts research project also utilises quantitative research approaches, which need to be considered and reflected upon from a postcolonial perspective and deconstructed from a decolonial perspective. Quantitative research must take into account the respective regional and local ways of knowing, social structures and cultural backgrounds (Crückeberg/Heinicke et al., 2024, pp. 567-577).

1.2 Postcolonial Theories on Arts Education Research

Ngugi wa Thiong'o was one of the leading scholars who called for postcolonial processes in the field of arts education and also in the field of literacy as early as the 1980s. In his work *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), he advocates for using **local languages** in literature and cultural work to break through the colonisation processes perpetuated in the languages of the colonisers.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's ideas were taken up by the cultural policy of Zimbabwe, which became independent in 1980, and relied on arts education to implement decolonisation processes from the bottom up. Ngugi wa Mirii, for example, further developed them, resulting in a diverse scene that used various methods to advance postcolonial strategies. The mix of different cultural traditions is striking here (Heinicke, 2012, pp.1-22). For example, the Amakhosi in Bulawayo, a cultural institution that works primarily in the field of arts education, realises many smaller theatre projects and workshops that are the result of cooperation with the population of Bulawayo, especially in the township of Makokoba. It is also interesting to note here that, one of the most important decolonial steps concerns language, as Jane Plastow argues:

"The company have become the leading Ndebele group in Zimbabwe, with their plays written in what Mhlanga calls "Ndenglish", a fusion of languages which makes the work accessible to all Zimbabweans. Mhlanga sees his mission as being a voice for the povo – the ordinary people, and it is this which drives both performance style and context." (Plastow, 2004, p. 111)

A further boost to cultural policies and the development and theorising of arts education followed with the independence of South Africa. The first president of the republic, Nelson Mandela, tried to realise the vision of a 'Rainbow Nation' with the help of arts and cultural practice. Research in the field of postcolonial arts education was promoted in South African universities and gained international recognition. Mark Fleischmann (University of Cape Town), Hazel Barnes (University of KwaZulu-Natal), Alexandra Sutherland (Rhodes University), and Kennedy Chinyowa (University of the Witwatersrand), among others, have become internationally recognised researchers in the field of postcolonial arts education. Their work emphasises close cooperation with the respective groups and communities. Here, too, attention is paid to the syncretic use of different cultural practices that play a role for the participants.

Such attempts are interpreted as incorporating existing knowledge and practices. In addition to language, **rituals, ideas of community, body, gender, and identity** also play a role. It is also noticeable that the telling of one's own story (storytelling) is moving into the centre of academic debate. Since the stories and narratives of African societies were often taken away or assumed not to exist during colonial times, the **processes of storytelling** became an essential way of expression for the postcolonial discourse. Maria Teresa Cruz and Madalena Miranda highlight the societal importance of storytelling both in African traditions and in post-colonial contexts.

"The resurgence of storytelling, a central practice from the very early age of human culture, is playing a significant role in fostering critical self-awareness and the creation of counter-narratives in post-colonial societies." (Cruz & Miranda, 2022, p. 297)

Storytelling not only creates counter narratives and brings together different aspects, but it is also linked to the **body**. In the postcolonial discourses on arts and arts education, African scholars reflect different understandings of the body according to Samuel Ravengai:

"I believe that there is a Western realism which can be differentiated from an African realism (which I will discuss in more detail below). If the psycho-technique was crafted to deal with Western realism, does it still have any relevance today in dealing with post-linear play texts? My second hypothesis is that our bodies are 'embodied' differently, not because of genetics, but as a result of our different cultural environments. Consequently, the psycho-technique tends to favour a Western-groomed body and seems to disorientate any other differently embodied body." (Ravengai, 2011, pp. 35-36)

With regard to arts education, Tia Reihana also observes that concepts of the bodies are used to strengthen hierarchies and cultural concepts (Reihana, 2023, p. 66). Taking these reflections into account, it could be said that in a postcolonial context, the body is reflected on different levels and in different contexts. There is always one or more cultural concepts that refer to the specific body used in the arts context, but also different artistic training styles and aesthetic "qualities". The cultural body represents "basic" concepts such as gender, community, individualism and collectivity, distance and proximity, behaviour, and ways of speaking and eating. The artistic body is linked to this, but also to the way of how a society or a group defines art. There are various styles and modes of the body in which the aesthetic becomes visible and is used. Acknowledging that, there are differences between groups, ethnicities, regions, countries but also rural and urban areas, some of them are only recognisable to the people who are familiar with the specific groups.

Not only the body, but also the **space** used in arts education is reflected in the postcolonial discourse. In European traditions, space is not only connected with different and complex philosophical narratives, but also to the structures, the societies and assumptions around them, as Ashar Mobeen reflects:

“European philosophical contemplation of space, spatiality, and time has deep roots, and to attribute its beginning to a single philosopher is impossible. However, the earliest rigorous considerations of these topics can be traced back to ancient Greece. Aristotle, for instance, linked the concept of space closely with place, defining it as the boundary surrounding an object. Concurrently, Euclid’s Elements laid the groundwork for a geometric comprehension of space. With the passage of centuries, the European understanding of space has evolved dramatically. René Descartes’s Cartesian coordinate system abstracted space, turning it into an infinitely divisible realm. Gottfried Leibniz, on the other hand, championed the idea of relational space, implying that space was the product of relationships between objects.” (Mobeen, 2025, p. 149)

Although space in European cultural history is very complex, in the colonial contexts, it was often used in a very simple way. Colonial power was strengthened by segregation and exclusivity. Even theatre and its spaces were part of this strategy. Compared to this, the precolonial assumptions concerning space and their concepts appear to be more complex.

As Revengai already mentioned in the context of the body, it could be said that space refers to different realities, and one “real” **space and time** could also refer to many others. Both are highly relevant categories from a postcolonial perspective, as they reflect the diversity of cultural assumptions and the possibility of exercising power over the regulation and definition of these. In various postcolonial observations, it becomes clear that there are numerous ideas about the conception of space that can often only be experienced aesthetically and sensually, similar to time.

Behind both of these conceptions lie various cultural assumptions such as the religious meanings of places, or different temporal models (time as a uniform curve or time as a phenomenon that does not correspond to a uniform sequence). Artistic practices, in turn, refer to the different conceptions, either being part of them or subverting them. In European drama, times can be skipped and places can be set. In African rituals, the place plays a role, but so does the presence of different times. While in Christianity, for example, the afterlife does not lie within the experiential space of the present, it can be part of it in many African cultures. From a postcolonial perspective, it is crucial to recognise the different concepts and perceive them as cultural concepts that are closely linked to the respective places and societies.

Artistic practices can, in turn absorb and reflect on these, especially in decolonial contexts, as Mobeen argues:

“To move beyond the colonial legacies embedded in the urban landscape, we must engage in a process of decolonial reimagining. This involves not only critically examining the existing structures and narratives within these spaces but also envisioning new spatial orders that reflect a more inclusive and just society. One approach could involve commissioning site-specific artworks that challenge the dominant colonial narratives or transforming these spaces into venues for multicultural ceremonies and storytelling. These interventions could function as acts of reclamation, providing counter



narratives that underscore the histories and contributions of the traditionally marginalized.” (Mobeen, 2025, p. 155)

In order to be able to meet the postcolonial challenges in arts education formats, he emphasises the importance of the interplay between the various disciplines to foster decolonial processes:

“The journey toward a decolonial future is not without its challenges. It requires a collective effort from artists, scholars, policymakers, and community members to dismantle the entrenched power dynamics that continue to shape our public spaces. There is also the risk of tokenism—of merely adding new layers to the existing colonial framework without fundamentally altering it. To avoid this, the voices and leadership of Indigenous and marginalized communities themselves must guide decolonial efforts.” (Mobeen, 2025, p. 155)

In addition to these demands to actively involve groups marginalised due to colonialism in the design and implementation, the tendency to rethink postcolonial theories in a transdisciplinary and inclusive way is visible in the research work. At present, it can be observed that educational theories within postcolonial approaches to arts education incorporate innovative discourses from Gender Studies and African Studies, but also endeavour to include indigenous knowledge systems. „Decolonising methodologies bring together, among others, indigenous, transformative, liberation, feminist, and critical methodologies to strengthen decolonising research” (Barnes, 2018, p. 379).

Recent works, for example, refer to the considerations of the postcolonial philosopher Achille Mbembe, who, in incorporating “wasteful ways of thinking”, puts the principle of differences aside (Heinicke, 2019, pp. 138-149; Heinicke et al., 2024, pp. 103-113). Mbembe argues that ‘universal communities’ and thus their research practices can only be conceived in their diversity in the future (of knowledges):

“This question of universal community is therefore by definition posed in terms of how we inhabit the Open, how we care for the Open – which is completely different from an approach that would aim first to enclose, to stay within the enclosure of what we call our own kin. This form of unkinning [dissimilation] is the opposite of difference.” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 183)

From a postcolonial perspective, this form of “unkinning” also applies to the construction of research design and the use of methods. Due to the diversity of cultural assumptions in the context of body, space, time and the variety of artistic techniques, it seems sensible to choose a research design with a methodology that does justice to Mbembe's claim of openness and makes it possible to incorporate as many particularities of the respective places and communities and their contexts. In addition to the mixed methods model, common postcolonial research methods should be scrutinised. If colonial structures are powerful, they can be demonstrated in decolonial methods. In addition, practices should be supplemented by methods that include indigenous contexts, or ways of knowing that have been marginalised by imperial and colonial structures.

1.3 Decolonising Research Methods

Against the backdrop of postcolonial discourse, it seems necessary to subject current research methods that examine cultural literacy in the context of arts education to decolonial reflection and contextualise them accordingly. One of the key findings of the postcolonial discourse summarised above is the versatility of knowledge on cultural assumptions, which has been overshadowed by colonial dominance in recent centuries. Thus, one of the aims of the research methodology is to engage with the relevant actors (students, teachers, researchers, communities, politicians, etc.) in their respective cultural contexts and experiences at an eye level. This means that the researchers' assumptions are scrutinised and reflected back to the actors involved, and the regional experts are included in advance.

After reviewing the relevant literature and several discussions with colleagues from WP 1, 2, 3, and 4, for whom postcolonial research methods are relevant, three methodological fields in particular appear suitable for decolonial practice:

1. Community-based participatory research (CBPR) focuses on the participation of the respective communities, so that a bottom-up development of the design is already established here.
2. Art-based methods have long been dismissed as “unscientific”, as they partially elude common patterns of scientific knowledge. Traditional patterns of argumentation, such as thesis and antithesis, or quantitatively verifiable results, are less prevalent in the research. Instead, the subjective meaning and localisation of knowledge are emphasised, as well as its multiperspectivity, depending on the viewpoint from which it is understood. In addition, art-based methods offer a variety of approaches (cognitive and aesthetic) for knowledge acquisition and enable the incorporation of different cultural traditions of knowledge (including indigenous knowledge).
3. Empirical methods, such as interviews, participant observation, and quantitative surveys, give deep insights into the perspective of the people being researched and different interpretations by the researcher. This also raises the question of who has discourse sovereignty. In classic methodological designs, it is the researchers themselves who make the decisions in advance, draft the questions, form categories and draw their conclusions from the observations.

1.3.1. Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) with Decolonial Approach

John Sullivan and Eduardo Siqueira (2009) emphasise the special nature of this research method in designing power-sensitive and intersectional research settings together at eye level:

Though trust and authenticity are key to success in CBPR, and bidirectional dialogue through accurate, unmediated, and timely channels are essential to building trust and validating authenticity, these qualities and the structures that sustain them are difficult

to design, construct, and maintain. Some of this difficulty derives from subtle reconfigurations of power and affinity in response to contingencies in neighbourhoods and the larger social sphere that steadily swirl like currents through the shared life-world of a community. Another measure of difficulty stems from inherent differences in the life-worlds and subsequent agendas of expert science and generalist, more informally educated communities.” (Sullivan & Siqueira, 2009 p. 401)

There are many understandings and practices of community-based participatory research, but in its core methodology, it embraces flexible power relationships, and unobstructed eye-level exchange of the researcher and local knowledge of the participants. Trust, dialogue and validation stays at the core of the engagement (Sullivan & Siqueira, 2009).

For this reason, they lend themselves to decolonial strategies, as has been increasingly emphasised in the relevant research in recent years (Seppälä et al., 2021, p. 2). The **intersectional orientation** of the methodology encourages the participants of the study not to be reduced to a specific role, gender, ethnicity, social or cultural background, but to represent and reflect on their interplay and thus also their complexity. This approach protects against dichotomies and polar simplifications and assumptions by linking different social aspects with each other. In the context of academic research into cultural literacy and arts education, this interplay is of great importance, as the former is always linked to cultural assumptions and social accessibility. The latter one is also interwoven with cultural, social and societal traditions, so it seems to be important to take its intersectional links and ties into account.

Intersectional categories can vary depending on the context, group and region. There is also always the danger of reducing individual people to certain characteristics when defining intersectionality. In order to be able to counter both, it appears necessary to determine the intersectional field within community-based research with the respective groups. Which specific categories (e.g. gender, sexual orientation, social status, migration history, disability, age, skin colour, language ability) should be paid particular attention to? Which of these groups are marginalised or require sensitive handling? Intersectionality means that these categories are interconnected and are rarely effective individually. It requires sensitivity on the part of the researchers to open up the intersectional links in a group or community with the participants of a study and to reflect on these and take them into account in the research.

This form of researching local conditions cannot be realised with the traditional ethnological view of the researcher. As Asli Özgen argues:

*“The **cultural analysis framework** posits a different relationality between “the knower” and the object. As opposed to the knower being the active agent who explains the object and thus practices some mastery over it, cultural analysis insists that none is superior; they strictly engage in a relationship and this relationship is **dialogical**.” (Özgen, 2025, p. 215, highlighted by d@rts)*

In the history of cultural studies, researchers have usually taken little account of the cultural context, expertise and perspectives of local people, but have seen themselves as observers and thus also as “categorisers” and decision-makers. This was usually based on Western categories and dichotomies in particular, which were rarely scrutinised. In the course of post-colonial reflection, these **hierarchies should be rethought and deconstructed**, also for community-based research, as Nadine Zwiener-Collins argues:

“Approaches that disrupt the often clinical and hierarchical researcher–participant binary favour partnerships with historically marginalised communities to facilitate mutual uplift.” (Zwiener-Collins et al., 2021, p. 125)

This process of change in research design also requires a fundamental reorientation of the researcher's self-image. It is not only the perception and construction of the researcher's ego that plays a role, but also the connection between the objective of the research and the participants in the research.

“The researcher cannot ‘position’ him/herself, or ‘empower’ the other. Instead, through entering a participatory mode of consciousness the individual agent of the ‘I’ of the researcher is released in order to enter a consciousness larger than the self.” (Denscombe, 2024, p. 237)

The question of one's own role and its decolonial reflection arises not only for researchers, but for all actors involved in the field of arts education. For example, it is challenging for teachers to find a way into this role, as Özgen described.

“The many ‘decolonizing toolkits’ do present some models, yet not all of these models are suitable to apply across disciplines and varying classroom compositions. The question persists: As a teacher, how do I practice decolonial pedagogy? What am I going to do when I walk into the classroom in order to avoid falling back into and repeating colonial epistemological paradigms?” (Özgen, 2025, p. 206)

Any form of community-based research is closely tied to the **collection of data**. To date, it has been customary for the data to remain with the researcher or their institution and to be used by them. However, community-based research demands that the data is also shared and made available to the various participants. A justified criticism from many participants and participating communities is that they take part in research but neither benefit from it nor have access to the data.

“For the academy, data is land and the experts are those who own the land and have the right not only to its ownership and the capital it produces, but also the right to author narratives about those from whom the data is taken.” (Singh et al., 2018, p. 386)

This requires not only responsible handling of the data, but also precise planning in advance as to who has access to the data and how they can benefit from it.

The question of the benefits for the participating community must be posed from a postcolonial perspective and discussed with the participants in advance. There are various ways in which participants and **communities can benefit**. In addition to access to the data, the added value can be defined in advance. Innovative ideas for the region, new concepts for society, ideas and visions or improvements to procedures and organisational processes, promotion of the common good, and greater visibility. All this and much more can be achieved directly and indirectly with research projects. It is worth discussing with those involved what results the research achieves and whether these are of value to the stakeholders involved. If not, it is also worth reflecting on what alternative benefits could be possible.

The Intersectional Mapping, Diverse Backgrounds in the Communities

The intersectionality toolkit defined by UN WOMEN (2021) is extended for d@rts research purposes. In this application, the reader will be able to address the communities from an intersectional perspective.

Intersectional Contexts of the Field

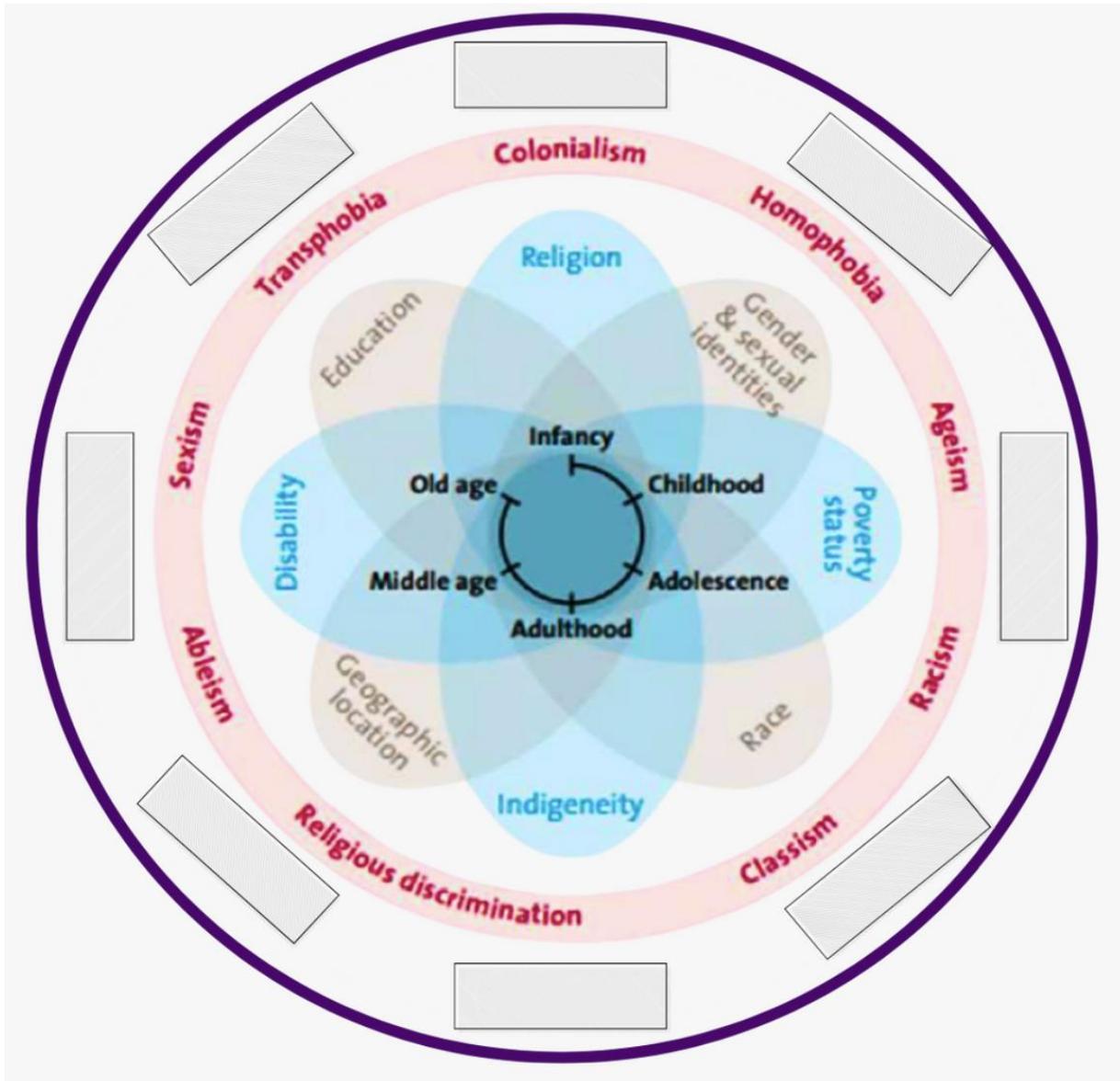
- Cultural backgrounds** _____
- Languages** _____
- Social & Economic factors** _____
- Different realities** _____
- Other(s)** _____

What hierarchies exist in the field?

- School system (norms, grades, roles)** _____
- Pupil-Teacher dynamics** _____
- Researcher- community relationship** _____
- Access to cultural capital (e.g. music)** _____
- Communication or literacy abilities** _____
- Other:** _____

Please fill in the blanks in the extended toolkit.





(Intersectionality toolkit as it is shown on UN WOMEN Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit, 2021, extended for d@rts research purposes)

Concerning your research communities and participants: Are there any other concepts that you would like to add from your perspective?

Benefits

Who will benefit from this research project?



What kind of benefits do you think this research project will have for the different groups (researchers, communities, teachers, institutions)?



1.3.2. Art-Based Research and Indigenous Practices (Alfdaniels Mabingo and Julius Heinicke)

Research into cultural literacy in the context of arts education must inevitably include methods of art-based research, as this form of literacy draws on artistic levels of understanding. In recent years, research work in this field has increased significantly. However, there are not so many papers that specifically address art-based research methods in the context of arts education from a postcolonial and indigenous perspective. For this reason, the following questions should be addressed: What challenges does art-based research face from a postcolonial perspective? Which forms of knowledge and arts are included (keyword indigenous knowledge)? What pedagogical concepts are used as a basis, and what cultural preconditions are these based on?

Dónal O'Donoghue (2009) argues that due to the special nature of art within art-based research, categories and assumptions are first developed in the context of education:

“Arts-based educational research is founded on the belief that the arts have the ability to contribute particular insights into and enhance understandings of phenomena that are of interest to educational researchers.” (O'Donoghue, 2009, p. 352)

Following this principle, it can also be applied in the context of a decolonial research framework:

“First, there is the question of how do arts-based researchers create the conditions for others to interpret and understand their research findings/outcomes? Second, there is the question of access. Who is in a position to access the outcomes of research inquiries conducted in and through art in ways that are meaningful and generative? At this end, what are the implications of misinterpretation for educational research conducted in or through the arts? Is this not a key question that ought to be of concern to arts-based researchers?” (O’Donoghue, 2009, p. 365)

In addition to the provided questions on access and possible misunderstandings by O’Donoghue, evokes further questions such as who defines what art is? Particularly from a decolonial perspective.

Walter Mignolo explains in an interview with Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández (2014) the role of delinking aesthetics from Western thinking and concepts in supporting decolonial processes. It is important to mention that he underlines the fact that “aesthetics” is “*not restricted to the art work, but is a basic human attribute*” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014, p. 201):

“We, decolonial thinkers (artists, curators, activists, art and literary critics, philosophers), have to delink from that legacy, the legacy of modern aesthetics and its Greek and Roman legacies (...). So the first step was to review and remake the legacies I just mentioned. And one caveat: for reasons that are long to explain, it is necessary to start from concepts introduced by Western philosophy, science, religion, arts, and knowledge in general in order to depart (to delink) from them. This is for two reasons: one is that Western knowledge has been spread globally and, therefore, it is in all of us who went through at least secondary education. It is irrelevant for billions of people who have not been exposed to such education. However, people who have not been exposed to secondary education and above have senses, sensibilities, emotions, and they have skills to make things that bring them and the community pleasure or emotions in sacred rituals. So that aesthesis is not restricted to the art world, but is a basic human attribute (and I will go further, all living organisms, human or not).” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014, p. 201)

It is interesting to observe the extent to which art was integrated into educational contexts during colonisation. Yet it is not limited to the area of education, as the term “aesthesis” also includes other areas of life and experience beyond the arts. If the decolonial critique of the concept of arts and education is taken seriously, then “aesthesis” may enable a decolonial conception of arts education. In turn, methods of art-based research are suitable for researching this conception scientifically, if these in turn attempt to question Western concepts and incorporate indigenous cultural knowledge and educational practices.

Arts-based research touches the core understanding of indigenous knowledge systems. In this regard, reflections on practices that are still being practised in their local communities are vital. For example, Uganda has gone through massive processes of sociocultural transformation as a result of colonialism, globalisation, and technological intrusions. However, there are remnants of indigenous practices that still exist, which remain true to the ethos of their

communities of practice. If we take an example of some communities among the Baganda people of Central Uganda, arts practices such as music, dance, storytelling, and instrumentation, among others, are not only methodologies of inquiring into the world, but they are also ways and meanings of being in the world. Therefore, in terms of knowledge production, the arts are part of a holistic and circular system that weaves the methodology, practice, inquiry, and meaning of being in the world (Eddison, 2024; Izu and de Villiers, 2021). The arts are key avenues of generating, sharing, and living the knowledge. The nature of art practices makes them ever-present domains in life. The aspect of embodiment frames the active presence and agency of the person in the process of knowing, doing, thinking, connecting, and becoming.

The indigenous arts-based knowledge is undergirded by experience, reflection, accessibility, participation, and inclusion (Hammond et al., 2018). The act of embodiment interweaves the individual and the community. Basically, arts-based knowledge production in indigenous communities asks a person to act within the context of the community (Moncada, 2016). The philosophy of Ubuntu, which is one of the many philosophies underlying arts practices in Uganda, is a key marker in grounding individuals and communities within the realm of arts-based knowledge production (Mabingo, 2020a). The aphorism (of Ubuntu) “I am because we are and because we are, therefore I am” is an essential foundation of the different processes of knowing, thinking, and doing through the arts. The artistic epistemologies are built on the reality that each one needs the other for knowledge to attain its value to people, ecology, and the world. Again, embodiment invites individuals to work together in the spirit of community to grow, question, and reimagine the knowledge. In the midst of the arts, new experiences are cultivated by the participants.

In the world of arts-based knowledge production, knowledge is not the end in itself. There is an understanding that every person is a knowledgeable other. The matrix of the arts is constituted of a broader spectrum of domains that form a chain that expands knowing, thinking, and doing. For example, dancing, singing, soloisting, drumming, clapping, mnemonics, body percussion, storytelling, poetry, and other forms of artistic expression take place concurrently (Mabingo, 2020b; Nannyonga-Tamusuza, 2015). The configuration of the varied forms of embodiment offers multiple entry points into the knowledge that the artistic world creates. The inquiry and being in this experience positions multidimensional agency in the artistic processes of knowledge production, creating a space of potentialities to thrive and get celebrated.

The value of indigenous arts-based knowledge is derived from its impact on the communities of practice. It is knowledge by the people, for the people, and with the people (Menkiti, 1984). The knowledge lives within the community. The community acts as the library and laboratory of this knowledge. The multimodal and multidimensional nature of the arts produces and sustains different forms of literacies that shape the existence into the world. The arts are social, cognitive, emotional, philosophical, and linguistic, among so many other forms of understanding and being in the world (Dogara, Fagbemi & Osagie, 2021). In indigenous communities, the knowledge is published every day through artistic practices that are integrated into daily life and resistant to different forms of subjugation (Martineau, 2015). The purpose of the arts as part of the epistemological existence of people is to address life challenges and create more opportunities to achieve the well-being of living and non-living things.

Integration of the arts in daily life also shifts who is considered an artist. Considering that the arts are embedded in communities where everybody is considered a knowledgeable agent,



the definition of who is an artist is very horizontal and holistic. By this, we mean that the hierarchies of knowledge are not as prescribed. Rather, in the process of embodying art forms, different players emerge and take on roles in a rotational manner. While over time the artistic system of knowledge production produces master drummers and singers, although these do not necessarily sit at the hierarchical pyramid of art practices. Instead, they are the pillars that hold the communities together and are accountable to these communities. These leaders emerge from a consensual effort of the community. From the standpoint of the communities of practice, the participants in the activities within these communities are seen as individuals with artistry and experiences to share, rather than as artists.

By their nature, indigenous art forms are transdisciplinary. Their modes of practices and meanings that are embedded in their material seek to speak to the different areas that define human existence. The arts narrativise issues of politics, leadership, ecology, economics, gender, the universe, culture, sociology, human anatomy, fauna and flora, linguistics, and mental health, among so many other areas. Through the arts, communities explore knowledge in various areas using embodied, experiential, and artistic practices. The arts transcend the action of the body in which they are sited. The potency of embodied experiences lies in allowing people to live the knowledge that the arts offer. The arts knowledge is not only artistic knowledge. It transcends different spheres of human existence. Knowledge of the different domains is explored through artistic practices. The exploration of being in the world through the arts is meant to enable individuals to reflect on the world in its entirety. The different disciplines that the arts touch allows people to interact with knowledge from multiple areas that constitute life.

Taking these reflections on indigenous perspectives into account, art-based research initially **defines the levels of understanding and experience** that precede the acquisition of different knowledge systems. Musical, performative and painterly elements can form the basis of this. Regarding the procedures for gaining knowledge in other fields of research (analyses, arguments, etc.), it should be discussed with the participants what a **possible result** could be: Shared experience, irritation, enjoyment, pleasure, etc. From a decolonial perspective, it makes sense to select the art forms together with the participants and take their experiences of art into account.

*“Arts-based methods offer unique ways of data collection with multiple benefits for racialized and immigrant older adults. The prolonged nature of engagement in arts-based designs and the specific needs of racialized and immigrant older adults require **methodological creativity that must be developed further**. Researchers are encouraged to share more detailed methodological accounts of engaging in arts-based research with these populations to explain facilitators the challenges and solutions from practice.” (Salma et al., 2023, p. 772)*

It is advisable that references to familiar artistic practices are present, even if these are questioned or placed in a different context or supplemented by others. Another point to consider is the intersectional challenges and inclusive methods, which also influence the choice of art techniques or the design of the outcome.

Against the background of cultural literacy, consideration can be given to what kind of literacy should be promoted. The capacity of a particular practice? A competence to realise it collectively? A form of experience? Art-based research can question and re-evaluate the definition

of cultural literacy from a postcolonial perspective. Similar to the question posed above about the choice of art, we can thus ask how literacy is shaped in this context. Which skills and competences should be included? Here, too, it seems sensible to build bridges to the skills and competences of the participants: Where do they already have expertise? What can be built on?

Questions of **access** also arise in the research design of art-based research, even if these can be approached in very different ways. In contrast to other research methods, the approaches to the arts are very diverse. Depending on the format chosen, access can be low-threshold or challenging (e.g. I only have to clap versus playing an instrument). However, the understanding of knowledge is also determined by different approaches. To what extent are the participants informed about the cognitive pathways and involved in their creation? To what extent is the achievement of certain goals linked to questions of access, and what alternative options are there for people with limited access?

The challenge of art-based research in the context of education, which can lead to misunderstandings or different results, is oppositely beneficial from a postcolonial point of view. The **decolonial method** also seeks to question the combination of contemporary Western and colonial science and to open the way for ambiguity. The need to bring together the very diverse methods and results of art-based research with educational issues makes mutual negotiation and exchange of views a necessity. In this process, assumptions and structures are not imposed top-down, but instead developed bottom-up: Art techniques that are used are decided upon together, objectives are designed together, and the significance for education and the conceptualisation of cultural literacy are also discussed together.

Art-based methods are suitable for a decolonial-oriented analysis of cultural literacy in the context of arts education for the simple reason that they place art at the centre and thus conceive the research design from the perspective of art practice. From a postcolonial perspective, the following steps and questions are essential in applying art-based research with a decolonising perspective:

- Selection of arts and indigenous (art) practices: Which ones appear useful for the target group? Which can be linked to? Which ones already have expertise? Which indigenous forms exist?
- Definition of arts education, cultural literacy and possible outcomes: The definitions of arts education and cultural literacy need to be harmonised: Which concepts are also referred to? Which experiential spaces are created? How are these reflected and moderated? Equally important is the joint agreement on possible goals: What could a research result look like? How will this be measured?
- Potentials and barriers to access: Who has access to art practices and who does not? Which ones are accessible? How can access be facilitated? Who should be supported? What access do the participants want?
- Interpretations and misunderstandings: How can the results of the art-based methods be interpreted in the field of education? What room for manoeuvre is there to miss results? What margin of error? How can art-based research, which requires a more open-ended and free participatory design, and cultural literacy, which refers to clear, well-defined concepts of competences, be brought together? What areas of tension arise here, for example between art and education?



Artistic Methods

What artistic methods are used?

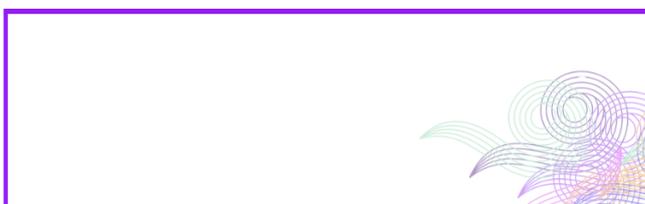


Which postcolonial concepts and decolonial practices can be related to cultural literacy?



Selection of artistic and indigenous practices

Which artistic practices appear to be useful?



Which indigenous practices already exist?



Are there different definitions and concepts of arts education and cultural literacy?



Interpretations and Misunderstandings

How can the results of the art-based methods be interpreted in the field of education?



How can arts-based research, that requires an open-ended and free participatory design, be brought together with cultural literacy related concepts?



What areas of tension can arise here, for example, between art and education?



Who defines the concepts?



What actions could reduce colonial hierarchies?



What kind of barriers and accessibility problems may you encounter?



1.3.3 Decolonising Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods and Participant Observation (Empirical methods)

In recent years, the UNESCO Chair Hildesheim has collaborated with partners in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly on empirical methods. In a research project on the significance of art and culture for the social cohesion of young people in Mali, the limitations of traditional methods

have become particularly apparent. Not only questions of access, but also the question of language, the context of reference, the role of the researchers and the relevance for the young people played a significant role.

Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods

Both **qualitative and quantitative research methods** need to be questioned through their limitations. Lather and St. Pierre (2013, p. 631) argue that it is important to question their limitations. The discussion on decolonial approaches to qualitative and quantitative research methods also reveals aspects that were already visible in community-based and art-based research. Particularly striking is the emphasis on the limits imposed by the researcher's own perspective, which Lather and St. Pierre allude to. In the research project in Mali, the UNESCO Chair initially focused on post-qualitative research:

“Post-qualitative inquiry not only produces other ways of understanding the research process, but it also facilitates understanding the role of the researcher as something different from the established ideals in both conventional qualitative and quantitative research. In different ways, several scholars exemplify what is actualised when the researcher is no longer regarded as the prime and given impetus for the research, but instead is viewed as an agent intra-acting with data (Nordstrom, 2015; Somerville, 2016), participants (Wolfe, 2017), voices (Johansson, 2015), bodies (Fullagar, 2017) and so on.” (Johansson, Moe & Nissen, 2021, pp. 3-4)

A particular challenge for **empirical methods** is that they can usually only look at the level of the answers, but hardly at the other dimensions, such as the language, the body, the mood, etc., which are important for the results – especially in the context of art education. For the post-qualitative design in the context of arts education, the context of the interviewee should be carefully discussed with them, and the following questions considered: How can the ‘safe space’ of the ‘interview’ be designed? Which aspects play a role (language, body, art, etc.), who and which expertise should be involved in advance? Which cultural contexts play a role? How can these be ‘inquired’ and reflected upon? Should the interview take place in a specific native language with a translator?

When preparing quantitative surveys, similar challenges arise from a postcolonial perspective. In order to do justice to the respective life contexts of the participants, questions should be developed in consultation with experts in advance. We learnt these lessons from the research project in Mali mentioned above. Not everyone has access to digital devices, and linguistic expertise and language gestures are often limited, especially when interviewing children. In Mali, the young people had access to translations in their native language to help with any queries they had which makes them also share their stories and perspectives much easier.

Nadine Zwiener-Collins, Juvaria Jafri, Rima Saini and Tabitha Poulter (2021) problematise colonial hierarchies and dichotomies in quantitative research methods in their article on “Decolonial quantitative research methods pedagogy: Teaching contemporary politics to challenge hierarchies from data”:

“Quantitative researchers have tended to – often for analytical reasons such as sample size or feasibility – ignore the heterogeneity of race and ethnic identity in multicultural societies and the historical power hierarchies that underlie commonly used racial and



ethnic classifications. British national statistics often homogenise African, Caribbean, and South Asian descended people under the broad categorisation of 'Black', or 'Black' and 'Asian'. Binary oppositions between broad categories often used for comparative analysis – such as Black/White, non-White/White, immigrant/native – link to colonial dualities of uncivilised/civilised and inferior/superior” (Hall, 1988).” (Zwiener-Collins et al, p. 126)

They also recommend questioning Eurocentric dichotomies and concepts in quantitative designs and reflecting on these (pp. 128-129). Although, working on a strategy of decolonising **quantitative methods** on the one hand and developing a postcolonial quantitative design at the same time is rather challenging. It means first critically reflecting on the methodological frame: Which assumptions reduce social diversity? Which cultural (Western) norms are assumed? In a further step, the traditional quantitative methods must be supplemented with additional ways of knowing: How can knowledge that cannot be linguistically categorised be quantified? How can opinions that move beyond polarised yes/no patterns be collected? How can different understandings of supposedly 'clear' categories be addressed in quantitative studies?

The subject area of arts education offers a number of opportunities to supplement the quantitative methodology with new forms of knowledge through the approach of art and aesthetics. In addition to writing and language, music, songs, spoken word, performances and digital media can be used. Particularly in the quantitative survey of cultural literacy, the different aesthetic levels of experience can be surveyed if there is the possibility of making them accessible to a larger (quantitatively relevant) group of participants, for example via digital media or in artistic spaces.

Participant Observation

The question and search for different cultural experiences and stories also arise within the method of **participant observation**. On the one hand, the person carrying out the observation has their own cultural history of experience and localisation. Reflecting on this and understanding the limitations of one's own perspective is essential from a postcolonial perspective. On the other hand, it is crucial to see the people being observed in their different cultural contexts and to look for these. They are not just “observed” but must be seen as active dialogue partners, who are enabled to act on an equal footing and to clarify their cultural background. In this way, participant observation requires a careful assessment of the cultural spheres of the community and must include representatives within these communities. Furthermore, one's own cultural localisation must also be reflected upon.

For example, in his analysis of a theatre project with refugees from Afghanistan, Andreas Bürgisser reflects on the different cultural levels of the participants and how quickly they are 'reduced' to individual categories.

“During a student's final project, the process developed into a conflict at times due to fundamentally different world views. For example, three women from Afghanistan who are currently living in Switzerland with asylum status and three people who are read as women and with full right of residence created a theater evening. (...) In the end, the project could be carried out and everyone stayed on as actors. The student described the reason for this as that everyone knew that they had something in common,



which, however, could not be clearly stated. The fact that women or female read people are doing a project together in a place designed for artistic encounters between people who have or have not fled their home countries is not surprising at first. I rather assume that this setting has created a great willingness to get to know and to encounter each other in all their complexity.” (Bürgisser et al., 2025, pp. 104-105)

Participant observation means that, first of all, the observer must be very familiar with the field they are observing or have expertise in it (Keikelame and Swartz, 2019). This means that the “observation” must be integrated into a long-term process in which one's own ideas, concepts and assumptions are continuously questioned. Assumptions and hypotheses are thus often only generated in the course of the analysis and observation of the field. Alpa Shah names key aspects that should be considered in the preparations for the research design:

*“Participant observation centers a long-term intimate engagement with a group of people that were once strangers to us in order to know and experience the world through their perspectives and actions in as holistic a way as possible. For short, I will refer to these four core aspects that are the basis of participation observation as **long duration** (long-term engagement), **revealing social relations of a group of people** (understanding a group of people and their social processes), **holism** (studying all aspects of social life, marking its fundamental democracy), and the dialectical relationship between **intimacy and estrangement** (befriending strangers).” (Shah, 2017, p. 51)*

What is interesting about Shah's argument is that the biographical distance between the participating observer and the actors in the observed field is not a disadvantage but rather makes it possible to reflect on one's own perspective and assumptions as well as those of the people in the field. In decolonial participant observation, the focus is not on exposing or stereotyping, but instead on describing and analysing different processes. The decisive factor here is constant feedback with the experts in the field in order to develop a mutual, holistic understanding despite the differences in the situation, which creates a form of intimacy:

*“Let us turn first to the relationship between intimacy and estrangement. Why is it important to work with people who you feel at first sufficiently alienated from? It is nothing to do with exoticism or cultural relativism (the stereotypes that are sometimes lazily attributed to anthropologists) but it marks the very basis of our ability to contribute new insights. Working with people who are similar to us or have the same histories as we do risks us perpetuating what most other disciplines do—that is, to work from theoretical premises that ultimately only demonstrate their **own assumptions**.” (Shah, 2017, p. 51)*

Participant observation supports the process of perceiving colonial hierarchies (also in research constellations) through continuous reflection on different roles. Decolonial practice comes into play as soon as an attempt is made to include the observed field within the gaining of knowledge actively, and at the same time to question and resettle one's own observations. In this way, not only is the colonial subject-object constellation (observing subject, observed object) disrupted, but marginalised and subaltern voices can also have their say in a long-term relationship and discussion, and hierarchies can be addressed. For example, in the field of

cultural literacy and arts education, pupils and their art practices, as well as those of the respective communities that are not included in the canon of music lessons (e.g., practices beyond so-called high culture), can be included to a greater extent.

The continuous endeavour to jointly name colonial hierarchies, perceive the different voices in the field of observations, and to deconstruct them to the extent that repressed voices and art practices are included in the canon, the self-reflection of the observers stays at the core for ensuring the critical and inclusive role of the cultural literacy research.

*“Aligned with this perspective, researchers must consciously take part in reflexive engagement of their assumptions and interpretations, in the quest to work from an anti-colonial perspective. We reiterate that as **qualitative researchers**, committing to the use of decolonizing methodologies in our work should be combined with solidarity with oppressed populations in their everyday struggle against colonial forces.” (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021, p. 6)*

This applies not only to qualitative research but to research designs in general. After the applications, the following subchapter will turn to the self-reflection of the researcher’s own research history for this reason.

Empirical Methods

Which empirical methods are applied? Are my methods extractive or participatory?



Collection of Data

Which types of data are collected?



Is the data sensitive? Who has access to the collected data?





How is data ownership defined/respected?



How are findings returned or used beyond the academic settings?

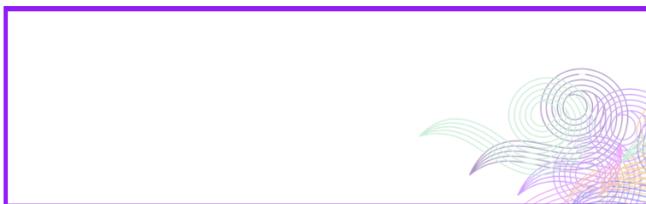


Critical Reflection on Methodology

Which cultural (Western) norms are assumed?



Which assumptions might reduce cultural diversity and literacy?



Supplementing Quantitative Methods

How can knowledge that cannot be linguistically categorised be quantified?



How can opinions that move beyond polarised yes/no patterns be collected?



How can different understandings of supposedly 'clear' categories be addressed in quantitative studies?



Qualitative Methods

How can the 'safe space' of the 'interview' be designed?



Which aspects play a role (language, body, art, etc.), who and which expertise should be involved in advance?



Which cultural contexts play a role? How can these be ‘inquired’ and reflected upon?



Should the interview take place in a specific native language with a translator?



1.3.4 Reflection of One’s Own Research History (Alperen Kalay & Julius Heinicke)

Self-reflection on one’s research history stays at the core of one’s decolonial journey. Critical reflexivity in decolonial research practices, echoed as 'unlearn one's privilege' or to 'unlearn one's learning, to question regressive hierarchies (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012; Porter, 2004).

“Exercising critical reflexivity is a key approach to decolonizing research. Critical reflexivity is powerful for examining researchers’ epistemological assumptions, their situatedness with respect to the research, and crucial in addressing power dynamics in research. Epistemological assumptions frame the way one views the world, how one organizes oneself in it, what questions one poses, as well as what answers one looks for. Engaging in critical reflexivity extends beyond ‘confessions of privilege’ (Lockard, 2016, p. 2).” (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021, p. 3)

To obtain the transformative potential of the decolonial journey, while going through the reflection tables, one should keep in mind to ask postcolonial (reflective) perspectives. One could ask the question: how do engage in a decolonial way? As one should realise that decolonisation is an ongoing process, where the researchers should be aware of approaches (privilege, positionality...).

“We are aware that many Western scholars working with colonised and marginalised communities are increasingly criticised for succumbing to ‘innocent colonialism’ that is falsely represented as ‘solidarity’, for arguing that they are engaging in processes of decolonisation while their work is not really connected to the needs and interests of the communities and even for using research to reproduce their own positions of privilege (Tuck & Yang, 2012 ; see also Dey, 2018; Tuck & Fine, 2007, 2014 [sic]; Simpson, 2017; Smith, 2012).” (Seppälä, Sarantou & Miettinen, 2021, p. 5)

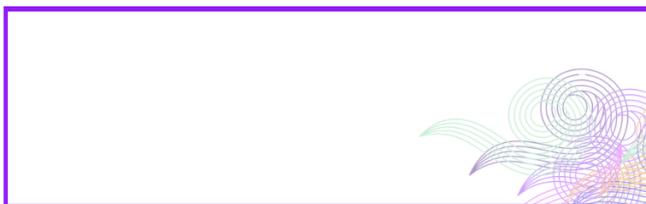
As it is highlighted in the above text (Seppälä, et al., 2021), approaches to “solidarity” in research practices are a challenging context as it can be quickly interpreted as tokenism. Ownership of the data/knowledge should be prioritised by the researcher. Indigenous researcher Kathleen Absolon on *Wholistic & Ethical Social Inclusion*, explain in her text:

“Nothing about us without us’ is clear in meaning and intent toward inclusion. Agendas that are rooted in equality, social justice and respect for diversity will create fertile ground for social inclusion in addressing matters of spiritual, emotional, mental and social wellness at individual, community, national and allied levels.” (Absolon, 2016).

Hence, ownership, access and inclusion should be positioned at the core of decolonial data collection and participatory research practices.

Role of the Researcher and the Participants

What is the role of the researcher in this context? (Observer, facilitator, co-creator or other?)



What can collaborative/inclusive research look like?



How are participants involved?

Who is responsible for the research topics you have identified?

Who is the intended audience or beneficiary of your research?

How are you addressing power dynamics and decision-making throughout your field research, interviews?

What is considered valid knowledge within your research?

Who experiences social inclusion, cohesion, transformation as a result of your research?



What role do I play in reclaiming and transforming knowledge through my de-colonial research?



Chapter Two / Step Two. Rethinking Terms and Theories through UNESCO Concepts (Alperen Kalay)

Introduction

Since the End of the Second World War, UNESCO has been trying to develop concepts of culture and education that fit into different global contexts and support peacebuilding worldwide. For implementing a decolonial approach to cultural literacy and arts education, the UNESCO concepts, definitions, and conventions are relevant, as they were often addressed within a postcolonial frame. With the help of UNESCO content, the terms and concepts used in d@rts research could be reflected. Relevant categories such as diversity, cultural literacy, arts education, and cultural policies will feed into the debate to bring clarity to cultural literacy analysis in the d@rts project. Depending on the questions raised from UNESCO concepts, they can provide relevant systematic knowledge for the decolonial research approach.

2.1 Culture

UNESCO defined culture in 1982 in such a manner that it paved the way for further exploration of identity, diversity, and heritage dimensions, as well as the relationship between cultural education (also arts education) and cultural policies.

“... culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs; that it is culture that gives man the ability to reflect upon himself. It is culture that makes us specifically human, rational beings, endowed with a critical judgement and a sense of moral commitment. It is through culture that we discern values and make choices. It is through culture that man expresses himself, becomes aware of himself, recognizes his incompleteness, questions his own achievements, seeks untiringly for new meanings and creates works through which he transcends his limitations.” (UNESCO, 1982, p. 1)

One can refer to the 1982 definition of culture as a fundamental milestone in discourse, as it acknowledges a pluralistic, multi-perspective understanding of culture. Yet, there have been many criticisms over the years in academia that have implicated UNESCO’s definition of culture as non-universalistic, which implies but a cultural relativism that has shifted away from “Bildung” to heritage and ethnocentrism (Eriksen, 2001, pp. 127-130). Although the “right to culture” perspective is highlighted further in the **1982 principles on cultural identity**:

“1. Every culture represents a unique and irreplaceable body of values since each people’s traditions and forms of expression are its most effective means of demonstrating its presence in the world.

2. *The assertion of cultural identity therefore contributes to the liberation of peoples. Conversely, any form of domination constitutes a denial or an impairment of that identity.*

(...)

4. *All cultures form part of the common heritage of mankind. The cultural identity of a people is renewed and enriched through contact with the traditions and values of others. **Culture is dialogue**, the exchange of ideas and experience and the appreciation of other values and traditions; it withers and dies in isolation.*” (UNESCO, 1982, p. 2, emphasis by d@rts)

Some principles defined in the Mexico Declaration (UNESCO) emphasise safeguarding cultural identity, but also the **need for cultural dialogue**, which fosters a pluralistic understanding of culture that is still direly needed in today’s curricula and cultural policies. However, one can argue that the UNESCO principles are still far from decolonial in their current status if one depends solely on them to conduct an analysis on cultural literacy learning. Özgen explains “dialogic” in cultural analysis as:

“... dialogical presence undermines the so-called decoding relationship with intellect; it is always already corporeal, affective, relational. Bal writes, “the object, although mute, is present. This presentness matters. It is one of the defining features of cultural analysis to focus on this present quality of cultural objects, including those that came to us from the past” (“Introduction” 8). The knower is always already situated in a cultural space-time, and so is the object, no matter what. Reconsidering the relation between the knower and the object as situated and dialogical helps dismantle the universal validity as well as the hierarchical domination of the knower.” (Özgen, 2025, p. 215, underlined by d@rts)

Subjectivity remains at the core of reconceptualising cultural literacy as a dialogical practice, and one’s identity is essential to the rhetoric (Lähdesmäki, 2022). But reconsidering the culture definition of UNESCO, one must pay attention to unlearning and de-othering (culturally) to achieve the dialogic and decolonial aspects of this.

Going back to the related criticism on the definition of culture above, one should also discuss **Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)** as it is referred to as a “*living heritage*” by UNESCO (2011), which emphasises the transformative and sustainable aspects of culture. UNESCO’s definition emphasises **the critical importance of ICH to intercultural dialogue, empowerment, respect, and social cohesion**, which are central to the decolonial approach in arts education and cultural literacy learning.

*“Intangible cultural heritage exists only in the **present**. The expressions of the past that are no longer practised are part of cultural history, but are not intangible cultural heritage as defined in the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. **Intangible cultural heritage is what communities today recognize as part of their cultural heritage. Therefore, it is often called “living heritage.”**” (UNESCO, 2011, p. 4, emphasised by d@rts)*

“Why is it important?”

(...)

*ICH is also vital for maintaining **cultural diversity** in the face of globalization. Understanding ICH contributes to **intercultural dialogue**, encourages mutual respect and **ensures social cohesion**. The importance of ICH is not the **cultural manifestation** itself; it lies in its significance to communities. Its value is both intangible and tangible, linked to the social and economic effects of the knowledge and skills transmitted through it.” (UNESCO, 2011, p. 4, emphasised by d@rts)*

The UNESCO document (2011) tries to highlight the aspect of temporality (or presentness) of culture, where the ownership of the particular “contemporary” culture lies within the community itself, whereas “right to culture” can be translated as the right to self-defining what ICH would mean to that particular community itself. In this sense, the concept of ICH becomes a relevant context for community-based research and a challenge to disruptions in cultural continuity, where researchers sometimes overlook the fact that even after the research process, communities and spaces continue to transform and evolve. Danilo Giglito (2021) argues that ICH is central to the continuity of cultural practices in migrant communities, although he questions:

*“While emigrating flows from culturally and geographically distinctive places can diminish the poignancy and sharpness of socio-cultural practices whose survival is relying on transmission and practical rehearsal, there is another side to be considered. **Cultural manifestations** can be reconstructed out of cultural contacts in receiving localities (Le Bot, 2011) and are ‘a major factor in the formation and consolidation of immigrant communities’ (Vukov and Matanova, 2017, 9). This suggests that ICH can be of great significance for migrant and refugee communities, their identity, sense of **cohesion**, and wellbeing.” (Giglito, et al., 2021, pp. 75-76, highlighted by d@rts)*

Even with its negative connotations, ICH can still be an integral part of the discourse and the research framework. Giving impetus to the “cultural manifestation”, the concept might play a role in cultural literacy discussions not because of its semantic relations, but rather due to its significance for **social cohesion, dialogue, and self-empowerment of migrant and minority communities**, and their empowerment through such concepts. Inclusive approaches to cultural literacy learning can only be achieved by raising awareness of globalisation, post-migration, decoloniality, and cultural diversity in local spaces. Redefining and reconceptualising the dialoguing aspect of culture, arts, and artistic practices in cultural literacy learning is the challenge ahead. Thus, interpreting intercultural dialogue in field research and engagement with diverse communities requires further attention. The following 2005 concept explores various aspects of diversity and interculturality, providing some answers in this regard.



2.2 Cultural Literacy and Interculturality

2.2.1 Cultural Diversity and Interculturality (UNESCO, 2005)

UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO, 2005) emphasises the fundamental role of education in protecting and promoting cultural diversity. Cultural literacy and arts education are not directly quoted but are interlinked to the very concepts of d@rts, such as equity, tolerance or social justice. The convention also mentions **linguistic diversity**, which is defined as a fundamental element of cultural diversity that is substantial to inclusive arts education as well as post-migration society challenges.

“Cultural Diversity refers to the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression. These expressions are passed on within and among groups and societies. Cultural diversity is made manifest not only through the varied ways in which the cultural heritage of humanity is expressed, augmented and transmitted through the variety of cultural expressions, but also through diverse modes of artistic creation, production, dissemination, distribution, and enjoyment, whatever the means and technologies used.” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 4).

“Interculturality refers to the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 5)

“7. Principle of equitable access

Equitable access to a rich and diversified range of cultural expressions from all over the world and access of cultures to the means of expressions and dissemination constitute important elements for enhancing cultural diversity and encouraging mutual understanding” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 3)

Equity and equal representation that d@rts seeks to achieve in classroom contexts are linked to the 2005 convention, although minority perspectives are not taken into account properly. Cultural diversity and interculturality-related concepts can only be achieved when the researcher thoroughly recognises minority voices in all their aspects.

*“(e) to promote respect for the diversity of cultural expressions and raise awareness of its value at the **local, national and international levels**;*“(UNESCO, 2005, p. 3 emphasised by d@rts)

One of the 2005 Convention objectives highlighted “*to promote respect*” at local levels, which gave impetus to the locality aspect of cultural diversity. Although the 2005 Convention is highly relevant to the cultural literacy discourse, the concept as a standalone is lacking crucial points (such as inclusion and cohesion) to address the gaps for more inclusive arts education and policies.

2.2.2 Cultural Diversity and Education

Non-formal education has been an integral part of education, especially for the inclusion of indigenous, minority, and marginalised communities, as these groups are mostly forgotten or excluded from the national curricula. UNESCO publication *Investigating in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue* (2009) emphasises the dire need to reconsider cultural dimensions in education. Arts education in this context is central to achieving social cohesion and inclusion through its interlink to cultural diversity. One should always consider cultural diversity a priority in developing curricula:

“In education, integration of the cultural dimension makes for greater relevance of educational methods and contents. The cultural dimension contributes to the full realization of the right to education and the diversification of forms of learning, including out-of-school learning, ensuring that no group in society (e.g. indigenous minorities, vulnerable groups) is overlooked. If cultural diversity is not taken into account, education cannot fulfil its role of learning to live together. Consequently, the development of intercultural competencies that are conducive to dialogue between cultures and civilizations should be an educational priority.” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 32)

The implications of cultural diversity and representation in education have become increasingly evident for public policies to take into account, as cultural diversity is defined as central to the role of education in society (2009). However, the trend on diversity and inclusion became only clearer in 2013 through the *Intercultural Competences* framework, where the concepts will be open for redefinition and tailoring in this framework. Intercultural Competences could play a central role in developing a common understanding of cultural literacy and cultural diversity but also in preserving indigenous rights, as well as the inclusion of native languages or multilingualism (linguistic diversity) and their critical role in shaping curricula.

2.2.3 Intercultural and Multilingual Competences / Cultural Competences

Intercultural Competences in 2013 (UNESCO) emphasises again the aspects of **linguistic and cultural diversity** in increasingly diverse contemporary societies. The framework is particularly interesting in decolonial contexts, as it also touches on issues such as othering, ghettoisation, cultural appropriation and belonging (pp. 5-6). Cultural literacy and inclusive arts education can address these socio-political challenges if intercultural competencies are taken into account. The document highlights the importance of cultural literacy as part of *intercultural competences*, and both **non-formal and formal education** have been recognised in their relevance. One can review intercultural competencies as a key component of this framework since these concepts are well-defined and directly relate to the d@rts context. D@rts asserts the importance of these competencies in arts education, curricula and policies as well.



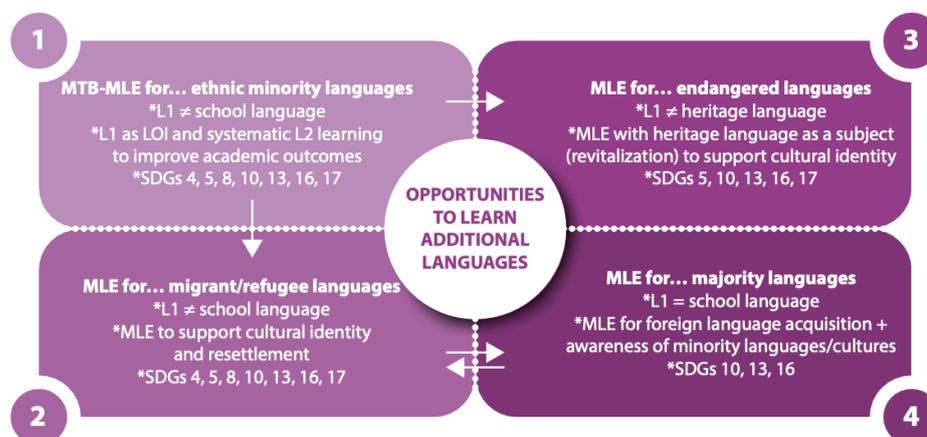
*“Intercultural competences are abilities to adeptly navigate complex environments marked by a growing diversity of peoples, cultures and lifestyles, in other terms, abilities to perform ‘effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are **linguistically and culturally** different from oneself’ (Fantini and Tirmizi, 2006). Schools are a central place to nurture such skills and abilities, as was underlined by UNESCO in a previous publication, *Guidelines on Intercultural Education* (UNESCO, 2006b). Nevertheless, given their relevance for social and political life, the scope of intercultural competences is much wider than formal education.*

*This idea was further developed in the UNESCO World Report *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue* (UNESCO, 2009): ‘it is a new kind of **literacy**, on a par with the importance of reading and writing skills or numeracy: **cultural literacy** has become the lifeline for today’s world, a fundamental resource for harnessing the multiple venues education can take (from **family and tradition** to the media, both old and new, and to informal groups and activities) and an indispensable tool for transcending the clash of ignorances. **It can be seen as part of a broad toolkit of worldviews, attitudes and competences that young people acquire for their life-long journey.**’” (UNESCO, 2013, p. 5 highlighted by d@rts)*

The 2013 competences are one of the very few UNESCO documents that mention **cultural literacy**, which makes it relevant to d@rt contexts for the reason that it discusses the formal and non-formal education together, highlighting the role of family, traditions, and backgrounds, which policies and curricula do not take into account enough. Languages being at the core of heritages, identities, traditions, and education, the curricula and policies must also include support for minority and endangered languages as part of the cultural and linguistic diversity. Practitioners in arts education could ask the following questions: Does the repertoire include a piece in everybody else's language in the room? How do I know that everybody is represented in the curriculum? How can I avoid cultural appropriation in the classroom?

Rethinking inclusion and cohesion within the context of linguistic diversity from the UNESCO perspective could support the design of more inclusive curricula. UNESCO defines multilingual education as part of supporting cultural identity and marking many SDGs as part of addressing multilingual education (MLE).

Figure 3 | The four contexts of multilingual education



Source: UNESCO and Bruno Maurer

(UNESCO, 2025a, p. 25)

UNESCO defines language as part of diversity, heritage and cultural Identity. Speaking from a decolonial perspective, one should consider minority and indigenous languages and knowledges in arts education as a priority. Does a “one size fits all” national curriculum really work for today’s diverse societies? Can a more local approach to curricula actually make way for more heterogeneous societies? Local communities might need local responses to ensure inclusivity in arts education. Rethinking inclusion and cohesion through postcolonial lenses in reshaping our curricula, intercultural competences can help rethink these processes as well.

“Acquiring intercultural competences is a thrilling challenge since no one is, naturally, called upon to understand the values of others”. (UNESCO, 2013, p. 5)

2.2.4 Intercultural Dialogue

As multilingual and intercultural concepts are mentioned in their significance for education and literacy, the question of how these concepts could be used in classroom realities remains. One concept developed and discussed by UNESCO is “intercultural dialogue”. The concept, defined in 2013, places special focus on the **decolonial questions of “how”** that we have raised in the d@rts project (d@rts Bodø General assembly, 2024). When conducting research with diverse societies and communities, it is essential to adapt the intercultural dialogue concept, keeping the emphasis on the decolonial questions raised in this framework, particularly when working with communities and participants with whom researchers are not familiar with. In this sense, researchers and practitioners in arts education should always keep in mind the post-colonial methods addressed in the *first chapter* and remember that this is an ongoing (and dialogic) process.

*The complication is that **one person in an interaction cannot be interculturally competent alone** – for interaction is a process co-constructed jointly by all participants.* (UNESCO, 2013, p. 14-15, highlighted by d@rts)

The concept definition aims to promote a **dialogic**, creative, and **participatory approach**, which can be reflected in field research, particularly when addressing inclusivity aspects in community-based research.

*“Intercultural dialogue specifically refers to dialogues occurring between members of different cultural groups. **Intercultural dialogue assumes that participants agree to listen to and understand multiple perspectives**, including even those held by groups or individuals with whom they disagree. As phrased by UNESCO, intercultural dialogue encourages readiness to question well-established value-based certainties by bringing reason, emotion and creativity into play in order to find new shared understandings. By doing so, it goes far beyond mere negotiation, where mainly political, economic and geo-political interests are at stake. It is a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect.*

(...)

*Although common usage refers to cultures interacting, or holding dialogues, it is actually individuals who interact and **who hold intercultural dialogues, not the cultures themselves; similarly, it is individuals who manage their interactions more or less interculturally competently.** (...) If together participants manage well, then together they have been interculturally competent; if not, then it is simply inaccurate to say one of them was competent and the other incompetent; rather, all must admit that together they were incompetent. This notion of co-construction, of jointly making our interactions with others, rests at the heart of any intercultural encounter. (UNESCO, 2013, p. 14-15, highlighted by d@rts)*

Interculturality posits with dialogue in its semantics. Sharing, hearing and questioning one's position is a key component to successful intercultural dialogue and decolonial approaches.

"In a culturally diverse world, it is necessary to develop new approaches to intercultural dialogue, beyond the limitations of the 'dialogue among civilizations' paradigm. The prerequisites include consideration of the ways in which cultures relate to one another, awareness of cultural commonalities and shared goals, and identification of the challenges to be met in reconciling cultural differences." (UNESCO, 2009, p. 9)

Intercultural dialogue, when introduced into classroom contexts or community-based research, should provide a safe space for dialogue and deconstruct cultural assumptions and appropriations. Engaging fully in dialogue through acknowledging different ecologies of knowledge, values, cultural competences, and creative expressions, however, is a step that one should self-define in the decolonial framework.

Addressing/Self-questioning such Questions during the Research might help:

What practices can be implemented to facilitate genuine intercultural dialogue?



How do I dialogue without my hierarchical role?





The following chapters will combine interculturality with “literacy” and arts education, as well as social cohesion and inclusion through UNESCO references to deepen our collective understanding.

2.2.5 Intercultural Literacy

Analysing “intercultural” as a somewhat replacement or an alternative adoption of the term cultural literacy by UNESCO might bring clarity to the notion of cultural literacy learning. **Intercultural Literacy**, in its semantic distinction from cultural literacy in UNESCO contexts, is the understanding of or navigating cross-cultural settings and how one dialogues or communicates with different forms of culture, knowledge, and people. Milena Dragičević Šešić and Sanjin Dragojević in 2011 defined intercultural literacy as one of the core concepts in practising intercultural competences.

“Intercultural literacy, which might be glossed as all the knowledge and skills necessary to the practice of intercultural competences, has become an essential tool for modern life, parallel to the development of information literacy, or media literacy.” (Dragičević Šešić & Dragojević, 2011)

Broader understanding of intercultural literacy, defined by Šešić and Dragojević at the end, may not be able to address d@rts specific issues, but could be a starting point for reconceptualising the cultural literacy understanding through intercultural competences.

“The particular value of this phrasing is that, just as with these other forms of literacy, some active teaching or modeling must occur, though it need not occur as part of formal education. Shared experiences, conversations, and storytelling are among the ways in which members of a diverse group can come to understand one another.” (UNESCO, 2013, p. 17)

Shared experiences, conversations, and storytelling, as mentioned above, which are also acknowledged in this research framework, could be the notion where one clearly sees the linkage between decolonial approaches, intercultural dialogue, and how we define cultural literacy as a dialogic practice through our adoption of postcolonial, UNESCO, and d@rts triangle frame of reference.

The understanding of **cultural literacy** in the UNESCO (2013) context clearly interweaves with other concepts, which are defined in the intercultural competences. Intercultural dialogue, ICH, cultural diversity, and linguistic diversity are just a few of them that should be included in the discourse on cultural literacy understanding. In a nutshell, cultural literacy from the UNESCO perspective relates to a broader conceptualisation, which values a pluralistic, multiperspective approach that gives impetus to intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity.

*“The UNESCO World Report Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue makes it clear how crucial it is to acquire a **cultural literacy** to understand cultures in their creative diversity: (...) **The advocacy for linguistic and cultural diversity within education** is an awareness-raising campaign in need of holistic and official recognition at the highest possible levels in order to convince all parties of its benefits and relevance’ (UNESCO, 2009, p. 118). “(UNESCO, 2013, pp. 8-9, highlighted by d@rts)*

The distinction given to cultural literacy, which separates it from intercultural contexts, is the greater emphasis that it puts on education and policy levels. It also highlights the importance of young people, which can be discussed in educational concepts. The open question, though, still remains whether the cultural literacy concept can be replaced by intercultural literacy or intercultural competencies. Perhaps, another perspective that intertwines with the d@rts research, UNESCO’s arts education understanding could support the combination of such approaches.

2.3 Arts Education 2.0: Rethinking Concepts of Cultural Literacy and Intercultural Competence, Social Cohesion & Inclusion

To bring clarity to the notion of cultural literacy, the above sub-chapters particularly discussed relevant UNESCO publications and their dialogic aspects. The aim of this chapter is the re-conceptualisation of such concepts to develop a collective understanding of our approaches and the role of arts education.

UNESCO acknowledges the need for a global educational system that can encompass diverse understandings, knowledge, and perspectives, where the educational settings and the spaces play an immense role. The approach in arts education is similar to “literacy” as it emphasises the importance of non-formal and formal educational settings. UNESCO made similar recommendations for embedding indigenous, minority aspects in arts educational settings.

“In many countries both tangible and intangible aspects of cultures are being lost because they are not valued in the education system or are not being transmitted to future generations. There is therefore a clear need for education systems to incorporate and transmit cultural knowledge and expressions. This can be achieved through Arts Education, in both formal and non-formal educational settings.” (UNESCO, 2006a, p. 6 highlighted by d@rts)

UNESCO calls for an inclusive approach in education in another publication (UNESCO, 2020):

“Engage in meaningful consultation with communities and parents: Inclusion cannot be enforced from above. Parents may hold discriminatory beliefs about gender, disability, ethnicity, race or religion. Some 15% of parents in Germany and 59% in Hong Kong, China, feared that children with disabilities disrupted others’ learning. Fixed beliefs may mean families with choice avoid disadvantaged local schools or



mainstream schools if they feel these do not cater for their children's needs. In Australia's Queensland state, 37% of students in special schools had moved from mainstream schools. Governments should open space for communities to voice their preferences as equals in the design of policies on inclusion in education." (UNESCO, 2020, p. 21)

The 2020 paper provides relevant input for educational policies, as it emphasises a crucial point regarding aspects of disability, the disadvantages of social inclusion and cohesion, and the tendencies and reluctances of parents towards inclusion. The status on inclusive education since the definition of culture in 1982, and the 2005 Convention where the inclusion, cohesion as well as emphasis on minority and indigenous voices were not addressed to their fair extend, there is a clear pattern in the next and final UNESCO reference that acknowledges inclusion and cohesion in education as a fundamental part of a common global goal and a human right.

Finally, an opinion paper released by UNESCO collaborating with the International Institute for Economics and Peace, revisits the 2013 intercultural dialogue and its links to **social cohesion**:

"UNESCO, in its Framework for Enabling Intercultural Dialogue, defines social cohesion as the process of building trust between communities which in turn supports collective action and cooperation, among diverse groups and individuals, in pursuit of shared objectives" (Foa, 2011; Mansouri and Elias, 2021)". (UNESCO, 2025b, p. 8)

Revisiting the quote makes it evident that intercultural dialogue is also an essential objective for achieving social cohesion in today's world, while acknowledging that this is recognised as an ongoing process and an urge of adopting decolonial, dialogic approaches in today research domain. On a final note, the UNESCO understandings stresses the need of creating intercultural dialogue, engagement, sharing, and storytelling to develop a collective understanding of the concept, of the role as a researcher, lecturer and being a part of contemporary society.

What one can understand from a half a century UNESCO journey through culture, cultural heritage, intercultural competencies, and cultural literacy is that the interpretations may change through time, and through different values within spaces and different cultures. What is left is clear in the nature of culture, that it is a transformative, ever-changing, and ongoing process that only engaging effortlessly through dialogue will prevail. Keeping in mind the decolonial questions raised in the d@rts consortium meeting in Bodø in 2024, we can only pursue the goal of constantly rethinking and striving to become (culturally) "literate" ourselves as researchers and fascinated by different cultures, knowledge systems, values and understandings.

The following applications will dive into reconceptualising and extending the concepts that the UNESCO chapter mentioned.

Application – UNESCO Terms and Concepts

Which UNESCO concepts are interesting to your research?



Define your understanding of arts education in one or two sentences:



Define your understanding culture, cultural literacy, and intercultural dialogue in one or two sentences:



Intercultural Competence Tree

Many concepts mentioned above have also been visualised by UNESCO (2013) in the “Intercultural Competence Tree”. Redefining cultural literacy through a decolonial approach allows for the revision of the Intercultural Competence Tree. For example, regional cultural concepts, such as *Ubuntu* and *Uchi Soto*, are mentioned, but one can ask whether there can be more localisation of the concepts in the future. Keeping in mind the indigenous perspectives mentioned in the *first chapter*:

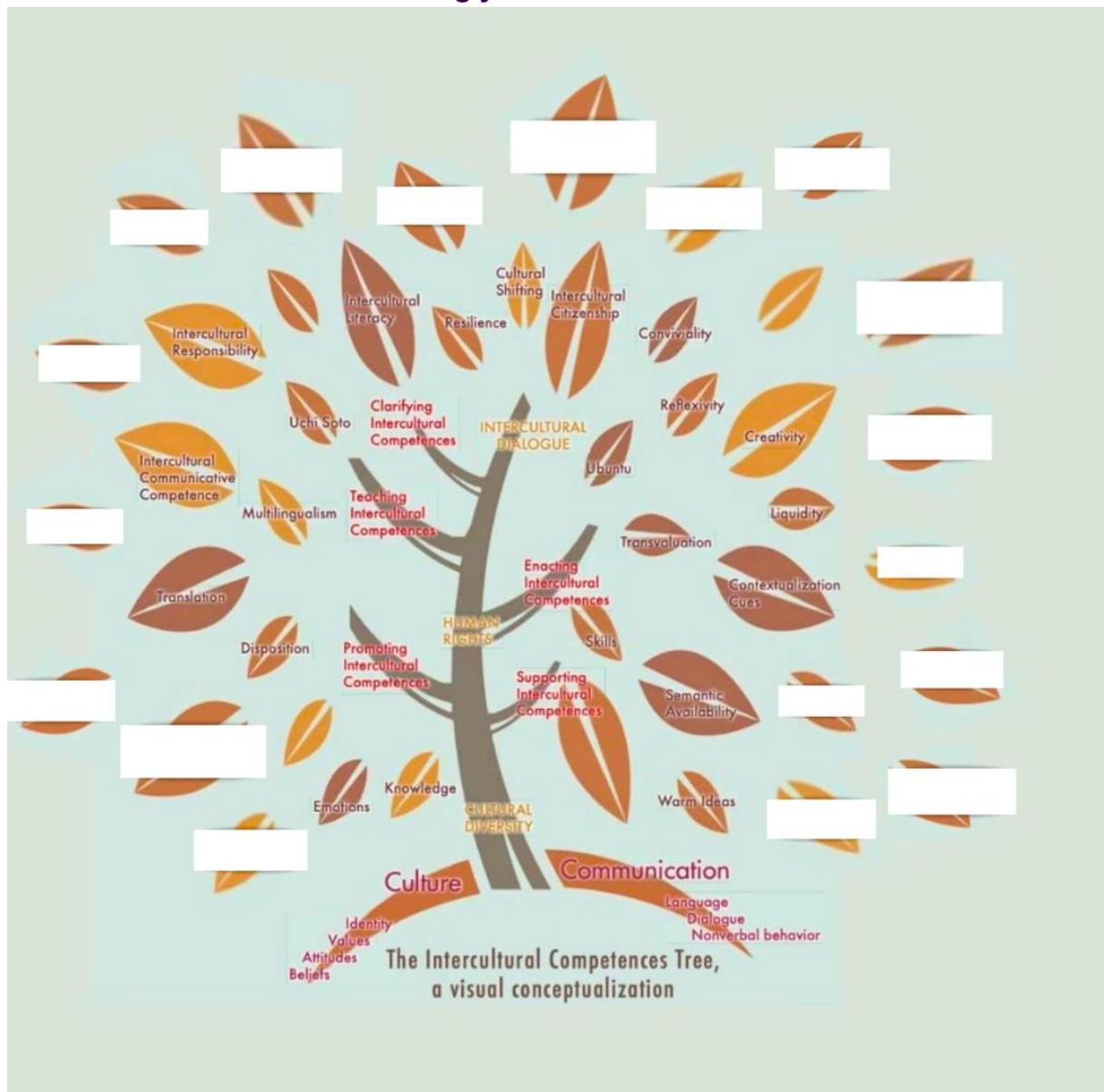
Are any of the concepts outdated? Which leaves would you use in your research?





What other concepts could there be? Is there any regional concept like “Uchi soto” or “Ubuntu” in your own region?

Please fill in the leaves accordingly.



(Intercultural competences, UNESCO, 2013 p.23)

Application - Decolonising Curriculum

In arts education programmes, songs are often taught which refer to stereotypes and racist connotations.

1.
C - a - f - f - e - e, trink nicht so viel Caf - fee!

5
2.
Nicht für Kinder ist der Tür - ken trank, schwächt die Nerven, macht dich blass und krank.

9
3.
Sei doch kein Mu - sel - mann. der ihn nicht las - sen kann!

Carl Gottlieb Hering, 1846

Lieder-Archiv. (n.d.). *caffee Notenblatt*. Alojado Publishing (Translated below by d@rts)



Coffee
Don't drink coffee, coffee!
Turkish potion is not for children,
weakens the nerves, makes you pale and sick.
Don't be a muslim who can't go without it.



The song depicted above is still performed in formal arts education spaces in parts of Germany. While discussing linguistic and cultural diversity in arts education in this chapter, one should also be aware of some realities in praxis and research contexts. This application gives an example of a negative connotation that researchers might face during their field research (be that in the classroom, community, or artistic contexts).

Germany is well known as having the biggest Turkish diaspora population in the world and this song clearly imposes social disruptions and challenges social inclusion processes. How can one expect, for example, a pupil who identifies her/himself as Turkish to take part in the “inclusive” arts education? How can one deconstruct a canon with the methods? How can the researcher be aware of such sensitivities? What can we do about this?

The dialogic approach is vital to social inclusion and cohesion; however, bringing these concepts to the classroom (and to the realities) is the challenge ahead. Perhaps a song that represents values of others, a song that one could include from other languages or “consciously excluding the one above” might be the gateway to decolonising classrooms or curricula. In this case, referring to the UNESCO approaches might help us answer questions like:

How does **linguistic and cultural diversity** play a role in the curricula? How can one support the preservation of endangered languages and minority languages as a means of fostering

cultural identity and inclusion? How can one deconstruct a canon with our methods? How can one use a song that depicts racist stereotypes?

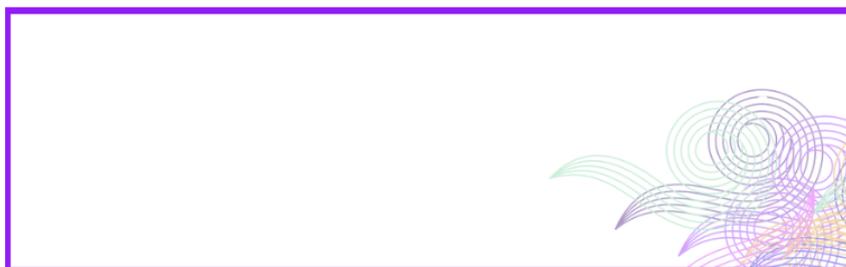
One can analyse the song origins, lyrics, and context, and discuss the origins of “coffee”, and why it has been depicted as orientalist in the classroom. Exchange views on power dynamics in the classrooms by deconstructing Eurocentrism, xenophobia, colonialism, and cultural appropriation. Perhaps one can discuss why it is problematic and how to change this with pupils, and teach actively through critical reflections.

After reviewing the critical reflections, one could ask pupils to reframe or rewrite the lyrics as part of a decolonial artistic practice.



Are there any other artistic examples in your local context that disrupt inclusivity in the classroom or field research that can be deconstructed with decolonial critical thinking?

Please share here:



Chapter Three / Step Three. D@rts Literature Review (D1.1) Which Questions are Important for the Framework? (Runa Jenssen & Kristie Mortimer)

D1.1 Synopsis (What does it mean for D1.3?)

The Literature review offered in WP1 has already built a common understanding of the interlinks between cultural literacy, intercultural competence and intercultural education. Decolonisation has been recognised and was an active part of the “process” in data collection. Limitations mentioned, such as time, access, and language barriers, are further explored in this framework (*Chapter One Methods, Chapter Two UNESCO*) as part of building on top of the d@rts systematic knowledge. The intercultural concepts, which were a significant starting point in the literature review, have been analysed further from a UNESCO point of view to provide readers with a collective understanding of these concepts. Reflective questions developed by the Literature Review team cover a vast number of self-questioning one’s decolonial methods.

Deliverable D1.1 ‘Literature Review’ provided a shared starting point for the d@rts project, aiming to gather literature across cultural literacy, arts education, and social inclusion and cohesion. The literature review as a body of literature explores four key themes – Cultural Literacy, Intercultural Competence and Education; Cultural Literacy and Policy; Role of Performing Arts in Education; and Social Cohesion and Inclusion. However, beyond these key themes, the way we approached our literature review raised important methodological and ethical questions. *What is literature? Whose voices are included or excluded? What assumptions shape how we search, select, and engage with literature?* These questions sit at the core of our methodological process which engages with a collaborative, dialogical, and autoethnographic approach and a decolonial perspective, aiming to ensure a flexible, inclusive, and critically reflective exploration of diverse perspectives and knowledges (Montuori, 2005; Paulus et al., 2008; Silverman & Rowe, 2020; Smith, 1999).

Our aim was to produce a comprehensive literature review, including Indigenous knowledges and de-/postcolonial perspectives, at the nexus of cultural literacy and performing arts education. In carrying out the review we sought to avoid Eurocentric dominance in research and show cultural sensitivity to the meanings, contexts and uses of concepts. In practical terms, this meant adopting a flexible and collaborative approach to the review, allowing for creative and contextual ways of collecting and engaging with literature (Montuori, 2005; Wyatt et al., 2018). The process was intentionally reflective. Each team member brought their own perspective and was encouraged to document how and why certain sources were chosen, and to reflect on the challenges of accessing diverse forms of knowledge (Holman Jones, 2005). These reflections were gathered and shared throughout the process, and they now sit within D1.1 not as add-ons, but as a central part of the work.

Some of the challenges we encountered—such as the strong association of the word ‘literature’ with written, Western, and academic norms—became starting points for deeper conversations. Reflection became an important aspect of the process to consider what, where and how literature was being collected, particularly in relation to a necessity for expanding the definition of literature and incorporation of diverse perspectives (Pigram et al., 2023). Reflective questions were used to guide the process, including: *What kind of literature have I collected? Whose voices and perspectives are included in the literature? Who has access to these voices and perspectives? Why does this matter?* Reflective questions such as these helped to shape the choices we made about what to include, how to write about it, and how to

be transparent about what we could not access. This way of working demonstrated how literature reviews can be more than a technical exercise. They can function as spaces to question dominant knowledge practices and to model alternative, more inclusive approaches.

Such an approach also comes with limitations, such time, language barriers, and access constraints which continue to shape what is possible. Recognising these limits openly, rather than trying to work around them invisibly, was part of the accountability we are trying to build into the project. Overall, engaging with literature, particularly within a decolonial approach, it is not just about gathering information; it is about making choices, building relationships, and recognising power. By critically reflecting on 'literature', the forms and places it exists, the voices and knowledges included/excluded, and by engaging dialogically, collaboratively, and ethically throughout the process, these approaches can help us carry the decolonial intentions of d@rts throughout the research project.

Importantly, D1.1 is a *first* step, which can guide and support practices both within and beyond the d@rts project. Within other d@rts work packages, team members can continue this relational, dialogical and reflective approach. Literature can take many forms—songs, memories, performances, policy documents, community conversations—and each team might find different ways to bring these into their work. The critical, reflective and collaborative approach can also inform the ways other researchers communicate and work. A decolonial approach to a literature review *does* something with our academic voices, perhaps unsettling them, making space for uncertainty and hopefully opens a space where a multiplicity of voices can begin to enter the literature review in a Horizon Europe project.

As a result, many questions emerged and are shared throughout D1.1 with this 'first step' in mind. The questions are intended to prompt further reflection and development in research and practice:

Cultural Literacy, Intercultural Competence and Intercultural Education

- How can we further develop understandings of cultural literacy within the partner countries and the different communities/groups of people within them?
- What might be the implications of either deciding on a set definition for use in d@rts, or maintaining an open and flexible understanding?
- Are there any assumptions underlying our work around the role of creativity in cultural literacy education?
- If developing/assessing intercultural competence (or similar) in d@rts, how might this development and assessment be carried out with a focus on the process vs product? Why?
- What does intercultural competence look like from the perspective of marginalised groups?
- How are power structures relevant to the intercultural education we might encounter in d@rts activities?
- In what way might d@rts activities allow space for both differences and similarities in intercultural education within formal, informal and non-formal contexts across different countries?
- What does intercultural and multicultural education look like beyond academic literature, in the societies and communities of different d@rts countries and target groups?

Cultural Literacy and Policy

- How can educational policies be designed and implemented to bridge the gap between the goals of cultural literacy and their practical application in diverse educational settings?

- What strategies can be employed to ensure that cultural literacy policies actively promote critical engagement with cultural differences rather than merely celebrating diversity superficially?
- What are the key challenges in aligning policy intentions with the actual practice of performing arts education, and how can these be addressed to promote more equitable access to arts education?
- How can policies ensure that the performing arts serve as a platform for marginalized communities to express their cultural identities and contribute to broader social cohesion?
- How can cultural policies be designed to more effectively include the voices and experiences of marginalized groups?
- How can educational and cultural policies work together to address systemic inequalities and promote a more inclusive society that values diverse cultural contributions?
- What frameworks are needed to ensure that cultural literacy policies are adaptable to local contexts while addressing historical and systemic inequalities?
- Who is responsible for contributing to the development of policies related to arts, education and cultural literacy? What barriers might people face in shaping these policies?

Role of Performing Arts in Education

- How can we ensure Indigenous knowledge is incorporated into our writing, art and education in a sensitive and culturally responsive way?
- In what ways might hegemony and power relations need to be navigated and dismantled beyond the literature review?
- What might embodied knowledge look like if included in a literature review?
- What resources are needed to find and share embodied knowledge for a literature review such as this one (or upcoming d@rts deliverables)?
- Why is embodied knowledge important to include in written outputs such as a literature review?
- How are socio-cultural barriers affecting the 'literature' being produced in our societies, and access to this literature?
- How could a literature review give voice and validate contributions of diverse people and their cultural expressions?
- How can 'case studies' from communities and knowledges sitting outside of academia be included in a literature review such as this?
- What lessons can be learned from international perspectives on the role of arts in fostering intercultural dialogue and community engagement?

Social Inclusion and Cohesion

- How might the origins of knowledge be questioned throughout the d@rts project in both research and practices?
- What hegemonic structures or practices might be present in within various aspects of a Horizon Europe project? (ie. Researchers, facilitators, administrators, participants, etc).
- How can arts-based initiatives be designed to not only foster social cohesion but also address and challenge the structural inequalities that contribute to social fragmentation?
- In what ways can researchers/teachers/practitioners ensure that efforts to promote social cohesion through the arts genuinely empower marginalized communities rather than perpetuating existing power dynamics?



From a researcher's point of view, is there a decolonial-postcolonial question that could have still been addressed?



Is there Literature or other “knowledge” you can add?



Chapter Four / Step Four. Analysis D1.2. Curriculum and Policy Outcomes, Which Questions are Important for the Framework? (Katja Mäkinen)

This chapter refers to the findings in policy and curriculum analysis in d@rts. In light of the findings, one may ask questions like: How can policies support the needs and concerns of communities regarding social cohesion through arts education? Do you see a resemblance to UNESCO competences or to our decolonial approaches? Is there a country that acknowledges similar decolonial approaches in policies and arts education?

D1.2. Synopsis (What does it mean for D1.3?)

The curriculum and policy analysis particularly touch on active participation as a fundamental achievement for cultural literacy learning and social inclusion. It questions the hierarchies and the involvement in designing and deciding practices/activities. This framework particularly encourages the researchers to approach these issues from postcolonial perspectives, by implementing applications which encourage active participation and improving self-reflections.

The analysis suggests more empirical studies on the practices which this framework also addresses, but also calls for a broader conception of cultural literacy as a collective competence. This can be achieved only by a realisation of the diversity of understanding and knowledge systems. Cultural Literacy can have many different meanings and perceptions both in local and global contexts. D1.3 tries to advance this “collective” understanding by the meanings of decoloniality, UNESCO concepts, and also personal reflections in field research, as the understanding of cultural literacy may differ within regional contexts and in different communities.

The next chapter particularly focuses on discovering the variety of approaches from regional perspectives.

Findings from the Policy and Curriculum Analysis and Questions for further Research

To ensure equitable opportunities for cultural participation, performing arts education should be part of lifelong learning. This is why it is important to explore if opportunities for performing arts education and cultural literacy learning are equally available for all population groups, regardless of age and any other factors.

The analysis in Deliverable 1.2 found that in designing policies and practices of performing arts education for promoting social cohesion and inclusion, it is more beneficial to take proactive measures than to retroactively resolve problems related to exclusion. A practical tool proposed in the data is cultural outreach work, which is proactive and anticipatory and offers opportunities for cultural participation to children and young people who are at risk of becoming excluded from the existing cultural services. In cultural outreach work, activities are to be produced and developed together with children and young people. Research is needed to explore proactive and anticipatory practices: who do they reach and whether participants themselves have a chance to design the goals and modes of activities in these practices.

Research also needs to pay attention to the unequal power relations in the context of cultural diversity, such as imbalance regarding various resources that influence in opportunities to produce and participate in culture. Are the marginalised groups included in decision-making and policy-making processes at all stages and how are practices of performing arts education contributing to this? In particular, we need research on systemic difficulties and intersecting economic and social disadvantages that may make the position of some population groups marginalised or vulnerable and making it difficult for them to participate in cultural literacy learning and also hampering their broader societal participation. The analysis showed that few policies and curricula discussed structural power imbalance in detail. This gap could be filled with empirical research focusing on practices of performing arts education and cultural literacy learning.

The roles of different groups and actors as well as the relations between them within practices of performing arts education and cultural literacy learning also deserve attention. It would be important to investigate whether all participants are perceived as active learners and producers of culture rather than passive recipients or vulnerable groups to be protected and safeguarded.

Since cultural literacy means ability to understand and produce meanings in culturally diverse contexts, it would be interesting to investigate how diversity is understood in the practices of cultural literacy learning. For example, how are the relations between the 'global' and the 'local' conceptualised? Can practices and discourses aimed at creating cohesion and belonging sometimes construct binaries of "our Western culture" and "other cultures", maintain subtle forms of "othering" or strengthen ethnocentric perspectives?

To enhance diversity, cohesion and inclusion, it is crucial to ask whose culture is referred to in the policies and curricula that guide the activities and cultural literacy learning. Is culture seen as relational and hybrid, being constantly constructed through exchange and cross-fertilisation or is one culture depicted as a reference point? Are various cultural hierarchies recognized? What is the role of children's culture and youth culture, for example?

The analysis showed that in the curricula, cultural literacy is mostly seen as a competence of individuals. It is crucial to explore if this is the case also in various practices of cultural literacy learning or whether they have a broader conception of cultural literacy as a collective competence spanning institutions, communities, and societies.

Cultural literacy can be understood as a transformative competence that entangles with decolonial perspective. Does performing arts education encourage cultural literacy as critical literacy that helps to create alternative knowledge, make space for disagreement as well as identify problems and actively change them?

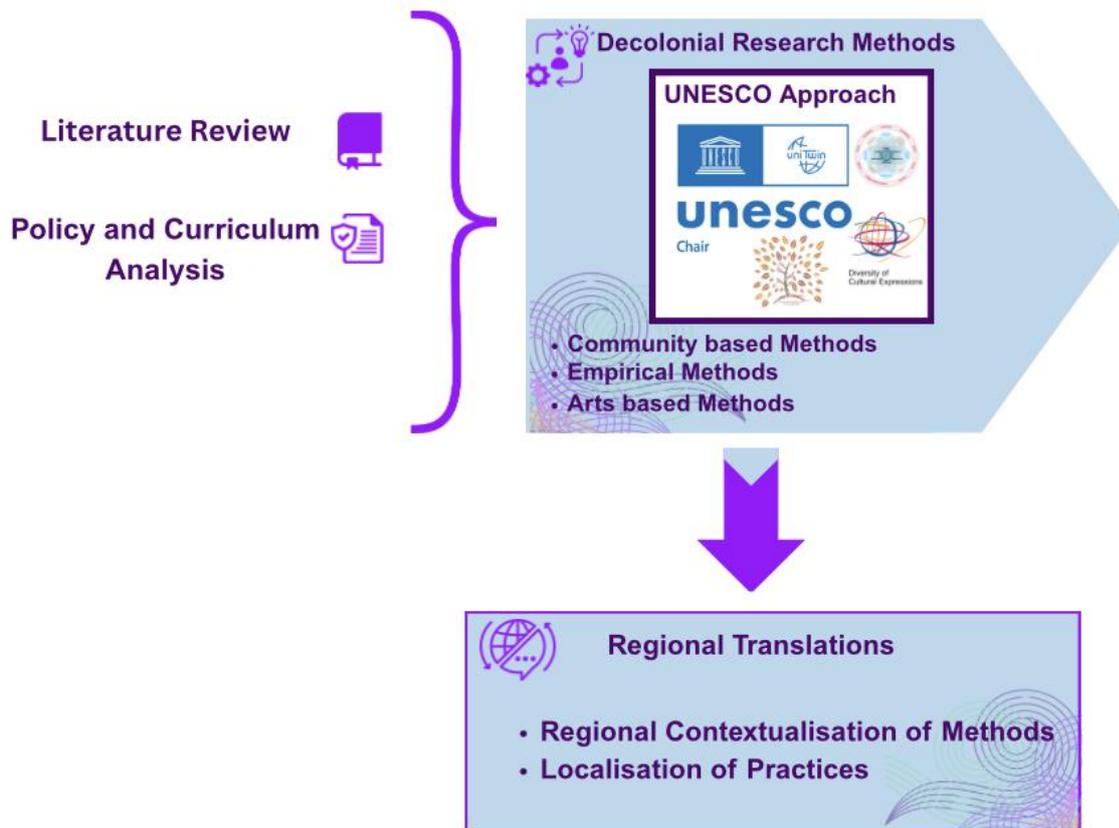
On which ways cultural literacy is defined in the curricula of your research field?



On which ways cultural diversity and social inclusion is defined in the policy papers of your research field?



Chapter Five / Step Five. Translating the Decolonial Frame to Regional Contexts



Regional differences may demand a localised tailoring to decolonial approaches. Researchers should be aware of the local meanings, and knowledges while conducting field research. The applications of the former chapters already asked to answer questions in the context of a specific research field. In this step, the framework redirects some of the questions to translate them into local-specific research contexts.

Questions referring to *Step One*. (Postcolonial Reflection and Research Methods from a Decolonial Perspective)

The *first chapter* informs on postcolonial theories, intersectional hierarchies and decolonial methods that the researchers should be aware of before going into the field research. The objective of the application is to gather information on the selection processes.

- Are there specific postcolonial theories mentioned in the first chapter that are part of your regional context?
- Which (neo)colonial challenges and intersectional hierarchies do you have to be aware of?
- Which decolonial methods could be used in your specific field research (in your local contexts)?
- The intersectionalities, hierarchies, and challenges addressed in the *first chapter*: How could they be translated into decolonial methods in the local context?
- What are the first steps to translate them to the regional contexts? (diversity of the groups, intersectionality) Please identify if you are working with specific groups:

With which people and groups do you work with?



Viewing these different groups: Which intersectional aspects might be important?



Which postcolonial theories and concepts will be useful?



Which questions of access arise?



Which postcolonial theories and concepts will be useful?



Which hierarchies and challenges become visible with the help of the postcolonial theories?



Which decolonial and arts-based methods will be important in your regional cases?



Which indigenous practices are used in your field? Can you embed them into your research methodology?



In which way do you communicate with the communities? Which languages are you using? How inclusive and transparent is our communication?



Which decolonial data collection will you use?



How will you organise your documentation?



Are there any gaps / failures / challenges concerning participatory observation?



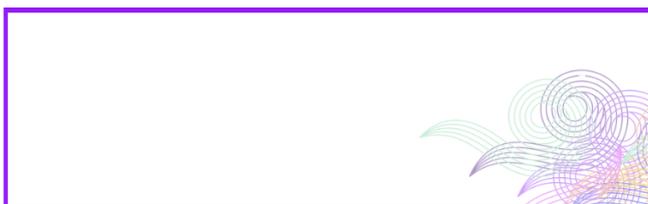
What will be the outcome/profit for the communities of your field research?



Questions referring to *Step Two*. (Rethinking Terms, Concepts and Theories)

Chapter Two provided information on UNESCO concepts, approaches, and questions related to cultural diversity, interculturalism, and cultural literacy in arts education. It provided interactive tools, such as extending the Intercultural Competence Tree, as well as case examples on deconstructing practices. Following localised questions might help define a more precise regional approach in inclusive arts education:

Which cultural concepts are essential for your local field research?



Which intercultural competencies might be helpful in your community-based field research?



Which UNESCO concepts are criticised in your regional cases?



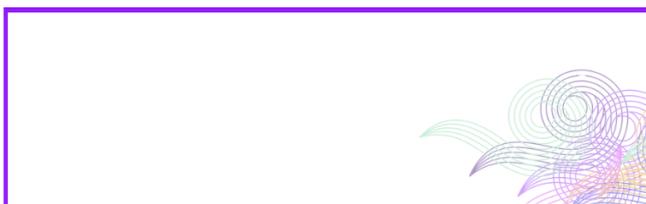
How can you strengthen intercultural dialogues through the UNESCO approach in your local context?



Questions referring to Step Three. (d@rts Literature Review (D1.1) Which Questions are Important for the Framework?)

The *third chapter* referred to the knowledge created by d@rts researchers on the literature review on relational, dialogical and reflective approaches. The research conducted here gave birth to many questions concerning decoloniality. However, a lack of indigenous sources of data also became visible.

What kind of data/knowledge is out there in the field that is not included in the literature review? How can that be captured in regional field research?



Is there other decolonial data you could collect in your local field research?





How can you ensure that indigenous knowledge serves as a source of data in local research?



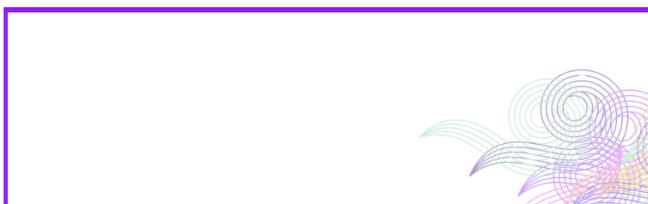
Questions referring to *Step Four*. (Analysis T1.2. Curriculum T1.3. Policy outcomes, questions? T.1.3. Which questions are Important for the Framework?)

The findings and questions raised in the curriculum and policy analysis provided a base understanding before conducting field research. It addressed local strategies and regional policies in the d@rts research countries. It is essential for researchers to understand the structural challenges they may encounter during fieldwork beforehand. Are the communities marginalised or included in the decision-making processes? Are their own concepts, knowledge, and demands are part of the curriculum and cultural literacy learning settings?

How can policies (concerning social cohesion through arts education) support the needs and questions of the communities you are going to research?



How can the policy and curriculum analysis support you in addressing local-specific research?



What counts as competence in your local community? Are there forms of indigenous knowledge that inform or challenge this?





Chapter Six / Step Six. WP7 Decolonial Game Prototype (Decolonise This), Future Practices (Sarah Foster-Sproull, Ralph Buck)

This chapter introduces a prototype game concept to engage action, communication and discussion with different actors under decolonial principles. The artistic methods and creative visualisations are used to explain the process so far. The prototype of the game will be introduced at the General Assembly of the d@rts in Chemnitz in July 2025, and will be part of the future artistic practices in T7.2.

Introduction to ‘Decolonise This ... the story so far’

We know the world through different ways of meaning making (Eisner, 1998). Dance, music, drama, art, story, carving, poetry and so on are ways of making meaning of human experience and sharing that experience. A decolonial approach to articulating knowledge acknowledges and values diverse artistic processes, symbol systems and products that provide practice-led insights into diverse people’s values, beliefs and needs (Heinicke et al., 2024). As noted at the outset of this Research Framework, we value qualitative and artistic research methods that assist our critical examination of values, assumptions and experience. We also aim to meet postcolonial challenges through the interplay of arts disciplines that aim to foster decolonial readings of this framework (Mobeen, 2025).

The following arts-led and story-led pages articulate both the theory and practice of developing an educational tool kit titled “Decolonise This”. The visual story animates a series of dialogic meetings, pedagogical processes, and critical reading of theory and experience. We have valued the storied visual format by way of foregrounding our acceptance that knowledge is created and shared in diverse forms and in diverse contexts (Foster Sproull, 2023; Buck, 2003).

Storytelling and artistic practice provide a dialogic opportunity that offer the reader of this Innovative Framework a different construct of knowledge, and in so doing honouring diverse cultures where story, art, music and so on are central to how we know our world. Further to recognising diverse means for building knowledge, the visualised storytelling illustrates how experience informs meaning-making.

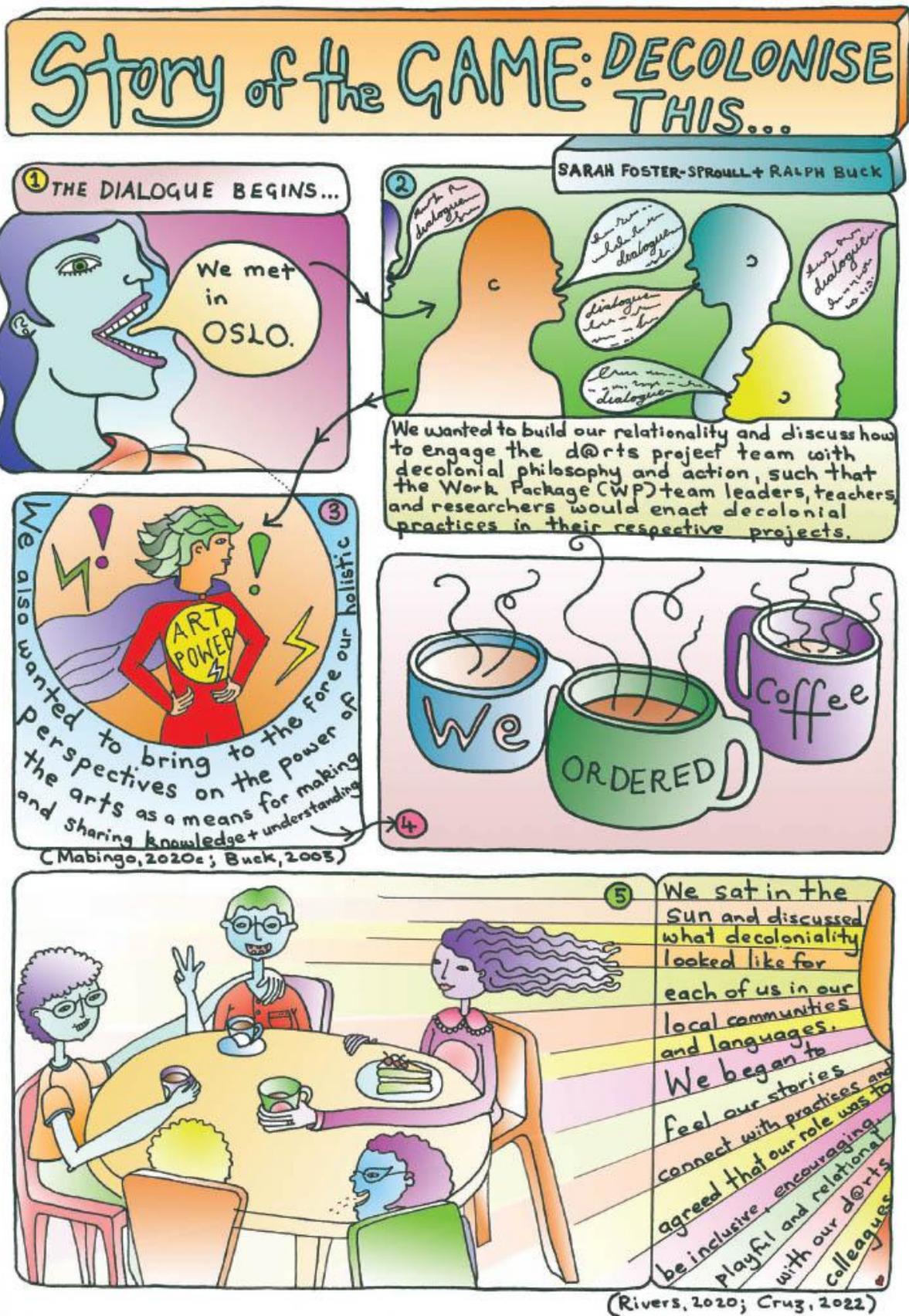


Figure 1



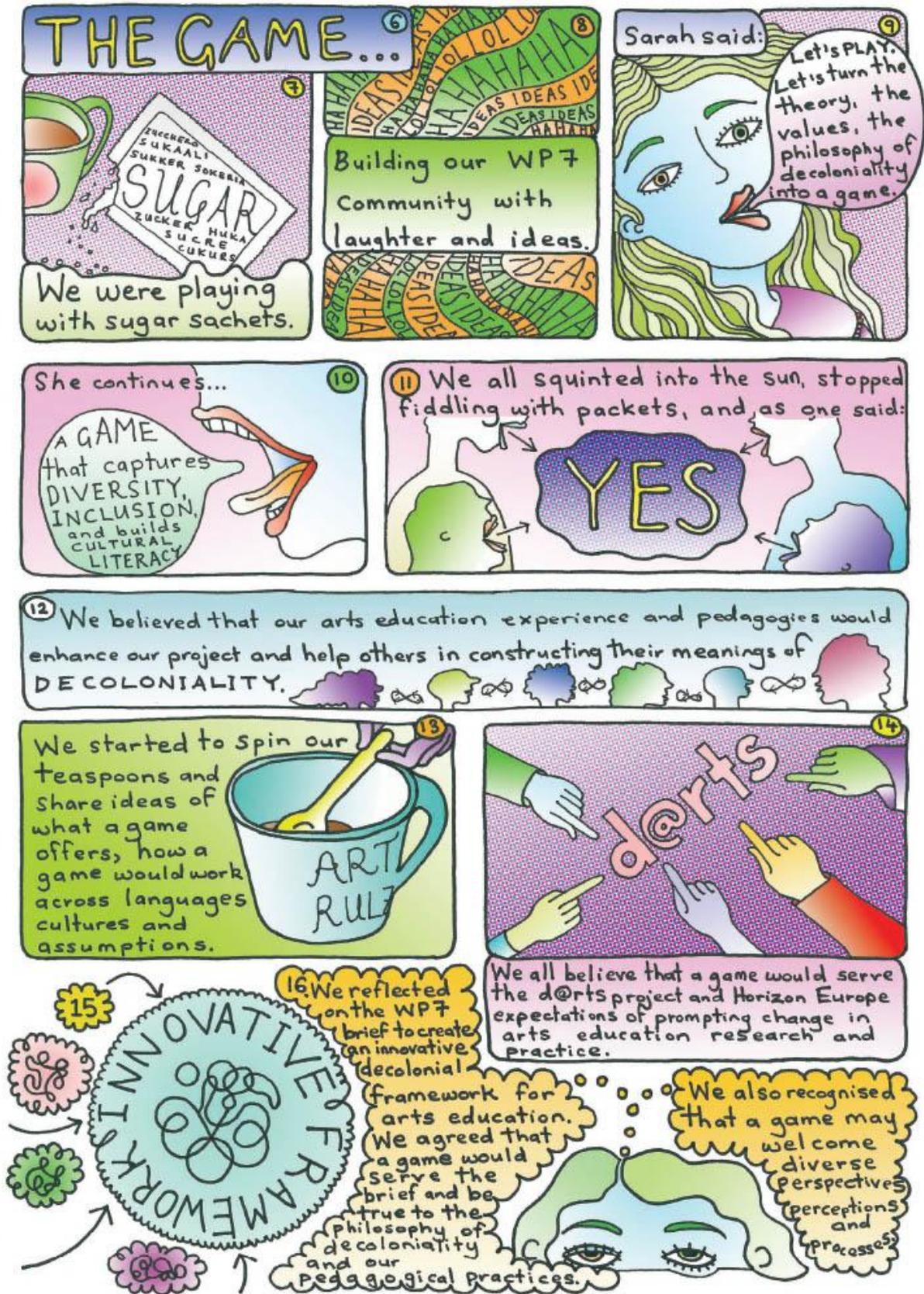


Figure 2

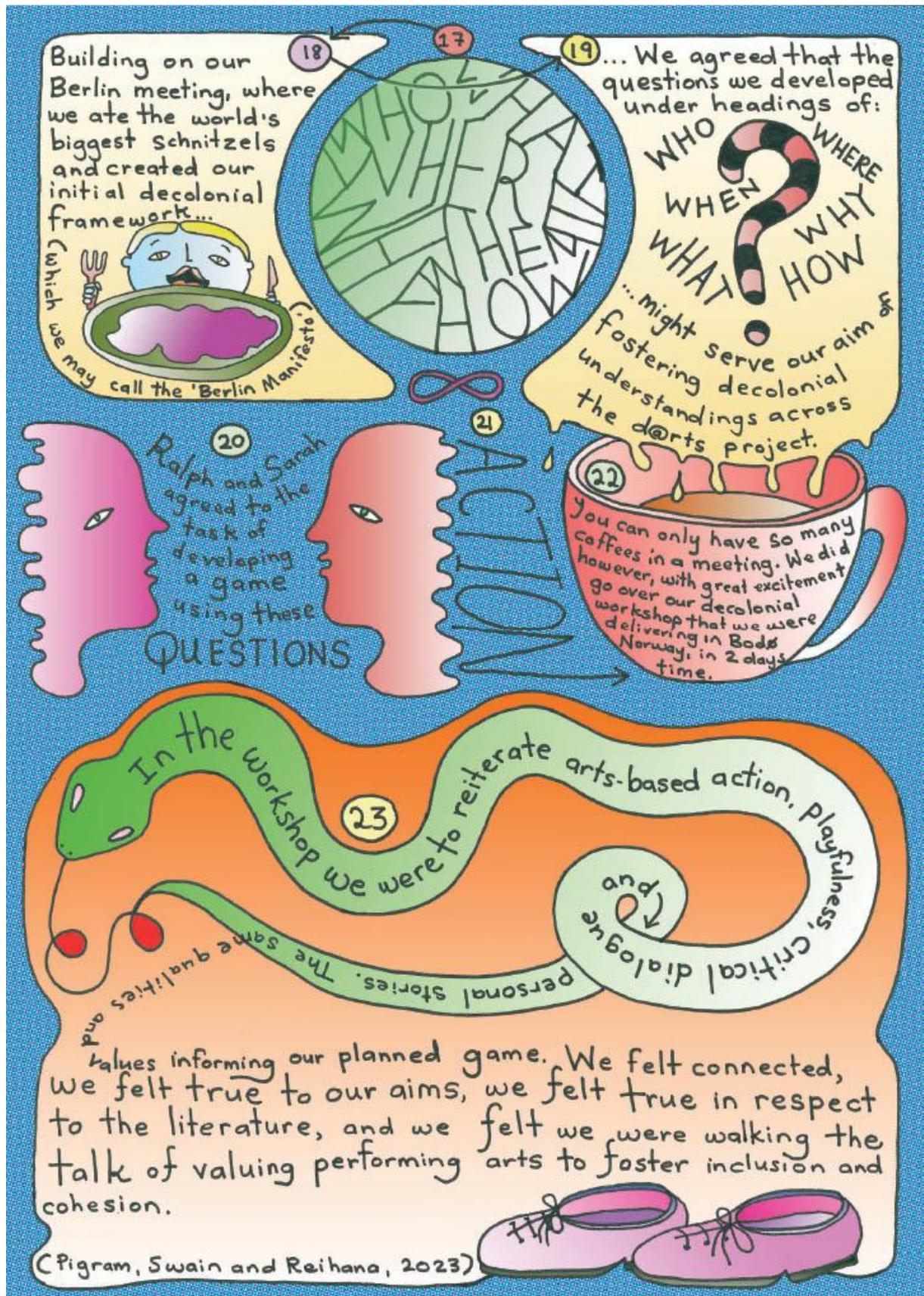


Figure 3

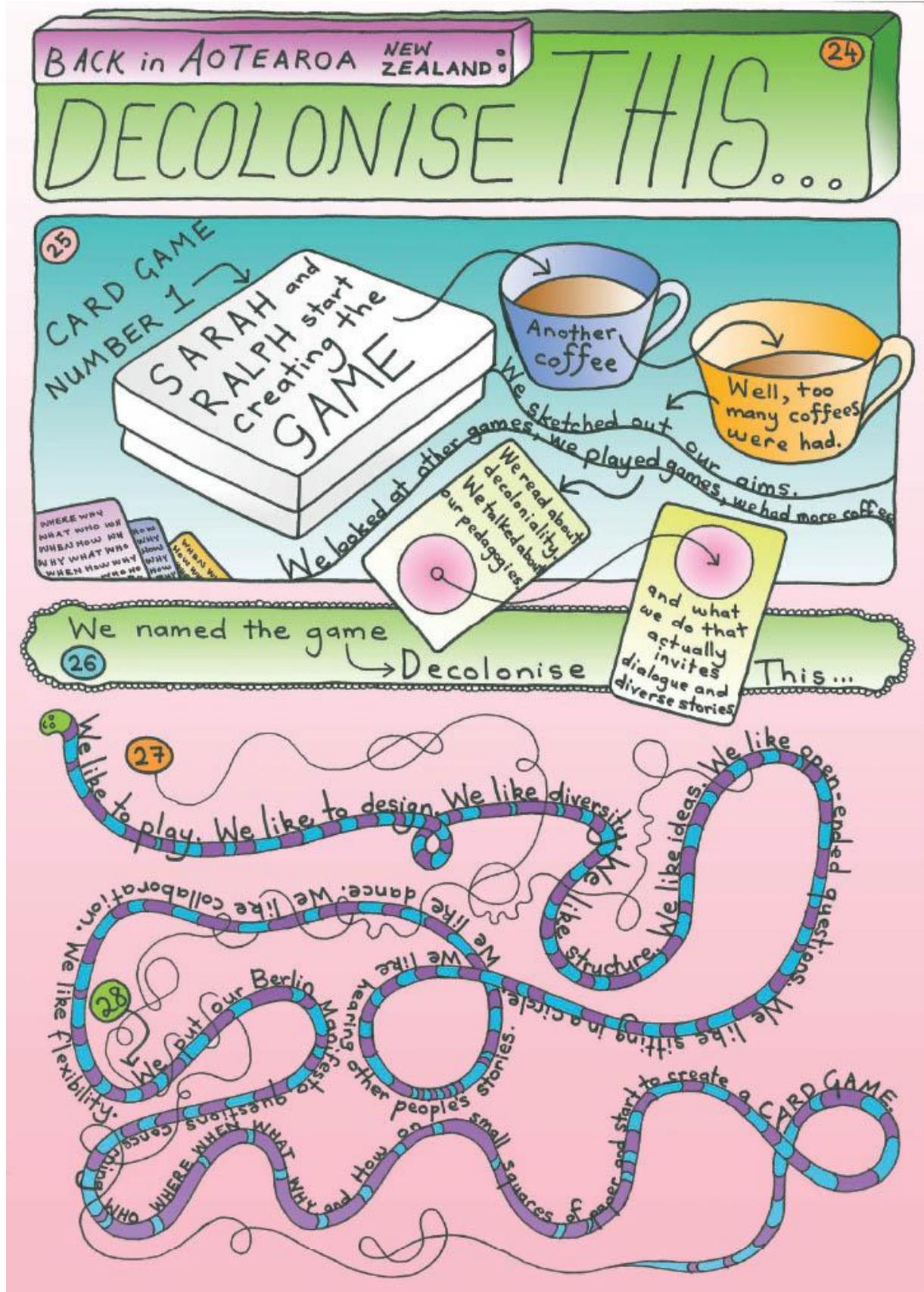


Figure 4



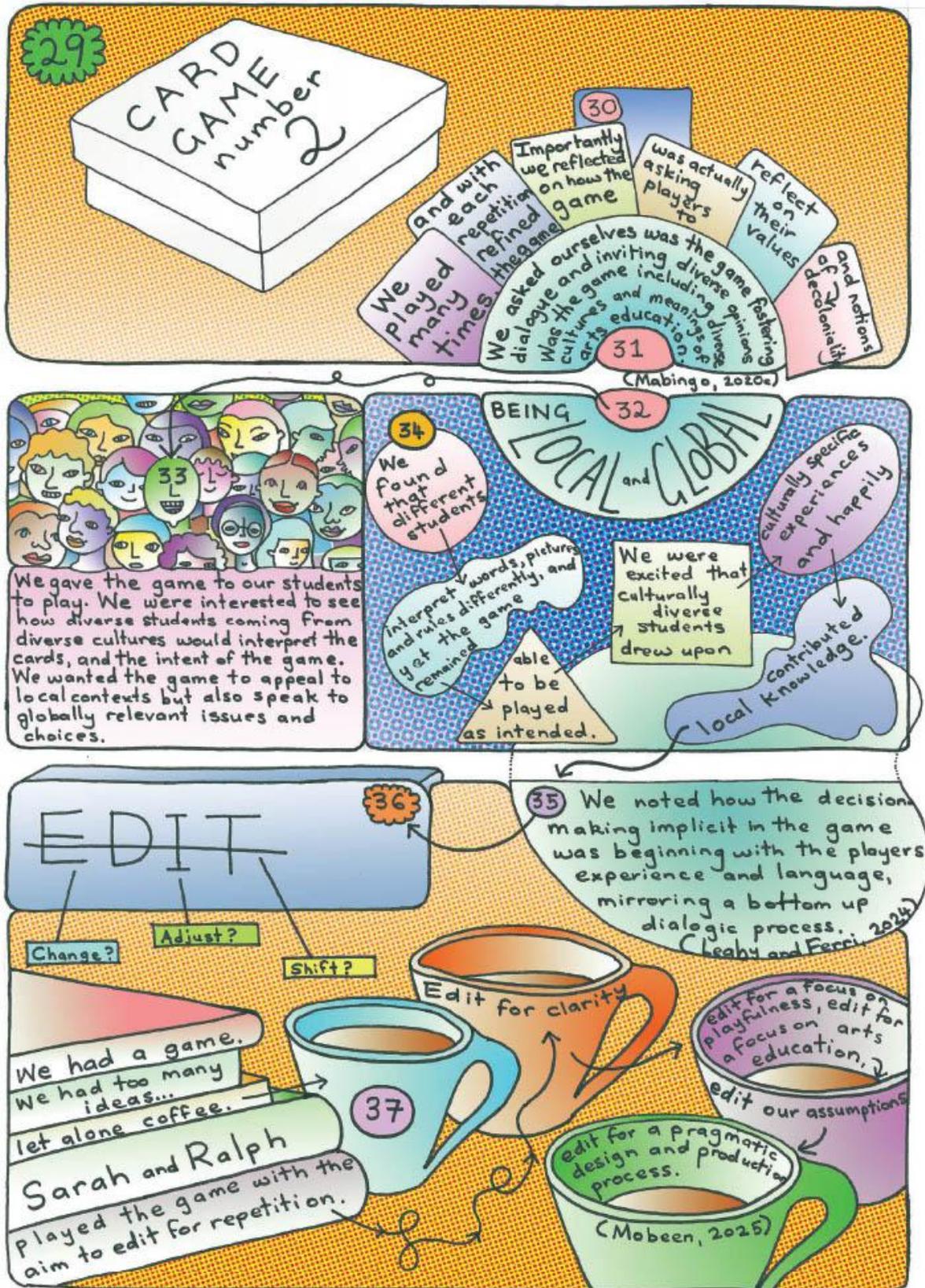


Figure 5

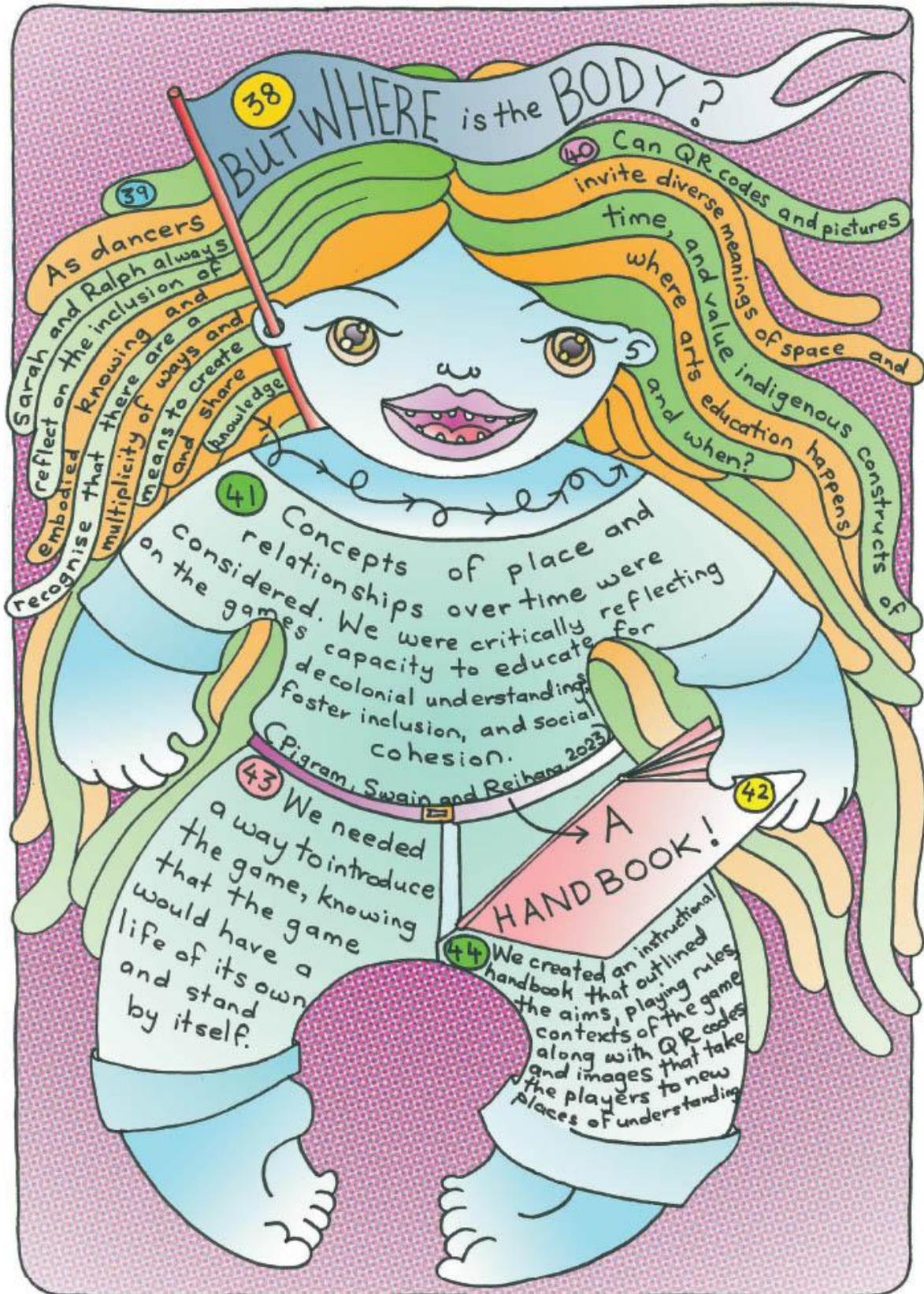


Figure 6





Figure 7



Figure 8

Chapter Seven / Step Seven. Future Practices, Digital Playground (Anita Jori)

As part of future practices, this framework also collaborates with d@rts Digital Playground. As stated in the Grant Agreement, Work Package 6 develops an interactive platform to build a digital community. The platform includes a “playground” with gamified elements that can be drivers in post-digital learning, fostering communication and creativity, and influencing motivation or participation. This interactive platform has already been implemented with the help of Collaboard, an online whiteboard platform. Collaboard (n.d.) is 100% GDPR-compliant and its data is hosted in the EU cloud with the best data control.

The main aim of this platform is to bring the project participants (researchers, artists, cultural managers, etc.) together and create a safer space where they can share ideas and thoughts on notions such as “dialogue”, “dialogic arts”, “performing arts”, “arts education”, “cultural literacy” or “multiculturalism”, etc. We believe that specific dimensions of cultural literacy can be observed and facilitated in the context of 21st-century skills and digital communication spaces, because it is precisely in these aspects of identity, class and nationality that can be more fluid than in real learning worlds.

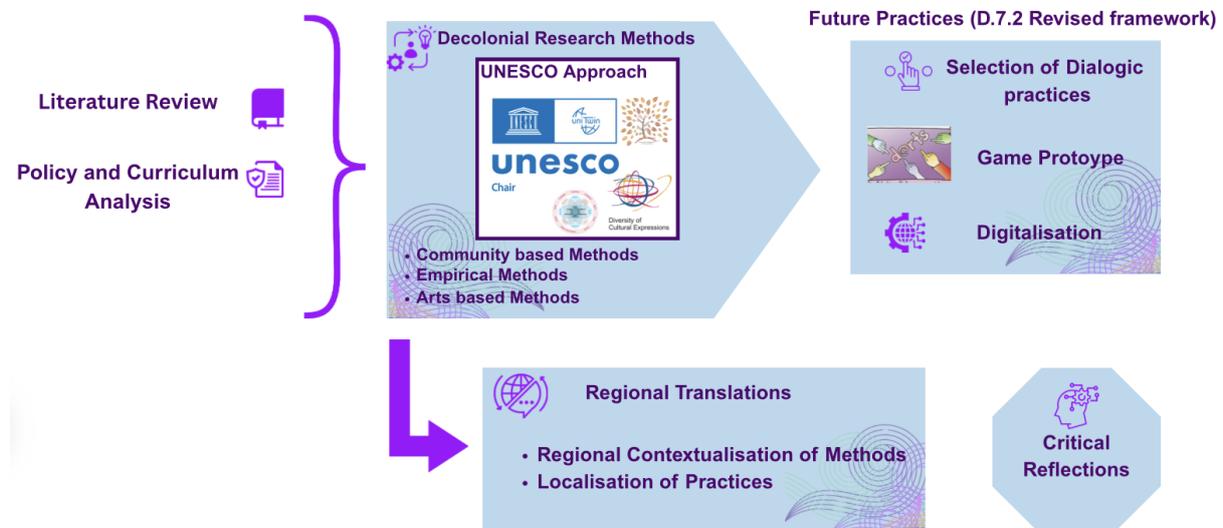
Interactive approaches in this Decolonial Framework align well with the ideas of WP6 and its digital playground. Therefore, we will further discuss the digital implementation of the decolonial practices on the d@rts Digital Playground. The surveys and applications offered in this framework are also made accessible online on the digital platform.

Participants in the digital playground will have access to explore the interactive applications from around the world, across different time zones. The digital version of the game idea (if applicable) also may decentralise Eurocentric time and space: everyone can join whenever they like and wherever they are. Players can move the cards on the platform (on the “digital table”) and leave comments, notes, or any related media that contribute to the dialogue evolving from the game. With these digital tools, players can also acquire valuable digital skills.

In what ways can the digital version of the game or applications be part of your local community research?



Chapter Eight / Step Eight. Reflecting and Re-constructing Methods and Evaluating the Decolonial Framework



This deliverable provided a pool of knowledge, featuring thematic discussions on cultural literacy learning, theoretical background, concepts, dialogical practices and examples, as well as a range of selected methods under the **decolonial research framework**. The design also conceptualised cultural literacy learning (or understanding) from a UNESCO approach by extending UNESCO concepts for d@rts purposes. The issues and decolonial challenges were central to every chapter, and the provided critical-reflection surveys will be vital to the further development of the transdisciplinary postcolonial research frame and its future application practices in D7.2. Furthermore, the dialogical(future) practices and interactive tools are also introduced as part of the framework.

This chapter is designed to facilitate self-reflection, methodological improvements, and refinement in the decolonial journey, drawing on researchers' field observations and empirical methods. How did they unfold? What were the challenges they have faced in their decolonial approach? What were the gaps and failures they encountered during their field research? Were there any reflection mechanisms against disruptions? Was there any party that is not collaborative? How did you define them? Detect them?

The decolonial journey is acknowledged as an ongoing process, and so are the unlearning and reflections that one may have encountered during this framework and the field research. The researchers' personal input, both during and after the field research, will contribute to the development of a validated version of the framework, which will inform the creation of a transdisciplinary postcolonial research frame and its application practices (future practices) in D.7.2.

If you had the chance, what would you want to rework in the decolonial framework chapters?



Which theoretical aspects would have helped you more in this framework?



Which methods can be offered in the revised version?



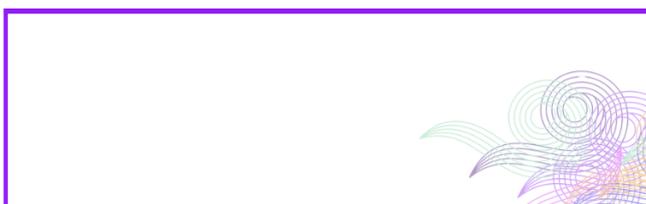
What helped you the most in your decolonial journey?



Evaluations

Please provide feedback on steps for restructuring in the validated version (D7.2)

Step One. (Postcolonial Reflections and Research Methods from a Decolonial Perspective)



Step Two. (Rethinking Terms and Theories through UNESCO Concepts)



Step Three. (d@rts Literature Review (D1.1) Which Questions are Important for the Framework?)



Step Four. (Analysis D1.2. Curriculum and Policy Outcomes, Which Questions are Important for the Framework?)



Step Five. (Translating the Decolonial Frame to Regional Contexts)



Step Six. (WP7 Decolonial Game Prototype (Decolonise This), Future Practices)



Step Seven. (Digital Playground)



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