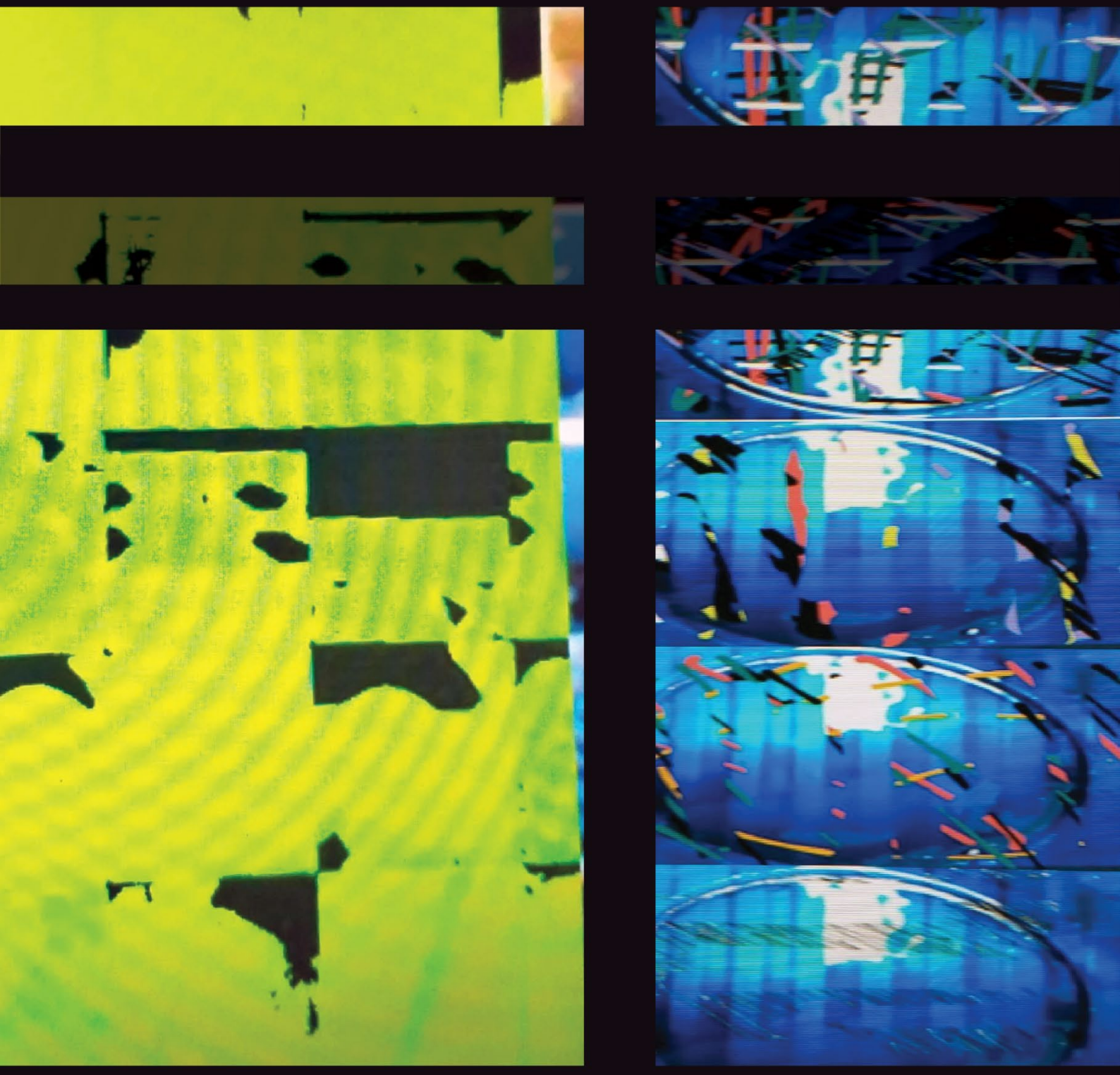

Beyond Access

Power Relations, Inclusive Pedagogies, and Participation in the Arts, Culture, and Education

Editors Anabela Moura & Ana Tudela de Sousa

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FOREWORD

Raphael Vella

In educational and cultural contexts, inclusion is a term that crops up very often, maybe too often. The question of inclusion always risks falling short of what it aims to achieve, becoming a gesture of hospitality that actually reinforces the host's authority. For to have the power to include also implies having the power to exclude. Whoever holds the key to a door can decide who is allowed in and who stays out. So, inclusion on whose terms?

Beyond Access: Power Relations, Inclusive Pedagogies and Participation in the Arts, Culture and Education acknowledges this tension. Edited by Anabela Moura and Ana Tudela, the book's openness is not only evident in its interdisciplinary approach and the presence of authors from different continents and backgrounds. Its significance lies in its multiple considerations of how participation itself is produced: in which contexts, under which conditions, by and for whom. The authors in this publication examine how different institutions and epistemic frameworks determine whose voices and which socio-linguistic communities are heard, which cultural traditions are recognised or whose experiences matter and are seen by others. By inquiring into the very methods that are used to invite the participation of others, the chapters in this publication also question the orders of knowledge that we have inherited and the institutions that are rooted in these orders. In a way, the authors question the very spaces they inhabit and work in, for academia and culture revolve around epistemic structures that are shared yet constantly need to be challenged.

This brings us to the crucial role that the arts play in any interrogation of power relations. In the arts, meanings, forms, sounds and words are persistently negotiated and renegotiated. Everything is provisional, experienced as singular events that make forms visible and sounds audible. The arts burst open the question of legitimacy; all prescriptive hierarchies and box-ticking exercises are rendered futile in a field that can only matter if the most unfamiliar objects or sounds can be allowed to enter the scene and participate in its activities. While assumptions about what counts as art stand guard at the doors to institutions like museums, galleries, schools and funding bodies, artists strive to pass illegitimate forms through their ranks. This is how the arts nurture the most fertile ground for participation, which also opens up new and unforeseen spaces for learning.

The challenge posed by this book is not restricted to making these learning spaces accessible. Its asks what might happen if these spaces become negotiable and provisional. This means that participants are not only invited inside; they also can transform what the spaces look like, sound like, feel like. The book therefore points towards an education that is not only inclusive but is willing to remake the very conditions which structure it.

PREFACE
Beyond Access: Power Relations, Inclusive Pedagogies, and Participation in the Arts, Culture, and Education

Anabela Moura
Ana Tudela de Sousa

> Teaching is not the transference of knowledge, but the creation of possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge.
> (Freire, 1996, p. 47)

Beyond Access: Power Relations, Inclusive Pedagogies and Participation in the Arts, Culture and Education addresses one of the most pressing challenges facing contemporary democratic societies: how to move beyond understandings of inclusion that equate participation with access alone, and towards a more transformative approach that interrogates and reshapes the social, cultural, educational, and institutional conditions through which meaningful participation becomes possible.

Although access to schools, museums, cultural institutions, and public spaces has expanded in many contexts, greater access has not necessarily resulted in greater inclusion. The structures, norms, and practices that organise these spaces continue to shape who is recognised, whose knowledge is valued, and whose forms of participation are legitimised. As critical theories of recognition, redistribution, and cultural reproduction have demonstrated, inequalities operate not only through material conditions, but also through symbolic, cultural, and institutional mechanisms that determine belonging, visibility, and legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1984; Fraser, 2003; Honneth, 1995; Young, 1990).

Moreover, institutions are not neutral spaces, but are oriented in ways that make some bodies and forms of presence more easily accommodated than others, shaping differential experiences of inclusion and exclusion (Ahmed, 2012). In cultural and institutional contexts, participation itself emerges as a contested practice, shaped by power relations that influence not only access, but also the capacity to act, contribute, and be heard (Carpentier, 2011; Matarasso, 2019; Mörsch, 2016; Sandell, 2007; Semedo, 2019).

Inclusion, therefore, cannot be understood as a technical adjustment, a compensatory policy, the simple removal of barriers, or the incorporation of marginalised groups into unchanged structures. Rather, it must be conceived as an ongoing process of ethical, political, pedagogical, and aesthetic transformation, involving the redistribution of opportunities, the recognition of difference, and the reconfiguration of relations of power (Carpentier, 2011; Freire, 1968; Nussbaum, 2010). Such a transformation also requires questioning the epistemological assumptions that underpin dominant understandings of knowledge, subjectivity, and participation, recognising how forms of exclusion have been historically shaped by unequal relations of power, including colonial and other hierarchical structures.

This volume brings together contributions from researchers across Europe, South America, Africa, Asia, and North America, whose work traverses philosophy, education, cultural policy, sociology, design, architecture, disability studies, linguistics, heritage studies, and the arts. Rather than offering a universal definition or a singular model of inclusion, the book develops a set of interconnected reflections around five fundamental dimensions: inclusion as a question of power and redistribution; as recognition of difference; as embodied and multisensory experience; as artistic and epistemic practice; and as the situated, transnational negotiation of cultural and historical contexts, shaped by intersecting histories of inequality and coloniality.

Organised into three complementary sections, the volume traces a movement from conceptual and political critiques of inclusion, through pedagogical and artistic practices, towards embodied, sensory, and technological reconfigurations of participation. Together, these perspectives invite readers to reconsider inclusion not as a fixed condition to be achieved, but as a dynamic and ongoing process through which societies continually negotiate belonging, recognition, and participation.

Part I
Philosophies, Policies, and Conceptual Frameworks of Inclusion

The seven chapters in this first part establish the conceptual and political foundations of the volume by examining inclusion not as a neutral or technical process, but as a contested and situated field shaped by power relations, institutional structures, cultural narratives, and systems of knowledge.

Together, these contributions question who is granted visibility, recognition, and opportunities for participation, revealing that inclusion requires more than opening existing spaces to new audiences: it demands a critical examination of the conditions, assumptions,

and power relations through which those spaces are historically, socially, and politically constituted.

Beginning from the perspective of cultural policy, **António Jácomo** argues that inclusion cannot be reduced to strategies of audience expansion or institutional accessibility. His analysis of Portuguese cultural policy highlights the need for structural transformation grounded in principles of justice, recognition, and redistribution, establishing a central concern that resonates throughout this section: participation depends on the ways societies distribute cultural legitimacy and symbolic power. This question of recognition is further explored through artistic and experiential practices.

The relationship between inclusion and the environments that shape everyday life is critically addressed by **Susana Barreto**, whose analysis of hostile urban design reveals how apparently neutral architectural decisions may reinforce exclusion and render vulnerable populations invisible. By bringing spatial politics into the discussion, this chapter expands the notion of inclusion beyond social institutions, showing that public spaces themselves embody values, assumptions, and hierarchies. These concerns are further developed through a philosophical reconsideration of citizenship. Drawing on Deleuze, Foucault, Larrosa, Rancière, Gallo, Silva, Veiga Neto, Pereira, and other influential thinkers, **Ana Maria Faccioli Camargo and Anabela Moura** propose an understanding of citizenship as a relational and aesthetic process of becoming, rather than as a fixed legal status. This perspective challenges static definitions of belonging and invites us to conceive of inclusion as the deconstruction of the apparatuses that capture the subject, while fostering a subjectivity in continual becoming, rather than as a set of actions aimed at equalising individuals under a single common denominator.

The question of difference is taken further in **Maria Teresa Eglér Mantoan**'s critique of the persistence of the medical model of disability within Brazilian education. By advocating a shift towards the social model of disability, she challenges deficit-based approaches and argues for the recognition of difference as a constitutive dimension of human diversity. Her contribution provides a critical bridge between philosophical debates on difference and the practical realities of educational inclusion. Building upon this perspective**, Anabela Moura, Ana Maria Faccioli Camargo, Maria Celeste Cantante,** and **Bárbara Correia** examine inclusive education in Portugal and Brazil, focusing on the role of arts and media in connecting policy frameworks with pedagogical practices. Their analysis demonstrates that inclusion is not achieved solely through legislation or institutional commitments, but through transformative educational experiences that create conditions for participation, expression, and dialogue.

The spatial and social dimensions of exclusion are further explored by **Manuel Carlos Silva, Fernando Matos Rodrigues, Fernando Bessa Ribeiro, José Lopes Cordeiro, Ana Reis Jorge, João Teixeira Lopes**, and **António Cardoso**, whose study of working-class neighbourhoods in Porto and Braga reveals how housing conditions, urban space, and social representations

contribute to processes of marginalisation. Their contribution reinforces the argument that inclusion must be understood within broader structures of inequality, where cultural, social, and material conditions intersect.

Finally, **Ana Saldanha Dias** brings language and literature into this wider discussion, examining multilingualism as a fundamental dimension of cultural inclusion. By positioning language as a space of communication, identity formation, and intercultural understanding, her chapter highlights the importance of recognizing diverse forms of expression and knowledge, and meaning-making.

Taken together, these chapters reveal inclusion as a complex and multidimensional process that operates across cultural policies, educational systems, public spaces, philosophical frameworks, and modes of communication. Rather than presenting inclusion as an outcome to be achieved, this section positions it as a continuous process of questioning, negotiating, and transforming the structures through which visibility, legitimacy, and participation are distributed.

Part II
Inclusive Pedagogies, Artistic Practices, and Creative Engagement

The second part moves from the conceptual and institutional dimensions of inclusion explored in Part I towards the spaces where inclusion is enacted: classrooms, artistic practices, cultural encounters, and collaborative processes of knowledge production. Across these chapters, inclusion emerges not as a predefined outcome, but as a dynamic pedagogical and creative process through which individuals and communities negotiate identity, belonging, expression, and participation.

The contributions gathered here share a common premise: education and the arts are not merely instruments for implementing inclusion policies; they are epistemological spaces where different forms of knowledge, experience, and cultural expression can encounter one another. Through diverse geographical, cultural, and educational contexts, these chapters demonstrate how inclusive practices are created through dialogue, participation, embodied experience, and recognition of multiple ways of knowing.

Beginning with cultural heritage and collective memory, **Abdulrasheed Olowoselu** examines cultural practices in Nigeria, highlighting festivals, music, dance, and traditions as living systems of knowledge transmission and sense of belonging. His contribution establishes a foundation for understanding culture not as a static inheritance, but as an active and participatory process through which communities construct meaning and belonging. The transformative potential of artistic pedagogy across cultural boundaries is explored by **Dilma**

Janete Fortes and **Yinan Li** through a transnational dialogue between Cape Verde and China. Their contribution demonstrates how artistic practices create spaces of intercultural understanding, where knowledge is not simply transferred but collectively produced through encounter and exchange.

The role of language as a condition for participation is further examined by **Fátima Moura Simões** and **Conceição Rabaçal Fernandes** in their analysis of the "Building Bridges" project. By integrating CLIL, translanguaging, arts education, and Erasmus+ mobility, they demonstrate how multilingual and multicultural educational contexts can become spaces for linguistic justice and expanded participation.

Moving from language towards embodiment, **Wolfgang Weinlich** challenges deficit-oriented approaches to arts education by proposing re-embodiment and rhythm as foundations for aesthetic participation. His contribution highlights the importance of the body as a site of knowledge, perception, and inclusion, questioning educational models that privilege limited forms of sensory and cognitive engagement.

This attention to alternative knowledge systems is extended through **Jorge Gumbe**'s decolonial perspective from Angola. By advocating the recognition of Indigenous knowledge and intangible heritage within arts education, his chapter challenges dominant epistemological frameworks and calls for more plural understandings of cultural knowledge and creativity.

The social transformative potential of interdisciplinary arts education is further explored by **Rosário Santana** and **Helena Santana**, who demonstrate how theatre, music, dance, and visual arts can foster social inclusion through collaborative artistic experiences. Their work reinforces the idea that participation is created through shared practices rather than simply granted through institutional access.

Ana Tudela de Sousa and **Duarte Paiva** examine how art-based pedagogical practices can expand understandings of inclusive pedagogy by reshaping relationships between learners, environments, and other forms of life. Their contribution highlights the role of imagination, attentiveness, and aesthetic experience in cultivating more complex forms of perception and engagement, extending the discussion of inclusion towards the ways individuals learn to relate with the world around them.

Questions of access and participation within institutional contexts are examined by **Raquel Azevedo Moreira**, whose analysis of Portuguese higher arts education reveals persistent inequalities in access to meaningful cultural experiences. Her contribution highlights the need to critically examine not only educational opportunities but also the cultural assumptions and structures that determine who can fully participate in artistic learning.

The importance of sensory experience and democratic engagement is further developed by **Carlos Almeida**, who focuses on critical listening in teacher education. By exploring sound-based practices, he demonstrates how listening can become an inclusive pedagogical act that expands participation beyond predominantly visual and verbal modes of communication.

The transformative role of education across different life trajectories is explored by **Mariana Gonçalves Borges** and **Silvia Maria Cintra da Silva** through their study of Youth and Adult Education (EJA) in Brazil. Their analysis reveals education as a process of renewal and empowerment for individuals whose educational pathways have been interrupted, emphasizing lifelong learning as a dimension of social inclusion.

Finally, **Paula Trigueiros** and **Susanne Römer** bring together many of the concerns raised throughout this section by proposing Inclusive Design as a framework for teacher professionalization and pedagogical innovation. Their contribution suggests that inclusion requires not only adapting existing practices, but redesigning educational systems and environments from the outset according to principles of diversity and participation.

Taken together, these chapters demonstrate that inclusion is not merely a political objective or an institutional commitment. It is a creative, embodied, and relational practice continuously produced through dialogue, collaboration, and the co-construction of knowledge. Through arts, education, and participatory processes, this section reveals inclusion as a transformative practice that reshapes how we teach, learn, create, and engage with one another.

Part III
Embodiment, Multisensory Experience, Accessibility, and Technologies

The final part expands the discussion of inclusion into the domains of embodiment, sensory experience, accessibility, and technological mediation. Building upon the previous sections' focus on structures and practices, these chapters shift attention towards the lived realities through which inclusion is experienced: the body, perception, material environments, cultural memory, and emerging technologies. Together, they challenge approaches that understand inclusion primarily as institutional adaptation, proposing instead that meaningful participation requires a transformation in the ways bodies, senses, spaces, and forms of knowledge are recognised.

The section begins with the body as a fundamental site of experience and difference. **André Mota** and **Marciléia Sampaio** examine the lived experiences of children with disabilities in educational contexts, revealing how pain, vulnerability, and bodily crises are frequently overlooked, silenced, or misinterpreted by normative educational systems. Their

contribution challenges dominant assumptions about learning and participation, emphasizing the need to recognise embodied experiences as legitimate forms of knowledge.

This attention to embodiment leads naturally to questions of design and the environments that shape participation. **Maria del Pilar Rovira Serrano** argues for inclusive design as an ethical, legal, and creative imperative, maintaining that diversity should not be considered an exception to be accommodated, but rather the foundation from which all design processes should emerge. Her contribution reframes accessibility as a principle of innovation and social responsibility rather than as a corrective measure.

The relationship between inclusion and sensory experience is further explored by **Nicola Jakob-Feiks** and **Wolfgang Weinlich**, who examine lecture performance as a multisensory pedagogical practice. Their analysis demonstrates how inclusion can emerge through the reconfiguration of sensory hierarchies and the creation of collective forms of perception, challenging educational and artistic traditions that privilege particular modes of knowing and experiencing.

These questions of perception and access are extended into museum contexts by **Maria do Céu Diel de Oliveira**, whose examination of visual accessibility in Brazilian museums focuses on tactile strategies and the role of imagination in the aesthetic experiences of visitors with visual impairments. Her contribution highlights how inclusive cultural experiences require more than physical access; they depend on creating alternative pathways for interpretation, engagement, and aesthetic encounter.

The institutional dimensions of accessibility are further explored by **Edna de Oliveira** through her reflection on the inclusion of the first blind student at a Brazilian federal university. Presenting inclusion as an ongoing institutional process of learning and transformation, her chapter demonstrates that accessibility involves changes in attitudes, structures, and practices rather than the simple removal of physical barriers.

Moving towards emerging technological contexts, **Kara Jhalak Miller** explores the relationship between choreography and artificial intelligence, questioning traditional understandings of embodiment, authorship, and relationality. Her contribution opens new perspectives on inclusion by examining how technological mediation reshapes creative practices and challenges established boundaries between human agency, movement, and machine intelligence.

The final chapter broadens the discussion from individual and institutional experiences towards cultural memory and collective identity. **Marina Diel de Araújo** reflects on the architectural heritage of Isfahan, arguing that cultural destruction represents not only the loss of physical structures but also the erosion of symbolic memory, historical continuity, and forms of human knowledge embedded within cultural landscapes.

Taken together, these seven chapters reposition inclusion as a question of embodiment, perception, materiality, technology, and memory. They extend the concept beyond traditional institutional frameworks by demonstrating that inclusion is also produced through the ways societies recognise bodies, design environments, preserve histories, and imagine future forms of participation.

Final remarks

Across its three sections, this volume advances a central proposition: inclusion is neither an endpoint nor an administrative category, but a dynamic and relational process that traverses institutions, bodies, and cultural systems. It is simultaneously ethical, political, pedagogical, aesthetic, and material. The twenty-six chapters gathered here demonstrate that inclusion cannot be reduced to access or adaptation. It requires a transformation in the ways knowledge is produced, bodies are perceived, institutions operate, and participation is imagined. It calls for listening differently, designing differently, teaching differently, and sensing differently. What unites this diversity of voices is not theoretical uniformity, but a shared commitment to questioning the structures that produce exclusion and to imagining alternative forms of collective life grounded in justice, plurality, and shared responsibility. Ultimately, *Beyond Access* invites readers to understand inclusion not as something to be definitively achieved, nor as a model to be replicated, but as an ongoing democratic practice, continually transformed, constructed, and renegotiated across the domains of education, culture, and the arts.

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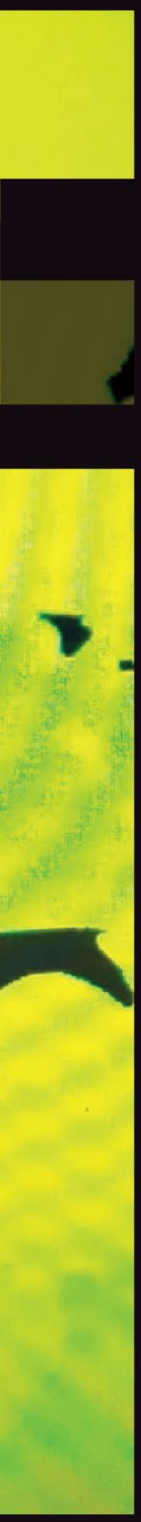

Part I

Philosophies, Policies, and Conceptual Frameworks of Inclusion

Ethics and Inclusion in the Arts: Cultural Policy and Structural Transformation in Contemporary Portugal

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Abstract

This article critically examines the relationship between ethics and inclusion in the arts through the lens of contemporary Portuguese cultural policy. Understanding ethics as a normative and relational framework that guides institutional and artistic practices, it examines how public cultural policies have incorporated — or, in some instances, constrained — inclusive approaches concerning access, representation and participation. The analysis draws on documentary evidence from Portuguese cultural policy, with particular attention to the Plano Nacional das Artes (PNA), the *Carta do Porto Santo* (2021), the *Adenda dos Jovens à Carta do Porto Santo* (2025), and the Direção-Geral das Artes (DGARTES) policy framework and funding priorities. The article argues that inclusion should not be conceived merely as audience development or symbolic diversity, but rather as a structural transformation affecting the conditions of artistic production, cultural legitimacy and circulation. Building upon Fraser's theory of justice and McGuigan's reflections on cultural policy, the discussion examines the tension between *cultural democratisation* and *cultural democracy* in Portugal. It contends that an ethically grounded cultural policy should promote redistribution, recognition and participation simultaneously, thereby fostering social justice, territorial cohesion and aesthetic plurality. Ultimately, the paper proposes a relational understanding of ethics capable of strengthening democratic governance within the Portuguese cultural sector while expanding opportunities for historically underrepresented communities.

Keywords

Ethics; Cultural Policy; Inclusion; Cultural Democracy; Portugal Cultural Policy; Social Justice.

Introduction

Ethics and inclusion have become central concepts within international debates on cultural policy, particularly in response to concerns regarding social justice, democratic participation and equal access to cultural life. Across Europe, public institutions increasingly recognise culture not only as a domain of artistic production but also as a dimension of citizenship and democratic development. Belfiore (2002) cautions against assuming that the arts automatically alleviate social exclusion, while the European Commission (2018) and UNESCO (2005, 2022), for example, place participation, diversity and access within broader cultural policy frameworks, while the Council of Europe (2005) links cultural participation to the exercise of cultural rights. Consequently, cultural policies are expected to promote diversity, accessibility and participation while responding to persistent inequalities affecting cultural production and consumption.

Within this broader context, Portuguese cultural policy has undergone significant institutional development during the last decade. The Plano Nacional das Artes (PNA), established through the *Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 42/2019* and subsequently extended and revised through the *Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 51/2021*, explicitly connects cultural participation, education, accessibility and territorial cohesion (Plano Nacional das Artes [PNA], 2019). At the level of arts support, DGARTES has also framed its 2026 programme priorities in terms of plural artistic practice, territorial cohesion, cultural participation and the centrality of the arts in democratic life (Direção-Geral das Artes [DGARTES], 2026). These policy developments indicate a movement towards broader participation, but they do not in themselves demonstrate a transition to *cultural democracy*. Important structural questions remain concerning who receives public support, who participates in cultural decision-making and how cultural value is institutionally recognised.

This article therefore asks: to what extent has Portuguese cultural policy moved from a model of *cultural democratisation*, centred primarily on widening access to established cultural provision, towards *cultural democracy*, understood as the participation of citizens and communities in shaping cultural life and cultural decision-making? The central argument is that inclusion cannot be understood simply as the expansion of audiences or the numerical diversification of participants. Rather, inclusion should be conceived as a structural transformation of the institutional conditions governing artistic production, recognition and

circulation. Such an approach requires an ethical framework capable of interrogating the mechanisms through which cultural value is produced and legitimised.

The study adopts a qualitative documentary analysis of Portuguese cultural policy between 2018 and 2026. The corpus comprises the strategic and legal framework of the Plano Nacional das Artes, including the *Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 42/2019* and *Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 51/2021*; the *Estratégia do Plano Nacional das Artes 2019-2024*; the *Carta do Porto Santo* (2021); *the Adenda dos Jovens à Carta do Porto Santo* — Caldas da Rainha/Loulé (2025); and the Direção-Geral das Artes' *Declaração Anual 2026*. These documents were selected because they explicitly address participation, access, *cultural democracy*, education, territorial cohesion and institutional responsibility. They are analysed through the perspectives of cultural justice and critical cultural policy, drawing principally on Fraser (2008) and McGuigan (2004).

The paper is organised into six sections. Following this introduction, the second section reviews the theoretical relationship between ethics, justice and inclusion, with particular attention to the distinction between *cultural democratisation* and *cultural democracy*. The third section explains the documentary corpus and analytical procedure. The fourth analyses recent Portuguese policy developments through documentary evidence, including the PNA and the Porto Santo policy trajectory. The fifth discusses the implications and persistent structural challenges of these developments, and the conclusion identifies the contribution of *relational ethics* to future cultural policy in Portugal.

Ethics and inclusion in cultural policy

Ethics as cultural justice

Ethics in cultural policy extends beyond questions of administrative transparency or institutional accountability. It concerns the normative principles through which societies define cultural value, distribute opportunities and recognise the plurality of artistic expression. From this perspective, ethics becomes inseparable from justice, requiring continuous reflection on the social, political and symbolic structures that determine who creates culture, who participates in cultural life and whose artistic practices receive public recognition. Bourdieu (1993) shows how cultural legitimacy is produced through institutional fields in which artistic value and symbolic capital are unequally distributed. Holden (2006) similarly argues that debates about cultural value cannot be reduced to economic or numerical measures, since cultural legitimacy is also shaped by public and intrinsic dimensions of value.

Fraser (2008) proposes that justice depends on the articulation of three complementary dimensions: redistribution, recognition and representation. Applied to cultural policy, this framework suggests that equitable financial support alone cannot guarantee inclusion if cultural institutions continue to privilege dominant aesthetic traditions or exclude minority communities from decision-making processes. Ethical cultural policy therefore requires structural transformation rather than merely compensatory measures. This perspective also clarifies why access to cultural institutions, although important, is analytically different from participation in the production of cultural value and in the governance of cultural institutions.

From cultural democratisation to cultural democracy

One of the most significant debates within cultural policy concerns the distinction between *cultural democratisation* and *cultural democracy*. The former traditionally seeks to broaden public access to established artistic institutions and canonical forms of culture through education, subsidies and audience development programmes. This model can widen participation while leaving the underlying distribution of cultural authority substantially unchanged (Bennett, 1995; McGuigan, 2004). By contrast, *cultural democracy* recognises the legitimacy of diverse cultural practices and seeks to involve citizens and communities as active participants in cultural production, interpretation and governance. Rancière (2004) further argues that democracy in the arts involves a redistribution of what can be seen, heard and recognised, thereby expanding the political dimensions of aesthetic experience.

The distinction is especially significant in Portugal because the policy trajectory associated with the PNA explicitly addresses the relationship between culture, education and participation. The *Carta do Porto Santo*, developed in the context of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union and presented in 2021, proposes a cultural-democracy paradigm and presents culture and education as interconnected spaces of participation. It addresses political decision-makers, cultural and educational organisations and citizens, offering recommendations for each group (Plano Nacional das Artes [PNA], 2021). The document therefore provides a policy-level articulation of the shift from democratisation towards democracy, rather than merely expressing a general commitment to access.

This trajectory was subsequently deepened by the *Adenda dos Jovens à Carta do Porto Santo — Caldas da Rainha/Loulé*. Finalised in 2025 under the coordination of the PNA, the *Adenda* incorporated proposals emerging from a 22-month participatory process involving young people and institutions from ten European countries. Its emphasis on participation, access to the arts, cultural education, digital challenges and the sharing of decision-making power gives concrete expression to *cultural democracy* as a participatory process (PNA, 2025). The Portuguese policy landscape thus contains an identifiable movement beyond access-oriented

democratisation, although the extent to which this movement has transformed institutional funding and governance remains an open empirical question.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on documentary analysis. The method is appropriate because the research question concerns how cultural policy documents formulate and institutionalise concepts of access, participation, representation and *cultural democracy*. The analysis focuses on Portuguese cultural policy between 2018 and 2026, while including the 2019–2021 legal and strategic foundations of the PNA and the 2021 and 2025 Porto Santo documents because these materials are directly relevant to the policy trajectory under examination.

The primary corpus comprises: (1) the *Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 42/2019*, which establishes the PNA's guiding principles; (2) the *Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 51/2021*, which republishes and updates the PNA framework; (3) the *Estratégia do Plano Nacional das Artes 2019-2024*; (4) the *Carta do Porto Santo* (2021); (5) the *Adenda dos Jovens à Carta do Porto Santo* — Caldas da Rainha/Loulé (2025); and (6) the *DGARTES Declaração Anual 2026*. These documents constitute the primary documentary evidence analysed in Sections 4.1–4.3. Academic literature is used as a secondary interpretive corpus to frame the documentary evidence rather than as evidence of Portuguese policy itself.

The analytical framework is informed principally by Fraser's (2008) multidimensional conception of justice — redistribution, recognition and representation — and McGuigan's (2004) critique of instrumental approaches to cultural policy. Documentary analysis was organised around three interconnected dimensions:

1. Access, examining how cultural policies seek to reduce social, economic and territorial barriers to artistic participation.
2. Representation, analysing the visibility and institutional recognition of historically underrepresented communities and artistic practices.
3. Participation, considering the extent to which cultural policies encourage democratic involvement in artistic production, governance and cultural decision-making.

Rather than evaluating individual cultural programmes, the study seeks to identify broader ethical principles underpinning contemporary Portuguese cultural policy and to assess whether current policy frameworks contribute to structural inclusion within the arts.

Portuguese cultural policy: ethical commitments and structural challenges

Institutional framework

Since the democratic transition initiated in 1974, Portuguese cultural policy has progressively evolved from a predominantly centralised administrative model towards a more diversified governance structure emphasising decentralisation, participation and cultural citizenship. In the period examined here, the PNA provides particularly clear documentary evidence of this orientation. Its strategic framework identifies three axes—cultural policy, capacity-building, and education and access—and explicitly seeks to make the arts more accessible, promote participation, and strengthen collaboration between cultural and educational actors (PNA, 2019). The legal framework for the PNA also identifies cultural participation and territorial cohesion among its guiding concerns (*Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 42/2019*, 2019; *Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 51/2021*, 2021).

DGARTES occupies a central position in the Portuguese arts-support system through its public funding programmes. The documentary evidence examined here indicates that the institution's policy language increasingly connects financial support with plural artistic practice, territorial cohesion and participation. The *Declaração Anual 2026* states that DGARTES will support the plurality of the artistic sector, contribute to territorial cohesion, stimulate cultural participation and promote the centrality of the arts in democratic life (DGARTES, 2026). This is significant for the present argument because it places participation and democratic life alongside the conventional function of funding artistic production.

The evidence nevertheless points to an important analytical distinction between policy commitment and structural effect. Policy documents can establish principles and priorities, but they do not by themselves demonstrate changes in the distribution of institutional power, funding or representation. The present documentary analysis therefore treats these statements as evidence of policy orientation rather than as proof that structural inequalities have been overcome. Historical concentration of cultural infrastructures in metropolitan regions and differences in local institutional capacity remain relevant conditions for assessing the implementation of inclusive policy.

The analysis of the policy corpus therefore suggests that the Portuguese institutional framework has moved beyond a purely centralised conception of cultural provision, but that the transition towards *cultural democracy* is uneven. The documentary evidence is strongest at the level of policy discourse, strategic objectives and participatory instruments; it is less conclusive concerning the redistribution of decision-making power within cultural institutions.

The resulting picture is therefore neither one of simple continuity with *cultural democratisation* nor one of completed *cultural democracy*. Rather, the Portuguese policy corpus reveals a transitional configuration: access, decentralisation and audience participation remain important, but they are increasingly accompanied by explicit claims about cultural rights, shared responsibility and citizen participation in cultural life. This transitional character is central to the discussion that follows.

Funding, decentralization, and territorial equity

Public funding constitutes one of the principal mechanisms through which ethical principles become operational within cultural policy. Decisions regarding financial support influence not only artistic production but also symbolic recognition, professional sustainability and the geographical distribution of cultural opportunities. This makes funding design particularly relevant to the distinction between *cultural democratisation* and *cultural democracy*.

The DGARTES policy framework provides evidence of an effort to connect support mechanisms with territorial and participatory objectives. The *Declaração Anual 2026* describes the agency's role in terms of supporting the plurality of the artistic sector, contributing to territorial cohesion and stimulating cultural participation (DGARTES, 2026). The evidence is therefore not limited to a general claim that funding exists; it shows how the institution itself frames support for the arts in relation to territory and democratic participation. At the same time, the document remains a framework for programmes to be launched during the year and cannot, on its own, establish the distributive outcomes of those programmes.

Territorial decentralisation is also explicit in the PNA and the Porto Santo trajectory. The PNA's strategic framework seeks to work across the national territory and to develop collaboration among artists, educational communities, cultural institutions, municipalities and other partners (PNA, 2019). The *Carta do Porto Santo* (PNA, 2021) extends this logic by treating *cultural democracy* as a shared responsibility involving decision-makers, organisations and citizens. These documents support an understanding of decentralisation not merely as geographical relocation of cultural events, but as the development of institutional conditions that enable participation across territories.

The documentary evidence nevertheless supports a cautious conclusion. Decentralisation is clearly articulated as a policy objective, but the documents analysed here do not provide sufficient quantitative evidence to establish that territorial disparities in funding, infrastructure or professional opportunities have been eliminated. For this reason, territorial equity is treated in this article as an ongoing governance challenge rather than as an accomplished policy outcome.

From an ethical perspective, territorial equity requires recognising that access to cultural creation and participation constitutes a dimension of democratic citizenship rather than a privilege determined by geographical location. This interpretation is consistent with the PNA's national-territory orientation and with the emphasis placed by the *Carta do Porto Santo* on shared cultural responsibility (PNA, 2019, 2021).

Cultural mediation, participation, and inclusion

One of the most significant developments in recent Portuguese cultural policy concerns the growing recognition of cultural mediation, participation and education as interconnected dimensions of cultural policy. The PNA's strategy explicitly seeks to make the arts more accessible, promote participation and creation, and strengthen collaboration between cultural and educational actors (PNA, 2019). The *Carta do Porto Santo* (PNA, 2021) goes further by framing *cultural democracy* as a paradigm requiring participation from institutions, educators and citizens.

The documentary evidence becomes particularly clear in the subsequent *Adenda dos Jovens à Carta do Porto Santo* (PNA, 2025). The *Adenda* was developed through a 22-month participatory process involving more than 350 participants from ten European countries and support from 53 institutions. It addresses youth participation in culture, equality of access to the arts, cultural education and the ethical challenges of the digital environment, and proposes practical actions for cultural and educational policy (PNA, 2025). The significance of this evidence is not merely that young people are mentioned in policy discourse: the document itself emerged from a participatory process and explicitly treats the sharing of decision-making power as part of democratic cultural practice.

This trajectory indicates a broader understanding of participation than attendance at cultural events. Participation is framed as involvement in artistic creation, cultural education, civic dialogue and, increasingly, the formulation of policy priorities. This interpretation is consistent with Matarasso's (2019) account of participatory arts as a practice connected to democratic relationships and collective agency, and with Moura and Barbosa's (2018) emphasis on citizenship and participation through artistic practice.

Important limitations nevertheless remain. Participation can remain project-based and dependent on short-term initiatives, while the existence of participatory policy documents does not necessarily mean that decision-making structures have been transformed. Cultural mediation should therefore be interpreted not simply as an educational or audience-development strategy, but as a potential ethical practice through which cultural authority can be redistributed. In this sense, the Porto Santo trajectory provides a concrete policy

reference point for evaluating the extent to which *cultural democracy* is being institutionalised.

Discussion

Ethics as structural transformation

The analysis developed throughout this article suggests that ethics in cultural policy cannot be reduced to compliance with legal standards or institutional transparency. Rather, ethics should be understood as a transformative principle capable of reshaping the structures through which artistic value, legitimacy and participation are produced. From this perspective, inclusion becomes inseparable from questions of power, recognition and democratic governance. The Portuguese documentary corpus is particularly revealing because it contains an explicit policy vocabulary of participation and *cultural democracy*, while also leaving unresolved the question of how far these principles alter institutional practices.

Matarasso (2019) argues that participatory arts should not be evaluated exclusively through economic efficiency but through their capacity to strengthen democratic relationships and collective agency. In the present analysis, the relevant domain is therefore cultural governance: the issue is whether participatory and inclusive principles influence how institutions define priorities, distribute opportunities and involve cultural actors in decision-making, rather than merely whether individual projects attract larger audiences.

The Portuguese policy trajectory shows clear development at the level of policy formulation. The PNA's guiding principles (PNA, 2019), the *Carta do Porto Santo* (PNA, 2021) and the *Adenda dos Jovens* (PNA, 2025) articulate participation, access, cultural education, territorial cohesion and democratic involvement as policy concerns. DGARTES similarly frames its 2026 support priorities around artistic plurality, territorial cohesion and cultural participation (DGARTES, 2026). However, these documents do not by themselves establish that institutional funding allocation, artistic evaluation and leadership have been transformed. The key analytical contribution of the present study is therefore to distinguish policy articulation from structural implementation.

This distinction between rhetorical inclusion and structural inclusion is fundamental. Audience diversification alone does not necessarily alter the social composition of cultural institutions, nor does increase geographical dissemination automatically redistribute cultural authority. Ethical cultural policy therefore requires transforming not only who accesses culture but also who defines cultural value, who participates in decision-making processes and whose artistic practices become publicly legitimised.

Fraser's (2008) multidimensional conception of justice provides an appropriate framework for understanding these dynamics. Redistribution without recognition risks reproducing symbolic exclusion, while recognition without representation may fail to alter institutional power relations. Consequently, genuinely inclusive cultural policy depends on integrating economic, symbolic and political dimensions of justice simultaneously. The Portuguese case suggests that the policy discourse increasingly recognises these dimensions, but the documentary record examined here is insufficient to conclude that they are yet fully integrated in institutional practice.

Persistent challenges for inclusive cultural policy

Despite significant policy development, several structural challenges continue to limit the implementation of an ethically grounded approach to inclusion within Portuguese cultural policy. The documentary evidence analysed in Section 4 points to a recurring gap between the articulation of participatory principles and the evidence available concerning their institutional effects. This gap should not be interpreted as evidence of policy failure, but as an important area requiring further empirical investigation.

The first challenge concerns territorial inequality. The PNA explicitly adopts a national-territory orientation and links culture to participation and territorial cohesion (PNA, 2019), while DGARTES identifies territorial cohesion as an objective of its 2026 support framework (DGARTES, 2026). Yet the documents analysed do not provide sufficient outcome data to establish that disparities in infrastructure, professional opportunities and public investment have been overcome. Territorial cohesion therefore remains an ongoing governance objective rather than an accomplished outcome.

A second challenge concerns institutional representation. The *Carta do Porto Santo* (PNA, 2021) explicitly addresses decision-makers, cultural and educational organisations and citizens, while the *Adenda dos Jovens* (PNA, 2025) places the sharing of decision-making power at the centre of its participatory rationale. These are important normative developments, but they do not amount to evidence that funding panels, leadership structures or evaluation bodies have become socially and territorially representative. The distinction between participatory policy design and institutional representation therefore remains analytically important.

Third, accessibility cannot be reduced to physical or economic terms. UNESCO's *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* (2005) situates cultural diversity within a framework of participation and access, while the PNA links accessibility to education and participation (PNA, 2019). Ethical cultural policy must consequently also address linguistic, cognitive, digital and symbolic barriers. Cultural participation depends not

only upon entering cultural institutions but also upon being represented within their narratives, collections and artistic practices.

Finally, evaluation systems can privilege quantitative indicators — such as audience numbers, events organised or geographical coverage — while giving less attention to qualitative transformations concerning empowerment, social cohesion or long-term community engagement. Holden's (2006) critique of narrow approaches to cultural value and Matarasso's (2019) emphasis on democratic and collective outcomes support the need for broader evaluative frameworks. Such frameworks would better correspond to a cultural-democracy approach than measures based solely on reach or attendance.

Taken together, these challenges suggest that inclusion cannot be achieved through isolated programmes or temporary initiatives. Instead, it requires continuous institutional learning and policy frameworks capable of addressing the multiple dimensions of cultural inequality. The Portuguese policy corpus demonstrates that many of these principles are now explicitly articulated; the next analytical and policy step is to assess systematically how they affect institutional practices and outcomes.

Towards a relational ethics of cultural governance

The discussion developed throughout this article supports the adoption of a relational conception of ethics within cultural policy. Rather than understanding ethics as a fixed normative code, *relational ethics* emphasises dialogue, reciprocity and shared responsibility among institutions, artists and communities.

Within this framework, cultural institutions are no longer viewed simply as providers of artistic services but as democratic spaces where cultural identities, collective memories and social relationships are continuously negotiated. Public cultural policy therefore assumes responsibility not only for distributing financial resources but also for fostering conditions in which cultural actors from diverse social, cultural and territorial backgrounds can participate more equally in artistic production and institutional governance.

A framework grounded in *relational ethics* would therefore encourage several complementary strategies:

1. Diversifying decision-making structures, ensuring broader representation of cultural, social and territorial diversity within funding panels, advisory committees and institutional leadership.
2. Strengthening territorial equity, promoting long-term investment in cultural infrastructures beyond metropolitan centres and supporting regional cultural networks.

3. Expanding cultural mediation, recognising mediation not merely as audience development but as a collaborative process facilitating dialogue between institutions and communities.
4. Adopting qualitative evaluation criteria, capable of assessing long-term social impact, cultural participation and democratic engagement alongside quantitative performance indicators.
5. Recognising epistemic diversity, supporting artistic practices that emerge from historically underrepresented communities and acknowledging multiple forms of cultural knowledge as legitimate contributions to contemporary artistic creation.

These recommendations illustrate that ethically grounded inclusion depends on institutional transformation rather than isolated policy interventions. Diversity should not be interpreted as an exceptional objective requiring occasional corrective measures but as a constitutive condition of democratic cultural life. The Portuguese policy trajectory examined in this article provides evidence that such a principle has gained explicit recognition in strategic and participatory policy documents, while also showing that its institutional effects require further empirical assessment.

Conclusion

This article has examined the relationship between ethics and inclusion within contemporary Portuguese cultural policy, arguing that inclusion should be understood as a process of structural transformation rather than simply as audience expansion or symbolic representation. Drawing upon Fraser's theory of justice and McGuigan's reflections on cultural policy, the analysis has demonstrated that ethical governance in the arts requires the integration of redistribution, recognition and democratic participation. The capability approach proposed by Sen (1999) and further developed by Nussbaum (2011) reinforces this perspective by suggesting that cultural participation can be understood as a condition for exercising substantive freedoms and capabilities. The analysis of the Portuguese documentary corpus adds a more specific contribution: it identifies the PNA and the Porto Santo policy trajectory as a concrete site in which the shift from *cultural democratisation* to *cultural democracy* has been explicitly articulated.

The Portuguese cultural sector has developed a clearer policy vocabulary around decentralisation, cultural mediation, participation, territorial cohesion and democratic cultural governance. The PNA's guiding principles (2019), the *Carta do Porto Santo* (2021) and the *Adenda dos Jovens* (2025) demonstrate that this vocabulary is not merely imported from international theory but has been translated into Portuguese policy instruments and participatory processes. DGARTES' 2026 framework likewise connects arts support with

plurality, territorial cohesion and participation (DGARTES, 2026). Nevertheless, the documentary evidence also indicates the limits of policy texts as evidence of structural change: persistent questions remain concerning the distribution of funding, institutional representation and the qualitative assessment of participation.

The findings suggest that ethical cultural policy must move beyond distributive models of access towards participatory models of *cultural democracy*. Such a transition requires rethinking not only funding systems but also institutional governance, artistic legitimacy and public participation. Ethics thus becomes a dynamic process through which cultural institutions continuously negotiate questions of justice, diversity and democratic responsibility. For Portugal, the principal challenge is no longer simply to articulate the value of participation, but to demonstrate through institutional practice and outcome-based evidence how participation changes the distribution of cultural authority.

Future research could extend this analysis by incorporating empirical case studies of Portuguese cultural organisations, comparative analyses with other European cultural policy models and qualitative research involving artists, cultural mediators and community organisations. Such studies would contribute to a deeper understanding of how ethical principles are translated into everyday institutional practice.

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Designing Inclusion: Crime, Territories of Intersection, and Academic Legitimation in the Portuguese Context

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Abstract

This chapter examines the intersection between Design and Crime as an emerging field of research, teaching and intervention, still incipient in the Portuguese academic context despite its consolidation in countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia. Drawing on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and Design Against Crime (DAC), it examines how these frameworks reconcile — or fail to reconcile — safety with inclusion, using hostile design and its inclusive alternatives as a critical test case. The discussion is illustrated with examples from the author's own research and teaching, including the FCT-funded project I.PLACING and the Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme on Urban Transformation and Public Safety, alongside case studies from two distinct United Kingdom institutions — the Design Against Crime Research Centre (University of the Arts London) and the Design Against Crime Solution Centre (University of Salford). The chapter closes with a reflection on the ethical responsibilities of design in this domain and proposes pathways for the field's legitimation and replicability in Portugal.

Keywords

Design Against Crime; CPTED; Urban Safety; Hostile Design; Visual Communication; Crime Prevention.

Introduction

This chapter addresses the intersection between Design and Crime — a domain still relatively underexplored in the Portuguese academic landscape — with the aim of legitimising this field of research and intervention, and of fostering associated pedagogical practices.

Methodologically, the chapter takes the form of a narrative, practice-based reflection rather than an empirical study, drawing on theoretical literature, documented case studies and the author's own ongoing research and teaching practice. Its central purpose is to demonstrate how Design can contribute to crime prevention and to the mitigation of the fear and sense of insecurity that accompany it.

While this intersection is already well established in countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia — with significant case studies, applied methodologies and concrete advances presented throughout this chapter — its development remains at an early stage in Portugal. Legitimising this territory of research matters: the challenges posed by urban crime, insecurity and social exclusion demand interdisciplinary responses, and the absence of formal recognition limits research, academic training and the practical application of integrated solutions. Once legitimised, this domain opens space for the creation of dedicated methodologies (Fig. 1) and allows for more effective, context-sensitive responses to local realities.

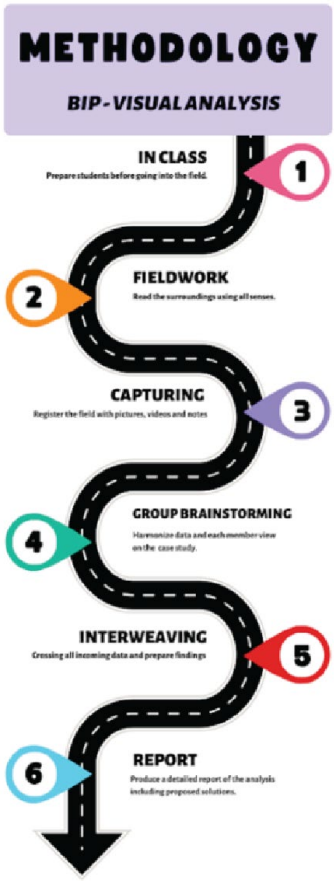

Fig. 1
Infographic illustrating the methodology developed for the Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) on Urban Transformation and Public Safety, applied to fieldwork, analysis and proposal formulation (2023).
Author: Susana Barreto. Presented at the *Livable Cities Conference*, London, 2024.

The study of Design and Crime is relevant not only to security, but also to urban planning, education and social awareness-raising. This multidisciplinary perspective is underlined by several scholars in the field (e.g., Ekblom, 1995; Gamman & Thorpe, 2009; Garland, 2001; Geason & Wilson, 1988;), who argue that effective solutions to criminal phenomena require

cross-disciplinary contributions from design, criminology, sociology, geography and urban planning. Among these authors, Lorraine Gamman — a member of the Advisory Board of the FCT-funded research project I.PLACING, in which the author participates (see Section 3) — stands out for her long-standing role in the field.

Design and Crime are argued to share common ground across multiple dimensions, and recognising this proximity can enrich both fields. This chapter explores that proximity first through the frameworks of CPTED and Design Against Crime, using hostile design — and the ethical tensions it exposes — as a critical lens, and then through concrete examples drawn from the author's own research, teaching and case-study work, as a basis for critical reflection on the ethical and social roles of Design.

The chapter also describes the author's recent scientific and pedagogical engagement with the theme. From a research perspective, it presents I.PLACING, a project recently approved for funding by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), in which the author is part of a multidisciplinary team (Geography/Planning, Criminology and Design). On the pedagogical side, the chapter presents the Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) on Urban Transformation and Public Safety, developed in partnership with three European universities, in which the author participates as a lecturer for the University of Porto.

Alongside this, the chapter addresses the rapidly expanding phenomenon of artificial intelligence (AI), whose influence has been especially transformative in design, automating processes and increasing their speed and efficiency. AI use, however, also raises serious concerns when deployed for unlawful or criminal purposes. The intersection between AI, Design and Crime reveals significant vulnerabilities — deepfakes and image manipulation, the abusive use of surveillance and control technologies, and the production of visual content in the service of criminal propaganda, extremism and disinformation campaigns — with consequences ranging from the erosion of privacy to the increased exposure of vulnerable groups to marginalisation and abuse.

Given the sensitivity of these themes — public safety, fear of crime, surveillance technologies and the impact of artificial intelligence — the research and practice of Design in this domain must be guided by core ethical principles: respect for privacy, non-discrimination, transparency and informed consent. Projects with an impact on communities or public space must ensure the informed participation of users, avoiding approaches that reinforce social stigma or render vulnerable groups invisible. Where artificial intelligence and other digital technologies are applied, a critical assessment of associated risks is required, together with mechanisms of algorithmic accountability and the promotion of visual and digital literacy. Collaboration with fields such as criminology, sociology or urban planning should, finally, be guided by listening and co-construction, ensuring that design's contributions complement — rather than replace — other forms of knowledge and social action.

This chapter pursues three main objectives:

- to legitimise Design and Crime as a field of research and practice in the Portuguese context;
- to explore the methodological intersections between Design and Crime, examining how strategies associated with criminal practice can be reinterpreted to anticipate unlawful behaviour, promote safer environments and reinforce visual and critical literacy in contexts vulnerable to manipulation, exclusion or harm, while investigating how design methods can, in turn, contribute new tools of analysis, visualisation and intervention to crime studies;
- to promote a multidisciplinary approach that fosters dialogue between design, criminology, urban planning and other relevant fields, equipping students to understand the role of Design in producing safer, more inclusive and accessible urban environments.

Contextualisation

The relationship between Design and Crime dates to the origins of civilisation, when human beings began to shape and manipulate their physical and visual environment to influence behaviour — whether to reinforce safety or to facilitate unlawful practices. In contemporary urban contexts, for instance, the design of public transport terminals with clear signage, adequate lighting and good visibility has long been used to deter deviant behaviour. This relationship was, however, only systematised and formally recognised from 1971 onwards, with the publication of manuals by the International CPTED Association (ICA), which marked a turning point for both academic research and professional practice.

These manuals consolidated methodological principles and guidelines for applying Design to crime prevention, promoting interdisciplinary approaches that bring together urban planning, criminology, psychology and design. According to Portugal's Directorate-General of Internal Administration (Direção-Geral de Administração Interna, 2013), CPTED theory rests on four foundational principles: natural surveillance, which maximises the visibility of spaces and discourages criminal activity; access control, which orients and limits circulation flows, reducing opportunities for crime; territorial reinforcement, which fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility for spaces, making them less susceptible to unlawful intervention; and maintenance, which preserves the built environment and prevents visible signs of abandonment or degradation that, according to the Broken Windows Theory (Wilson & Kelling, 1982), can favour rising crime and the devaluation of public space.

More recent approaches add a fifth principle — community support and involvement, illustrated later in this chapter by the ECO project — which underscores the importance of citizens' active participation in the safety, maintenance and preservation of public spaces. This community dimension reflects CPTED's conceptual evolution across three generations: a first generation centred on the physical design of space and the four foundational principles; a second generation that incorporates social and behavioural aspects such as social cohesion and community interaction; and a third, more recent generation that integrates sustainability, urban resilience and social justice, calling for collaborative solutions adapted to local contexts.

CPTED versus Design Against Crime (DAC)

Two distinct but complementary strategies stand out in this field: CPTED and Design Against Crime (DAC). Both share the goal of reducing crime and promoting safety, though they differ in their logic of action and in when they are applied (Table 1).

Design Against Crime (DAC) is an interdisciplinary concept and approach that proposes the use of design as a tool to prevent crime and reduce the risk of victimisation without compromising the usability, accessibility or aesthetics of products and environments. The term Design Against Crime Research Lab (DACRL) designates the research laboratory founded by Lorraine Gamman at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London, an international reference in the field; Design Against Crime Research Centre (DACRC) is used only in institutional and formal contexts, referring to the same laboratory.

Characteristic	CPTED	Design Against Crime (DAC)
Origin	Environmental criminology (USA, 1970s)	Design academia (UK, 1990s)
Foundation	Architecture and urban planning	User-centred design
Focus	Physical space, situational prevention	Social, ethical and creative design
Method	Normative, technical	Experimental, participatory
Ethical stance	Risk of exclusion or excessive surveillance	Focus on inclusion and empathy

Table 1 Comparative summary of CPTED and DAC (2025).
Author: Susana Barreto.

While CPTED intervenes preventively at the design and construction stage of the built environment — for example, through urban furniture conceived to promote safe lingering in

public space, such as well-lit, strategically positioned benches — DAC takes a more exploratory, user-centred approach, incorporating co-design, design thinking and social design practices, and extending beyond the built environment to artefacts, services and digital interfaces. One illustrative, and contested, example is "mosquito noise": sonic devices designed to discourage the presence of specific groups, typically young people, in public spaces by emitting frequencies audible mainly to younger age ranges.

Both branches of research and practice remain limited in Portugal. A "CPTED Chapter" bringing together four researchers — Ana Neves and Mónica Dinis in Lisbon, and Susana Barreto and Miguel Saraiva, both lecturers at the University of Porto — was proposed under the International CPTED Association, aiming to consolidate and give greater visibility to the field. DAC and the Australian Design Out Crime Research Centre (DOCRC) approach crime prevention from a perspective closer to professional design practice, integrating creative and collaborative methodologies centred on the user and on social innovation. DAC was originally developed at Central Saint Martins by designer Lorraine Gamman, in collaboration with the London Metropolitan Police, resulting in a distinctive methodology and numerous publications and products aimed at reducing crime and its social impacts; Gamman currently also participates in the FCT-funded I.PLACING project. In Sydney, the DOCRC has likewise distinguished itself through innovative, co-design-based approaches. No Design Against Crime approach currently exists specifically for the city of Porto (Tedim & Barros, 2010) — a gap identified more than fifteen years ago that largely persists today: CPTED remains largely unknown in Portugal, with limited use in urban planning projects and absent from legislation and academic training (Saraiva et al., 2019).

Understanding security itself is central to designing effective prevention strategies. The concept comprises two components: objective security, linked to measurable indicators such as crime and victimisation rates; and subjective security, or the sense of insecurity, expressed emotionally (fear of crime), cognitively (risk perception) and behaviourally (avoidance and self-protective behaviours). Crime hot spots do not necessarily coincide with hot spots of fear: the latter are frequently associated with urban degradation, poor lighting, low visibility or isolation, as well as contextual factors such as time of day. CPTED and DAC each address one or both of these dimensions — CPTED chiefly through the physical environment, DAC through user-centred, participatory solutions — though the use of Design in crime prevention also raises significant ethical questions, including the risk of social exclusion, excessive surveillance, disproportionate restriction of individual freedoms, and the risk that some design solutions reproduce or reinforce pre-existing social inequalities. These tensions are nowhere more visible than in one specific and widely debated design strategy, to which the discussion now turns: hostile design.

Hostile design and the limits of prevention

Hostile design pushes the ethical questions raised above to their limit. Where CPTED and DAC seek to reconcile safety with inclusion, hostile design — also termed hostile architecture — pursues control of public space through elements of the built environment that deliberately orient and constrain people's behaviour, often at the direct expense of the most vulnerable. A now-familiar example is the anti-homeless spike: metal or concrete studs embedded in flat surfaces to make them uncomfortable or impossible to lie on (Fig. 2). Rowland Atkinson and Aidan While (2015), both from the University of Sheffield, argue that such measures form part of a broader pattern of hostility toward social difference and poverty in cities.



Fig. 2
Concrete spikes installed beneath a road bridge in Guangzhou, Guangdong, China.
Source: Imaginechina/REX, https://tinyurl.com/54s3c646

Portugal is no exception: in April 2025, the newspaper *Público* documented the placement of plant pots at the entrance of a building on Praça da República, in Porto, to deter rough sleepers from settling there (Fig. 3), and invited readers to report further cases of hostile architecture in the country (*Público*, 2025).



Fig. 3
Pots placed at a building entrance on Praça da República, Porto, to deter the presence of rough sleepers (2017).
Adriano Miranda/Público (archive).

It is important not to confuse hostile design with "bad design": while bad design can inadvertently favour deviant behaviour, hostile design is an intentional strategy for controlling the use of public space. One of its most cited examples is the "Camden bench" (Fig. 4), commissioned by the London Borough of Camden in 2012 and engineered to prevent a series of undesirable uses, making it virtually impossible to sleep on. Its features classify it as anti-drug-dealing and anti-littering (no crevices to hide substances or accumulate waste), anti-theft (recesses allow users to store bags behind their legs, out of reach), anti-skateboarding (edge variations discourage grinding), and anti-graffiti (a paint-repellent coating).



Fig. 4
The Camden bench, a concrete urban furniture structure commissioned by the London Borough of Camden (2012).
Source: https://tinyurl.com/4tyaftsw

"We are here today to demonstrate that it is still possible to use them for skateboarding." Dylan Leadley-Watkins, after performing a trick on one of the benches installed in Covent Garden (as cited in Quinn, 2014).

In response to such acts of reclamation, Lorraine Gamman has argued that if design is to be used to reduce anti-social behaviour, democracy must be reflected in the crime-prevention strategies implemented in public spaces (Gamman & Fisher, 2019; UAL Social Design Institute, 2019). As architectural historian Iain Borden (2015) observes, citizenship in public space is often conditioned on working or consuming — behaviour is deemed acceptable if calm and predictable (such as sitting at a café terrace) but not if it involves musical performance, protest or skateboarding. Jane Jacobs (1961-2011) described this logic as the transformation of public space into the controlled, surveilled environment of a shopping centre.

Alternatives to hostile design include the simple removal of benches and bins from public spaces — itself a contested solution — or genuinely inclusive design. Canadian charity RainCity Housing, for instance, developed benches in Vancouver that convert into shelters for people experiencing homelessness (Fig. 5), while designer Matthias Megyeri's *Sweet Dreams* project reimagined security devices — spikes, barbed wire, guard-dog silhouettes —

as playful, humorous urban furniture and homeware (Fig. 6), demonstrating that safety and accessibility need not come at the cost of exclusion.



Fig. 5
A bench by RainCity Housing, Vancouver, that converts into a shelter for people experiencing homelessness (2025).
Source: https://tinyurl.com/bdhtr8sp



Fig. 6
Sweet Dreams project reimagines security devices as playful urban furniture and homeware (2008).
Source: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/94006

Integrating the theme into research and pedagogical practice

This section presents two strands through which design oriented toward crime prevention has been integrated into the author's work: a research project, I.PLACING, and a pedagogical practice, the four-university Blended Intensive Programme.

Research project — I.PLACING: spatial, visual, and social analysis of urban safety in transit environments

On 20 April 2025, the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) approved funding for I.PLACING, led by Principal Investigator Professor Miguel Saraiva — with whom the author also shares responsibility for the BIP on Urban Transformation and Public Safety (2022–present). The author is a member of the project's multidisciplinary team, alongside researchers from the Faculty of Law (Criminology), the Faculty of Arts (Geography) and the Faculty of Fine Arts (Design).

I.PLACING will develop a replicable, technology-based decision-support procedure and web-app to assess and monitor insecurity and vulnerability in cities — particularly transport stations — combining advances in Geography, Criminology, Design and Policing. Supported by geospatial and AI tools and by big and small data, it will test innovative planning and design solutions to promote safer, more inclusive cities, structured around four objectives: (1) integrating Criminology, Geography/Planning and Design practices in Portuguese research, with potential for replication elsewhere; (2) producing an interdisciplinary diagnosis of insecurity and vulnerability in Porto and Lisbon's transit environments; (3) developing a dedicated web-GIS platform for spatial statistical analysis, decision support and public dissemination; and (4) informing municipal action plans and urban interventions to mitigate insecurity and promote social cohesion.

The project's advisory board includes Lorraine Gamman (Design Against Crime, University of the Arts London), Macarena Rau (President, International CPTED Association), and specialists in built-environment security, geospatial analysis and predictive crime-prevention technologies from the Netherlands, Norway, the United States and Belgium.

Pedagogical practice

Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) on Urban Transformation and Public Safety

Since its launch in Rotterdam in 2022, the Erasmus+ BIP on Urban Transformation and Public Safety has brought together Inholland University of Applied Sciences (the Netherlands, coordinating institution), Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, the University of Porto, and the University of Pisa (Barreto, Saraiva, et al, 2024). Students apply analytical tools related to urban planning and public safety to a real case, combining online collaboration with an intensive week of interdisciplinary, multicultural teamwork, culminating in diagnoses and intervention proposals presented to a panel of lecturers and peers (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7
Field analysis session during the Blended Intensive Programme (BIP), held at the University of Porto (2024). Author: Susana Barreto.

Editions have been held in Rotterdam, Bergen, Porto and, again, Rotterdam in 2025, and in Pisa in September 2026. The most recent Porto edition (October 2024), focused on the regeneration of the Antas area, was attended by three representatives of Porto City Council's Urban Planning Division, illustrating the programme's capacity to feed interdisciplinary, participatory input into real municipal planning processes.

Case studies

This section briefly presents three case studies illustrating distinct applications of design in response to crime, social exclusion and public safety — two from the United Kingdom and one from Portugal, the latter involving the author directly as researcher.

Black Heroes Poster Project, DACRC

In July 2022, the Design Against Crime Research Centre (DACRC) asked inmates at HMP Isis, a UK young offender institution, "Who do you admire? Who are your heroes? Who can inspire you to change?"

Their answers, spanning music, sport, design and public figures such as Martin Luther King, informed a series of posters produced in collaboration with a design agency and exhibited at Central Saint Martins and across HMP Isis during Black History Month 2022, intended to provide inmates with a continuous source of inspiration throughout the year.

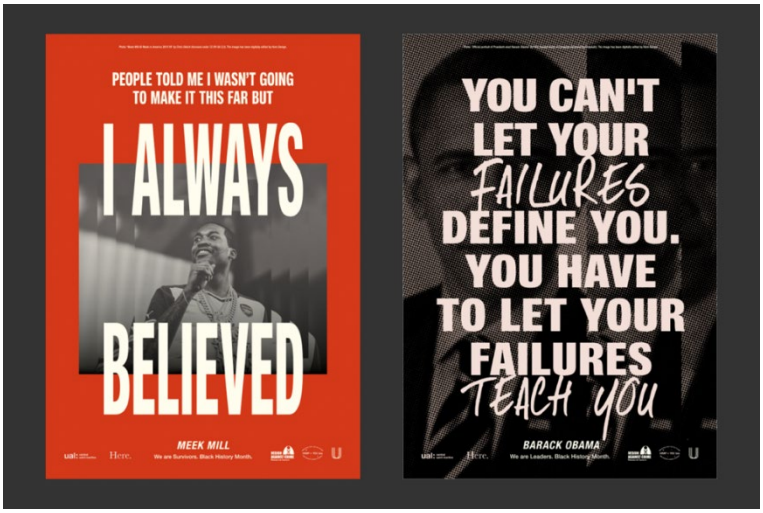

Fig. 8
Poster series produced for the Black Heroes Poster Project during Black History Month, exhibited at Central Saint Martins and across HMP Isis (2022).
Source: https://designagainstcrime.com/Black-Heroes-Posters

Youth Designing Against Crime (YDAC)

Run by the University of Salford's Design Against Crime Solution Centre with UK charity Catch22, YDAC challenges young people at risk of delinquency to address problems in their communities through design, working alongside police officers and urban planners (Davey,

Wootton, & Marselle, 2012). Aligned with Hart's (1992) emphasis on children and young people's right to participate in decisions affecting their lives, an early process evaluation (Davey, Wootton, & Marselle, 2012) found that YDAC improved participants' confidence, qualifications and skills, strengthened relationships with adults, and contributed to social cohesion, with subsequent interest in replicating the approach nationally and across Europe.



Fig. 9
A YDAC team with their police mentor in the London Borough of Southwark (2012).
Source: Davey et al (2012).

ECO – Echoing the Communitarian Self

Funded by FCT and led from the Communication Design field, ECO documented self-initiated community practices in a disadvantaged social housing neighbourhood — Balteiro, in Vila Nova de Gaia — historically marked by high levels of crime associated with substance use (Martins & Brandão, 2024). Working with Vila Nova de Gaia City Council's social services, the author's research team analysed two grassroots initiatives, the Balteiro Youth Recreational Association and the Escola Oficina training programme, both driven by local figures including Mr José Moreira and social worker Diana Mota. The project developed inclusive, participatory communication strategies — exhibitions, community publications, visual narratives, digital platforms and local campaigns — together with a critical, co-design-based pedagogy involving students from FBAUP, IPCA and Universidade Lusófona, with the aim of amplifying these practices and enabling their replication in other social housing contexts.



Fig. 10
Mr José Moreira with the mixed football team of the Balteiro Recreational Association, which he founded (2023).
Source: Cláudia Lima and ECO project.

Replicability potential and concluding synthesis

The approach outlined in this chapter — bridging Design and Crime as a territory of research, teaching and intervention — draws on consolidated methodologies such as CPTED and Design Against Crime, adapted to the Portuguese context. Centred on the articulation between visual analysis, critical awareness and interdisciplinary engagement, this methodological structure was developed to respond to local specificities while remaining sensitive to different academic and urban realities. Examples such as the Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme demonstrate the feasibility of transposing this pedagogical model to different institutions and audiences, strengthening the field's legitimation as an emerging area and suggesting that Design-and-Crime intersections can generate transferable, applicable and socially relevant strategies.

It should be noted that the case studies discussed in this chapter draw predominantly on non-Portuguese practice, pending the empirical findings that I.PLACING will itself generate for the Portuguese context; the arguments advanced here should therefore be read as groundwork for, rather than a substitute for, that forthcoming evidence base.

On this basis, several principles can be drawn for the legitimation of Design and Crime as a research territory in Portugal. Design and Crime should be affirmed as a legitimate field of research and practice, consolidating its strategic role in crime prevention, anticipating scenarios, critically reinterpreting crime-related strategies and imagery, and creating visual artefacts that promote safety, inclusion and visual literacy. Design should also strengthen its role as an interface between disciplines — criminology, urban planning, psychology — fostering interdisciplinary methodological practice. It is likewise essential to build the capacity of students and professionals, raising awareness of design's contribution to reducing fear of crime and to conceiving innovative solutions that reconcile safety, inclusion and access

to public space. Finally, the effective implementation of visual strategies positions Design as a key ally in promoting social justice and safety, contributing to more resilient, informed and inclusive societies.

Looking ahead, several pathways may support the recognition and development of the field:

- integrating principles of preventive design into academic and professional training, through curricula aligned with DAC and CPTED approaches;
- fostering collaboration with local communities through the co-creation of solutions responsive to specific safety and well-being needs;
- evaluating the impact of design interventions on crime reduction through case studies and empirical research;
- disseminating knowledge and good practice through workshops, seminars and publications that share experiences, methodologies and results, encouraging the adoption of preventive design strategies across different contexts.

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Citizenship, Difference, and Inclusion: Philosophical Perspectives and Contributions of Art and Arts Education

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Abstract

This chapter discusses citizenship as an experience of *belonging* in relation to the concepts of *difference-in-itself* (Deleuze), *subjectivation* and *practices of freedom* (Foucault), *experience* (Larrosa), and the *distribution of the sensible* (Rancière). Through a theoretical-conceptual approach, it proposes an understanding of citizenship not as a static legal status, but as a relational and ethical *event*, closely linked to the production of singular subjectivities. The text shifts citizenship from the domain of identity to the plane of plurality, configuring it as a sensitive and nomadic participation in the world. It argues that, as long as difference is reduced to a normative category, educational practices will continue to reinforce processes of integration and normalisation without enabling the effective coexistence of plurality. In the second part, the article examines how art, grounded in an aesthetic rationality, can foster *belonging* and expand forms of inventive inclusion. Within this context, performative practices are analysed, with particular emphasis on Ian McKellen and Cão Pestana, whose work challenges conventional understandings of the body, vulnerability, and alterity. From this perspective, the arts, informed by the concept of Minor Education, are conceived as a privileged field for questioning and reinventing practices of citizenship, opening possibilities for forms of participation that are more responsive to difference and plurality.

Keywords

Citizenship; Difference; Belonging; Inclusion; Arts.

Introduction

Citizenship as becoming: from normalisation to the aesthetics of difference-in-itself

The motivation for this study arises from the observation of a striking asymmetry within contemporary liberal citizenship: while some enjoy rights without bearing the weight of corresponding duties, others, often in situations of vulnerability, are burdened with social demands while their fundamental rights are systematically denied. In light of this observation, we seek to construct a theoretical bridge linking citizenship as a sense of *belonging*, the concept of *difference-in-itself* (Deleuze, 1968/2006), and practices of inclusion. The aim is to propose a form of citizenship that is not confined to fixed identities but rather opens itself as a territory of becoming, where *belonging* emerges from the power of being different while still constituting an active part of social plurality. The problem of *belonging*, therefore, lies not merely in the absence of laws but in their normative character, which reduces social bonds to obedience rather than to the production of meaning.

This text was conceived with the purpose of challenging the limits of *contractual citizenship* by exposing its operation as a mechanism of normalization that produces exclusion. Rather than seeking to establish methodological prescriptions or present strictly empirical accounts, this article adopts a distinctly theoretical and conceptual approach, aimed at opening spaces for critical reflection in teacher education. Accordingly, the discussions developed here are intended as open conceptual tools, designed to stimulate debate in continuing professional development programmes, educational events, and other spaces for dialogue among teachers seeking to question the normative constraints embedded in everyday school life.

In modernity, citizenship is presented as a contract of rights and duties and as a guarantee of formal inclusion. However, when examined through the lens of the philosophy of difference, this inclusion reveals itself as one of the normalising dispositifs (Foucault, 1975/1987) integrated into disciplinary technologies. By adjusting the subject to a standardised identity in order to include them, the State and its institutions, most notably the school, silence *difference-in-itself* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1997), transforming *belonging* into an exercise in domestication.

Belonging, as a subjective and political experience, can only be fully realised when difference is welcomed as a constitutive force of the common rather than as a deviation. Thus, the focus shifts from identity (stable and exclusionary) to what Deleuze (1968/2006) calls *difference-in-itself*: that through which a thing is what it is, rather than what distinguishes it from something else. From this perspective, inclusion transcends the mere integration of identity groups and becomes the creation of conditions through which difference, as a productive force, transforms the common. As Rancière (1996) argues, politics occurs when those who

have no share disrupt the *distribution of the sensible* (Rancière, 2000/2004b) and demand to be heard as subjects of a common speech. In this sense, art and arts education emerge not as curricular appendages but as territories of resistance and ethical experimentation. By engaging with the power of becoming, they generate experiences that are frequently ignored by juridical forms of citizenship. To consolidate this discussion, we analyse the performances and activism of Ian McKellen, understanding them as acts of creation that destabilise fixed identities, transforming life into an aesthetics of existence and citizenship into a continuous performance of freedom.[2]

Methodological pathway

This study is characterised as qualitative research grounded in bibliographical inquiry and reconstructive analysis. The methodological procedure resembles Foucauldian and Deleuzian cartography, operating as a "toolbox" in which the works of Foucault (1975/1987), Deleuze & Guattari (1980/1997), Rancière (2000/2004b), Larrosa (2002), Silva (2000), Veiga-Neto (2003), Gallo (2009), and Pereira (2012) are mobilised to challenge contemporary practices of inclusion. The articulation of these authors is woven rhizomatically, seeking to destabilise the idea of normalisation in favour of multiplicity. The analysis is organised into three movements: the diagnosis of the crisis of formal citizenship, the deconstruction of normalising dispositifs, and finally the proposal of citizenship as an *event*.

That *contractual citizenship* functions far more as a dispositif of normalisation that paradoxically produces exclusion (Foucault, 1975/1987). This exclusion within inclusion is narrated in the song *Cidadão* (*Citizen*), composed by Lúcio Barbosa in the 1970s, first recorded by Zé Geraldo in 1979, and later recorded by Zé Ramalho in 1992. The subject who constructs the building is the same one who is barred from entering it. Once construction is complete, the worker may only enter the space to serve, never as one who belongs to it. As the lyrics state: "Do you see that school, sir? I shed my blood there. I thought that one day my son might also learn there […] But the porter threw him out because he had no money", demonstrating that a functional identity does not guarantee the dignity of *belonging*. The traditional model of citizenship, grounded in representation, is incapable of accommodating *difference-in-itself* because it requires the subject to conform to a norm in order to be recognised. As Deleuze (1968/2006) warns, representational models restrict educational vision to a single horizon of sameness, reducing multiplicity to equality.

According to Foucault (1970/2000), in *Theatrum Philosophicum*, representation is a system that seeks to domesticate difference by establishing a single centre and a horizon of identity (the Same). By reducing citizenship to an inventory of competences and behaviours, *belonging* becomes conditional upon the subject's capacity to resemble others. Inclusion thus becomes a process of assimilation rather than one of creation.

To break with this logic, citizenship must be displaced into the field of the *event*. Unlike a historical fact, the Deleuzian *event* ruptures linearity; it is a line of flight that enables the subject to cease being what the norm prescribed. Citizenship is not a title but the production of *practices of freedom* that affirm singularity. This means recognising that *belonging* does not arise through the signing of a contract but through the emergence of a new possibility of existence that the system could neither predict nor capture.

From identity to becoming: limits of contractual citizenship and the emergence of difference-in-itself

The crisis of formal citizenship and citizenship as event

In modernity, citizenship is understood on the premise that, once invested with rights and duties, the subject comes to belong to the social body. However, an analysis of inclusion practices from the perspective of *difference-in-itself* reveals not merely the subject's incorporation into the contract, but the emergence of a new possibility of existence that the system could neither predict nor capture. While Deleuze (1969/1974) focuses on the *event* as a force of differentiation, Foucault (1970/2000) locates it as a rupture within networks of power where the norm is confronted by a resistance unforeseen in the calculations of dispositifs.

To make this relationship between subject and world more comprehensible, Deleuze (1986/2005) employs the metaphor of the fold. Let us imagine reality as a single, infinite fabric. What we call the "self" is not a separate piece cut from the cloth but rather a fold made within the fabric itself. The inside (our subjectivity) is the outside (the world, culture, affects) gathered and bent back upon itself. From this perspective, the subject is not in the world; rather, the subject is a particular curvature of the world. Inclusion, therefore, is not about placing the Other "inside" the school but about allowing the world to fold in different ways, recognising that every singularity constitutes an essential fold in the social fabric. At this point, Pereira's (2012) concept of the threshold converges with the fold: citizenship occurs between subject and world, in the border zone where the subject becomes something new through encountering the other. It is in this *in--between* space that *difference-in-itself* emerges as the invention of new modes of life.

The dispositif of normalisation: inclusion as a technology of control

Foucault (1975/1987) demonstrates that modernity replaced violence with the subtlety of the norm, whereby normalisation operates as a technical process for producing conformity. Citizenship grounded in the rights/duties binary functions in the same way as disciplinary power: a structure that, rather than embracing alterity, seeks to produce predictable

subjects. The power of normalisation "compels homogeneity while simultaneously individualising, thereby making it possible to measure deviations and render differences useful" (Foucault, 1975/1987, p. 153). This logic of adjustment is what Veiga-Neto (2003) identifies as the machines of governmentality: inclusion becomes a strategy for managing the risks that difference represents to social equilibrium.

The subject is included on the condition of being normalised, monitored, and corrected. This erasure of subjectivity resonates with the poem *Eu, Etiqueta* (*I, Label*) by Carlos Drummond de Andrade (1984), in which the subject becomes an advertiser of products and even feelings are identified by abbreviations. The labelled subject reflects a form of citizenship reduced to static identity, in which the individual is fragmented into codes serving the system. Resistance requires understanding the subject as becoming (Deleuze, 1968/2006), escaping the capture of governmentality through a continuous movement of variation that refuses to be immobilised by contractual moulds, recognising instead the subject as a flow of intensities in perpetual differentiation.

Ontology of difference and minor education

Advancing towards citizenship as *event* requires breaking with the metaphysical tradition that subordinated difference to identity through the shackles of representation: Identity in the Concept, Analogy in Judgement, Opposition of Predicates, and Resemblance in Perception (Deleuze, 1968/2006).[3] Transposing this ontology into education, Gallo (2003) warns of the danger of moulding students to fit pre-established identities, annihilating the power of life in favour of a productive citizen. Silva (2000) politicises this issue by arguing that identity and difference are social productions traversed by relations of power that determine who belongs; to define *belonging* is simultaneously to exercise the power to expel the other to the margins of difference. Thus, inclusion based solely on identity reveals itself as an act of tolerance—a benevolent concession from the centre towards deviation that maintains subalternity under surveillance. Tolerating a disabled student in a mainstream school is a way of saying that their presence is acceptable only insofar as it does not destabilise the established norm. Silva further emphasises that tolerance implies a value judgement in which the one who tolerates retains the power to define what is acceptable. In this sense, tolerance does not include; it merely pacifies conflict.

The distinction between this citizenship of tolerance and inclusion as affirmation gains visual expression in the short film *Ian* (Goldfarb, 2018), in which inclusion only occurs when the force of coexistence breaks through the social barrier, allowing Ian to cease being a tolerated other and become an active member of the group. Against tolerance, we propose rhizomatic plurality (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1997), in which *belonging* emerges from the singularity that is necessary to the whole. This shift requires moving from *major education* — instituted

by the State and by curricula aimed at reproducing the social order — to *minor education*: that which operates within the cracks and interstices of the system (Gallo, 2002, 2003), a micropolitical practice that occupies these spaces to produce autonomous thought. Within this context, aesthetic experience functions as the threshold of *subjectivation* proposed by Pereira (2012), enabling lines of flight through which inclusion is experienced as the right to difference, opening spaces for life to pulsate in its fullest variation within the micropolitics of everyday school life.

From the distribution of the sensible to the cracks of minor education

Artistic performance constitutes a space for the production of subjectivity and the reconfiguration of the sensible, as exemplified by the practices of Ian McKellen and Cão Pestana. For *difference-in-itself* to take shape, it is necessary to understand Rancière's (1996) distinction between *police* and *politics*. For Rancière, what we commonly call democracy is, in fact, the institutional *police*: an administrative order that distributes places, functions, and voices, determining who may speak and who must merely obey. This order is grounded in the *aesthetic distribution*, a system of evidences that defines what is visible and audible. Genuine politics—and, consequently, genuine inclusion—occurs only when this order is interrupted through *dissensus*. As Rancière states: "Politics occurs when the presupposition of the equality of any speaking being with any other speaking being is enacted in dissensus" (Rancière, 1996, p. 45). In this sense, dissensus is not a conflict of opinions but a clash of perceptions: the established order declares that a particular subject lacks the capacity to occupy a given space, while that subject acts as though such capacity already exists.

This interruption is poetically described in *The Flower and the Nausea* (*A Flor e a Náusea*) (Drummond, 1945), where the flower breaking through the asphalt becomes the event that disrupts the urban police order. By occupying a forbidden space and compelling the world to acknowledge its existence, the flower performs a redistribution: what was previously invisible demands to be seen. Inclusion, therefore, is an act of emancipation:

> Instruction can therefore mean two absolutely opposite things: either confirming an incapacity through the very act that claims to reduce it, or, conversely, compelling a capacity that is ignored or denied to recognise itself and to develop all the consequences of that recognition. The first act is called stultification and the second emancipation. (Rancière, 1987/2004a, pp. 11-12)

Real inclusion, therefore, does not grant rights; rather, it verifies an equality that already exists. The included citizen is not the one who adapts to an assigned place, but the one who creates a new place through their presence and discourse. Drummond's flower materialises Gallo's (2002, 2003) concept of *minor education* by finding openings within the rigidity of bureaucratic, normative asphalt — anaesthetised by the nausea of identities — through which life can emerge. As Gallo (2009) suggests when reflecting on how processes of normalisation

affect pedagogical practices in much the same way as dark and viscous asphalt, "we can tear through this thickness and make flowers bloom...", transforming what was previously perceived as noise or imperfection into creative potential. Pereira's (2011) contribution strengthens Gallo's argument by advocating a shift from an instrumental rationality, focused on predictable outcomes, towards an aesthetic rationality that operates at the threshold of *experience* and *subjectivation*. This shift enables subjects to find the openings necessary for inclusion understood as the right to singularity, allowing them to belong to the common world without renouncing their constitutive difference.

The sense of belonging: aesthetics of existence and experience

For citizenship to cease being a form of domestication, it is necessary to shift attention towards the care of the self. Foucault (1984) argues that freedom consists in the creation of oneself as a work of art, whereby the individual learns not to become enslaved either to personal impulses or to external power. This aesthetics of existence takes shape in the film *Billy Elliot* (Daldry, 2000). By diverging from the destiny imposed upon him—boxing and the coal mine—Billy exercises the care of the self through dance, which functions as the *experience* described by Larrosa (2002, p. 21): "Experience is what happens to us, what befalls us, what touches us." *Belonging* thus becomes a process of *subjectivation* through which the subject produces meaning within their own trajectory, refusing to exist merely as a product of institutions. To care for oneself is to prepare oneself to be touched by the world, breaking through the armour of normalised identity so that *experience* may occur.

However, this process of self-constitution does not take place in isolation. As Ortega (1999) observes, care of the self necessarily requires care for the other. At the aesthetic threshold (Pereira, 2012), the subject experiences *belonging* as an affective intensity within a field of forces in which difference becomes the only common measure, transforming ontological vulnerability into a form of sovereign and collective resistance.

Inclusion as becoming and nomadic citizenship

If *contractual citizenship* requires the subject to remain fixed within a stable identity, *nomadic citizenship* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1997) proposes an existence in movement, inhabiting the *in-between* and refusing rigid boundaries such as normal *versus* abnormal. It is the affirmation of *becoming*, captured in the urgency of *Metamorfose Ambulante* (*Walking Metamorphosis*) by Raul Seixas (1973). The refusal to hold "that same old opinion about everything" embodies the essence of rhizomatic thought and the right to inhabit the plasticity of being. Inclusion thus becomes a process of becoming-citizen, a continuous movement of differentiation in which the subject affirms their nomadic singularity as a right to variation. *Minor education* (Gallo, 2002, 2003) transforms the pedagogical environment into a

laboratory of aesthetic and political experimentation, where the school becomes a space for encounters between pluralities.

We conclude this first part by affirming that genuine inclusion requires abandoning stable identity in favour of the capacity to transform oneself and to affect one's surroundings without being crushed by them. Yet for this form of citizenship not to remain confined to philosophical abstraction, it is necessary to seek the territory in which it becomes visible: the body and the voice. This territory is Art. On the stage and through performance, the nomadic citizen actualises their lines of flight. As we shall see below, in the work of Ian McKellen, art enables the subject to cease being a "clinical case" and instead become the political protagonist of their own difference.

Art, performance, and experience: aesthetic practice and citizenship

Performance as a space of citizenship: the case of Ian McKellen

Citizenship, understood as an *event*, emerges through the rupture of norms and the affirmation of difference, finding in artistic performance one of its privileged spaces of manifestation. Through the body in action and its relation to others, citizenship ceases to be an abstract concept and becomes a sensitive and relational experience. In this context, performance may transcend mere representation, producing subjectivities and reconfiguring the sensible, displacing regimes of visibility and inviting spectators into an active process of meaning-making. Performance therefore functions simultaneously as an aesthetic and political practice.

An illustrative example can be found in Sir Ian McKellen's appearance on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* (2026, February 4). During the interview, McKellen performed the "Strangers' Case" monologue from *Sir Thomas More*, an Elizabethan play written collaboratively, with Shakespeare widely believed to have contributed to the text. The monologue, from Act II, Scene 4, refers to the anti-immigrant riots that took place in London in 1517 and is delivered by Thomas More to a crowd demanding the removal of foreigners from the city. McKellen's relationship with this text is longstanding. He first played Thomas More in the Nottingham Playhouse production of *Sir Thomas More* in 1964 and subsequently performed the monologue in different contexts. His 2026 appearance therefore represents not the introduction of the text, but its reactivation within a contemporary media context, bringing a historical discussion of "strangers" into dialogue with present-day debates about immigration, exclusion, and *belonging*.

Before performing the monologue, McKellen contextualises the historical episode represented in *Sir Thomas More*. He explains that, in London, a crowd gathers in the streets

protesting against the presence of foreigners — "strangers" — whom he explicitly relates to contemporary immigrants. The authorities send Thomas More, then a young lawyer, to quell the riots. McKellen emphasises that More appeals to the crowd in two ways: first, by reminding them that their actions violate the law; and second, by appealing to their humanity and asking them to imagine themselves in the position of those whom they seek to exclude. He then performs the "Strangers' Case" monologue from Act II, Scene 4 of *Sir Thomas More*. The episode is historically associated with the London riots of 1 May 1517, known as Evil May Day, when More, then under-sheriff of London, was sent to calm the rioters.

The speech recounts a riot directed against foreigners and constructs a powerful reversal of perspective. More's appeal does not rely solely on legal authority but also asks the rioters to imagine themselves as foreigners in another country. By inviting them to consider what it would mean to be subjected to the same violence and exclusion that they direct towards others, the speech unsettles the distinction between "citizen" and "stranger". The foreigner is no longer presented as an absolute other, but as someone whose position could potentially be occupied by oneself. In this sense, the speech opens an ethical space in which *belonging* can be reconsidered through the recognition of shared vulnerability and humanity.

The significance of McKellen's performance lies not only in the words of the historical monologue but also in the displacement produced by its reactivation in a contemporary media environment. A text associated with a sixteenth-century episode of xenophobic violence is brought into contact with present-day debates about immigration and exclusion. McKellen's performance therefore creates a temporal and interpretive encounter between past and present. The historical "stranger" becomes connected to the contemporary figure of the immigrant, while the spectator is invited to reconsider how categories of *belonging* and exclusion are produced and sustained.

Another example of McKellen's performative work can be found in the film *Richard III* (Loncraine, 1995), an adaptation of Shakespeare's play. Through his interpretation of Shakespeare's tragic text, McKellen offers a complex representation of Richard III, drawing attention to the character's marginality and his relationship to the social order that surrounds him. Rather than reducing Richard to a purely moral category, the performance foregrounds the processes through which identity is constructed in relation to difference, exclusion, and power. Read through a Foucauldian perspective, this may be understood as an interrogation of the categories through which subjects are rendered intelligible, normal, or abnormal. McKellen's performance thus destabilises fixed distinctions between the subject and the other, inviting reflection on how identities are produced within relations of power.

Ian McKellen's performances and activism, including his appearance on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* (2026, February 4), highlight the relationship between art, difference, and citizenship. Interpreted through the lens of Mandoki (2007), his reading of the Shakespeare-

associated text demonstrates how hostility towards the "other" is sustained not only through political discourse but also through culturally shaped regimes of sensibility. In rejecting the foreigner, the spectator may participate in a dynamic of exclusion that is both social and affective. More's speech, reactivated by McKellen, disrupts this logic by inviting audiences to consider the position of the other. This aesthetic displacement can be understood as a shift in how a situation is perceived, felt, and interpreted, involving not only rational reflection but also affective and embodied responses. Rather than necessarily transforming fear into empathy, however, the performance creates conditions for a possible displacement in the spectator's relation to the figure of the foreigner, revealing that perceptions of difference and exclusion are culturally constructed and therefore open to questioning and transformation.

Performance can therefore be understood as a space that articulates aesthetics and pedagogy, enabling encounters with alternative ways of feeling, perceiving, and relating to others. It constitutes an aesthetic-pedagogical space in which sensibilities may be reconfigured and citizenship approached as a relational and embodied practice. According to Rancière (2000/2004b), artistic practices intervene in the *distribution of the sensible*, affecting what can be seen, heard, said, and recognised within a given social order. In this context, the spectator is not simply a passive recipient of meaning but may become actively involved in interpreting and negotiating what is presented (Rancière, 2008/2012). McKellen's practice further illustrates identity as a process of becoming: through the reactivation of a historical text within a contemporary media context, spectators may be displaced into a different ethical and affective position, reconsidering the figure of the "other" as someone whose vulnerability and humanity cannot be separated from their own.

In dialogue with Foucault (1984, 1984/1985), performance may therefore also be understood as an aesthetics of existence, opening possibilities for questioning established ways of being and relating to others. From this perspective, artistic performance does not merely represent the world but can create spaces in which relations of power, difference, and *belonging* become perceptible and open to interrogation. Citizenship, consequently, is not simply enacted through the possession of rights or membership in a political community; it may also emerge through practices that challenge exclusion, unsettle established identities, and create possibilities for more inclusive forms of coexistence.

Artistic practices and the reconfiguration of the sensible: the case of Ção Pestana

Ção Pestana is an important figure in the development of performance art in Portugal during the post-25 April period. Her trajectory, which began in the 1970s within the experimental context of the Coimbra Circle of Plastic Arts (*Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra*), is characterised by a multidisciplinary approach that problematises the body and femininity. By

exploring the body as language—through the intersection of gesture, image, and time—Pestana operates within an intimate and conceptual register that challenges the boundaries of traditional art.

The consolidation of her practice took place in spaces of resistance and hybridity, such as the Cerveira Biennial (Silva, 1998), where the recognition of her actions contributed to the visibility and legitimisation of artistic practices that were still considered marginal. If performance foregrounds citizenship as bodily presence and action, Pestana's installations extend this dimension by involving the spectator in complex sensory dispositifs in which space, time, and materiality generate new forms of perception and participation. As Pinto (2024) argues, this field of experimentation was closely connected to the cultural processes through which democracy was experienced and negotiated in Portugal. Pestana's work can therefore be understood as a form of "body-manifestation" that not only inhabits public space but also contributes to its political and sensory reconfiguration, opening possibilities for questioning exclusion and defending more inclusive forms of participation.



Fig. 1. Installation in *Zapping* (2026). CAAA São João da Madeira.
Author: Ção Pestana.

In the project *Zapping*, Ção Pestana (2026) presents an installation (Fig. 1) that reactivates eight analogue black-and-white photographs from the 1990s. Originally produced within a private context, these images are relocated into a multisensory exhibition dispositif composed of drawers, light, sound, and tactile elements. The use of drawers and tactile components moves the spectator beyond a purely contemplative position because, to access the images, one must act. The experiential dimension of the work is therefore activated

through the spectator's participation, as opening the drawers becomes part of the process through which the work is encountered and interpreted. In an informal conversation, Pestana (personal communication, April 18, 2026) explained that she chose black, grey, and white because of their strong dramatic charge. Similar to German Expressionism, the use of colour is not intended to represent reality faithfully but rather to convey emotions, psychological tensions, and inner states. The artist further explained:

> It is a return to seeing and feeling analogue photography before the fixation of colour. In nature, life is perceived through the gaze as multicoloured; when black and white are used, the intention is to metamorphose that fixed reality in dramatic terms. The two pieces (Fig. 2) reflect my fundamental exploratory premises: dominants and dominated. (Ç. Pestana, personal communication, April 18, 2026)

The photographs are not merely memories because, when reactivated through sound and light in the present, they acquire new possibilities of interpretation. They cease to function simply as fixed records of a previous moment and become part of an encounter between past and present. This corresponds to what the artist describes as a dialogue between the dated gaze and the contemporary gaze. The work invites the opening of memory, audience participation, and a multiplicity of interpretations, generating a critical dialogue between two temporalities: the moment of capture in the 1990s and the moment of reinterpretation in 2026. By inviting spectators to manipulate and interact with the installation, the artist transforms photographic records of the past into what may be understood as "living artefacts", extending their capacity for meaning-making.

According to the artist herself, the work constitutes an "epistemology of knowledge and vision", in which re-authorship and the complicity between artist and curator give rise to a new piece that merges past and present into an open narrative. Such an encounter can be read in relation to Larrosa's (2002) understanding of *experience* as an *event* capable of transforming the subject.

In *Zapping* (Fig. 1), Ção Pestana's work ceases to function solely as an object of contemplation and becomes an *experience* of *aisthesis* (Mandoki, 2007), in which perception and affect contribute to the construction of singular meanings. By disrupting the stability of the dormant archive, the installation transforms private memory into an open and public *experience*. This process has both pedagogical and political potential. Such openness resonates with Larrosa's (2002) understanding of *experience* as something that can transform the subject, and with Rancière's (2000/2004b) conception of art as a (re)*distribution of the sensible* that (re)organises ways of seeing, feeling, and interpreting. The installation therefore becomes a relational and experimental space in which multiple readings are possible.

According to Pestana (personal communication, April 18, 2026), *Submerged States* (Fig. 2) refers to "life stories that evoke ideas of confinement, torture, silence, and their scars as

symbolic forms of banalised repression, in this case of the feminine". Within this context, artistic practice can be understood as a dispositif of sensitive and political formation in which questions of citizenship emerge through the interaction between subjects, artwork, and world.

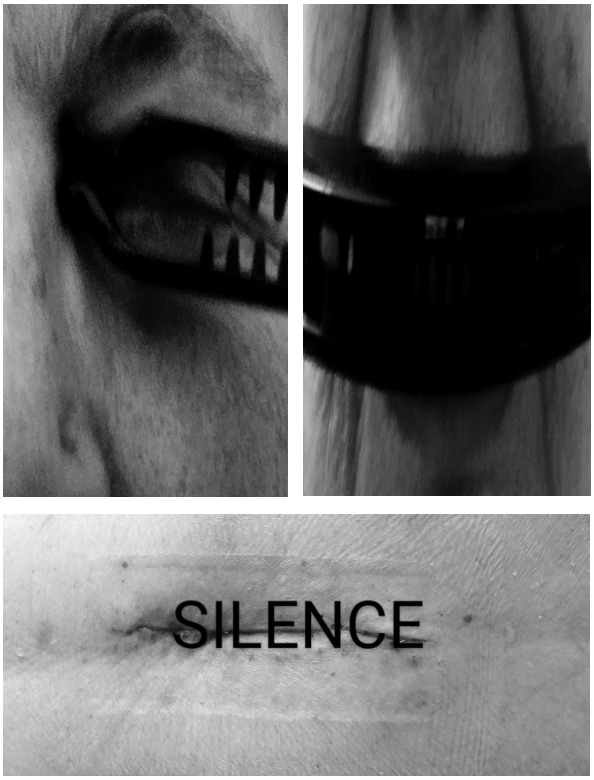

Fig. 2.
Submerged States (2026).
Digital photographs, A5 format.
Author: Ção Pestana.

Ção Pestana's works (Figs. 1 & 2), through the displacement of private photographs into immersive dispositifs incorporating sound, light, and tactility, disrupt the stability of the archive and transform memory into an open experience. Transposed into pedagogical practice, *Submerged States* — with its evocation of silenced histories, confined bodies, and experiences of exclusion — offers particularly fertile ground because its themes of exclusion are more immediately legible. Students could be guided through simple yet incisive questions, adapted to different educational levels, such as:

- Who lacks a voice in this work?
- Which stories have been silenced?
- What forms of violence are present, even when they are not explicit?
- Can students identify similar situations of exclusion in their everyday lives (school, social media, other contexts)?
- Can they imagine how these situations might become more inclusive?
- Who would gain a voice?
- What would need to change?

The pedagogical value of these questions lies not simply in eliciting personal responses but in creating opportunities to examine how exclusion is produced, normalised, and potentially challenged. Participation, however, should not be equated automatically with inclusion. For artistic experience to contribute to inclusive citizenship, participation needs to be accompanied by critical reflection on who is able to speak, who is heard, whose experiences are recognised, and how relations of power shape these possibilities. The role of the teacher is therefore to create conditions for dialogue and plurality rather than to impose a predetermined interpretation, enabling students to move from an immediate sensory response to a critical consideration of difference, recognition, and participation.

The artist's references to "confinement, torture, and silence" highlight the existence of bodies and experiences excluded from public space, while also revealing the normalisation of repression, particularly in relation to women. In other words, exclusion here appears not merely as absence but as an active process of erasure, silencing, and containment.

What are we to do with all this?

In summary, both the McKellen/Colbert performance (2026), within a media context, and the works of Cão Pestana (2026) operate as aesthetic practices that produce difference, *subjectivation*, and *experience*, reorganising the *distribution of the sensible* and transforming art into a space for ethical and political engagement with the common world. In both cases, there is a movement from object to experience and from representation to *event*, highlighting the arts as a privileged field for thinking citizenship through difference: not as the representation of fixed identities, but as an active dispositif for reconfiguring ways of seeing, feeling, and inhabiting the world.

By mobilising sensory, temporal, and interactive processes, these practices exceed a purely representational logic and intervene in the conditions of perception and participation. Gilles Deleuze's (1968/2006) notion of *difference-in-itself* enables us to understand them not as variations of the same but as forms of difference and creation. In dialogue with this perspective, Michel Foucault (2000) allows us to interpret these practices as forms of *subjectivation* through which subjects constitute themselves in relation to aesthetic experience, exercising situated forms of freedom. For Jorge Larrosa (2002), *experience* is understood as that which traverses and transforms us. Jacques Rancière (1996), in turn, demonstrates how such practices enact a (re)*distribution of the sensible*, reorganising who may appear, speak, and signify within the common space, whether through the aesthetic displacement promoted by performance or through the immersive dispositifs characteristic of Pestana's work (2026).

However, the significance of these formulations does not end at the theoretical level. Their pedagogical relevance becomes effective when they are translated into concrete educational

practices. *Minor Education*, as formulated by Silvio Gallo (2002, 2003), is particularly relevant in this respect. Rather than constituting an alternative model or formalised methodology, it operates as a micropolitical practice within the cracks of the educational system, producing subtle yet significant displacements in ways of teaching, learning, and relating. Inclusion, understood as becoming, is therefore not achieved through normative discourse or declarative policies alone, but through situated practices that reconfigure, in everyday educational life, the conditions of participation and recognition.

The artistic practices discussed above become particularly productive for pedagogical reflection. By relocating private images into public and sensory dispositifs, as in *Zapping*, and by exposing processes of silencing and confinement, as in *Submerged States*, Pestana creates conditions in which students can encounter difference through sensory, temporal, and interpretive displacement. Transposed into educational contexts, this implies creating dispositifs that invite active participation and move students beyond the position of passive spectators. The artwork can thus become something to be experienced, questioned, and discussed rather than simply analysed. Such participation may open spaces for the critical problematisation of narratives of exclusion, the recognition of multiple interpretations, and the exploration of error, deviation, and difference beyond normative standards.

Yet participation should not be equated automatically with inclusion. To participate is not necessarily to have equal possibilities of speaking, being heard, or being recognised. Invisible cultural, emotional, social, and institutional barriers may continue to shape who feels entitled to participate, whose interpretation is valued, and whose experience remains marginalised. The pedagogical challenge is therefore not simply to invite students to participate, but to examine the conditions under which participation becomes possible and meaningful. Inclusion requires attention to relations of power, to unequal positions within the classroom, and to the possibility that some voices may remain unheard even within apparently participatory environments. The teacher's role is consequently crucial: not to guarantee a predetermined inclusive outcome, but to create and continually reassess the conditions for dialogue, recognition, plurality, and critical participation.

In this way, the arts cease to function merely as objects of analysis and emerge instead as pedagogical dispositifs capable of activating experiences of sensory displacement and subjective reconfiguration. The school, traversed by such practices, can become a field of aesthetic, ethical, and political experimentation rather than simply a space for reproducing stabilised identities. Citizenship therefore emerges not as a fixed status but as a relational practice in continuous becoming, produced through the interaction of subjects, bodies, discourses, and affects. Inclusion cannot consequently be understood as integration or tolerance, nor simply as the opposite of exclusion, but as an active and unfinished process of

opening the common space to difference. Rather than incorporating the other into the same, the challenge is to transform the common itself.

It is precisely within this movement that Minor Education finds its strength: by operating at the margins, through interruptions and small gestures of everyday life, it becomes possible to fissure the normative surface of the educational system and allow new forms of *belonging* to emerge, in which difference is not merely accepted but recognised as a constitutive and productive condition of life in common. The micropolitics of difference, however, do not unfold in an abstract vacuum; they operate within the immanent reality of the classroom itself. Their activation depends fundamentally on the teacher's sustained attentiveness and capacity to identify the openings through which the predetermined can be challenged, displaced, and reconfigured.

This constitutes an ethical stance towards the *event*: a readiness to recognise the emergence of the unforeseen and, within the pedagogical encounter itself, to transform unexpected responses, tensions, and differences into productive occasions for thought and differentiated action. The value of artistic practices in citizenship education therefore lies not in their capacity to guarantee transformation or inclusion, but in their ability to create conditions in which established ways of seeing, feeling, speaking, and *belonging* can be questioned. The movement from citizenship as a concept to citizenship as a sensory and relational experience is thus inseparable from a critical question: who is able to participate, under what conditions, and with what possibilities of being recognised? Keeping this question open is essential if aesthetic experience is to become not merely an invitation to participate, but a practice capable of interrogating and transforming the conditions of participation themselves.

Notes

[1] Foucault identifies eight principal disciplinary dispositifs: (1) hierarchical surveillance (making the subject constantly visible); (2) normalising sanction (correcting deviations through subtle forms of punishment); (3) examination (classifying and comparing); (4) control of time (the organisation of rhythms); (5) control of space (the functional distribution of bodies); (6) bodily training (the regulation of gestures and behaviours); (7) exercise (repetition designed to shape conduct); and (8) records and documentation (transforming the individual into an object of knowledge).

[2] Artificial Intelligence Assistance. The authors declare that generative artificial intelligence tools were used during the preparation of this chapter to support bibliographic searches, the organisation of ideas, and linguistic and textual editing. These tools were used as assistive resources and not as authors of the work. All bibliographic sources, theoretical arguments, interpretations, and final formulations were critically reviewed and validated by the authors, who retain full responsibility for the content of the chapter.

[3] Identity of the Concept: the search for a single and universal definition. When we ask, "What is a citizen?", the answer generally evokes an ideal and abstract model.

Analogy in Judgement: the establishment of hierarchies through comparison. A disabled person, for example, may be viewed only in relation to a standard, measured according to a scale of "better" or "worse" depending on their proximity to the norm.
Opposition of Predicates: the predominance of binary thinking (Normal/Abnormal; Able/Disabled; Capable/Incapable). Difference is understood as negation; the subject is defined by what they lack.
Resemblance in Perception: the acceptance only of what is familiar. The other is tolerated only insofar as they share the same values or behave according to established norms.

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School Inclusion and Special Education: a Structural Contradiction

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Abstract

This chapter examines the values, principles, attitudes, and theoretical-philosophical and educational foundations involved in transforming schools into inclusive educational environments. It is grounded in the fundamental question of inclusion — the singularity of persons — based on the concept of difference developed by the contemporary French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. The chapter revisits the difficulties Brazilian schools face in becoming inclusive teaching and learning environments, particularly those related to the role of Special Education. It critically examines the influence of this modality in the transformation of schools, arguing that such interference seeks to reclaim former students as well as the privileges and authority associated with the reinstatement of special schools and special classes. The text bears witness to the struggle of those committed to restoring the meaning and purpose of inclusive education within Brazilian education.

Keywords

Difference; School Inclusion; Special Education.

By way of introduction

Inclusive educational environments are those in which students are not only gathered in the same physical space, but are effectively with one another, participating in a common educational experience that is not tailored to specific groups, and which embraces all types of interests, educational trajectories and ways of learning inherent to each student when

confronted with curricular content. Such environments are created by schools that are open to the singularity of each student and that refuse the typical practice of special education, which operates based on categorizing students at all levels and stages of education, from primary to higher education. Envisioning schools that are indeed for everyone implies taking a demanding path, in which equality prevails over educational conceptions based on a perspective of managing students according to their external differences. Creating such schools also implies understanding the legal and philosophical basis for inclusion, and, most importantly, transforming our own conceptions about teaching and learning. And such demands ought not to be, as we see it, associated with a modality of education designed for only a few people: Special Education. In this chapter, we take the Brazilian experience as the basis for reflecting on such a modality, which is part of the educational guidelines of several countries. Our main goal consists in drawing the attention of educators, and anyone who is interested in this subject, towards Special Education, which is incorporated into education systems as a "necessary" modality but needs to be looked upon as a constraint stalling the development of inclusive actions in schools all over the world.

On difference itself and identities

From the perspective of inclusion, each student is comparable only to themselves. This conception rejects generalisations, oppositions, and comparisons that seek to place students in predefined scales or categories. The conceptual basis of this chapter lies in difference itself, which evades any possibility of identifying people by their external differences. Our reasoning is based on the concept of the univocity of people, rather than on the possibility of grouping them based on external and categorizable attributes. In a word, we do not operate through identities, but with singular beings. Difference itself, being inherent to each person, is fluid and unstable, continuously updating itself in the course of life. For this reason, it cannot be understood as something external to the subjects, nor can it be measured, quantified, or graded, as occurs with the external differences used to classify individuals. The reduction of difference to general categories was contested by the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze (2009), whose reflection inspires this analysis. According to the author, the Other is always irreducible to our preconceptions. Their singularity prevents them from being fully captured by previously established parameters. The Other, from this perspective, goes beyond our definitions, since it escapes all attempts at identification that seek to enclose it in fixed categories. Difference, in the Deleuzian conception, is always distributed in the particular and cannot be reduced to attributes supposedly shared by a group of people. However, schools and Special Education classes often take the opposite way. They seek to define individuals by means of classifications and identifications that rely on visible and measurable attributes. Thus, images and categories are built to enclose subjects in certain institutional places. The regular school also occupies a privileged position in this process because, by incorporating the

images and categories created by Special Education, it uses assessments, diagnoses, and groupings to define who learns, who experiences learning difficulties, and who is considered incapable of following regular education. Such mechanisms produce educational identities with profound consequences on the course of students throughout their education. Those who deviate from established standards are often classified, separated, and referred to distinct educational arrangements. In this context, the permanence of the Special Education modality in the structure of educational systems has fostered discrimination, institutionalizing classificatory mechanisms that transform the singularities of students into school categories. Many of these labelled students come to be identified as "inclusion students" at the very moment of enrolment, and when this does not occur initially, they end up being captured by specialized services that operate on the fringes of regular schooling.

On school and its exclusionary mechanisms

The first step to building a school for everyone consists in exposing and rejecting misinterpretations of what school inclusion means and how it can effectively be accomplished. The goal of an inclusive school is to create conditions for all students to develop their skills, talents and interests within a shared learning environment. In each class, such skills are entangled with their life stories, experiences and perspectives. It is based on this context that school knowledge acquires multiple interpretations and is built collectively, through processes of dialogue and exchange of ideas that enrich students' intellectual development. Inclusive education therefore demands a profound revision of pedagogical conceptions on which traditional teaching relies. This implies re-assessing the role of educators, the ways of teaching and learning, and the meanings given to knowledge taught in school. In Brazil, the path taken up to the present moment concerning the implementation of inclusive education has been long and marked by ambiguities. According to data from the School Census of Basic Education 2024 (Censo Escolar da Educação Básica 2024), Brazil reported 2,076,825 enrolments of students who are the target audience of Special Education, including people with disabilities, people with autism spectrum disorder, and people with high abilities and giftedness. About 92.6% of these enrolments occurred in regular teaching classes. From 4 to 17 years old, compulsory school age in Brazil, the percentage of inclusion reaches 95.7% (Brazil, 2024). Despite the high number of students included, the public rhetoric often talks about inclusion but does not always implement practices that are actually able to transform the school structure. The increase in enrolments in Special Education in regular schools has not, per se, ensured more inclusive educational environments. Similarly, referring students to Specialized Educational Service (Atendimento Educacional Especializado – AEE), part of the Special Education program introduced in Brazil in 2009 (Brazil, 2009b), which aimed originally at supporting school inclusion, has not made significant progress in that direction. AEE is a service implemented by the National Policy on

Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education – PNEEPEI/2008 (Política Nacional de Educação Especial na Perspectiva da Educação Inclusiva) (Brazil, 2008). It has been widely implemented in regular schools, but has deviated from its former goals of removing attitudinal, communicational, physical and linguistic barriers that may hinder education for everyone in regular classes. In reality, AEE works mostly as remedial education, adapted instruction for so-called "inclusion students", deviating from its goals and replicating characteristics of substitutive education with students who once attended special classes and schools. There are several challenges to school inclusion which require overcoming practices and conceptions that have historically led to exclusion. In this scenario, we have noticed a fundamental contradiction. The consistency of an inclusive school project, whose underlying assumption is the singularity intrinsic to each student, confronts directly the existence of a modality of teaching that is aimed at a specific public: Special Education. If we assume the existence of a "special public" at an allegedly inclusive school, a structural contradiction is found. Schools may even change the terminology, labelling these students as "inclusion students", but they maintain the labelling principle that endorses exclusion. Special Education distorts inclusion because it transforms singularity into categories of students. The demands of an inclusive education also concern changes in initial and continuing professional preparation for teachers, who must be prepared for educational contexts populated by unique individuals, with multiple experiences and life stories. Such training has not sufficiently evolved to meet the transformations required by inclusive educational systems, also because they were heavily influenced by Special Education. This educational modality emerged from a segregationist logic. Therefore, it cannot provide educators with purpose, knowledge and tools so they can be inclusive.

Inclusive education in our legal documents

Despite several national and international legal documents affirming the right of people with disabilities to education in the mainstream educational system in Brazil, they have served more as a tool for praising inclusion as an avant-garde proposal rather than actually implementing it in our schools. The Decree No. 3,956/2001 (Brazil, 2001) enacted the *Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities*, hosted in Guatemala.

This document states that specific measures are only acceptable when aimed at overcoming barriers that prevent people from fully participating in shared social environments. In 2006, the *Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities* was adopted, in New York, at the United Nations. In Brazil, it was given constitutional status under the Decree No. 6,949/2009 (Brazil, 2009a). Article 24 of the Convention states that people with disabilities shall not be excluded from the general educational system alleging disability, and that they ought to be provided

with all necessary support inside this system to ensure their full participation. The Brazilian Law of Inclusion (Brazil, 2015), in turn, endorses this principle by ensuring the right of people with disabilities to education in inclusive educational environments. Even before these norms, the Federal Constitution (Brazil, 1988) already ensured the right to education for everyone and determined that the access to the highest levels of education should be given according to the capacity of each individual. In this context, the PNEEPEI/2008 (Brazil, 2008), despite being a policy focused on Special Education and its target population, represented an important milestone by affirming school inclusion as a guideline for the Brazilian educational policy. In 2025, the PNEEPEI/2008 was replaced by the National Policy of Inclusive Special Education – PNEEI/2025 (Política Nacional de Educação Especial Inclusiva – PNEEI/2025), enacted by the Decree No. 12,686/2025 (Brazil, 2025), thus fully recovering the leading role of Special Education and re-introducing the possibility of separate schooling for certain students in specialized school environments. This action does not conform to our Constitution and the principles of the international conventions ratified by Brazil, and paves the way for segregationist practices that had been partially overcome.

Equality and equity in schools

Equality is the right that is at the core of all objectives that lead us to educate generations of citizens engaged with an increasingly fair and humanized view of the world. Authors such as Pearpoint, Forest and Snow (1992), well-known defenders of inclusion in Canada, argue that a high-level sense of community is based on egalitarianism. According to these authors, to belong in a society is a fundamental need of each person, and it should be a right guaranteed to everyone, without distinction. And this right must be guaranteed within schools. Equality between people is not contrary to the respect for the difference itself; rather, it constitutes its fundamental condition. To Baker and Gaden (1992), equality concerns the respect for people in the sense that "each human being has the right to dignity, regardless of their abilities and accomplishments…". These authors state that social advancements ought to be exclusively based on each individual's talent, meaning that no one shall be at a disadvantage due to any of their characteristics. Thus, each person ought to have a real opportunity of "developing their specific skills satisfactorily, and that a great amount of personal accomplishment ought to be available to each individual, regardless of their capacity". At the beginning of the 20th century, the access to public education in Brazil covered all children, and this coverage was followed by the creation of Special Education. Originally, the students served by this modality had access only to separate schools, located in specialized institutions or special classes within regular schools. Then they started being educated in a parallel system due to their disability. Despite the expertise of their teachers and the available resources in many of these segregated institutions, such students remained distant from the regular educational experience.

Today, our so-called inclusive schools still reproduce attitudinal and cultural barriers which favour discriminatory and exclusionary practices. These barriers manifest as educators' low expectations of students' performance in primary or higher education. These educators are reluctant to embrace inclusion and usually turn to Special Education, hoping that this modality will be successful in addressing each individual case. Inclusion proposes equality in a society that still profoundly struggles with dealing with differences, understood here in the plural form, as external attributes that distinguish and classify people. Equity, in turn, concerns precisely these external differences: visible, quantifiable, comparable, intersectional, scalable, measurable and, to a certain extent, standardizable. It operates through criteria that establish distinctions considered fair, upon assessment of specific cases and circumstances. In this sense, equity always implies some sort of judgement and comparative assessment. It affirms observable differences and organizes responses to compensate for them. For this reason, equity often seeks compensations able to induce social justice.

Nonetheless, such compensations maintain the same logic that separates, labels and organizes individuals in increasingly larger and complex groups. Equality is a condition that must go beyond theoretical reasoning and trigger deep social transformations, able to reach the structures that preserve inequality in our schools. School inclusion, in this context, represents a necessary path to be taken to move towards affirming equality inside schools. At first, this proposal may seem utopic. However, if we intend to move in the direction of a society that overcomes the structural inequalities that shape our relations, based on the difference "between" individuals and groups, it is crucial to resort to new paradigms.

School inclusion is one of them and must be defended immediately, such that the accomplishments towards an open school to everyone obtained in the last decades be preserved, not overturned. Defending the ideals of inclusion demands critically reassessing certain ambiguities still present in the Brazilian legislation about education, and mainly confronting the contradictions that persist in making our public policies. Social inclusion is not a sectoral agenda. It is an issue concerning the very conception of public education and the way we perceive equality within school institutions.

Conclusions or… how far our naivety has come

After almost two decades of the PNEEPEI/2008 (Brazil, 2008), which represented a milestone in inclusive education in Brazil, it is no longer possible to avoid stating its constitutive contradiction: it intended to implement an education for everyone without phasing out the modality of teaching historically responsible for separating some students. What, at a specific time in History, could be considered an advancement or possible conciliation turns out to be an issue overlooked by the Policy itself. It has not been a simple

conjunctural limitation, but a structural impasse: inclusion was affirmed rhetorically, whereas segregation remained preserved at the level of organization of education systems and schools.

In a school committed to equality and the singularity of each student, there is no excuse, without contradiction, for maintaining a modality of education aimed at a specific audience. The very existence of this modality re-writes, in the heart of the regular school, the logic that inclusion intended to overcome: the logic according to which it is necessary to identify, label and tell apart those whose presence demands specific treatment. In these terms, Special Education not only tensions the inclusive project; it restricts it, derails it and, in certain cases, neutralizes it.

It was precisely this tension that, over the years, produced deep conceptual and institutional ambiguities. School inclusion no longer means, in many contexts, a fundamental transformation of school, and now it is understood as a simple expansion of Special Education. Rather than radically displacing the foundations of schooling, it has conformed to the difference in pre-existing structures, preserving the mechanics through which schools decide, manage and distribute their students according to standardization criteria. For that reason, the inclusive critique was absorbed without decisively changing the rationale that endorses exclusion. The current National Policy of Inclusive Special Education–PNEEI/2025 (Política Nacional de Educação Especial Inclusiva – PNEEI/2025) (Brazil, 2025) has made this even clearer. By placing Special Education back at the centre and readmitting separate forms of schooling, it merely exposed the fragility of a project that never fully managed to break away from its segregating assumptions. What we see now is not an anomaly, but a historical consequence of a theoretical and political conciliation between Special Education and school inclusion which, from the very beginning, carried within it the impossibility of its accomplishment.

Thus, the Brazilian experience seems to have produced a sufficiently unambiguous response to the underlying question in this debate: a school is not for everyone if it keeps the mechanisms that segregate some students unchanged. Where a modality of teaching geared toward certain students subsists, there also subsists the prerogative to distinguish them beforehand, to circumscribe them institutionally, and to reinscribe their difference as an exception. And every time the school needs this exception to operate, it fails in building itself as a shared space. That is why the challenge imposed on Brazilian education today is neither marginal nor sectoral. It concerns deciding whether inclusion is taken as an irreversible principle of school reorganization or continues to be subjected to arrangements which, in the name of responding to the categorization of people, do nothing but renew its forms of segregation. At its core, the question does not only concern the future of Special Education,

but the very public sense of schools. At this point, it is not enough to reform the narratives, fix terminologies or manage ambiguities.

It is necessary to choose. Either we unequivocally affirm the regular school as an unconditional right for everyone, or we will continue to rely on instruments that legitimize sorting, exception and segregation in the name of inclusion. And a school that still needs to segregate to include has already forfeited the most radical power of inclusion. Because a school is only truly for everyone when it is no longer necessary to decide, before teaching, who may really belong in it. Therefore, what we have left to do is to face this contradiction. Will we be able to revert the current situation? There are more than enough means to recover that which, perhaps, has been an excessively optimistic bet – or even a gesture of naivety by believing that the wolf would not prowl around the flock. We must move forward!

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Soft Water on Hard Stone… From School to an Inclusive Society

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Abstract

This chapter explores the concept of inclusion from an epistemological and socio-educational perspective, linking it to the notion of difference as a foundational principle of contemporary education. Drawing on theoretical contributions from critical pedagogy, philosophy, and inclusive education studies, it argues that inclusion requires the recognition of human diversity beyond classificatory and deficit-based models historically embedded in schooling systems. The chapter traces the historical shift from segregation and integration paradigms towards inclusive education frameworks, with particular attention to the Portuguese context. It further examines how the arts, digital media, and cinema can function as pedagogical tools for fostering participation, critical competence, and citizenship. These dimensions are analysed not merely as curricular resources but also as spaces for social transformation and the deconstruction of stigma. The chapter also presents empirical examples of film-based educational projects developed in Portuguese schools, illustrating how collaborative creative practices can promote inclusion, intercultural dialogue, and student engagement. The discussion highlights the persistent gap between inclusive policy

and educational practice, emphasising the need for structural investment, teacher training, and institutional transformation to achieve genuinely inclusive education.

Keywords

Inclusion; Difference; Education; Critical Competence; Cinema.

Introduction

This chapter revisits research conducted by the authors over recent decades, focusing on educational models oriented towards inclusion, equality, citizenship, and strategies that promote the development of critical competence. We agree that a curriculum model aimed at reducing prejudice can contribute to changes in attitudes and behaviours among teachers, students, and members of school communities in diverse global contexts. Before reaching these conclusions (Camargo, 2022; Cantante, 2024; Correia, 2024; Moura, 2000), it was necessary to establish a theoretical framework applicable to the social contexts of our respective countries — one capable of clarifying and defining concepts and curricular practices aimed at combating discrimination, inequality of opportunity, and the mechanisms of power that threaten the democratic principles upon which our societies are founded.

Pathways to inclusion

From classification to the struggle for rights

We began by exploring the concepts of classification and ordering developed by Carl Linnaeus, the founder of modern taxonomy. Rooted in positivist thought, these concepts were introduced into education during the nineteenth century and became the basis for the organisation of school life, a structure that remains present in most schools today. This approach resulted in a homogenising pedagogy that viewed differences as "abnormalities," perpetuating inequalities and creating a binary division between "normal" and "abnormal" students (Camargo, 2022). According to Dussel and Caruso (2003, p. 190), this model "allowed the maintenance, up to the present day, of a teaching model that is the same for everyone and a conservative stance regarding society, thereby contributing to the preservation of existing inequalities". Within this binary framework, people with disabilities have historically been marked by exclusion, segregation, and prejudice.

The first support initiatives emerged in medieval religious institutions, leading to the creation of schools for deaf and blind individuals in France and England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From that period onwards, the education of people with disabilities increasingly came to be regarded as a responsibility of the State (Camargo, 2022). During the

twentieth century, the disability rights movement gained momentum through the establishment of legislation guaranteeing access to education. However, the implementation of special classes and schools reinforced segregation, and the prevailing integration paradigm required "special students" to adapt to the school rather than requiring the school to adapt to them. This approach became known as the paradigm of integration.

A significant shift occurred during the World Conference on "Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs" in Jomtien, Thailand (1990), and the World Conference on "Special Educational Needs: Access and Quality", culminating in the Salamanca Statement (1994). This landmark declaration promoted an inclusive concept of education and represented a major milestone in the struggle against discrimination and prejudice, by replacing the medical model with the social model of disability. In other words, the focus shifted from impairment itself to the physical, social, and attitudinal barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from fully participating in society (Gomes, 2016). Despite advances in accessibility and legislation guaranteeing access to education and employment, the process of inclusion continues to face significant challenges. The ongoing struggle for a more inclusive society is symbolised by the Portuguese proverb that underpins the title of this chapter: "Soft water on hard stone, tapping again and again until it pierces the stone." Like the English proverb "Constant dripping wears away the stone", it evokes how persistent efforts can gradually overcome resistance to social change.

Changes in the concept of difference

Fortunately, the understanding of difference has evolved significantly over time. Initially, difference was associated with identity attributes—that is, the set of external characteristics attributed to an individual (for example, woman, white, mother, teacher). However, such a perspective is unable to capture the totality and complexity of the subject.

In the twentieth century, Deleuze (1968/2006) proposed a new conception of difference detached from identity. For Deleuze, difference is intrinsic to the subject; it is *difference in itself*, constituting a multiplicative and transformative force that is not limited by fixed categories.

This perspective challenges binary thinking (good/bad, normal/abnormal), which hierarchises and classifies individuals according to value judgments, in which the first element is associated with what is considered good and the second with what is perceived as inferior or undesirable. Such a framework has historically underpinned numerous forms of prejudice and exclusion. *Difference in itself*, by contrast, embraces multiplicity and singularity, thereby providing the foundation for inclusion, as it recognises that every individual is unique and irreducible. This occurs because binary classification is ideological in nature and results from choices imposed by others. *Difference in itself*, however, encompasses not only this or that, but

rather this and that which simultaneously constitute us and differentiate us without limits (Deleuze, 1968/2006).

Within the school context, binary understandings continue to hinder the implementation of inclusive education, as many institutions still perceive inclusion as the insertion of "different students" into pre-existing classrooms rather than the creation of environments in which the differences of all individuals are welcomed and valued. Although schools are constitutionally obliged to receive all students, the support provided is often inadequate, resulting in simplified activities based on limited educational objectives, flexible curricula, and differentiated pedagogical measures directed at so-called "inclusive education students". The understanding of difference proposed by Deleuze (1968/2006) is crucial to the construction of an inclusive society because it recognises and values the multiplicity inherent in every human being.

Building an inclusive society

Exclusion vs. Inclusion in the arts

Schools experience the challenges of inclusion and exclusion on a daily basis. Although official discourse promotes inclusive education, exclusionary pedagogical practices frequently persist, whether through physical, cognitive, emotional, or symbolic barriers. In this context, art can function as a powerful tool for resistance and transformation, offering paths to a more equitable, democratic, and diversity-sensitive education. Moura and Barbosa (2018) argue for the importance of rethinking the visual arts curriculum as a tool for social and cultural inclusion, and propose practices that challenge traditional school norms through inter- and transdisciplinary collaborative approaches that value active listening, individual student expression, and the use of art as a means of promoting cultural citizenship and critical engagement with the world.

Almeida (2011) analyses school exclusion as a process manifested through everyday micro-relations, often naturalised, which disregard cultural plurality and diverse ways of learning. The same researcher defends art as a language that can challenge these mechanisms by embracing different voices, stories, and subjectivities. Similarly, Ana Mae Barbosa, one of the most influential figures in Brazilian art education, introduces the Triangular Approach (Barbosa, 1978/2010, 2008), which combines image reading, historical contextualisation, and artistic practice as a strategy for democratising access to art and valuing students' cultural repertoires. More recently, Barbosa (2023) further reinforces the idea that everyone can create and interpret art and that schools should foster dialogue and the construction of a more inclusive collective identity.

Richter (2002), in turn, emphasises that artistic practices can strengthen students' sense of belonging, particularly among those experiencing social vulnerability. This author advocates an arts pedagogy grounded in listening, experimentation, and the appreciation of aesthetic experience as a means of fostering relationships and building a more human and caring school environment. The construction of a more just, inclusive, and supportive society requires profound critical reflection on the paradigms that govern education, politics, and social practices. In this regard, the theoretical contributions of Sousa Santos (2006), Silva (1945/1997), Freire (1970), and others provide distinct yet complementary paths for addressing contemporary challenges.

The tension between inclusion and exclusion in schools will not be resolved solely through public policies or well-intentioned discourse, but rather through the effective transformation of pedagogical practices. Due to their sensitive, critical, and symbolic nature, the arts can act as catalysts for such transformation. They offer spaces in which differences are valued, silences can be broken, and subjectivities recognised. Consequently, when considering the contributions of Moura (2000), Almeida (2011), Barbosa (1978/2010, 2008), Pacheco et al. (2019), and Richter (2002), art education should not be viewed as a luxury or a curricular embellishment. Rather, it should be understood as a fundamental right and an essential component of a genuinely inclusive education system.

Digital media and cinema as processes of inclusion

Schools, whether public or private, play a fundamental role in preparing individuals for active participation in society through educational practices that promote inclusion, respect diversity, and reject segregation and discrimination. As institutions responsible for the social and civic development of young people, schools are expected to create conditions in which inclusion becomes a tangible reality and all individuals, regardless of their differences, are able to experience a sense of belonging and citizenship.

Research suggests that children's first significant encounters with difference frequently occur within the school environment. It is often in this context that social group formation and bullying behaviours emerge, frequently based on perceived internal or external characteristics, thereby contributing to exclusion and reinforcing distinctions between pupils (Faria & Silva, 2022). Given the central role of schools in preparing individuals for adult life, they are also important settings for fostering awareness of the rights, responsibilities, and values associated with citizenship.

Nevertheless, exclusion extends beyond the educational sphere, despite the considerable progress achieved in the promotion of more inclusive societies. According to Lima (2022), the challenges involved in pursuing the common good and achieving full citizenship are rooted in political and social structures in which minority groups have historically had limited

opportunities to make their voices heard. The author further argues that a continued emphasis on citizenship education remains necessary because discriminatory practices and barriers related to communication, attitudes, and accessibility persist in many areas of social life. Consequently, the promotion of citizenship and inclusion should remain a priority within both educational and societal contexts.

In contemporary society, the concept of citizenship can also be extended to include digital citizenship, reflecting the increasing influence of digital technologies on everyday life. Within this framework, digital media and cinema can be understood as valuable tools for promoting inclusive and equitable forms of education. Their use contributes to raising awareness of the right of every individual to participate fully in social and professional life and to enjoy equal opportunities regardless of personal characteristics or circumstances.

Lima (2022) argues that learning within digital environments can strengthen individuals' understanding of citizenship by encouraging forms of communicative participation that allow students to engage actively with others. In this context, learners are no longer passive recipients of information but become active participants in digital networks, contributing to the creation, sharing, and dissemination of knowledge. The author further highlights the significant inclusive potential of digital media, particularly through social networking platforms and online professional opportunities, which can facilitate participation and social integration in a variety of ways.

Despite these opportunities, greater awareness of inclusion remains necessary. Lima (2022) maintains that digital culture has the capacity to promote both participation and inclusion by enabling individuals traditionally regarded as passive consumers of information to become active contributors to media environments. Through the production, verification, exchange, and dissemination of information, users can play a more direct role in shaping digital spaces and public discourse.

At the same time, digitally mediated relationships have created new forms of social interaction and collaboration that have supported advances in civic, political, and democratic participation (Lima, 2022). However, the author also notes that the development of the Internet has not always occurred under conditions that fully favour inclusion and democratic engagement. Digital environments may expose users to various forms of vulnerability, making it necessary to establish appropriate regulatory frameworks and mechanisms capable of addressing harmful behaviours and protecting users' rights.

The close relationship between digital technologies and contemporary social life further highlights the importance of digital literacy and responsible participation. As Lima (2022) observes, people do not simply live alongside media technologies; rather, media environments have become deeply embedded within everyday life. Consequently, raising awareness of the role of the Internet in shaping social experiences is essential. The growing

mediatization of society influences numerous aspects of citizenship and social participation and may either facilitate inclusion or contribute to exclusion, depending on the nature and extent of individuals' exposure to digital environments. Therefore, the educational use of digital media and cinema should not only promote technological competence but also encourage critical, ethical, and inclusive forms of engagement that support the development of active and responsible digital citizens.

Cinema, education and the deconstruction of stigma

The implementation of Decree-Law No. 54/2018 marked a significant shift in the Portuguese approach to inclusive education, diverging from the previous legal framework regulated in 2008, particularly in relation to the range of students covered by educational measures. All students are now encompassed by support measures applied without exception. Educational responses are organised according to a multi-tiered model, including a continuum of measures — universal, selective, and additional — the latter aimed at students with profound and persistent difficulties, previously identified under the category of Special Educational Needs (SEN), now reframed as Special Health Needs (NSE).

This new paradigm shifts the focus away from diagnostic categorisation towards educational responses and the personalisation of teaching strategies. In this way, intervention becomes the responsibility of all actors within the school context, although external medical advice may still be required when necessary. One of the most significant consequences of this reform has been the integration into mainstream schools of students who were previously placed in specialised institutions, such as those with autism spectrum disorders or intellectual disabilities. In this context, internal structures such as Learning Support Centres were created, operating in collaboration with multidisciplinary teams. The central aim of these measures is to promote a more inclusive and egalitarian school, where all children, regardless of their characteristics or difficulties, can learn and develop within a shared environment that values diversity and equity in access to education.

According to Article 1 of Decree-Law No. 54/2018, inclusion is defined as a process aimed at responding to the diversity of needs and potential of each student, through increased participation in the learning process and in the life of the educational community. This legal framework reinforces collective responsibility and reaffirms the commitment of the Portuguese education system to equity, equal opportunities, and non-discrimination, ensuring that all students have access to quality education under equal conditions. However, this transformation implies not only legislative change but also a profound shift in pedagogical practices, school organisation, and institutional culture.

Despite this normative framework, it is necessary to question whether the education system is effectively prepared to implement such an ambitious model. Evidence from school-based

observations conducted between 2023 and 2024 suggests that the system is still unable to ensure that this transformation produces the expected effects (Correia, 2024). Although the intention is clearly positive, questions remain regarding the readiness of teachers and educational communities to assume such responsibility. Inclusion has proven to be a complex challenge, not only due to apparent systemic unpreparedness, but also because of insufficient training, limited practical experience among professionals, and a lack of human and technical resources that directly compromise implementation.

This gap between policy and practice is further reinforced by empirical evidence. According to recent data from FENPROF, "almost a quarter of classes including students with special educational needs do not comply with the legislation on inclusive education", revealing a clear mismatch between legislative intention and educational reality. In practice, schools face persistent shortages of specialised teachers and therapeutic technicians, alongside overcrowded classrooms, limited material resources, and inadequate physical spaces.

Sanches (2011) emphasises the importance of listening more attentively to students and recognising the forms of exclusion they continue to experience within schools. According to the author, diagnostic criteria and the structure of additional measures may lead to students being temporarily removed from mainstream classrooms for specialised support, which, when insufficiently resourced, may reinforce processes of exclusion. When students are sent to support centres, "this is where the stigma begins". The same author also notes that extreme cases in Portugal have contributed to the creation of a category of permanent special educational needs, grounded in a medicalised and segregating logic that fails to recognise that individuals with disabilities can progress significantly when placed in favourable educational environments.

These concerns are reinforced by Moreira (2025), who reports that almost a quarter of classes exceed the legal limits established for inclusive education. According to a survey conducted by FENPROF with 132 school clusters, approximately 80% report insufficient resources to support students with educational needs. The findings highlight shortages of special education teachers, specialised technicians, operational assistants, appropriate physical spaces, and materials. This situation jeopardises the monitoring and educational progress of students with additional needs and exposes the fragility of the process of implementing inclusive education.

Taken together, these findings suggest that inclusion in Portugal remains, to a significant extent, an unfinished project. While the legal framework is progressive and clearly oriented towards equity and participation, its implementation continues to face structural constraints. As a result, inclusion risks remaining at the level of policy discourse rather than being fully realised in everyday school practice. It is precisely within this tension between legal intention and lived reality that reflections and analysis of films as well as cinema-based educational

practices acquire particular relevance. Effectively a cinematic work can prompt reflection and self-discovery, encouraging individuals to recognize their uniqueness, whether different or not. It can play a crucial role in socialization, and communication. According to Lima (2022), cinema is an important way of communication due to its enormous variety of subjects that present the students' knowledge, and emotions, among other feelings, able to make them reflect on their ways of thinking about life, and find their own identity, avoiding the repetition of points of view, attitudes, and actions.

Similarly, spatiality and temporality, when observed as communicative potential, bring significant importance to cinema in minimizing actions of discrimination against those who are different, contributing to greater inclusion. Cinema but also audiovisual languages, contribute to debate, dialogue, emotions, and feelings, thinking (Lima, 2022). Let us take as an example the film Dead Poets Society (Peter Weir, 1989). In this cinematic artwork, the diverse social and geographical dimensions show the viewer the scope of communication, as argued by Araújo et al. (2019).

This film, due to its dramatic content, the dynamics imprinted on the desire to discover oneself and the world around oneself, whose plot unfolds in a conservative and strict boarding school, and is related to the challenge that a teacher dares to put into practice, leading his young students to think for themselves and make choices, even if they run risks, can be an important tool to be used in schools. This film calls for the stimulation of individual and group action, contributes to solidarity, friendship and inclusion, demonstrating that film can play a fundamental guiding role as an intervention tool for inclusion.

Likewise, the film work of Manoel de Oliveira can be mentioned. His films speak of life, of reality and express it. The filmmaker's originality invites the viewer to look at the world, in the form of "relating the elements of reality, a particular way of feeling time and space, a specific modality of adherence to reality" (Bello, 2022, p. 29). The fiction of reality can lead to the hidden, living truth, which the viewer often feels as his or her own reality. The viewer "enters" the film narrative and feels like an integral part of it, which can influence useful learning, for adult, social, facilitating socialization and inclusion.

As examples of practices that contribute to inclusion in schools, we present two experiences involving film-based educational approaches that took place over a period of four academic years, followed by a further two years, at the José Afonso School Cluster in Alhos Vedros, Portugal. The project entitled Cinema, One Hundred Years of Youth (Cinéma, Cent Ans de Jeunesse) emerged from a partnership involving the school cluster, the Municipality of Moita, the Portuguese Cinematheque, and the French Cinematheque. During each academic year, over a three-year period, the class selected to participate in the project was assigned a specific theme, such as Colour in Cinema or What is Shown and What is Hidden, which was explored throughout the school year. At the end of the process, two or three students were

chosen by their classmates to represent the group at the French Cinematheque, where they presented the collective work produced during the project.

The students were guided by two filmmakers working in collaboration with both the French and Portuguese Cinematheques and were accompanied by two classroom teachers. Initially, students viewed and analysed films related to the annual theme. Subsequently, they selected a topic and developed a screenplay for a short film of approximately eight minutes in length. All students participated actively in the filmmaking process, assuming the various roles and responsibilities associated with production, including acting, directing, camera operation, clapperboard management, sound recording, and other technical and creative tasks. Following the filming stage, the footage was edited and a collective discussion was held to select the most effective scenes and determine the final sequence of the film.

The completed work was screened for the entire class at the Portuguese Cinematheque and was followed by a debate at the French Cinematheque involving Portuguese students and students from several other countries participating in the Cinéma, Cent Ans de Jeunesse project. In Paris, students had the opportunity to interact with peers from different countries, and the project concluded with visits to iconic landmarks. Although financial constraints prevented all students from travelling, the outcomes in terms of socialisation, interaction, mutual support, solidarity, and friendship were consistently positive.

During the final two years, the project adopted a different format, involving collaboration between several classes from different educational levels and a partner school in Catalonia, Spain. Students interacted and communicated through digital technologies and online platforms. The project continued to be coordinated by the same filmmakers, while a teacher involved in the previous initiative coordinated the work of several Portuguese teachers in close collaboration with colleagues from the Catalan school. Although students did not travel, teachers from both countries visited one another's institutions, bringing with them gifts and materials created by students. The collaboration culminated in two final presentations delivered in each participating country. Each annual cycle was also preceded by professional development activities in Paris and meetings between the Catalan schools and the Alhos Vedros School Cluster. The educational and intercultural value of these experiences became particularly evident when, several years later, one student requested a letter of recommendation from the school in order to pursue film studies in London.

These experiences demonstrate how cinema can function not only as an artistic and educational resource but also as a powerful instrument for inclusion, intercultural dialogue, social participation, and the deconstruction of stereotypes and stigmas. By engaging students collaboratively in creative processes, such projects foster a sense of belonging, encourage respect for diversity, and create meaningful opportunities for personal and collective development.

Final thoughts

The analysis developed in this chapter highlights that inclusion should be understood as a complex and multidimensional process that involves conceptual, pedagogical and institutional transformation. Although significant progress has been made in educational policy and theoretical frameworks, the implementation of inclusive education continues to face persistent structural constraints that limit its full realisation in everyday school contexts.

This gap between policy and practice indicates that inclusion cannot be achieved solely through legislative or normative measures. It requires sustained investment in human resources, continuous teacher education, appropriate educational infrastructure and ongoing pedagogical innovation. Without these conditions, inclusive education risks remaining at the level of discourse rather than becoming a lived educational reality.

Within this context, it is essential to recognise the central role of education in preparing learners to engage with the complexities of contemporary society. Exposing students to the challenges of the twenty-first century has shown that, although their awareness of local and global issues may initially be limited, there is a clear openness and interest in understanding and discussing these realities. Such engagement suggests that young people are willing to participate actively in processes of reflection, dialogue and collective problem-solving.

In a context marked by increasing social, political and economic uncertainty, schools must therefore create meaningful opportunities for critical reflection and democratic participation. These experiences are essential for the development of informed, responsible and socially engaged citizens, capable of recognising their role as active agents in processes of social transformation.

Education thus plays a fundamental role not only in transmitting knowledge, but also in fostering inclusion, critical thinking, citizenship and respect for diversity. This implies educational practices that move beyond the mere accommodation of difference and instead understand diversity as a constitutive element of human coexistence and social development.

The experiences and reflections presented throughout this chapter reinforce the understanding that building a genuinely inclusive society depends on a continuous commitment to equity, participation and social justice. This requires schools to critically examine the ways in which institutional structures, pedagogical practices and social expectations may either promote inclusion or perpetuate marginalisation.

Ultimately, the promotion of more just, democratic and inclusive societies depends on ensuring equitable opportunities and enabling active participation for all individuals. Inclusion should therefore be understood not only as an educational objective, but as an ongoing ethical, political and social commitment to enabling all members of society to participate fully and meaningfully in community life.

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Working-Class Neighbourhoods in Porto and Braga: a Brief Overview of Precarious Living Conditions and Social Representations

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Abstract

This chapter comprises four sections: (i) the theoretical framework on urban space; (ii) a brief overview of the process of industrialisation, together with the emergence and proliferation of the 'ilhas', the Improvement Plan for the City of Porto, which included the construction of social housing neighbourhoods, particularly in Porto; (iii) urbanisation and housing policy in Braga and Porto under the Estado Novo dictatorship and in the period following the 25 April 1974 Revolution; and (iv) the research strategy, outlining the research aims and the methods and techniques employed. In historical-empirical terms, each section addresses not only a brief historical overview of the neighbourhood's origins and evolution, but also its socio-demographic characterization and housing types, the degree of (dis)satisfaction, sources of income, residents' assessments of the available services and facilities, infrastructure, transport and, in particular, the various bodies, not only national but above all local authorities.

Keywords

Basic Housing; Social Representations; Socio-Spatial Exclusion; Ethnic Segregation; Porto/Braga Neighbourhoods.

Introduction

This chapter aims to synthesize the reflections and historical-empirical findings presented in the book entitled "*Working-class Neighbourhoods in Porto and Braga: living conditions, ways of inhabiting and social representations of residents*", which brings together some of the key outcomes of the research project entitled "*Ways of Life and Forms of Dwelling: 'Ilhas' and Working-Class Neighbourhoods in Porto and Braga*" (PTDC/IVC-SOC/4243/2014). Following its resubmission in December 2015 under the Horizon 2020 Programme, the project was approved by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) and subsequently ratified by the relevant European bodies. The project was implemented on 1 September 2016, and it was completed on 31 May 2020.

Reporting the research findings regarding the '*ilhas'* and working-class neighbourhoods of Porto and Braga, several interim findings were disseminated throughout the project in papers presented at seminars and colloquia, as well as at national and international scientific conferences. Four edited volumes resulted from this project: *Towards a sustainable city strategy* (Salat et al., 2017; Portuguese translation and edition by Rodrigues et al.); *Urban space and basic housing as a fundamental right* (Silva, Baptista, et al., 2020); *Towards basic housing: Citizenship, associative democracy and participatory methodologies* (Silva, Rodrigues, et al., 2020); and *Housing is central* (Silva, Sanches, et al., 2023), the last of which was produced

in collaboration with colleagues from Mackenzie Presbyterian University in São Paulo, Brazil[1].

The volume *Housing and habitat: 'Ilhas' and working-class neighbourhoods in Porto and Braga* is the third and fourth book (Silva, Ribeiro, et al., 2023; Silva, 2023) presenting the theoretical and empirical findings of the aforementioned research project. Following the publication of this fourth volume, the principal researcher, drawing on the findings of his PhD thesis on the origins of 'peasant conservatism' in north-western Portugal (Silva, 1998), decided to analyse conservative socio-political behaviour in urban settings and the social representations of residents living in the working-class neighbourhoods of Porto and Braga, many of whom had migrated from rural areas to these cities during the 1960s and 1970s (Silva, 2023). This fifth volume, which is summarised in this chapter, adopts a multidimensional approach to the study of working-class neighbourhoods in Porto and Braga, focusing on residents' living conditions, ways of dwelling, and social representations concerning a wide range of issues, including national and local institutions, as well as ethical and moral matters.

Given the importance of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, particularly through questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews, the project's principal researcher coordinated the process with significant contributions from the research team. The researchers were actively involved in developing the survey instrument, which was discussed and validated at a team meeting following a pilot survey. The final questionnaire was based on an instrument previously developed and applied in earlier research projects coordinated by the principal researcher.

Following the Introduction, Part I of this chapter comprises four sections, namely: (i) the theoretical framework on urban space, which summarises the various perspectives on urban space (functionalist, bio-ecological-cultural, (neo)Weberian, (neo)Marxist, cultural-symbolic), the principle of the right to the city, the debate on housing in (peri)urban areas, with processes of socio-spatial and, often, ethnic-racial segregation; (ii) a contextualisation of the industrialisation process and the inherent genesis and evolution of the 'islands' and working-class neighbourhoods in Porto and Braga since the 19th century and, particularly, in the 20th century from the 1950s and 1960s onwards, with particular attention to the 'sanitation' measures applied to the 'islands' under the Estado Novo; (iii) the process of urbanisation and housing policy in Braga and Porto, covering the Estado Novo period and, following the 25 April 1974 Revolution, an analysis of the role of CRUARB and of Operation SAAL under pressure from residents' associations and technical teams of architects and activists; (iv) a description of the research objectives and the outline of a research strategy and respective research methods and techniques, both quantitative (826 questionnaires) and qualitative (100 semi-structured interviews and participatory methodologies), also taking the 'islands' and neighbourhoods under study as the field of research.

In Part II, in addition to the '*ilha*' of Bela Vista, four neighbourhoods in Porto (Cerco, Lagarteiro, Fernão Magalhães and S. João de Deus) were selected, and in Part III, four neighbourhoods in Braga (Andorinhas, Santa Tecla, Enguardas and Picoto). Each section, dedicated to one of the neighbourhoods and based on the surveys and interviews conducted in each, addresses not only a brief historical overview of the neighbourhood's origins and development, but also its socio-demographic profile and housing types, the degree of (dis)satisfaction, sources of income, residents' assessments of the available services and facilities, infrastructure, transport and, in particular, the various bodies, not only national (e.g. Social Security, Courts) but above all local authorities (the respective Municipal Councils and, in particular, the municipal housing companies, namely *Domus Social* in Porto and *Bragahabit* in Braga.

Theoretical framework, historical perspective and research strategy

Regarding the theoretical framework, the discussion begins with a brief consideration of the rural-urban dichotomy and continuum, together with the distinction between community and society. It then summarises the principal perspectives in urban space, followed by an examination of the principle of the right to the city and the right to place, before concluding with the debate on housing in (peri-)urban areas, where processes of socio-spatial segregation and, in some cases, ethnic and racial discrimination are frequently observed. Against this background, and with no particular reference to the right to the city and, more specifically, to the issue of and the right to housing, urban space is analysed both as a site for the expansion of real-estate and financial interests and as an arena of social and political struggles for social rights. To this end, the chapter reviews the main theoretical approaches to urban space. It begins with the structural-functionalist perspective (Durkheim, 1893/1977), concerned with the organisation and management of socially differentiated space in the interests of social cohesion. In contrast, it examines the bioecological and cultural approach of the Chicago School (Park, 1916/1987) and the subsequent symbolic interactionist perspective (Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1974) which, following Simmel's pioneering work (Simmel, 1903/1987), emphasises the distinction between rural and urban ways of life and the differing forms of interaction and lived experience within urban settings. Contrasting with structural-functionalism, Weberian action theory (Weber 1921/1987) highlights the role of individual and collective social actors while recognising socio-spatial inequalities and, in particular, the power relations that exist between different social classes and groups. Finally, the book considers the (neo-)Marxist perspective (Marx, 1867/1974; Lefebvre, 1968; Harvey, 1977), which, although also structuralist, is fundamentally opposed to the Durkheimian tradition. This approach places socio-economic structures and social

conflict at the centre of the explanation of social behaviour in both rural and urban contexts. It also addresses the racial division of labour as a key foundation of contemporary decolonial theory (Quijano, 2000; Dussel, 2009). The chapter concludes with a critical assessment of these theoretical perspectives.

The discussion then turns to the centrality of the home and basic housing, given that, in the context of globalisation under neoliberalism, it is evident that, alongside labour precarity, the right to housing is being increasingly denied and/or eroded due to the aggressive strategies of financialised and rentier property capital. This process is underpinned by the weakness of public housing policies and/or by the inaction or complacent omission of the State and, not infrequently, of municipal authorities. In any case, while the city constitutes a privileged site for holders of property and financial capital to maximise speculative rents and returns, it also remains a place of citizen mobilisation and claims-making. This, however, presupposes the existence of conditions conducive to collective action, beginning with the organisation of the various affected social groups at local-regional, national and international levels.

As regards the process of industrialisation in Portugal, this was slow and belated due to the dominance of large-scale landownership and a *compradore* bourgeoisie, as well as the emergence and development of the *pátios* and *vilas operárias* (workers' housing estates) in Lisbon and, to an even greater extent, the *'ilhas'* and so-called social neighbourhoods in Porto and Braga. With regard to the relations between the various centres of power, namely the legislative and executive branches, and different social groups, particularly workers in search of housing, the latter, faced with persistent governmental inaction, were often dependent on intermediary actors who sought to profit economically from the basic housing needs of the most economically deprived individuals and families.

With regard to the context of industrialisation and the inherent origins and evolution of the *'ilhas'* and so-called social housing neighbourhoods, particularly in Porto, from the second half of the 19th century and especially from the Fontismo period onwards, and subsequently in the 20th century from the 1950s and 1960s, the book provides, in the second section, a brief retrospective and historical overview of the housing issue, noting some public and, above all, private initiatives of a charitable nature, albeit without any notable effects, leaving former day labourers and former peasant-workers to find accommodation in shacks and squalid 'courtyards' in Lisbon and overcrowded *'ilhas'* in Porto. With the establishment of the First Republic, whilst evictions were restricted and rents frozen, the new republican government's plans, despite several attempts, to build so-called social housing neighbourhoods ultimately failed to materialise, notably due to interference from landlords' interests, as noted by Marques (1978), Gros (1982), C.N. Silva (1994), Teixeira (1996) and Baptista (1999). Under the *Estado Novo*, although Salazar's dictatorship was hostile to the process of industrialisation until the 1950s and 1960s and had only launched the 'Programme for Affordable Housing'

(*Casas Económicas*) between 1928 and 1933, in order to secure the loyalty of the regime's leaders and middle ranks, namely civil servants and paramilitary personnel, it was forced, under pressure from the regime's pro-industrial and technocratic wing, through the Development Plans, to allow in the 1950s and 1960s the construction of buildings up to four storeys high, thereby expanding urbanised areas in the suburbs and outskirts/peripheries. At the same time, the dictatorial Salazar regime did not embark on any plan to eradicate shanty towns, which had been piling up during the 1950s -70s in the metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto. In the case of Porto, also encouraged by the city's authorities, the regime drew up in the 1950s and 1960s what was designated as a 'sanitation' plan for the *'ilhas'* within the framework of the *'Improvement Plan for the City of Porto'*, as well as the rehabilitation projects for Ribeira/Barredo (Pereira, 2003; Pereira and Queirós, 2012; Silva, Ribeiro, et al., 2023).

It was only in the aftermath of the 25 April 1974 that a spontaneous and innovative process emerged in the housing sector which, within the framework of the Ongoing Revolutionary Process (*Processo Revolucionário em Curso* -PREC), led to a series of measures favourable to tenants and, above all, to the development and implementation of the Local Ambulatory Support Service (*Serviço de Apoio Ambulatório Local*, SAAL) as part of state and municipal interventions, under pressure from residents' associations and technical teams of architects and activists. However, following the political reversal of 25 November 1975 in favour of conservative and right-wing liberal social forces, this dynamic proved short-lived, and the programme was abolished at national level in 1976. Although its functions were formally devolved to local authorities, most municipalities, lacking both the resources and the political will to implement them, yielded to entrenched local landowning interests. In short, shanty towns and other precarious housing persisted, particularly in the metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto, and subsequently became the object of limited policy attention under the Special Rehousing Programme (*Programa Especial de Realojamento*, PER) in 1993.

Furthermore, in recent decades, particularly since the 2007- 08 financial crisis, which had repercussions in Portugal following the austerity programme imposed by the Troika and the PSD/CDS government from 2011 onwards, the State has been remiss and complacent in the face of the aggressive strategy pursued by financial and property interests, which have generated socio-spatial inequalities and segregations through land rent and processes of gentrification and touristification in urban centres, resulting in deprivation and the deterioration of housing conditions for hundreds of thousands of people, particularly in the *'ilhas'* and working-class neighbourhoods of Porto and Braga.

Housing policy and research strategy

Following their analysis of the process of (proto)industrialisation and urbanisation, not only in Porto but also, albeit at a slower pace, in Braga, attention is turned to the role of public

authorities in the provision of infrastructure and, albeit in a limited form, housing policies at national and municipal levels, as well as the emergence of new residential areas, whether under the First Republic, the *Estado Novo*, or in the decades following the 25 April 1974 Revolution up to the present day. Particular attention is paid to Urban Development Plans, especially Municipal Master Plans and their subsequent revisions.

The chapter then examines the characterisation and regeneration of the Ribeira/Barredo district in Porto, highlighting the role of the Commission for the Urban Renewal of the Ribeira/Barredo Area (*Comissariado para a Renovação Urbana da Área da Ribeira/Barredo*, CRUARB) in the post-25 April 1974 period, as well as the SAAL operation and subsequent state and municipal interventions (Bandeirinha, 2007). Despite the emergence of the SAAL initiative, which produced only limited positive outcomes and the corresponding rise in public expectations, precarious housing conditions persisted, particularly until the implementation of the Special Rehousing Programme of 1993 (Decree-Law 163/93, of 7 May), especially in Lisbon and Porto, aimed at the eradication of shanty towns. Nevertheless, situations of housing vulnerability affecting tens of thousands of households remain unresolved. Indeed, public housing provision has remained at around 2 per cent for decades, whereas in several European countries this figure stands between 20 and 30 per cent. On the other hand, particularly from the 1980s onwards, there was an expansion of the private housing sector, the widespread use of bank-financed credit, partly state-subsidised and a deregulated urban rental market shaped by the influence of construction and banking lobbies.

The fourth section sets out the research aims and methodological strategy, drawing on a range of methods and techniques, including quantitative methods, such as surveys and qualitative methods, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and content analysis, as well as participant observation during fieldwork in selected *'ilhas'* and neighbourhoods in Porto and Braga. Particular emphasis is placed on participatory methodologies in the *'ilhas'* of Bela Vista in Porto and the *Andorinhas* neighbourhood in Braga. This preparatory work and the process of building trust, which in some cases was facilitated by the support of Residents' Committees or Associations, whilst in others, particularly where latent or overt divisions or conflicts existed, especially of an inter-ethnic nature, required creative practices and approaches to overcome mistrust, was essential. On this basis, we often encountered the 'semi-hidden' records referred to by Scott (1990), particularly in some neighbourhoods of Braga, concerning internal rivalries or conflicts within the community, as well as critical positions towards authorities, municipal powers, and other actors.

By triangulating different research methods, *'ilhas'* and working-class neighbourhoods are analysed as significant sub-entities in relation to places of work and residence. This approach also raises the question of whether these *'ilhas'* and neighbourhoods display different forms of sociability and are characterised by specific modes of socio-spatial organisation, with deep-

rooted identities and solidarities and, potentially, certain forms of conflict, namely territorial, inter-ethnic, and class-based conflicts, often involving actors from outside the neighbourhood. To illustrate this, we selected Bela Vista among the *'ilhas'*, as well as four neighbourhoods in Porto and four in Braga, which we characterised in specific terms. Fieldwork is treated as the central and scientifically legitimate basis of socio-anthropological research (Boissevain, 1974/1978; Geertz, 1973), drawing on oral narratives and life histories (Bertaux, 1997), as well as data recorded in field diaries and audiovisual materials.

Following an earlier study (Silva, Ribeiro, et al., 2023), which summarised the general findings of the research based on 826 questionnaires and 100 semi-structured interviews, the objectives of the present study follow the same line of inquiry and methodology. However, this study focuses specifically on the *'ilha'* of Bela Vista and eight working-class neighbourhoods, four in Porto and four in Braga, discussed in Parts II and III, respectively.

Brief overview of neighbourhoods in Porto and Braga: socio-spatial and ethnic segregation

With the aim of analysing selected neighbourhoods in Porto and Braga, it was agreed that each section, based on the surveys and interviews conducted in each neighbourhood, would address, in addition to a brief historical overview of the neighbourhood's origins and development, its socio-demographic profile (gender, age group, marital status, household type, ethnic-racial background, and educational attainment); housing types and housing conditions; the degree of (dis)satisfaction with housing; employment situations and sources of income; residents' assessments of available services and facilities (or their absence, such as heating), infrastructure, and transport; and, most importantly, their views on various institutions, not only national ones (e.g. Social Security, the courts, service providers, the media, the PSP, and the GNR), but above all local authorities (the respective municipal councils and, in particular, the municipal housing companies, namely *Domus Social* in Porto and *Bragahabit* in Braga).

With regard to Part II, we began by analising the *'ilha'* of Bela Vista, taking into account certain specific features and, above all, the success of its rehabilitation. An overview was provided of the identity, origins, and history of the *'ilha'* of Bela Vista from the 19th century onwards, and particularly after 1974. Faced with the threat of eviction resulting from municipal policies, it was shown how the residents, through their Association, managed with the collaboration of experts and researchers and the support of activists, to hold political authorities to account, thereby ensuring that the electoral promise to rehabilitate the *'ilha'* was fulfilled.

This rehabilitation, despite its setbacks and difficulties, was therefore made possible by the fulfilment of the necessary conditions for success: the determination of the Residents'

Association and the participation of the residents themselves; the commitment of architects and other experts at the Basic Housing Laboratory (LAHB); the involvement of social science researchers; and the fulfilment of the electoral promise by the candidate, once he became Mayor, and by other municipal officials, in particular the commitment of the councillors responsible for Culture and Urban Planning. The project on the *'ilha'* of Bela Vista (2013–2017) provided a range of experiences that went beyond the mere production of architectural designs, in that it enabled the use of inter- and transdisciplinary methodologies in participatory practices with a social focus.

In Part II, four selected neighbourhoods in Porto (Cerco, Lagarteiro, Fernão Magalhães and S. João de Deus) were described and analyzed as case studies, based on a set of similar items, as mentioned above.

Similarly, in Part III we focus on working-class neighbourhoods in Braga, namely Andorinhas, Enguardas, Santa Tecla and Picoto, considering the same items and placing particular emphasis on omissions and on the practices of national and municipal institutions, with which residents have to contend. In Braga, it is worth highlighting, on the one hand, the polarization between residents and the City Council and *Bragahabit*, as well as latent tensions and overt conflicts at an institutional level; and, on the other hand, interethnic relations in mixed neighbourhoods (notably between Roma and non-Roma populations).

Roma people are often, in a false and/or generalised manner and in a so-called "neo-nationalist" or cultural discourse, classified as "foreigners" who commit "robberies" and are involved in "drug trafficking"; this is reinforced by a considerable degree of prejudice and stigma, indicative of "socio-spatial defamation" (Wacquant, 2006), on the part of certain institutions and "moral entrepreneurs" (Becker, 1968/1963).

Indeed, in some mixed neighbourhoods where interethnic relations are prominent, both in Porto, notably in Cerco and S. João de Deus, and in Braga, specifically in Enguardas and Santa Tecla, as well as in the mono-ethnic neighbourhood of Picoto in Braga we observed situations of tension, at times latent and at times overt, not only between neighbours of different ethnic backgrounds, but also in the form of discriminatory institutional practices.

For example, in the Enguardas neighbourhood, which has shifted from a working-class neighbourhood to a tense interethnic setting, there is evidence of a division between the "upper neighbourhood" for non-Roma residents and the "lower neighbourhood" for Roma residents, as well as a refusal to sell houses to Roma families in that same neighbourhood, in contrast to some non-Roma families who have both the means and the authorization to purchase social housing units.

In the Santa Tecla neighbourhood, there was no consultation regarding the demolition of part of the neighbourhood, specifically Block II, where only Roma residents live. More seriously

still, in order to remove Roma families from a central area of the city of Braga, Braga City Council acceded to a request contained in an open letter signed by hundreds of residents, leading to the eviction of those families. They were subsequently relocated to a segregated neighbourhood lacking even basic housing conditions and essential services (e.g. sanitation), in the mono-ethnic neighbourhood of Picoto, a situation that has persisted from its inception to the present day.

Indeed, beyond the multiple and not infrequent processes of socio-spatial segregation affecting working-class neighbourhoods and their residents, we observed within these neighbourhoods' situations of discrimination and racism, both institutional, carried out by municipal institutions, in particular local councils, and everyday, expressed by non-Roma residents towards Roma residents.

Overall, alongside the numerous and not uncommon processes of socio-spatial segregation affecting working-class neighbourhoods and their residents, the team also observed instances of discrimination and racism within these neighbourhoods themselves, sometimes institutional, carried out by bodies such as local councils, and sometimes everyday, expressed by non-Roma residents towards Roma residents.

Conclusion

Interethnic relations are particularly salient in several mixed neighbourhoods in Porto and Braga. This is especially the case in Cerco and S. João de Deus in Porto, and in Enguardas and Santa Tecla in Braga. Similar dynamics are also evident in the mono-ethnic neighbourhood of Picoto, in Braga.

Across these neighbourhoods, we observed both latent and overt forms of tension. These tensions emerged not only between neighbours from different ethnic backgrounds but also through discriminatory institutional practices.

The Enguardas neighbourhood illustrates these dynamics particularly well. Originally a working-class neighbourhood, it has evolved into a setting marked by tense interethnic relations. There is a clear division between the "upper neighbourhood", inhabited mainly by non-Roma residents, and the "lower neighbourhood", where Roma residents live. There is also evidence that Roma families have been denied the opportunity to purchase housing in the neighbourhood, whereas some non-Roma families have been authorized to buy their social housing units.

A further example is provided by the Santa Tecla neighbourhood. Residents were not consulted about the demolition of part of the neighbourhood, specifically Block II, where only Roma families lived. Moreover, in response to an open letter signed by hundreds of local residents calling for the eviction of Roma families, Braga City Council relocated those families

to the segregated neighbourhood of Picoto. Since its establishment, Picoto has lacked even the most basic housing conditions and essential public services, including sanitation.

More broadly, our findings reveal persistent processes of socio-spatial segregation affecting working-class neighbourhoods and their residents. They also reveal instances of discrimination and racism within these neighbourhoods. Such practices are manifested both institutionally, particularly by municipal authorities, and in everyday interactions between non-Roma and Roma residents.

Focusing on Porto, migrants from rural areas, such as former peasants, artisans and agricultural day labourers, moved to the city in large numbers, while a much smaller proportion settled in Braga. They contributed significantly to urban population growth. However, low wages forced many of them to live in precarious housing. Many settled in *'ilhas'*, which were frequently overcrowded.

Public intervention remained extremely limited throughout the late nineteenth century and the First Republic. The Estado Novo, initially hostile to industrialisation, did little to address the growth of informal settlements once industrialisation gathered pace. Except for the *Casas Económicas* Programme, which targeted selected urban groups, mainly civil servants and military personnel, the regime largely allowed socio-spatially segregated shanty towns to expand in Lisbon and, to a lesser extent, in Porto.

The 1956 Improvement Plan for the City of Porto (*Plano de Melhoramentos para a Cidade do Porto*) marked an important shift. It led to the construction of large working-class housing estates and enabled the rehousing of thousands of families. Nevertheless, inadequate housing conditions remained widespread. Large numbers of working-class households continued to live in *'ilhas'* and informal settlements.

Overall, these developments illustrate the persistence of socio-spatial inequality in Portuguese cities. Although public housing policies gradually expanded after the mid-twentieth century, they did not eliminate precarious housing or residential segregation among the urban working classes.

Following the 25 April 1974 Revolution, several grassroots initiatives and social movements emerged to promote housing rehabilitation and urban renewal. Many of these initiatives were developed in collaboration with architects and other professionals. The best-known example was the SAAL Programme, particularly in Porto. However, for a variety of political and institutional reasons, its impact ultimately fell short of expectations.

Over the subsequent five decades, the Portuguese state failed to guarantee adequate housing for all citizens. Public investment in housing remained extremely low, accounting for only around 2 per cent of the national housing stock. Instead, housing policy largely favoured home ownership through subsidised mortgage schemes. In practice, these schemes primarily

benefited households with sufficient financial resources to access credit, while also supporting the banking sector.

Our review of the different political regimes, from the monarchy and the First Republic to the Estado Novo dictatorship, shows that, although more adequate housing solutions were developed for the middle classes and intermediate social groups, the vast majority of working-class families, continued to experience precarious housing conditions. These ranged from the *pátios* and *vilas operárias* (workers' housing estates) in Lisbon and the *'ilhas'* in Porto to the squalid conditions of the shanty towns that later developed in the country's metropolitan areas.

Next, the team outlined the research aims and strategy, together with the methods and techniques employed. Over a three-year period, we conducted surveys and semi-structured interviews. We also adopted an action research approach and employed a range of participatory methods, including participant observation in several neighbourhoods. Two initiatives deserve particular attention: the action research project undertaken in the *'ilha'* of Bela Vista, Porto, and the case study conducted in the Andorinhas neighbourhood in Braga. Across all the selected neighbourhoods, we first examined the socio-demographic profile of residents and the different housing types. We then analysed housing conditions and explored residents' perceptions of public institutions and authorities, including the police, the courts, social security, the media, and in particular, local councils and their municipal housing companies, *Domus* Social and *BragaHabit*. We also examined residents' views on a range of symbolic, political and ethical issues.

Residents' assessments of the municipal housing companies, *Domus* Social in Porto and *BragaHabit* in Braga, were generally more positive than negative. Overall, perceptions were also more favourable in Porto than in Braga. Nevertheless, respondents in some neighbourhoods, especially in Braga, expressed critical views of both the municipal housing companies and the local councils.

By contrast, assessments of utility providers, including water and sanitation, electricity and telecommunications companies, were overwhelmingly positive. These evaluations appear to reflect residents' pragmatic assessment of the services provided, irrespective of whether the companies were publicly, privately or jointly owned.

Finally, our analysis of the *'ilhas'* and working-class neighbourhoods of Porto and Braga points to a broader pattern that extends across Portugal. For decades, both the central state and the municipal authorities in Porto and Braga have pursued policies characterised by limited intervention and, at times, neglect. Their failure to act has often facilitated the advance of financial and real-estate interests, particularly during the *Estado Novo*. Although the period following the 25 April 1974 Revolution brought significant progress in areas such as social

security, healthcare and education, improvements in access to adequate housing for the most disadvantaged sections of the working class remained limited.

The *'ilha'* of Bela Vista represents a notable exception. Its relative success resulted from the convergence of several factors discussed in the corresponding chapter, including residents' collective mobilisation, technical support and political commitment.

The evidence presented in this chapter reflects not only residents' assessments of decades of institutional neglect but also their histories of struggle and everyday forms of resistance. It also brings to light forms of family and community experience that have often remained hidden from public debate.

These findings point to the need for a more robust public housing policy at both national and municipal levels. They also underline the importance of strengthening participatory democratic processes within working-class neighbourhoods. Equally important is the promotion of residents' organisation and collective action. Such measures are essential if passive attitudes and social fragmentation, often reinforced by clientelist practices at municipal and local levels, are to be overcome.

Endnote

[1] Furthermore, it is important to highlight, following various communications and presentations, the publication of articles, books and book chapters on urban issues and, in particular, on housing, sometimes including case studies on 'ilhas' or working-class neighbourhoods of Porto and Braga by members of the research team, namely Fernando Matos Rodrigues, Fernando Bessa Ribeiro, António Cardoso, Luís Vicente Baptista, João Teixeira Lopes, José Lopes Cordeiro, Teresa Mora, Joel Felizes, António Cerejeira Fontes, David Viana and Manuel Carlos Silva, the latter being the project's principal investigator. It is also worth highlighting the collaboration and support of the project's consultants, namely José Manuel Sobral, anthropologist and retired researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon, and Maria Manuel Oliveira, architect and associate professor at the School of Architecture, Art and Design of the University of Minho.

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Learn Languages and Social Inclusion: the Right to Understand *vs.* the Right to Produce

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Abstract

How can individuals be educated and prepared for social inclusion? This question requires consideration of culture and language as fundamental dimensions of inclusion. Language learning raises issues arising from the relationship between the mother tongue and foreign languages. The aim is to foster interest in and commitment to diverse communities whose members are increasingly mobile across the globe. A communicative-cognitive approach can facilitate integration into heterogeneous sociolinguistic communities through the exchange of knowledge and expertise and, in particular, through language learning and linguistic interaction. Understanding contributes to inclusion, while the ability to express oneself and produce language in another language can strengthen that process.

Keywords

Understanding; Social Inclusion; Multilingualism; Plurilingualism; Production.

Introduction

In the context of increasing mobility, social inclusion necessarily involves the right to language and intercomprehension for migrants from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It also requires educational approaches that support immediate adaptation to new social realities.

Foreign-language teaching and learning necessarily involve the speaker as a social and linguistic subject, together with their environment and patterns of interaction. Anyone

learning a foreign language brings with them traces of their own *speech* and of who they are through their mother tongue. When educational institutions disregard this linguistic background, treating learners as blank slates and presenting only the structures of the target language, they fail to acknowledge the linguistic competence learners have already developed in their mother tongue.

Who can teach and learn a foreign language in the global context in which we live?

The linguistics of enunciation challenges the centrality accorded to syntax (Chomsky, 1965) by foregrounding a system of enunciative coordinates. From this perspective, a subject's linguistic capacity is not assessed solely in terms of mastery of forms and parts of speech, but rather in terms of the ability to perform enunciative operations. These operations are particularly significant because they can be generalised across language and languages, as they necessarily involve correspondences between values that vary according to the situation and are realised through different sets of markers in different languages.

As speaking subjects, learners are so accustomed to establishing such correspondences in their mother tongue that they generally do so effortlessly and without conscious reflection. The linguistics of enunciation, understood as a linguistics of the subject, therefore seeks to identify the subject within the learner; from a pedagogical perspective, the learner is the privileged protagonist of the learning process.

This approach requires the identification of learning strategies, which vary from one learner to another and from one group of learners to another. Each learner develops their own strategies for organising and constructing knowledge, involving processes of generalisation, abstraction, and association.

In their native language, learners are able to establish relationships between values and the markers required to express them, as well as to assess the appropriateness of the utterances they produce in relation to the situations in which they find themselves. This epilinguistic capacity cannot be disregarded. As Antoine Culioli (1968, p. 328) puts it, it involves "Une activité métalinguistique dont on n'a pas conscience (par exemple l'organisation des règles dans l'esprit d'un élève qui apprend une langue)" [A metalinguistic activity of which one is not conscious (for example, the organisation of rules in the mind of a pupil learning a language)].

To speak of metalinguistic awareness is to suggest that, throughout the language-learning process — for example, in a formal educational setting and regardless of the method or pedagogical orientation adopted — the learner attends to how language functions and reflects upon its functioning. This does not necessarily mean that such attention leads to a rigorous or fully developed verbal explanation. Rather, as Daniel Coste (1985) observes,

drawing on Danielle Bailly (1980), epilinguistic activity, which is largely subconscious, accompanies every utterance.

In formal learning, however, the relationship between these two dimensions remains an open question. It is therefore worth considering what factors might contribute to the emergence of a "spontaneous" metalinguistic awareness in learners and, more broadly, what position should be adopted regarding the relationship, if any, between metalinguistic reflection and the appropriation of a foreign language.

In a school setting, particularly within what may be described as mass education, the continued expansion of which is increasingly evident, failure to take account of learners' interlanguage, inhibitions, and ability to master enunciative operations risks reducing them to mere recipients of knowledge that they can only reproduce mechanically. Conversely, encouraging learners to develop their own strategies for learning how to learn and for "knowing how to do", while engaging them in lived situations within an enunciative framework, enables them to mobilise their existing knowledge and actively appropriate new forms of knowledge — that is, to develop their own "knowing".

The learner, as a student and speaking subject, also brings the notion of "need" to the forefront. Language needs are particularly relevant when considering language learning in the context of social inclusion. However, the notion of "need" is inherently ambiguous and therefore requires a precise consideration of what is meant by the "needs" of learners and how these needs are identified.

The relevance of culture and language as factors of inclusion

Identifying language needs involves collecting and analysing information about what teachers and learners consider necessary for designing and regulating their interactions in the teaching, learning, and use of a foreign language. It is important to emphasise that the concept of language "need" emerged primarily from experience in adult education and, as far as we understand, is particularly difficult to define and apply to the mainstream school population.

In many cases, language needs are identified by specialists at the request of educational institutions. The resulting information may therefore reflect, to a considerable extent, the specialists' interpretation rather than the perspectives of the individuals concerned. Such an approach may consequently lead to the imposition of particular objectives and contents.

A learner-centred pedagogy, by contrast, presupposes that teaching objectives and content should be informed by learners' language needs, a principle that is particularly relevant when language learning is considered in the context of social inclusion. Communication is therefore intrinsic to the notion of need. According to Martinet (1965), the fundamental function of

human language is to enable individuals to communicate their personal experience to others. Such communication may express certainty, doubt, desire, or need.

From our perspective, at the beginning of the learning process, it is important to avoid assuming either that the teacher knows the language "needs" of the learners or that learners themselves are fully capable of articulating those needs. In the current context, particularly in relation to migration, the analysis and identification of language needs offer an important opportunity to rethink the conditions under which living languages are taught and learned. Appropriating a language involves appropriating both its oral and written dimensions; it means discovering and progressively mastering the two modes through which the language is realised.

The written dimension is secondary to the oral dimension, which constitutes the primary form of language. Étiemble (1973) points out that human beings have existed for approximately one million years, whereas writing has been in use for only around six thousand years. Writing is therefore a relatively recent phenomenon in human history and, even today, is not part of the practices of all human communities.

The child or student — the learner of both native and foreign languages — can, in a certain sense, be understood, according to various authors, as reproducing the history of humanity. The oral dimension is appropriated before the written one: learners first encounter language as sound and only subsequently establish correspondences between its oral and graphic forms. These processes therefore constitute a later stage in language learning and have important behavioural and pedagogical implications:

- Learning the written dimension introduces the learner to a new linguistic experience and constitutes the first form of distancing from the language being learned.
- Learning to write involves appropriating the system of correspondences between the two dimensions of the language: the oral and the written.

For the foreign-language teacher, fostering learners' engagement with written texts can be a challenging task. In many cases, familiarity with written texts in a foreign language has not yet become an established practice, and learners may therefore need to develop both confidence and interest in approaching written language.

As Eddy Roulet reminds us:

> La langue n'est pas pour l'apprenant un instrument neutre (…): elle n'est pas seulement un code de transmission d'informations sur des objets, concepts ou sentiments extérieurs à l'énonciateur. Elle ne répondra aux motivations et aux besoins de communication de l'apprenant que si celui-ci peut se l'approprier, s'y engager, y inscrire sa personne par le biais de marques modales, illocutoires, argumentatives ou intonationnelles.
> [For the learner, language is not a neutral instrument (…): it is not merely a code for

> transmitting information about objects, concepts, or feelings external to the speaker. It can respond to the learner's motivations and communicative needs only if the learner can appropriate it, engage with it, and inscribe themselves in it through modal, illocutionary, argumentative, or intonational markers. (author's own translation)] (Roulet, 1980, p. 11)

This conception of language raises an important question in foreign-language learning: what is the relationship between linguistic complexity and learning difficulties? More specifically, how can teaching practices respond to differences in linguistic competence while ensuring that learners can participate meaningfully in the social and communicative environment of the host community?

In the context of migration, access to the language of the host country is undoubtedly important. However, inclusion does not necessarily depend on complete or "perfect" linguistic production. The communicative purpose of language may instead be understood in terms of the possibility of establishing mutual understanding between speakers. While the ability to express oneself and produce language in the target language remains an important objective, understanding may constitute a more immediate condition for participation.

This distinction is central to the relationship between language learning and social inclusion. The specificity of language learning lies partly in the relationship between the mother tongue and foreign languages, and, in the case of migrants, in the linguistic repertoires they bring with them. Rather than treating these repertoires as obstacles, language education can draw upon them as resources for learning and interaction.

A communicative-cognitive approach can support integration into highly diverse sociolinguistic communities by encouraging the exchange of knowledge and expertise among learners and between communities. Language learning thus becomes more than the acquisition of a linguistic system: it becomes a means of entering relationships with others and participating in a new social environment.

From this perspective, the "need" for communication does not necessarily result in complete linguistic production or expression. It may instead lead to mutual understanding between speakers, which can itself constitute an important form of participation. Production remains desirable, but understanding can provide an essential first step towards inclusion.

If language teaching and learning are understood as means of social transformation, teachers must continually question their pedagogical practice: Why does a particular learner learn, or fail to learn? What conditions facilitate or inhibit learning? Such questions require teachers to reflect on both their methods and their assumptions about learners.

According to D'Hainaut (1980), teachers' competencies should include *knowing how to do*, *knowing how to be*, *and knowing how to transform*, thereby enabling discovery to take place. The teacher's central role should therefore be to foster the emergence of the subject

within the learner and to create the conditions in which learners can become active participants in their own learning.

In a context in which the adaptation of different methodological approaches to particular groups of learners has become increasingly important, an eclectic approach to language teaching may be appropriate. What matters, however, is not methodological eclecticism in itself, but the capacity to establish a meaningful relationship between pedagogical theory and practice. In foreign-language education, teachers should encourage learners to reflect upon language and languages rather than simply reproduce linguistic forms.

This pedagogical perspective also presupposes a particular organisation of classroom interaction. Activities and tasks proposed by the teacher can be designed to lead learners towards the construction of concepts from concrete examples. Such examples provide a basis for different operations on language, including observation, inference, and verification. Through these processes, learners can gradually move from particular situations towards the identification and understanding of broader patterns.

The task, therefore, is not merely an opportunity to practise a linguistic form. It is a means of engaging learners in observation, reflection, hypothesis formation, and verification, allowing them to construct knowledge through their own cognitive activity.

Conclusion

In the contemporary context, teaching and learning necessarily involve knowledge in a state of construction: knowledge is developed through reflection, interaction, and the learner's active engagement. This raises a fundamental question: how is knowledge constructed and elaborated within the learner, and how can this process accommodate the diversity of learners that social inclusion presupposes?

From this perspective, it is essential for teachers to question their own pedagogical practices and, in turn, to encourage learners to question themselves. The answers to these questions can provide important guidelines for foreign-language teaching within a communicative-cognitive framework. The teacher's role is not simply to transmit knowledge, but to create the conditions in which learners can investigate, reflect, and construct knowledge for themselves.

The purpose of this approach is to engage learners in a process of personal investigation, followed by critical reflection within the group. This process can lead to an evaluation understood as an argued and justified reflection on particular examples, references, or situations introduced by the teacher. Learners would not necessarily think of drawing upon such examples independently, nor would the corresponding explanations necessarily emerge spontaneously at that stage of learning. Teacher mediation is therefore essential, not to replace the learner's cognitive activity, but to stimulate and guide it.

Such a teaching and learning model also enables learners to encounter different perceptions and perspectives, thereby fostering dialogue and discussion. The pedagogical intention is not to modify learners' cognitive systems from the outside, but to provide authentic and meaningful contexts in which diverse experiences, mediated through classroom interaction and supported by a climate of mutual trust, enable learners to construct a deeper understanding of the domain under study.

Developing reflective learners requires teachers to make learning processes more explicit. Learners need opportunities to verbalise their reasoning and, where appropriate, to think aloud, so that they can become aware of the mental activity involved in their learning. Such awareness is fundamental to the development of learner autonomy. Encouraging learners to approach a task in an increasingly conscious and reflective manner can therefore have a decisive effect on the quality of their learning.

However, many learners are not initially aware of the importance of such an attitude. Making them conscious of the relationship between their actions, their strategies, and the outcomes of learning activities can help establish a stronger connection between reflection and knowledge. The evocation of lived experiences within learning situations can contribute to this process by demonstrating how different attitudes and approaches may influence the effectiveness or success of a given task.

Within this framework, the teacher acts as a mediator and must remain aware of the effects of their pedagogical choices on learners. The teacher is simultaneously the designer and regulator of learning sequences, structuring activities in ways that favour socio-cognitive processes and encourage learners to take an increasingly active role in constructing knowledge.

Ultimately, teaching that promotes reflection presupposes a socio-cognitive conception of learning. It requires a shift in the understanding of what it means to "know": knowing is not simply possessing information or reproducing acquired forms, but being able to mobilise, question, reorganise, and apply knowledge. Metacognition therefore becomes an essential component of pedagogical practice, enabling learners to reflect upon their own cognitive processes and progressively assume greater responsibility for their learning.

In the context of contemporary global mobility and continuing migration, this perspective acquires particular significance. Language education should not be reduced to the transmission of linguistic forms or to the achievement of complete productive competence. It should create opportunities for learners to understand, participate, interact, and progressively develop the ability to express themselves within their new sociolinguistic environments.

The distinction between the right to understand and the right to produce is therefore not a distinction between two competing objectives, but between two interconnected dimensions of linguistic participation. Understanding can constitute an immediate condition for inclusion, while production represents the progressive expansion of the learner's capacity to participate as a speaking subject. From this perspective, language learning becomes not only a process of acquiring a new linguistic system, but also a means of constructing knowledge, developing autonomy, and enabling social participation.

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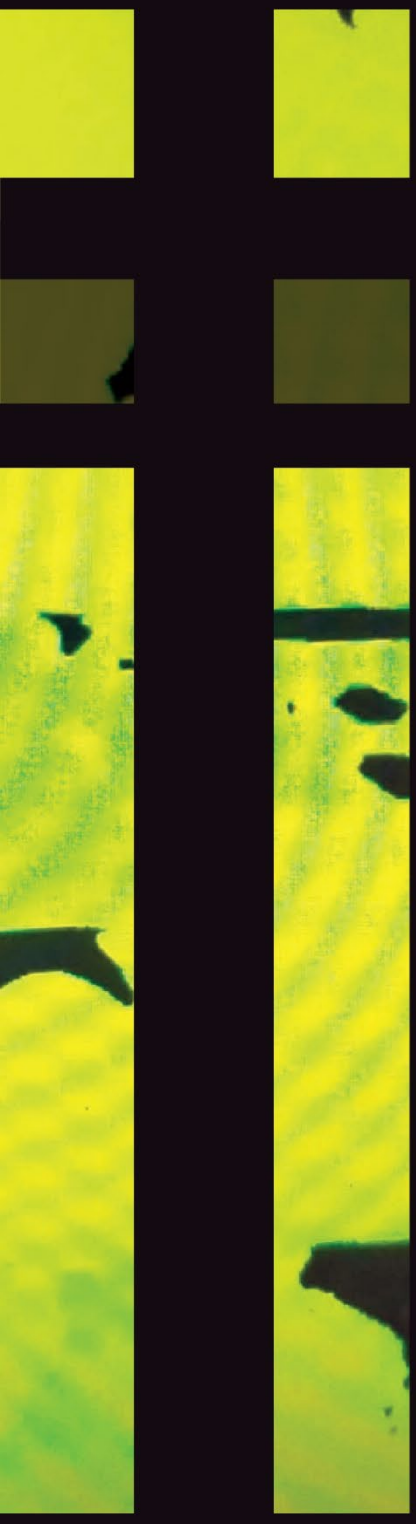

Part II

Inclusive Pedagogies, Artistic Practices, and Creative Engagement

Understanding Cultural Practices and Heritage: Insight from Nigerian Communities

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Abstract

Cultural practices encompass traditions, customs and behaviours that are passed down through generations within a community. Heritage implies the historical, cultural and natural aspects of cultural identity that is passed down through generations within a community. This study explores the cultural practices of Nigerian communities and their components such as social norms, etiquette and festivals, celebrations, music and dance are among the components examined in this study. Additionally, this study examines the aspects of heritage such as historical sites, monuments, customs, cultural traditions, language, art, music and dance. The study highlights the dynamic nature of cultural practices in Nigerian communities and outlines ways of promoting cultural heritage in these communities. The study concluded that understanding cultural practices within Nigerian communities enhanced knowledge of their nature, identity, and relevance to art and culture, thereby fostering their sense of purpose globally.

Keywords

Cultural Practices; Heritage; Social Norms and Customs.

Introduction

Cultural practices connote traditions, customs, and behaviours that are passed down through generations within a community. These practices form part of the often-overlooked activities of everyday life, shaping how individuals greet one another, celebrate milestones, resolve disputes and exhibit extraordinary diversity while sharing common Nigerian philosophical threads such as respect for elders, communal decision-making and corrective feedback from

elders. Nigerian communities invest significantly in festivals and family storytelling as vehicles of cultural continuity.

Heritage implies the historical, cultural, and natural aspects of cultural identity that are passed down through generations within a community. Whereas cultural practices emphasise living, evolving behaviours, heritage encompasses both tangible assets, physical sites, artifacts, monuments, landscapes and intangible wealth such as oral epics, indigenous knowledge systems, and collective memories. Nigeria's heritage includes the Sukur Cultural Landscape in Adamawa State (Gundu, 2018), the Benin Bronzes in the Kingdom of Benin. Additionally, cultural practices and heritage form an interdependent system while heritage provides legitimacy and historical depth to contemporary practices. Understanding both dimensions is essential for researchers and cultural enthusiasts seeking to engage Nigerian communities in research on Yoruba and Hausa tribes respectfully.

Cultural practices of Nigerian communities

Social norms

Social norms within Nigerian communities constitute the collectively enforced rules that govern behavior, relationships, and expectations across age groups, genders, and social strata. Unlike codified laws enforced by police and courts, social norms are enforced through communal approval. Among the Yoruba tribe, the norm of '*ọmọlúwàbí*' (a person of good character) synthesises multiple expectations: humility, courage, hard work, respect for hierarchy, and rejection of theft and lying (Sanusi, 2023). Among the Hausa, the norm of '*kunya'* (polite humbleness) requires a person to downplay their achievements, respect elders and avoid direct eye contact with superiors. These social norms are taught to children at an early age and embraced as they grow up. Meanwhile, social norms are dynamic, adjusting to urbanization, economic pressures, and generational change.

Etiquette and festivals

Etiquette and festivals in Nigerian communities reflect important dimensions of social organization, cultural values and collective identity. Festivals are far more than recreational events or tourist attractions; they function as living archives through which cultural knowledge, historical experiences, social values and cultural identities are preserved and transmitted across generations. The ways in which people participate in and conduct themselves during such occasions are also shaped by culturally specific forms of etiquette, including expectations concerning respect, hospitality, interpersonal relationships, and appropriate behaviour. The Osun-Osogbo Festival, held annually in Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria, features processions to the sacred grove, drumming, masked performances, music,

and dance. It constitutes an important expression of Yoruba cultural and spiritual heritage (Fakunle & Ampitan, 2024). Similarly, the Argungu International Fishing and Cultural Festival in Kebbi State is a four-day celebration that includes competitive fishing using traditional nets and canoes, canoe races, wrestling competitions, and agricultural exhibitions (Ojo et al., 2025).

Beyond nationally recognised festivals, numerous local and community-based celebrations contribute to the preservation of specific forms of cultural identity that may be less visible to outsiders. These include yam festivals, community feasts, traditional dance performances, and wrestling competitions. Such occasions provide opportunities for communities to reinforce social relationships, transmit cultural values, practise culturally appropriate forms of interaction, and strengthen a shared sense of belonging.

Celebrations

Celebrations differ from festivals since celebrations are tied to life-cycle events such as births, marriages, chieftaincy coronations and other religious ceremonies. Among the Yoruba, the naming ceremony takes place on the eighth day after birth and involves prayers and other traditional rites. The occasion is usually attended by members of the extended family, neighbours and other guests, who are typically offered food and entertained with music (Sanusi, 2023). Religious celebrations also encompass a range of activities that take place throughout the year. In addition, celebrations may include the conferment of chieftaincy titles on individuals recognised for their philanthropic contributions and involvement in community development.

Music and dance

Artistic practices play a significant role in preserving and transmitting Nigerian cultural heritage across generations. Traditional music, dance, sculpture, weaving, pottery, bead-making, textile production, masquerade performances, and oral poetry are not merely forms of entertainment but important cultural expressions that communicate historical experiences, religious beliefs, social values, and communal identities. Contemporary Nigerian artists increasingly reinterpret these traditional art forms through painting, theatre, film, fashion, and digital media, thereby ensuring that cultural heritage remains relevant within changing social and global contexts. Artistic practices therefore function as living archives through which communities continuously preserve, reinterpret, and celebrate their cultural identities.

Music and dance in Nigerian communities are inseparable from daily and social life activities. They have performed wonderfully at Western concerts, using their music and dance at many national and local events in Nigeria (Okoro, 2021). The Yoruba talking drum mimics the tonal

inflections of the Yoruba language, enabling it to make proverbs sound and convey praise songs across distances.

Aspects of heritage in Nigerian communities

Historical sites

Historical sites in Nigeria are physical locations that preserve evidence of past socio-political and economic activities and provide tangible links to collective memory. The Sukur Cultural Landscape in Adamawa State is characterized by terraced farmlands, dry-stone structures, paved walkways, iron-smelting furnaces, and the dry-stone palace of the Hidi (UNESCO World Heritage Committee, 1999). The site preserves evidence of a hierarchical society with a long-standing tradition of iron technology and sustainable agriculture (Gundu, 2018; Okeke & Mohammed, 2022). Another major historical site is the Ancient Kano City Walls, which historically served defensive and administrative functions and helped regulate access to the ancient city (Usman, 2014). These sites are associated with local communities and heritage authorities, whose involvement is important for conservation and tourism management (Usman, 2014).

Monuments

Monuments differ from historical sites in that they are deliberately erected, often on a smaller and more concentrated scale, to commemorate a specific person, event, idea, or dynasty. Nigeria's monuments include pre-colonial obelisks and sculptures, colonial-era statues, and post-independence memorials (Oladumiye et al., 2023). Another significant monument reflecting Nigeria's modern nation-building project is the National Theatre, located in Lagos State. Built in 1976, it was designed to host FESTAC '77, the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (Oladumiye et al., 2023).

Customs

Customs are deeply rooted patterns of social behaviour that organise a community's responses to universal human events such as birth, puberty, marriage, parenthood, and elderhood, in culturally specific ways. Among the Yoruba, greeting customs include kneeling by females and prostration by males. These practices begin as early as the age of two, when children are physically guided into these postures, and continue into adulthood, visibly expressing respect during social encounters (Ajala et al., 2025).

Customs are both resilient and adaptive, although their practice may sometimes involve ethical negotiations within and between households. The payment of bride price, for example, varies from one community to another. Understanding these customs requires engagement

with the moral life of the community and an appreciation of the negotiations between tradition, human dignity, religious doctrine, and contemporary ethical perspectives across time (Ajala et al., 2025).

Cultural traditions

Cultural traditions differ from customs in that they often lack direct practical function (no life-cycle event they organise, no survival need they address) but instead encode a community's philosophy, aesthetic values, and historical memory through repetitive performance. The Yoruba tradition of praise poetry involves reciting a lineage's history, accomplishments, distinctive physical or personality traits, and moral values during ceremonies such as naming ceremonies and weddings (Sanusi, 2023).

Cultural traditions also include craft and production lineages where specialised knowledge is transmitted through apprenticeship rather than schooling. Bead-making among the Yoruba produce beads using centuries-old techniques of crushing glass, mixing colorants, and firing in clay moulds (Sanusi, 2023). Indigo dyeing among the Hausa (the famous *Kofar Mata* dye pits in Kano, still operating after 500 years) involves fermenting indigo leaves, dipping cloth repeatedly, and stamping resist patterns using traditional carved wooden stamps (Usman, 2014).

However, the tradition of storytelling in the community has become a vehicle for understanding traditional culture and cultural relativism (Ogundele, 2022). It is important to relate cultural stories to children in the communities.

Languages

Language is the most pervasive and the most fragile component of heritage, encoding vocabulary, classifications of nature, kinship systems, and social relations (Sanusi, 2023). With many languages distributed across many ethnic groups, Nigeria ranks among the world's most linguistically diverse nations. Meanwhile, Nigeria’s major languages include Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. Each of these major languages possesses robust literary traditions and daily broadcast media (Ogundele, 2022). Meanwhile, the prestigious English language was adopted as Nigeria’s national language used in schools, government offices, and business transactions. In many Nigerian cities, children grew up speaking English and their own languages through storytelling in homes and schools (Ojo, 2017). Crucially, it is important to preserve our languages, as they are means of communicating in our daily life activities.

Music and dance

As heritage, music and dance differ in their status as living cultural practices, since they are transmitted as documents of identity for future generations, regardless of whether they are

musicians or dancers (Okoro, 2021). They remain activities that promote cultural identity in our daily lives. They remain important cultural activities in our daily lives. Thus, heritage music includes the traditional music still played in the communities, while heritage dance includes choreographed movements performed exclusively in royal events, featuring slow, dignified steps, specific hand positions facing outward, fingers together (Ogunleye, 2023). Heritage music also includes warrior dances performed only at annual festivals, with the original war songs. The National Music and Dancing Troupe of Nigeria maintains repertoires from many ethnic groups, performing at state ceremonies and international tours (Ugoli, 2011). Music and dance as heritage demand preservation such as recording, archiving, teaching and learning with the understanding of ethical protocols for individuals to access written and recorded materials for future purposes.

The dynamic nature of cultural practices in Nigerian communities

Inclusive pedagogies recognise learners' cultural identities as valuable resources for teaching and learning rather than barriers to academic success. In Nigerian communities, indigenous knowledge systems, oral traditions, local languages, storytelling, festivals, music, and craft practices provide culturally responsive learning opportunities that enable learners from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds to participate meaningfully in education. Teachers who integrate community histories, indigenous art forms, and local cultural practices into classroom activities promote inclusion, mutual respect, and intercultural understanding. Such pedagogical approaches also strengthen learners' cultural identity while encouraging appreciation of Nigeria's cultural diversity.

This study highlights the dynamic nature of cultural practices in Nigerian communities. In reality, Nigerian cultural practices have always adapted and invented new forms. Change is certain and communities will continue to innovate culturally (Chuku & Igbokwe, 2026). The dynamic nature of cultural integration among diaspora communities in their absorption of modified Nigerian cultural heritage needs further study in the field of art and social sciences. Perhaps, it is due to the dynamic and flexible nature of Nigerian cultural practices that are interesting, adaptive, interactive, and globally embracing.

Creative engagement for heritage preservation

Creative engagement provides practical opportunities for communities, schools, museums, and cultural institutions to participate actively in heritage preservation. Activities such as community theatre, storytelling festivals, art exhibitions, heritage walks, digital documentation, collaborative mural projects, and intergenerational workshops encourage

young people to engage creatively with indigenous knowledge and cultural traditions. Such participatory approaches strengthen cultural awareness while promoting dialogue among different ethnic and religious groups. Creative engagement also supports cultural tourism, local economic development, and community ownership of heritage resources, ensuring that cultural traditions remain dynamic and meaningful rather than becoming static historical artefacts.

Ways of promoting cultural heritage in Nigerian communities

The study outlines several ways of promoting cultural heritage in Nigerian communities, recognising that neither government agencies nor local communities can succeed in isolation. Firstly, integration into formal education requires mandatory indigenous language instruction through junior secondary school history curricula that include substantial pre-colonial Nigerian kingdoms, the colonial and postcolonial narratives included in the curricula should be introduced to the students. Secondly, the school should also introduce extracurricular heritage clubs that teach crafts, weaving, carving, and beadwork. Beyond extracurricular activities, teachers should adopt culturally responsive instructional strategies that encourage learners to explore their own cultural backgrounds alongside those of other Nigerian communities. Classroom projects involving oral history interviews, local museum visits, digital storytelling, community artists, and collaborative cultural exhibitions can enhance learners' creativity, critical thinking, and intercultural competence. Such inclusive learning experiences ensure that cultural heritage becomes an active component of education rather than simply a historical topic.

Music and dance should be introduced in schools under proper supervision during physical education lessons. Third, community-based visits to World Heritage sites, such as the Sukur Cultural Landscape, historically associated with the Kingdom of Sukur (UNESCO World Heritage Committee, 1999), and the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, should be promoted. Students should also be encouraged to visit the Ancient Kano City Walls and attend the Argungu International Fishing and Cultural Festival. These strategies, supported by multisectoral partnerships involving the government, the private sector, and local communities, would help make cultural heritage an economically viable and community-driven sector in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study concluded that understanding cultural practices within Nigerian communities enhanced knowledge of their nature, identity, and relevance to art and culture, thereby fostering their sense of purpose globally. This conclusion rests on accumulating evidence across the components and aspects examined. Communities that actively teach their heritage

to their children produce young people with higher self-esteem, morally sound and well-rounded individuals. Communities that maintain festivals and heritage sites attract researchers, filmmakers, and tourists thereby paving the way for income generation to fund community development projects. Furthermore, cultural heritage should not only be preserved but actively experienced through inclusive educational practices, artistic expression, and creative community engagement. These approaches encourage learners and community members to appreciate cultural diversity while fostering innovation, intercultural dialogue, and sustainable heritage preservation for future generations. It is important to note that communities that preserve languages also preserve dignity and a sense of belonging to their lineage and cultural identity.

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Between Islands and Voices: Artistic Pathways toward Inclusive and Equitable Education

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Abstract

The chapter "Between Islands and Voices: Artistic Pathways toward Inclusive and Equitable Education" offers a critical and conceptually oriented reflection on the contribution of artistic practices to more inclusive and equitable approaches to education. It brings into dialogue the perspectives of two researchers working across distinct cultural contexts, Cape Verde and China. Rather than undertaking a direct comparison of the two educational systems, the chapter uses this intercultural dialogue as an interpretive framework through which to examine how culturally situated artistic traditions and practices can illuminate shared questions of participation, cultural recognition, and educational inclusion. Drawing primarily on the Cape Verdean context, the discussion explores persistent asymmetries within educational systems that may privilege particular forms of knowledge, modes of expression, and ways of being over others. The chapter advocates recognising and valuing diverse forms of experience and expression, including cultural, social, and embodied dimensions that are often marginalised within conventional educational models. In this context, art is understood as a powerful form of pedagogical mediation, capable of expanding opportunities for participation, fostering attentive listening, and supporting the recognition and agency of learners. It advances a specific conceptual argument: artistic practices should not be understood merely as supplementary tools for promoting inclusion, but as constitutive of the pedagogical foundations through which participation, recognition, and the legitimacy of diverse forms of knowledge can be enacted. This argument is developed through a selective

engagement with international and Cape Verdean scholarship, relevant policy documents, and the illustrative case of the *Bolsa de Acesso à Cultura*. The Cape Verde–China dialogue serves to highlight the value of intercultural knowledge exchange and dialogue, rather than to suggest empirical equivalence or direct comparability between the two contexts.

Keywords

Inclusive Education; Artistic Practices; Pedagogical Mediation; Cultural Diversity; Intercultural Dialogue.

Introduction

Over the past several decades, inclusive education has become one of the principal frameworks underpinning international educational policy. Beyond ensuring formal access to schooling, this paradigm seeks to create meaningful opportunities for participation, learning, and the recognition of human diversity within educational settings. Inclusion therefore entails valuing diverse forms of knowledge, expression, identity, and cultural belonging, while challenging pedagogical models that have historically been characterised by the homogenisation of learners and learning processes. According to UNESCO (2020), inclusive education involves removing barriers that restrict students' participation and learning and recognising diversity as a fundamental resource for educational and social development.

Within the Cape Verdean context, this discussion is particularly relevant given the archipelago's historical, cultural, and geographical specificities. Cape Verdean society emerged through complex processes of encounter, mobility, and creolisation, resulting in a social reality characterised by linguistic and cultural diversity. As Fernandes (2006) observes, Cape Verdean identity is the product of an ongoing historical process of cultural construction and negotiation, in which diverse social, ethnic, and symbolic references have contributed to nation-building. Complementing this perspective, Tolentino (2006) argues that the developmental challenges faced by small island states require educational approaches capable of responding to local specificities while fostering citizens' meaningful participation in social and cultural life. From this perspective, understanding inclusive education in Cape Verde requires attention to the central role of identity, culture, and language in shaping educational processes.

Reflecting on the relationship between the Cape Verdean language, education, and inclusive development, Barreto (2024) argues that education and language occupy a central place in the construction of more inclusive societies. He further contends that debates surrounding the recognition and valorisation of the Cape Verdean language constitute an integral part of contemporary challenges of inclusion. This perspective suggests that inclusion cannot be

reduced to the administrative or pedagogical dimensions of schooling but must also encompass the recognition of students' cultural and linguistic identities. This understanding resonates with the work of Manuel Veiga (2017), who argues that valuing local languages and cultures is an essential condition for the democratisation of knowledge and the strengthening of citizenship in multicultural contexts.

The relevance of this approach becomes even more evident in light of recent legislative developments. In 2024, the Government of Cape Verde enacted its first legal framework specifically dedicated to inclusive education, establishing principles and regulations aimed at ensuring the inclusion of children and young people with special educational needs and the mobilisation of resources to respond to diverse educational needs throughout schooling (Governo de Cabo Verde, 2024). This legislation represents an important policy milestone. However, the existence of a legal framework does not, in itself, demonstrate how inclusive principles are enacted in everyday educational practice. The question that follows is therefore fundamentally pedagogical: which approaches can help translate formal commitments to inclusion into meaningful opportunities for participation and recognition?

It is within this context that artistic practices assume particular significance. The arts provide forms of communication and participation that extend beyond conventional verbal and written modes of expression, enabling experiences, emotions, and forms of knowledge to enter educational processes through musical, visual, bodily, dramatic, and collective forms of expression. The theoretical perspectives mobilised in this chapter, particularly those of Dewey, Greene, Eisner, Freire, and Vygotsky, suggest that creative processes may expand opportunities for participation, dialogue, interpretation, and collaborative meaning-making. Rather than treating these outcomes as universally demonstrated effects, the chapter draws on these perspectives to examine the pedagogical possibilities of arts-based education.

Rather than functioning merely as complementary pedagogical resources, artistic practices invite a reconsideration of what counts as legitimate knowledge within inclusive education. In culturally diverse contexts such as Cape Verde, where identity is continuously negotiated through multilingualism, oral traditions, and collective cultural memory, artistic expression can enable forms of participation that conventional pedagogies may overlook. From this perspective, inclusion is achieved not only by accommodating diversity but also by recognising different cultural and aesthetic ways of knowing as legitimate foundations for learning.

The Cape Verdean experience offers a concrete policy example through the *Bolsa de Acesso à Cultura* (Culture Access Scholarship Programme), implemented by the Ministry of Culture and Creative Industries under the previous government. According to information published by *Expresso das Ilhas* (Mendes, 2020), the programme sought to expand access to arts education across the archipelago and to frame cultural participation as a citizenship right. In

this chapter, the initiative is treated as an illustrative case of how cultural policy may create conditions for participation in arts education. Because the source used here is primarily descriptive, the chapter does not infer causal effects—such as reductions in economic or geographical inequalities—without specific empirical or evaluative evidence.

At the same time, recent research conducted at the University of Cape Verde indicates that inclusion remains a significant challenge for the national education system. The study *Inclusive Education of Children with Disabilities in Cape Verde: Voices of Parents/Guardians and Teachers* (Tavares & Martins, 2025) highlights the importance of listening to the perspectives of different educational stakeholders in developing appropriate responses to the needs of children with disabilities. Its findings reinforce the need for pedagogical approaches that integrate inclusive policies, teacher education, and strategies for the active participation of educational communities.

Although the chapter draws primarily on the Cape Verdean educational context, its analysis is informed by an intercultural academic dialogue between Cape Verdean and Chinese perspectives. The purpose is not to compare the two educational systems or to generalise from one national context to the other. Instead, the Chinese perspective contributes an external and intercultural lens through which to question the assumption that knowledge about inclusive education must emerge from a single cultural tradition. This dialogue directs attention to a shared analytical question: how can culturally rooted artistic practices become pedagogical resources while remaining attentive to the historical and social specificity of each context?

Conceptually and methodologically, the chapter is positioned as a critical, literature-informed reflection rather than an empirical comparative study. Its argument brings together four types of material: (i) international scholarship on inclusion and arts education; (ii) Cape Verdean scholarship on identity, language, culture, and education; (iii) selected policy and institutional documents; and (iv) the illustrative case of the Bolsa de Acesso à Cultura. These materials are read together to explore how participation, cultural recognition, and diverse forms of knowledge can be understood as interconnected dimensions of inclusive pedagogy. The China–Cape Verde dialogue functions as an intercultural interpretive framework rather than as a dataset for systematic national comparison.

Rather than viewing artistic practices as complementary activities that merely support inclusion, this chapter argues that they can be understood as part of the pedagogical foundation through which inclusive education is conceptualised and enacted in culturally diverse contexts. Its central analytical contribution lies in connecting three questions: what the Cape Verdean context reveals about the relationship between culture, identity, and participation; what an intercultural perspective adds by resisting a single cultural frame of reference; and what new insight emerges when these perspectives are placed in dialogue —

namely, that diversity is not only a characteristic of learners but also a characteristic of knowledge.

Between Cape Verde and China: an intercultural dialogue through artistic education

The dialogue between Cape Verde and China constitutes an interpretive dimension of this chapter, emerging from the academic collaboration between the two authors and their shared interest in the relationship between culture, arts education, and inclusion. It should therefore be understood neither as a comparison of national education systems nor as evidence that the two contexts produce equivalent educational outcomes. Its analytical value lies in bringing different cultural and educational experiences into dialogue and considering what becomes visible when inclusive education is examined across more than one cultural horizon.

This chapter is rooted in a collaborative process developed within a doctoral research context, in which the first author, a Cape Verdean researcher and doctoral student, was supervised by the second author within an academic environment in China. This relationship created a space for dialogue between different educational experiences and interpretive perspectives. The Chinese perspective informs the chapter primarily at the level of intercultural reflection and conceptual dialogue, encouraging the authors to consider how assumptions about legitimate knowledge, cultural heritage, artistic expression, and participation may be shaped by particular historical and cultural contexts. The chapter does not, however, seek to provide a comprehensive account of Chinese education or arts education.

This intercultural dialogue also reflects a broader understanding of knowledge production in contemporary educational research. Rather than assuming that educational innovation emerges from a single cultural tradition, the collaboration suggests that thinking about inclusive education can be enriched through reciprocal exchanges between different epistemological and pedagogical perspectives. In this sense, the dialogue between Cape Verde and China represents not only an international academic partnership but also an example of how intercultural scholarship can open new perspectives on inclusion, participation, and educational equity.

Cape Verde and China represent markedly different social, cultural, historical, and geographical contexts. Cape Verde is an Atlantic island nation shaped by migration, cultural encounter, creolisation, linguistic diversity, and territorial dispersion. China represents a substantially different historical and geographical context with a long and diverse cultural heritage. For the purposes of this chapter, these differences are not reduced to broad national

comparisons. Instead, they provide distinct cultural horizons from which to reflect on a shared pedagogical question: education is always embedded in cultural meanings, while artistic practices may create connections between learning, identity, community, and participation. A fuller analysis of the Chinese context would require dedicated China-specific scholarship and empirical evidence, which lies beyond the scope of this conceptually focused chapter.

Although these contexts differ considerably in scale, history, and social organisation, they offer grounds for considering culture not as an external complement to education but as a dimension of its foundations. This perspective suggests that inclusive educational practices should not be understood as universally standardised models, but rather as pedagogical processes that emerge from the cultural experiences of particular communities while remaining open to intercultural dialogue.

Traditional arts constitute a productive point of reflection between the two contexts, although the chapter does not claim that their historical development or educational functions are equivalent. In Cape Verde, music, dance, oral traditions, and community-based cultural practices are associated with collective memory, identity formation, and intergenerational transmission. In the Chinese context, artistic traditions such as music, calligraphy, theatre, and dance likewise provide examples of culturally situated forms of expression and heritage. The analytical point, however, is not similarity for its own sake, but the broader possibility of approaching artistic traditions as living cultural resources rather than as external additions to education.

When considered through the lens of inclusive education, the relevant question is how artistic practices may create opportunities for participation, cultural recognition, and engagement with community knowledge. The answer will necessarily vary across contexts, communities, and artistic forms. The Cape Verde–China dialogue therefore does not establish a universal model; rather, it helps demonstrate why culturally responsive approaches to inclusion must begin with the particular histories, languages, and expressive practices through which communities construct and communicate meaning.

From an inclusive education perspective, artistic traditions can be understood not merely as cultural elements to be preserved but also as living pedagogical resources. They provide opportunities for students to participate through multiple forms of expression, including embodied, visual, musical, and collective modes of communication that extend beyond conventional academic approaches. Recognising traditional arts as legitimate forms of knowledge may therefore create educational spaces in which diverse identities and experiences can be acknowledged and valued.

This perspective is particularly relevant in educational contexts where students' cultural identities may be underrepresented within formal curricula. When artistic traditions are

integrated into teaching and learning, they can do more than diversify classroom activities; they can also challenge assumptions about whose knowledge is recognised as educationally valuable. In this sense, artistic practices can become means through which inclusion is enacted rather than merely discussed.

The collaboration between Cape Verdean and Chinese perspectives contributes, therefore, not by producing a direct empirical comparison but by expanding the interpretive frame through which inclusive arts education can be understood. The intercultural dialogue draws attention to a central limitation of approaches that treat educational knowledge as culturally neutral: what counts as participation, legitimate expression, or valuable knowledge may be shaped by local histories and cultural traditions. This insight reinforces the chapter's argument for an inclusive pedagogy attentive to plurality rather than oriented towards the transfer of standardised models.

Importantly, this dialogue does not seek to homogenise different educational traditions or to suggest that successful practices can simply be transferred from one context to another. Instead, it illustrates how educational perspectives can inform one another while remaining attentive to their respective historical, linguistic, and cultural particularities. In this way, intercultural collaboration itself can be understood as a pedagogical practice grounded in mutual respect, reciprocity, and shared knowledge construction.

In this sense, the relationship between Cape Verde and China reflects the central argument of this chapter: inclusive education emerges through dialogue among voices, cultures, and experiences. Artistic practices can provide a shared language through which different societies communicate, learn from one another, and explore educational pathways that respect diversity while preparing new generations for increasingly interconnected worlds.

Rather than presenting the Cape Verde–China relationship as a straightforward case of international cooperation, this chapter argues that it offers an analytical framework for understanding inclusive arts education from an intercultural perspective. The dialogue between the two contexts suggests that educational inclusion can become more meaningful when artistic practices connect schools with the cultural knowledge, identities, and lived experiences of their communities. Consequently, the chapter proposes that arts education should be understood not merely as a strategy for supporting inclusion but as one of the pedagogical principles through which inclusive education can be conceptualised and enacted across culturally diverse contexts.

Art as a space for listening and recognising diversity

The social, cultural, and educational transformations of recent decades have reinforced the need to rethink educational systems in light of the principles of inclusion, equity, and social

justice. Within this context, the arts assume particular significance by offering alternative forms of participation, communication, and knowledge construction that can accommodate the diversity of experiences, identities, and modes of expression present within educational communities. This perspective is grounded in Dewey's (2010) educational philosophy, according to which aesthetic experience constitutes an essential dimension of learning, enabling individuals to construct meaning through active engagement with the world. From this perspective, art is not merely a curricular subject but a form of experience capable of fostering participation, creativity, and reflective engagement.

Dewey's perspective is particularly relevant to contemporary discussions of inclusive education because it shifts attention from the transmission of knowledge towards the quality and diversity of learners' experiences. This understanding suggests that inclusion may be strengthened when educational environments enable students to construct meaning through multiple forms of participation rather than through a single prescribed mode of learning. Artistic practices can therefore be understood as educational experiences through which diversity becomes part of knowledge construction rather than simply a characteristic to be accommodated.

Inclusive education entails far more than universal access to schooling. As UNESCO (2020) emphasises, inclusion requires creating conditions in which all students can participate meaningfully in learning processes, regardless of their social, cultural, linguistic, or physical characteristics. This perspective shifts attention from adapting individuals to transforming educational environments themselves, recognising that barriers to participation may be produced by institutional structures, pedagogical practices, and assumptions about what constitutes legitimate learning.

This institutional perspective has important implications for arts education. If barriers to participation are socially and pedagogically produced, artistic practices should not be viewed simply as additional teaching strategies but as approaches capable of transforming the learning environment itself. By expanding the ways in which students can communicate, collaborate, interpret, and demonstrate learning, the arts may contribute to reducing barriers that conventional educational practices can unintentionally reinforce.

In the case of Cape Verde, cultural diversity is a defining feature of society. Manuel Veiga (2017) argues that Cape Verdean identity emerged through a historical process of creolisation that gave rise to distinctive forms of language, culture, and belonging. He maintains that an educational project committed to inclusion must recognise the legitimacy of knowledge produced within communities and of the languages through which individuals interpret and engage with the world.

Similarly, Maxine Greene (2001) argues that arts education broadens the social imagination and enhances individuals' capacity to perceive and engage with different perspectives,

thereby contributing to democratic forms of citizenship. For Greene, artistic experience can enable individuals to imagine the world otherwise, fostering empathy, dialogue, and an openness to others—dimensions that are highly relevant to inclusive education.

Taken together, the perspectives of Veiga and Greene suggest that inclusive education cannot be separated from the cultural realities through which students construct meaning. In the Cape Verdean context, artistic practices rooted in local traditions can create educational spaces in which multilingual learners and culturally diverse communities are recognised not as exceptions to dominant educational models but as legitimate producers of knowledge. Rather than merely reflecting culture, the arts can participate in the construction of more inclusive educational relationships by legitimising voices, experiences, and forms of knowledge that may otherwise remain marginalised within formal schooling.

These reflections have important implications for the role of the arts in education. Artistic languages can make visible forms of expression that often remain underrepresented within conventional school curricula. Music, oral traditions, poetry, dance, and theatre constitute cultural forms deeply embedded in the Cape Verdean experience and may serve as bridges between formal school knowledge and community-based knowledge.

This bridging function is particularly significant in culturally diverse educational contexts because it can reduce the distance between the formal curriculum and students' lived experiences. When learners recognise elements of their own cultural practices within educational activities, participation may become more meaningful, while the school can become a space in which different forms of knowledge coexist without being automatically ranked according to a single hierarchy of value.

According to Barreto (2024), the development of inclusive education in Cape Verde requires the effective recognition of the country's linguistic and cultural diversity. He argues that valuing the Cape Verdean language is not merely a matter of cultural identity but also a condition for democratising access to knowledge and supporting students' full participation in educational processes.

Barreto's argument reinforces the idea that language is not simply a medium through which knowledge is transmitted but also a fundamental dimension of educational inclusion. Recognising students' linguistic identities can contribute to learning environments in which participation is grounded in cultural belonging rather than conditioned by linguistic conformity. This perspective further supports the potential of artistic practices, which may integrate verbal, visual, musical, and embodied forms of communication, to create broader avenues for participation.

Elliot Eisner (2008) argues that the arts cultivate forms of thinking that are rarely fostered in the same way by other areas of the curriculum, encouraging interpretation, sensitivity,

judgement, and engagement with complexity. Such capacities are particularly relevant in educational contexts characterised by diversity, where learning requires openness to multiple ways of understanding, representing, and interpreting reality.

From this perspective, the contribution of the arts extends beyond creativity itself. Artistic learning can foster epistemological openness by recognising that knowledge may be produced, interpreted, and communicated through multiple symbolic forms. This understanding challenges educational practices that privilege a narrow range of academic competencies and supports approaches capable of valuing diverse intellectual, cultural, and expressive capacities.

The arts can therefore be understood as a privileged space for listening and recognition. By enabling multiple forms of communication, they can provide students with different abilities, experiences, and modes of expression with legitimate avenues for participation. Rather than serving merely as complementary pedagogical tools, artistic practices may become means through which the homogenising tendencies of educational systems are questioned, and alternative forms of participation are made possible.

Ultimately, the discussion presented in this section suggests that arts education should be understood not simply as an instrument for supporting inclusion but as a pedagogical approach that can reshape how participation itself is understood. In culturally diverse societies such as Cape Verde, artistic practices can create educational spaces in which identity, language, memory, and community knowledge become integral dimensions of learning. Consequently, inclusion involves not only access to education but also recognition that multiple ways of knowing, expressing, and experiencing the world can hold legitimate educational value.

Between islands: contexts, identities, and educational inequalities

Cape Verde's insular condition provides a particularly compelling context for examining the relationships between education, culture, and inequality. The archipelago's geographical fragmentation, together with socioeconomic disparities across its islands and communities, shapes the educational opportunities available to children and young people. As Fernandes (2006) demonstrates, Cape Verde was historically shaped by continuous processes of mobility, cultural encounter, and negotiation, giving rise to plural identities that challenge uniform approaches to education.

This historical formation suggests that educational diversity in Cape Verde is not a recent phenomenon but a structural characteristic of the archipelago. Consequently, inclusive education cannot rely solely on standardised pedagogical models that assume cultural

homogeneity. Instead, educational practices need to acknowledge that students' identities are shaped by diverse linguistic, social, and cultural experiences, making diversity an inherent dimension of learning rather than an exception to it.

Although the country has made important efforts to expand access to education, questions of educational quality, inclusion, and territorial equity remain relevant to policy and practice. The Ministry of Education's Strategic Education Plan 2022–2026 identifies the strengthening of educational quality and inclusion as policy priorities (Ministry of Education of Cape Verde, 2022). This chapter does not use the plan to establish specific quantitative patterns of inequality; rather, it draws on the document to situate the discussion within ongoing national concerns regarding participation, educational quality, and improvement.

These developments suggest that expanding access, while essential, does not automatically guarantee educational equity. Meaningful inclusion requires learning environments in which students from different islands, cultural backgrounds, and social contexts have genuine opportunities to participate and succeed. This distinction between access and meaningful participation reinforces a central premise of inclusive education: educational justice depends not only on who enters school but also on whose knowledge, experiences, and identities are recognised within it.

Corsino Tolentino (2006) argues that development processes in small island states require educational approaches that are particularly responsive to local specificities. He contends that education plays a central role in fostering citizenship and addressing inequalities and should therefore be closely aligned with the cultural and social realities of local communities. Expanding on this argument, Tolentino (2007) maintains that the contemporary challenges of Cape Verde's development require public policies capable of integrating education, culture, and civic participation, while recognising territorial diversity as a fundamental dimension of nation-building.

Tolentino's reflections are particularly significant because they position education as a process of territorial and cultural development rather than solely as the transmission of academic knowledge. From this perspective, schools become spaces in which local identities, cultural heritage, and civic participation intersect. Such an understanding reinforces the argument advanced throughout this chapter that artistic practices can contribute to inclusive education precisely because they connect formal learning with the cultural realities of the communities in which schools are situated.

The analysis of educational inequalities cannot be limited to the material conditions of access to schooling. As Eurídice Monteiro (2018) points out, processes of exclusion also operate through the devaluation of particular identities, forms of knowledge, and modes of participation. Consequently, students from socially disadvantaged or culturally marginalised

backgrounds may experience subtle forms of exclusion even when they attend the same schools as their peers.

This perspective resonates with Boaventura de Sousa Santos's (2018) critique of the hegemony of singular forms of knowledge production and his advocacy of an ecology of knowledges that recognises the legitimacy of diverse social and cultural experiences. Applied to the Cape Verdean educational context, this perspective reinforces the importance of valuing knowledge generated within local communities and across the different islands of the archipelago.

Taken together, the perspectives of Monteiro and Santos suggest that educational inequality is not only a matter of unequal resources but also of unequal recognition. When schools privilege particular cultural references while overlooking others, they may reproduce symbolic forms of exclusion that remain invisible within conventional educational indicators. This interpretation broadens the understanding of inclusion by emphasising the importance of recognising multiple epistemic and cultural perspectives within educational processes.

Cape Verde's cultural diversity represents both a challenge and an opportunity. On the one hand, it calls for pedagogical practices capable of responding to the plurality of experiences that students bring to school. On the other hand, it offers valuable resources for developing learning experiences that are contextually grounded and culturally meaningful.

Rather than perceiving diversity as an obstacle to educational standardisation, this chapter argues that it constitutes a significant pedagogical resource for Cape Verde. The plurality of languages, artistic traditions, community practices, and island identities provides opportunities to design learning experiences that are locally meaningful while also fostering intercultural understanding. This interpretation resonates with the intercultural dialogue developed throughout the chapter between Cape Verde and China, suggesting that educational inclusion can be strengthened when local cultural knowledge is recognised as an integral component of teaching and learning rather than treated as supplementary content.

Ultimately, the island condition should not be interpreted solely in geographical terms but also as a pedagogical reality. The social, linguistic, and cultural diversity that characterises Cape Verde requires educational approaches capable of connecting schools with community life. Within this framework, artistic practices become particularly significant because they can create spaces in which local identities, collective memory, and cultural participation become active dimensions of educational inclusion.

Voices that educate: recognising diverse knowledge and experiences

Valuing diversity requires recognising that knowledge is not produced exclusively within academic settings. Family experiences, community knowledge, cultural practices, and collective memories constitute meaningful sources of knowledge that can enrich educational processes. This understanding is consistent with Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy (1996; 2000), according to which teaching involves an ongoing dialogue between formally recognised forms of knowledge and the knowledge generated through learners' lived experiences. Inclusive education is grounded, in part, in recognising learners as active participants in the construction of knowledge.

Freire's conception of dialogue extends beyond a pedagogical method; it represents an epistemological position that recognises learners as legitimate contributors to knowledge production. This perspective is particularly significant for inclusive education because it challenges hierarchical conceptions of teaching that privilege only officially sanctioned forms of knowledge. In culturally diverse societies such as Cape Verde, such an approach encourages schools to engage with knowledge already present within communities, thereby framing inclusion as a process of shared knowledge construction rather than one of cultural adaptation.

Gabriel Fernandes (2006) demonstrates that the formation of Cape Verdean identity resulted from multiple processes of cultural negotiation. This historical reality suggests that learning takes place across diverse social settings and through multiple forms of interaction. Restricting education to knowledge formally recognised by the curriculum risks overlooking significant dimensions of the experiences that shape students' lives.

This interpretation reinforces the understanding that the curriculum should not function as a closed body of supposedly universal knowledge detached from students' lived realities. Instead, educational practices can become more inclusive when they establish meaningful connections between formal learning and the historical, cultural, and social experiences through which learners construct their identities. In the Cape Verdean context, such connections are particularly evident in oral traditions, music, storytelling, and collective cultural practices that continue to shape community life across the islands.

Inclusive pedagogy seeks to broaden the recognition of these multiple sources of knowledge. Rather than viewing students as passive recipients of information, it recognises them as active participants in processes of knowledge construction. This perspective is closely aligned with sociocultural approaches to learning, according to which knowledge develops through interactions among individuals, communities, and their social and cultural environments.

Understanding learners as active participants also requires reconsidering the role of the teacher. Rather than acting primarily as a transmitter of knowledge, the teacher becomes a mediator who creates conditions in which different experiences, voices, and forms of participation can contribute to collective learning. This shift is particularly relevant to arts-based education, where collaborative creation can blur conventional distinctions between teaching and learning and allow students to bring their own cultural experiences into educational practice.

From a sociocultural perspective on learning, Vygotsky (1978/2007) emphasises the role of social interaction and cultural mediation in cognitive development. Learning takes place through participation in socially and culturally situated activities, highlighting the importance of community experiences, cultural languages, and collaboration among learners.

Vygotsky's theoretical perspective also provides a useful foundation for considering the educational significance of artistic practices. Artistic creation frequently involves interaction, interpretation, negotiation, and shared meaning-making. In this sense, arts-based educational experiences can exemplify collaborative learning environments in which learners develop knowledge and social relationships through participation. Rather than functioning as isolated creative activities, artistic practices can become contexts in which knowledge, identity, and relationships are developed simultaneously.

In the Cape Verdean context, this discussion is particularly relevant given the richness of the archipelago's oral traditions, musical heritage, and community practices. Family narratives, local artistic traditions, and knowledge generated within communities can all serve as valuable pedagogical resources.

These cultural resources illustrate that learning and knowledge are already present within communities before entering the classroom. Educational inclusion therefore depends not only on recognising students' individual characteristics but also on acknowledging the collective cultural environments that shape their ways of understanding and engaging with the world. Arts education offers particularly valuable opportunities for connecting these community-based forms of knowledge with formal educational objectives, potentially strengthening both cultural belonging and educational participation.

Inclusive education requires the creation of spaces in which different voices can be heard and valued. Such an approach does not entail replacing academic knowledge with other forms of knowing but rather fostering dialogue among different sources and forms of knowledge.

This dialogical perspective challenges binary distinctions between academic and community knowledge. Instead of positioning one form of knowledge above another, inclusive education can create conditions in which different epistemological perspectives coexist, interact, and inform one another. Such an approach is particularly compatible with arts education, where

multiple symbolic languages can coexist and where creative processes may emerge from encounters between different cultural experiences.

In the Cape Verdean context, Monteiro (2018) emphasises that recognising diverse social identities is an indispensable condition for addressing forms of exclusion that may remain invisible within conventional educational practices.

Monteiro's reflections further suggest that exclusion can operate through mechanisms of invisibility rather than through explicit discrimination alone. Students may formally participate in schooling while simultaneously experiencing the marginalisation of their identities, languages, or cultural practices. This understanding reinforces the potential of arts education as a pedagogical space in which diverse identities can become more visible through creative expression, collective participation, and cultural recognition.

Taken together, the perspectives discussed throughout this section suggest that recognising diverse forms of knowledge involves more than incorporating additional cultural content into existing curricula. It requires a broader reconsideration of how educational knowledge is defined, produced, and shared. Within this framework, artistic practices emerge not simply as teaching resources but as epistemological spaces in which learners' voices, identities, and lived experiences can become integral to the educational process. Consequently, inclusive education is strengthened when schools move beyond recognising diversity as a characteristic of students and begin to understand diversity itself as a legitimate dimension of knowledge production.

Art has a language of inclusion and equity

Artistic education occupies a distinctive position within inclusive because it can expand the ways in which learners participate, communicate, and construct knowledge. Unlike pedagogical approaches that rely predominantly on verbal or written language, artistic practices mobilise visual, musical, bodily, dramatic, and multimodal forms of expression, creating opportunities for students with different abilities, cultural backgrounds, and learning profiles to engage meaningfully in educational processes. In this sense, arts education can contribute not only to the development of creativity but also to broadening the conditions for participation within the classroom.

This broader understanding challenges traditional assumptions that associate educational achievement primarily with linguistic and cognitive performance as measured through standardised forms of assessment. Artistic practices illustrate that participation and learning can take place through multiple symbolic languages, thereby expanding the educational possibilities available to learners whose knowledge and abilities may not be fully recognised within conventional academic frameworks. Consequently, the arts can contribute to

redefining inclusion as the recognition of diverse ways of learning, expressing, and producing knowledge.

Elliot Eisner (2008) argues that the arts cultivate forms of thinking characterised by imagination, interpretation, sensitivity, and judgement. Rather than seeking predetermined or single correct answers, artistic processes encourage learners to engage with ambiguity, complexity, and multiple perspectives. Such characteristics are particularly relevant to inclusive educational environments, where diversity requires openness to different experiences, interpretations, and ways of making meaning.

Eisner's contribution is especially significant because it broadens conceptions of educational quality beyond narrowly defined academic outcomes. When artistic learning is recognised as intellectually rigorous, educational systems may become better equipped to value abilities that are frequently underrepresented within conventional curricula. This perspective supports a more comprehensive understanding of inclusion, in which diverse forms of intellectual, creative, and cultural expression are recognised as meaningful dimensions of learning.

Similarly, Maxine Greene (2001) emphasises that artistic experiences expand the social imagination by enabling individuals to perceive realities from perspectives other than their own. Through encounters with artistic expression, learners may develop empathy, critical awareness, and the capacity to imagine alternative possibilities for social life.

Greene's perspective suggests that inclusion is not only a structural or institutional objective but also an ethical and imaginative process. Schools become more inclusive when students develop the capacity to encounter, understand, and value experiences different from their own. Arts education can contribute to this process by creating opportunities for dialogue across cultural, linguistic, and social differences and by fostering mutual recognition rather than merely promoting coexistence.

Within the Cape Verdean context, artistic expression occupies an important place in social and cultural life. Music, dance, oral literature, theatre, and visual arts constitute significant forms of collective expression, participation, and identity formation across the islands. These cultural practices therefore represent valuable educational resources through which school learning can be connected with students' lived experiences and community contexts.

The educational significance of these practices lies not simply in their cultural value but also in their potential to bridge formal schooling and community life. When students encounter elements of their own cultural traditions within educational activities, learning can become more meaningful and schools can become spaces in which local identities are acknowledged rather than marginalised. This reinforces the argument that arts education can contribute to

inclusion by creating greater continuity between educational institutions and the communities they serve.

Arts-based practice as inclusive pedagogy: the Cape Verdean experience

The inclusive potential of arts education can be examined through initiatives developed within the Cape Verdean context. One particularly relevant example is the Bolsa de Acesso à Cultura (Culture Access Scholarship Programme), implemented by the Ministry of Culture and Creative Industries. According to the programme description reported by Mendes (2020), the initiative sought to expand access to arts education by creating opportunities for children and young people to participate in music, dance, theatre, visual arts, and other cultural activities across the archipelago. The available source supports a description of the programme's objectives and scope; it does not, in itself, provide evidence of measured educational outcomes.

Analytically, the initiative can be considered across four dimensions. First, participation: the programme was designed to broaden opportunities for children and young people to engage in artistic activities. Second, cultural recognition: by situating arts education within a broader cultural policy framework, it positioned access to culture as a socially meaningful dimension of citizenship. Third, community engagement: the initiative involved cultural actors and organisations beyond the conventional classroom. Fourth, inclusion: it created additional spaces in which children and young people could participate in forms of learning and expression that were not limited to conventional academic performance. These dimensions indicate the programme's potential relevance to inclusive education; they should not, however, be interpreted as empirically verified effects.

From the perspective developed throughout this chapter, the educational relevance of the initiative lies in its value as an analytical case. It illustrates how arts and cultural policy can intersect with educational questions of participation, recognition, and access. Stronger claims—such as whether the programme reduced exclusion or produced measurable improvements in educational inclusion—would require systematic evaluation, participant-level data, or other empirical evidence. Maintaining a clear distinction between programme objectives, reported activities, and demonstrated outcomes is therefore essential.

The case also helps clarify one of the chapter's central arguments: culture can be understood not merely as an additional educational resource but as a constitutive dimension of educational experience. Where artistic activities enable learners to participate through multiple forms of communication, connect learning with cultural identities, and engage collectively with community practices, they may create conditions conducive to inclusive

pedagogy. The case is therefore used to illustrate a pedagogical possibility rather than to present a universally validated model.

Such initiatives resonate with UNESCO's (2020) understanding of inclusion as the removal of barriers to participation and with Freire's (1996) conception of education as a dialogical process grounded in learners' experiences. They can also be interpreted through Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective, which emphasises the role of social interaction and cultural mediation in learning.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives suggest that arts education should not be interpreted simply as an innovative methodology but as a pedagogical approach that can reshape the relationships through which learning takes place. Artistic practices can simultaneously support communication, collaboration, creativity, and cultural recognition, thereby addressing several dimensions of inclusion within a shared educational process.

From this perspective, arts education can contribute to educational equity by broadening opportunities for participation and by recognising forms of knowledge and expression that may remain underrepresented within conventional schooling. Rather than requiring learners to conform exclusively to pre-existing educational structures, arts-based practices can encourage schools to become more responsive to diverse cultural, linguistic, and expressive resources.

This distinction is fundamental. Educational equity is not achieved solely by providing equal access to existing learning opportunities; it also involves creating educational environments in which different learners can participate meaningfully through their cultural, linguistic, and expressive resources. Artistic practices can therefore support a shift from narrowly compensatory approaches towards more transformative pedagogies that treat diversity as a potential educational resource.

Ultimately, this discussion suggests that arts education constitutes more than an instructional strategy for supporting inclusive schooling. It can function as a pedagogical language through which participation, identity, creativity, and cultural recognition become interconnected dimensions of educational practice. In culturally diverse contexts such as Cape Verde, these characteristics position the arts not simply at the margins of inclusive education but as a potentially significant component of its pedagogical foundations, providing possibilities for developing more equitable, democratic, and culturally responsive forms of learning.

Pathways forward: transformative arts-based educational practices

The development of inclusive educational environments requires pedagogical approaches that create meaningful opportunities for students' active participation. Within this context, arts-based educational practices offer promising possibilities. Booth and Ainscow (2011) argue that the development of inclusive schools involves cultivating collaborative cultures, participatory policies, and pedagogical practices that respond to learner diversity. Arts-based approaches can provide practical means of exploring how these principles might be translated into everyday educational practice.

Participatory theatre projects, collaborative creative workshops, visual storytelling, community-based audiovisual production, and initiatives that engage with local cultural heritage provide examples of practices that can bring together learning, creativity, and participation. The pedagogy proposed by bell hooks (1994) emphasises the importance of creating educational spaces grounded in dialogue, participation, and intellectual freedom. Arts-based practices can support such environments by creating opportunities for diverse voices to be expressed and for knowledge to be constructed collectively.

The Bolsa de Acesso à Cultura (Culture Access Scholarship Programme) represents a relevant initiative in this regard. Its stated purpose was to democratise access to arts education across the different islands of the archipelago (Mendes, 2020). This objective is particularly relevant to questions of economic and geographical access; however, the present chapter does not claim that these barriers were empirically reduced, as such a conclusion would require systematic programme evaluation. The initiative nevertheless provides an illustrative example of how public cultural policy can seek to broaden opportunities for artistic participation and strengthen connections among education, culture, and citizenship.

Recent research on inclusive education in Cape Verde also highlights the importance of listening to educational communities when developing responses to students' needs. Tavares and Loução Martins (2024), for example, emphasise the perspectives of parents or guardians and teachers in understanding the challenges of inclusive education for children with disabilities. Such findings reinforce the importance of participation and dialogue among different educational stakeholders when developing sustainable inclusive practices. This perspective is consistent with Freire's (1970) conception of emancipatory education, in which transformative educational processes depend on dialogue and the recognition of learners as active participants in their own development and in broader processes of social change.

Within this framework, artistic practices can provide opportunities for learners to exercise agency, creativity, and dialogue through individual and collective forms of expression. Their contribution therefore lies not in an automatic capacity to produce inclusion, but in the

possibilities they create for participation, interaction, and the recognition of different forms of experience and expression.

Ultimately, educational transformation requires more than the application of specific techniques. It calls for the development of a pedagogical culture grounded in collaboration, creativity, dialogue, and the recognition of diversity. From this perspective, arts-based education is relevant not simply because it introduces artistic activities into the curriculum, but because it can contribute to reshaping the relationships through which learners participate, express themselves, and construct knowledge.

Concluding remarks

Inclusive education requires more than formal access to schooling. It also requires attention to whose knowledge is recognised, how participation is organised, and whether learners' cultural and linguistic experiences can become meaningful resources within educational practice. This chapter has argued that artistic practices are particularly relevant to these questions because they expand the symbolic languages through which learners can communicate, participate, and construct meaning.

The chapter's principal contribution is conceptual: artistic practices should not be understood merely as supplementary strategies for supporting inclusion but as part of the pedagogical foundations through which inclusion can be enacted. This position differs from approaches that treat the arts primarily as an additional methodology. The emphasis here is instead on their potential to broaden the conditions of participation by legitimising visual, musical, embodied, oral, and collective forms of expression alongside conventional academic modes of communication and knowledge construction.

The Cape Verdean context is central to this argument. The archipelago's history of creolisation, multilingualism, territorial dispersion, and community-based cultural practices illustrates why inclusive education cannot be considered independently of culture, identity, and locally situated knowledge. The illustrative case of the Bolsa de Acesso à Cultura further provides a basis for considering how cultural policy can intersect with questions of participation and access. At the same time, the chapter maintains a clear distinction between the programme's documented objectives and outcomes that would require systematic empirical evaluation.

The Chinese perspective fulfils a different, intercultural function. It does not provide the basis for a direct comparison between two national education systems, nor does the chapter claim to offer a comprehensive account of arts education in China. Rather, the dialogue challenges the assumption that educational meanings can be understood adequately through a single cultural frame of reference and highlights the ways in which educational practices are shaped

by different historical and cultural traditions. Bringing the two perspectives into dialogue therefore suggests that intercultural knowledge exchange can enrich understandings of inclusion while remaining attentive to the particularities of each context.

Taken together, these arguments suggest that diversity should be understood not only as a characteristic of learners but also as a characteristic of knowledge itself. This constitutes the chapter's broader contribution to debates on inclusive education. If schools are to become more genuinely inclusive, they must do more than accommodate difference; they must create pedagogical conditions in which diverse cultural experiences, forms of expression, and sources of knowledge can contribute to the production of meaning and learning. Arts education offers one important pathway towards this goal, although its potential should not be assumed to be universal or automatic. Future research should therefore examine empirically how particular arts-based pedagogies shape participation, educational relationships, and learning across culturally diverse contexts.

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Building Bridges

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Abstract

The *Building Bridges* project analyses how Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) based multilingual pedagogies, artistic education, and Erasmus+ mobility can advance inclusive, equitable, and culturally sustainable educational practices in highly multicultural school contexts. Implemented within a linguistically heterogeneous Portuguese school grouping, the project adopts a language-in-education policy perspective that positions linguistic diversity, heritage languages, and migrant pupils' repertoires as central to educational equity. Artistic and embodied practices, such as cultural mapping, storytelling, songs, and collaborative workshops, operate as inclusive pedagogical practices that legitimise diverse identity narratives and support culturally sustaining forms of participation. Complementarily, CLIL and translanguaging approaches promote linguistic justice by enabling pupils to mobilise full linguistic repertoires across disciplinary learning, thereby reducing structural barriers associated with monolingual norms. International mobilities for teachers and pupils reinforce this inclusive framework by facilitating the observation of interculturally responsive methodologies, equity-oriented assessment strategies, and multilingual classroom ecologies in European partner schools. These exchanges strengthen educators' capacity to implement diversity-responsive pedagogies and deepen pupils' intercultural and civic competences. By interweaving inclusive language policies, artistic expression, and mobility-driven innovation, *Building Bridges* proposes an evidence-informed model for combating structural inequalities. It demonstrates that socially just, multicultural educational ecosystems emerge when schools develop pedagogical spaces where creativity, linguistic plurality, and community heritage are structurally valued.

Keywords

Inclusive Education; Cultural Sustainability; Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL); Multiculturalism; Equity in Education.

Introduction

Contemporary European societies are characterised by increasing linguistic and cultural diversity, the result of intensified migratory flows and globalisation dynamics that have profoundly transformed the composition of school contexts. In Portugal, this phenomenon is particularly visible in school groupings, where pupils from dozens of countries coexist, bringing different mother tongues, cultural traditions, and educational experiences. This reality poses significant challenges to school institutions, which often continue to operate according to monolingual and monocultural logics that render invisible and devalue the linguistic and cultural repertoires of migrant pupils and their families.

At the Santa Maria Maior School Grouping (AESMM), located in the north of Portugal, the school population — comprising around 2,000 pupils — includes a growing number of migrant pupils from countries such as Afghanistan, Angola, Argentina, Brazil, China, Colombia, France, Germany, Morocco, Spain, Russia and Ukraine. This reality creates a need to move beyond methodological models that privilege monolingual norms and make pupils' cultural repertoires invisible.

The project *Building Bridges* emerges as a strategic response to these challenges, using the metaphor of the "bridge" to symbolise the connection between learning and communities



Fig. 1 The Building Bridges project logo - co-funded by the European Union through Erasmus+ (2025).
Generated by CoPilot

and, ultimately, as a "bridge" between different communities. The bridge is conceived as a co-constructed space built by pupils, teachers, families, and community partners, whose direction is negotiated through participatory practices, and through which linguistic, cultural, artistic, and experiential forms of knowledge circulate and gain recognition within the school community. The project is grounded in the premise that diversity is not a deficit but a collective asset that must be preserved and integrated into teaching processes.

Developed in a linguistically heterogeneous Portuguese school grouping, the project articulates three complementary strands: multilingual pedagogies based on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), arts education as an inclusive pedagogical device, and Erasmus+ international projects as a vehicle for innovation and professional development.

From a theoretical standpoint, the project is anchored in a language-in-education policy perspective that values pupils' heritage languages and multilingual repertoires as central elements of educational equity (Harvard Immigration Initiative, 2024). Complementarily, it mobilises the concept of culturally sustaining pedagogy, which proposes that educational practices should not only be relevant to pupils' cultures but should actively sustain and perpetuate them. Arts education, in turn, is conceptualised as a privileged space for identity expression and the construction of belonging, while international projects are understood as opportunities for observing, sharing, and integrating interculturally responsive methodologies developed in European partner contexts.

Theoretical framework

Language education policy and linguistic diversity

Language education policy examines decisions about the languages used in teaching, often reflecting power relations that privilege dominant languages. UNESCO (2025b) argues that education systems should recognise multilingualism as a fundamental human characteristic, warning that a large share of the world's population lacks education in the language they understand fluently. In the context of AESMM, the suppression of migrant pupils' linguistic repertoires is understood as a form of epistemic violence: the exercise of power through knowledge relations that empowers already dominant groups while depriving marginalised people of voice, visibility, recognition, and participation in the generation and circulation of knowledge (Boteva-Richter, 2022).

CLIL and translanguaging: linguistic justice in the classroom

The application of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and translanguaging methodologies is central to promoting linguistic justice. CLIL constitutes a pedagogical approach that integrates the teaching of disciplinary content with the development of

linguistic competences, simultaneously promoting the learning of content and additional languages. The 4Cs model proposed by Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010) — Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture — offers a holistic framework that articulates the linguistic dimension with the conceptual and intercultural dimensions of learning. In multicultural contexts, CLIL can constitute a powerful instrument of equity when implemented in ways that value pupils' multilingual repertoires, rather than suppressing them in favour of a single language of instruction.

The concept of translanguaging, developed by García and Wey (2014), represents a significant evolution in the conceptualisation of linguistic practices in multilingual contexts. Contrary to approaches that treat languages as separate and sealed systems, translanguaging recognises that multilingual speakers operate from a unitary and fluid linguistic repertoire, mobilising resources from different languages in an integrated and strategic manner. In the classroom, translanguaging pedagogies allow pupils to use their entire linguistic repertoire as a learning resource, reducing structural barriers associated with monolingual norms and promoting linguistic justice. According to the same authors recent research has shown that these approaches are particularly effective with multilingual adolescent learners, contributing to more equitable instructional and assessment practices.

The articulation between CLIL and translanguaging therefore represents a promising pathway for building multilingual classroom ecologies that recognise and value linguistic diversity as a pedagogical resource.

Culturally sustaining pedagogy and arts education

The concept of culturally sustaining pedagogy, proposed by Paris (2012), represents an evolution relative to culturally relevant and culturally responsive pedagogical approaches. While the latter focus on the relevance of educational practices to pupils' cultures, culturally sustaining pedagogy goes further, proposing that education should actively perpetuate and foster linguistic, literacy, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling. This perspective is particularly relevant in multicultural contexts, where the cultures and languages of migrant communities risk being progressively eroded by the assimilationist pressures of dominant education systems.

Arts education constitutes a privileged space for implementing culturally sustaining practices. Artistic and embodied practices — such as cultural mapping, storytelling, songs, and collaborative workshops — function as inclusive pedagogical devices that legitimise diverse identity narratives and create safe spaces for the expression and recognition of cultural difference.

UNESCO (2025a) has reinforced this perspective, underscoring that culture and the arts are fundamental to a truly inclusive, relevant, and transformative education. The implementation

guidance for the Framework for Culture and Arts Education emphasises the need to ensure that learning environments reflect learners' cultural identities, needs, and contexts, building societies grounded in creativity, empathy, and social justice. The integration of arts practices that affirm pupils' identities — including visual and performing arts, creative writing, and drama — has been associated with positive outcomes in terms of pupils' linguistic, cognitive, and emotional engagement.

Erasmus+ mobility and competence development

The Erasmus+ programme is one of the most significant instruments of European education policy for promoting mobility, cooperation, and the development of intercultural competences. In the school context, Erasmus+ mobilities offer teachers and pupils unique opportunities to learn from and adapt pedagogical practices developed in distinct European educational settings, enriching their professional and personal repertoires. Recent research has demonstrated the positive impact of Erasmus+ mobilities on the development of civic, intercultural, and diversity competences in European school contexts (Macau & Tarrés, 2026).

For teachers, mobilities constitute professional development opportunities that enable the observation of interculturally responsive methodologies, equity-oriented assessment strategies, and multilingual classroom ecologies in partner schools across Europe. These experiences strengthen educators' capacity to implement diversity-responsive pedagogies and deepen their intercultural and civic competences. For pupils, mobilities represent intercultural immersion experiences that develop awareness of Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity, while simultaneously reinforcing their identity and sense of belonging to a broader educational community.

Project development

Context and participants

The project was implemented at AESMM, which welcomes pupils from more than thirty countries with diverse mother tongues, such as French, German, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, and Ukrainian.

Project participants include teachers from different subjects and educational stages, pupils from lower and upper secondary education, and host schools in three European countries — Spain, Italy, and Finland — selected for their experience in multilingual and intercultural pedagogies. The project also involved the families of migrant pupils, recognised as key partners in the construction of culturally sustainable educational practices.



Fig. 2 Spain Mobility (2026). Fátima Simões



Fig. 3 Spain Mobility (2026). Fátima Simões



Fig. 4 Spain Mobility (2026). Fátima Simões

Pedagogical interventions

A qualitative participatory action research (Moura, 2003) was adopted to document and critically reflect on the pedagogical processes developed throughout the Building Bridges project. Participants included fourteen teachers (n=14) from different subject areas and educational stages (Portuguese, English, Musical Education, Visual Education, Technological Education, History, Mathematics, Science, Information and Communication Technology, Physical Education, and Citizenship), a group of six undergraduate student teachers from the School of Education (n=6), engaged in a teaching practicum within the Citizenship and Development curriculum, around two hundred pupils from lower and upper secondary education (n=200), and, where relevant, around thirty families of migrant pupils (n=30) involved in project activities. Data were collected throughout the implementation of the project through participant observation, pedagogical materials produced by pupils and teachers, and mobility journals documenting teachers' and pupils' experiences during Erasmus+ activities. The analysis focused on recurring themes emerging from these materials, particularly participation, linguistic inclusion, cultural recognition, agency, and the opportunities created for pupils to contribute to and shape artistic and pedagogical processes. The participatory dimension of the research derives from the involvement of teachers and pupils not only as participants in the activities but also as contributors to the production of knowledge and reflection on the project's development. Rather than seeking causal generalisations, the analysis aims to understand how particular pedagogical and artistic practices created conditions for participation, expression, recognition, and collaborative meaning-making within this specific school context.

The pedagogical interventions developed within the scope of the project were organised around three complementary axes. The first axis focused on implementing Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) units that integrated translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy, enabling pupils to mobilise their full linguistic repertoires in the learning of disciplinary content (Ruiz de Zarobe, 2025). The second axis involved arts education activities

— including sessions of cultural mapping, storytelling, musical creation, "Living Together" podcasts creation, design, embroidery, exploration of music and traditional instruments from around the world, theatre, and a march for the environment — conceived as spaces for identity expression and the construction of belonging. The third axis comprised Erasmus+ mobilities involving teachers and pupils visiting European partner schools, with the aim of observing, understanding, and appropriating interculturally responsive pedagogical practices. It also included professional development in Greece, undertaken alongside teachers from France, Poland, Germany, Estonia, Hungary, and Cyprus, on the theme "Designing Inclusive Learning Environments to Support all Students".

The project also integrated the didactic pathways of the GET – Global Education Time project, focusing on active learning about migration and global inequalities. Pupils experienced activities that facilitated the understanding of concepts such as prejudice and the rejection of the unknown. Activities were planned to break with the tradition of the lecture-based class, promoting critical reflection and discovery.

Diversity was the starting point for this project. Throughout the year, cultures, languages, and identities were celebrated through commemorative dates (such as the European Day of Languages, World Singing Day, Universal Children's Day, World Day for Cultural Diversity, Christmas, Human Rights Week, European Day of Music in Schools, European Day, and others). Recognition of the other as an asset was promoted (story suitcases, intercultural mural, podcasts, songs, among others), valuing differences as an opportunity for learning and collective growth.

At the same time, the project highlighted the importance of distinguishing between celebrating cultural diversity and engaging critically with cultural difference. Activities involving languages, traditional objects, music, costumes, food, and cultural celebrations created opportunities for recognition, sharing, and dialogue. However, such activities may also risk presenting cultures as fixed or homogeneous if they focus mainly on visible or traditionally recognised cultural characteristics. For this reason, it was important to create opportunities for pupils to decide how they wished to represent their own experiences and identities, rather than simply reproducing predefined representations of their cultures. In this perspective, cultural diversity was understood not as a collection of separate and homogeneous cultures, but as dynamic, diverse, and shaped by individual experiences. Such an approach is consistent with culturally sustaining pedagogy, which involves recognising and valuing pupils' cultural and linguistic resources while also allowing them to reinterpret and transform how these resources are represented.



Fig. 5 European Day of Languages (2025).
Fátima Simões



Fig. 6 Universal Children's Day (2025).
Fátima Simões



Fig. 7 World Day for Cultural Diversity (2025).
Fátima Simões

Inclusion was the daily practice. Conditions were created for all pupils to participate actively, regardless of their origin or background. Strategies were developed such as welcome guides for migrant pupils, bilingual teaching, collaborative activities, and artistic experiences that gave voice to all.

Sustainability was the commitment guiding the future. Work addressed not only the environmental dimension, but also social and cultural sustainability, promoting values of citizenship, respect, cooperation, and responsibility.

Fig. 8 Inclusion Fair Logo (2025).
Generated by CoPilot

This commitment culminated in the Inclusion Fair, held on World Environment Day, symbolising the construction of a fairer and more balanced world. The Inclusion Fair "Bridges of Santa Maria Maior – United in Diversity" involved 185 pupils and the activities included:

- Multicultural Poem: performed by pupils of different nationalities, highlighting the school's linguistic richness.
- Live reading and illustration of the book "Last Stop on Market Street": provided an enriching experience, encouraging empathy, imagination, and reflection on themes related to diversity and harmonious coexistence.
- Panel on Inclusion: parents/ carers, pupils, and an invited specialist promoted reflection and dialogue among different perspectives. This moment fostered awareness of the challenges and benefits of a truly inclusive school.



Fig. 9 Multicultural Poem (2026).
Conceição Fernandes



Fig. 10 Reading and Illustration (2026).
Conceição Fernandes



Fig. 11 Panel of Inclusion (2026).
Conceição Fernandes

- Exhibition of illustrations, posters and an embroidery panel, addressing human rights, inclusion, cultural diversity, and global inequalities.

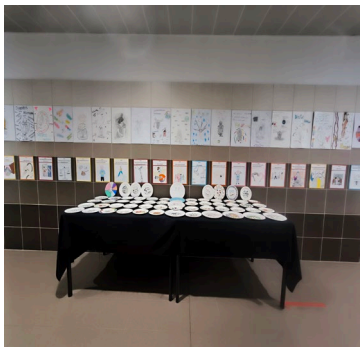

Fig. 12 Exhibition of illustrations (2026).
Fátima Simões



Fig. 13 Exhibition of illustrations (2026).
Fátima Simões



Fig. 14 Embroidery Panel (2026).
Fátima Simões

- "Sounds and Colours of the World" exhibition, featuring musical instruments from around the globe that visitors could play, as well as dolls representing the traditional costumes of various countries.
- Songs about Inclusion, Cultural Diversity, and Global Inequalities: presented by classes that explored these themes, wrote the lyrics, and composed the music using artificial intelligence tools.

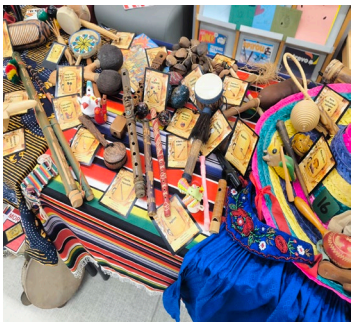

Fig. 15 Sounds and Colours of the World (2026).
Isabel Sá



Fig. 16 Sounds and Colours of the World (2026).
Fátima Simões

- Multilingual competition "From Object to Word: A Cultural Bridge": encouraged pupil participation, valuing the different languages represented in the school community and promoting curiosity and respect for various cultures.



Fig. 17 Multilingual competition (2026).
Fátima Simões



Fig. 18 Multilingual competition (2026).
Fátima Simões

- Embroidery and dance workshops: fostered the sharing of knowledge, interaction among participants, and recognition of different cultural expressions.
- Multicultural snack: constituted a moment of conviviality and sharing, strengthening bonds of belonging and community spirit.



Fig. 19 Embroidery workshop (2026).
Conceição Fernandes



Fig. 20 Dance Workshop (2026).
Cândida Sousa



Fig. 21 Multicultural snack (2026).
Fátima Simões

The public presentation of the work developed throughout the year made it possible to give visibility to the pupils' commitment and to the path taken in promoting interculturality, through exhibitions, dances, presentations, songs, podcasts, Padlet, and welcome guides.

From cultural representation to participation

Among the different artistic practices developed within the *Building Bridges* project, the "Story Suitcases" and the "Intercultural Mural" are particularly relevant for examining how participation was created and negotiated. Rather than functioning simply as activities for presenting cultural diversity, these practices created opportunities for pupils and families to decide what aspects of their personal and cultural experiences they wished to make visible and share with others. The Story Suitcases invited pupils to select objects, memories, stories, and cultural references that they considered meaningful, while the Intercultural Mural provided a collective visual space in which different experiences and identities could be represented. In this sense, pupils were not only recipients of a predefined representation of diversity; they also became contributors to the production of the representations through which the school community understood and represented itself.

The songs about Inclusion, Cultural Diversity, and Global Inequalities provided a further example of how artistic participation can be understood in terms of authorship and agency. Pupils were invited to define the themes and write the lyrics, while artificial intelligence tools were used to support the musical composition. The technology therefore functioned less as a substitute for pupils' creative work than as a resource within an interactive process of experimentation and decision-making. Pupils could evaluate the musical possibilities generated through the tool, make choices about the direction of the composition, and negotiate how the final artistic product should communicate the themes they had identified. This process also helped to raise important questions about authorship in digitally mediated artistic practices, such as the following questions: Who do you think should be recognised as the creator of a song when human ideas, lyrics, and decisions are combined with AI-generated musical elements? We concluded that the relevant issue in this curricular intervention is not whether the final musical output can be attributed exclusively to pupils or to the technology, but how the interaction between human intention, technological affordances, and artistic decision-making reshaped the conditions of pupil agency. In practice, pupils were active co-creators of the songs: they selected the themes, developed and wrote the lyrics, evaluated the musical options generated by AI, made decisions about the final composition, and helped determine how the songs communicated the messages they wanted to convey, while the teacher acted as a mediator, guiding the process, encouraging discussion and reflection, and supporting pupils in making their own artistic choices.

In other words, these practices broadened the forms through which pupils could participate. Linguistic proficiency in Portuguese was not the only criterion determining whose contribution could be heard or recognised. Images, objects, gestures, memories, words in different languages, and artistic choices became legitimate forms of communication and knowledge. This was particularly significant for pupils whose opportunities to participate in conventional classroom interactions could be limited by their proficiency in the language of instruction. The artistic dimension therefore did not simply "include" pupils; it created alternative conditions under which they could speak, represent, choose, contribute, and be recognised as producers of knowledge.

Findings

The qualitative evidence suggests that the articulation between Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and translanguaging created additional opportunities for multilingual pupils to participate in classroom activities, particularly for those with lower proficiency in Portuguese. Observations and pedagogical materials indicate that allowing pupils to mobilise resources from their different languages enabled forms of participation that were less dependent on proficiency in Portuguese alone. These observations should not be understood as evidence of a direct causal effect, but rather as indications of how multilingual pedagogies may contribute to creating more accessible conditions for participation.

The artistic practices provided further opportunities for pupils to express and negotiate aspects of their identities and experiences. In particular, the "Story Suitcases" and "Intercultural Mural" projects enabled pupils to share memories, objects, stories, and representations connected to their migratory trajectories and cultural repertoires. The significance of these practices lies not only in the visibility they gave to cultural diversity, but also in the opportunities they created for pupils to contribute to the construction of a shared representation of the school community. The multimodal character of the activities allowed pupils to participate through visual, embodied, linguistic, and musical forms, including forms of expression that were not dependent exclusively on Portuguese language proficiency.

The songs created around inclusion, cultural diversity, and global inequalities provided a further example of how artistic participation involved pupils in processes of authorship and decision-making. Pupils selected the themes, developed and wrote the lyrics, evaluated musical options generated by artificial intelligence, made decisions about the final composition, and contributed to determining how the songs communicated the messages they wanted to convey. The teacher acted as a mediator throughout this process, guiding discussion and reflection while supporting pupils in making their own artistic choices. The use

of AI therefore became part of an interactive process of experimentation and decision-making rather than a substitute for pupils' creative contribution.

The Erasmus+ mobilities similarly provided opportunities for professional learning and pedagogical reflection. Teachers involved in the mobilities reported observing interculturally responsive methodologies, equity-oriented assessment strategies, and multilingual classroom practices that subsequently informed discussions and adaptations within the Portuguese context. The evidence therefore points to a process of professional learning and pedagogical transfer rather than demonstrating a direct or uniform impact of mobility on school practices. For pupils, mobility experiences created opportunities to encounter different linguistic and cultural environments and to reflect on their position within a broader European educational community.

Conclusions

The *Building Bridges* project provides evidence that the articulation between multilingual pedagogies based on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and translanguaging, arts education, and Erasmus+ mobilities offers a pedagogically well-founded approach to promoting educational equity in multicultural school contexts. The findings suggest that socially just educational ecosystems can be fostered when schools develop pedagogical spaces where creativity, linguistic plurality, and community heritage are structurally valued, rather than merely tolerated or instrumentalised.

In terms of implications for educational practice, the project points to the need to: (i) integrate CLIL and translanguaging systematically into pedagogical practice, enabling pupils to mobilise their full linguistic repertoires in disciplinary learning; (ii) incorporate artistic and embodied practices that legitimise diverse cultural identities and create spaces for expression and belonging; and (iii) promote international mobilities of teachers and pupils that facilitate the observation and appropriation of interculturally responsive methodologies.

The *Building Bridges* project suggests that moving beyond access requires more than ensuring that culturally and linguistically diverse pupils are present and included in school activities. It requires creating conditions in which pupils can speak, create, contribute, make choices, and have their knowledge recognised as meaningful within the educational community. From this perspective, the value of arts education lies not simply in its capacity to make inclusion more engaging, but in its potential to redistribute opportunities for participation and recognition.

The experiences analysed in this chapter indicate that artistic practices can create alternative forms of participation in which language, memory, embodied knowledge, visual expression, and cultural experience become resources for collective meaning-making. At the same time, the project reveals the need to approach cultural diversity critically: sustaining cultural

identities should not mean reproducing fixed representations of cultures, but enabling pupils to interpret, negotiate, transform, and represent their experiences in their own ways. The use of artificial intelligence in the creation of songs further illustrates how contemporary artistic practices can open new questions about authorship, agency, and co-production.

The contribution of *Building Bridges* therefore lies not in demonstrating that a particular set of activities automatically produces inclusion, but in showing how carefully designed multilingual, artistic, and intercultural practices can create conditions for broader forms of participation and recognition. In this sense, moving beyond access means moving from being present in school to having opportunities to speak, create, decide, contribute, and be recognised. This perspective may be particularly relevant to culturally and linguistically diverse school contexts in which inclusion needs to be understood not as the incorporation of difference into existing structures, but as an ongoing transformation of the conditions through which participation and belonging are produced.

Notes

1. The concept of a "school grouping" in the Portuguese education system refers to an organisational unit that brings together pre-school and basic education establishments within a given geographical area under a single management. This organisational structure facilitates pedagogical articulation between cycles and the integrated management of educational resources.

2. The *Building Bridges* project was co-funded under the European Union's Erasmus+ programme.

3. Teaching and Learning Units - GET International (https://www.globaleducationtime.eu/tlu)

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Fig. 22 Co-funded by the European Union

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Re-Embodiment and Graphic Prosody in Inclusive Art Education: Rethinking Drawing Beyond Deficit Logics

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Abstract

Inclusive art education is frequently structured by implicit norms concerning recognisable representation, legible expression, developmental progression, appropriate pace, verbal explanation, and visible productivity. These norms are especially consequential in school settings, where assessment, schedules, and curricular expectations can position bodily, sensory, cognitive, communicative, and temporal difference as deficiency. This theoretical article develops an alternative account of drawing as bodily-temporal enactment. Drawing is understood as a recursive process in which movement, perception, material resistance, attention, and the emerging trace continually modify one another. Building on phenomenological uses of re-embodiment while specifying a distinct art-educational meaning, the article defines re-embodiment as the renewed enactment and potential reorganisation of sedimented embodied relations within an altered sensory-material configuration. It further develops graphic prosody as a descriptive and heuristic concept for analysing the temporal-dynamic articulation of drawing through rhythm, repetition, variation, intensity, hesitation, interruption, and pause. A reconstructive synthesis of embodied, art-educational, disability-critical, and participation-oriented scholarship is used to formulate six interrelated deficit logics: representational, expressive, developmental, temporal, cognitive, and participatory. The article argues that inclusion should not be conceived as adaptation to a dominant model of aesthetic practice, but as a relational and institutional condition under which heterogeneous modes of aesthetic participation become accessible, sustainable, negotiable, and recognisable. The proposed concepts are sensitising and non-diagnostic: they are intended to support research and pedagogical judgement, not to decode drawings or classify learners.

Keywords

Re-Embodiment; Sensory-Material Reorganisation; Inclusive Art Education; Drawing; Graphic Prosody; Ableism; Aesthetic Participation.

Inclusion and the persistence of silent norms

Inclusive art education is marked by a persistent tension, particularly in school settings. It seeks to open aesthetic practices to learners with different bodily, sensory, cognitive, communicative, and social conditions, yet it remains embedded in institutional and disciplinary traditions that define what counts as a meaningful image, intelligible expression, successful development, appropriate working time, demonstrable understanding, or valid participation. These criteria are seldom articulated as norms. Instead, they operate as apparently self-evident assumptions about what art education should make possible and what learners should visibly accomplish. Precisely because they remain tacit, they can structure perception, assessment, and pedagogical intervention without themselves becoming objects of scrutiny.

Disability Studies has shown that educational practices do not merely respond to pre-existing differences; they can also produce disability by organising environments, expectations, and forms of recognition around normative bodies and capacities. In art education, Wexler (2016) and Penketh (2014, 2020, 2024) demonstrate how apparently inclusive discourses may retain assumptions about ability, independence, vision, development, and legitimate artistic performance. Ableism is relevant here not only as overt devaluation, but as a field of largely unmarked expectations concerning which bodies, temporalities, modes of communication, and forms of agency count as fully legitimate (Campbell, 2009). Deficit thinking reinforces these expectations when difference is interpreted as an individual lack rather than in relation to structural, institutional, and pedagogical conditions (Patton Davis & Museus, 2019).

Drawing renders this tension especially visible. In many school-based contexts, drawings may be evaluated according to whether they depict something recognisable, communicate an interpretable intention or emotion, correspond to an expected developmental sequence, or culminate in an identifiable product (Anning, 1999; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987; Penketh, 2024). Temporal dimensions may then enter evaluation primarily as external measures, such as speed, endurance, continuity, or visible productivity. A drawing activity that remains repetitive, non-figurative, slow, interrupted, quiet, or difficult to verbalise may therefore appear incomplete or deficient even when it constitutes an intensive form of material, sensory, and aesthetic engagement.

The problem is not that representation, expression, development, language, or products are irrelevant to art education. Each may be aesthetically and pedagogically significant. The problem arises when one historically and institutionally established form is treated as the universal measure of aesthetic meaning and participation. In this article, deficit logic refers to this structure of interpretation: an aesthetic practice is not first approached through the organisation of its own enactment, but is evaluated primarily against an external norm. Such norms concern not only the image produced, but also the body that produces it, the time in which it is produced, the knowledge through which it is justified, and the social form in which participation becomes visible.

This article asks: How can drawing be conceptualised within inclusive art education without making representational legibility, linear development, verbal explication, common pacing, or visible productivity the primary conditions of aesthetic participation? Its central claim is that the appropriate unit of analysis is neither the isolated learner nor the finished product, but the bodily-temporal aesthetic situation constituted through relations among person, material, trace, time, support, and institutional conditions. Four analytical contributions support this claim. First, drawing is reconstructed as bodily-temporal and recursive enactment. Second, re-embodiment is proposed as a processual model of how established embodied relations may recur and change within altered sensory-material configurations. Third, graphic prosody provides a descriptive vocabulary for the qualitative temporal-dynamic organisation of drawing. Fourth, six deficit logics identify institutional criteria through which such processes may be misrecognised or devalued.

Conceptual approach and construction of the framework

The article proceeds through a reconstructive, theory-guided synthesis rather than a systematic review or empirical study. The selected traditions serve distinct analytical purposes: phenomenology and enactive approaches clarify bodily, perceptual, and material processes; art-educational scholarship specifies the medium, pedagogical settings, and histories of evaluation; Disability Studies and anti-ableist art education make normative assumptions about ability visible; and participation theory foregrounds access, agency, and institutional conditions. The selection is therefore problem-driven: each body of work addresses a dimension required by the research question.

The framework was developed through a selective and problem-driven reading of these traditions; it does not claim comprehensive coverage or frequency-based coding. The selection of key texts followed three criteria: direct conceptual relevance to the research question, capacity to clarify one of the framework's analytical dimensions, and critical usefulness for identifying normative assumptions about ability, development, temporality, knowledge, or participation. Within each tradition, priority was given to foundational or field-

shaping works together with recent scholarship that extends, revises, or challenges those positions. The synthesis also included conceptual counter-perspectives in order to avoid treating any single tradition as a comprehensive account of inclusive aesthetic practice. First, recurring evaluative criteria through which drawing and participation are judged were reconstructed. Second, these criteria were provisionally grouped according to their primary object of evaluation: product, legibility of subjectivity, developmental direction, process time, demonstrated knowledge, or socially visible involvement. Third, each provisional group was elaborated as an analytical ideal type and contrasted with process-oriented, embodied, and disability-critical counter-perspectives. The resulting six deficit logics do not identify discrete causes, and their number is not presented as exhaustive. They are overlapping analytical distinctions that remain open to empirical revision.

Graphic prosody and re-embodiment function as sensitising concepts in Blumer's (1954) sense: they orient attention towards dimensions that may otherwise remain unnoticed without prescribing fixed indicators or diagnostic meanings. Their analytical functions are deliberately distinct. Graphic prosody is primarily descriptive; recursion names a process structure; re-embodiment is a cautious theoretical interpretation of recurrence and change; and the deficit logics form a critical-institutional typology. The article's specific theoretical contribution lies not in claiming the isolated novelty of these individual concepts, but in their art--educational re-specification and integration into a disability-critical framework. This integration connects four analytically differentiated levels — temporal-dynamic description, recursive process structure, embodied continuity and change, and institutional critique — within the bodily-temporal aesthetic situation as a common unit of analysis. It thereby provides a framework for analysing how bodily-temporal drawing practices become perceptible, supported, and evaluated in inclusive educational situations. Terminology relating to disability is used contextually: the term ‘disabled people’ is preferred where a social and political relation is foregrounded, while ‘people with disabilities’ is retained where it reflects the terminology of a cited institution or source.

The primary field of reference is inclusive art education. School-based practice serves as a central field of application because curricular, temporal, evaluative, and organisational norms are especially explicit there; the framework is not, however, presented as an empirically established model specific to schools. Drawing functions as an exemplary medium because movement, tool, surface, material contact, temporal modulation, and durable trace remain closely connected. The framework is neither a universal model of aesthetic activity nor a target-group-specific method. Music, dance, theatre, sculpture, digital art, and collaborative performance organise embodiment, temporality, materiality, representation, and social interaction differently. Drawing is used here as a theoretically productive field through which a broader educational question can be examined: under what conditions are different bodily-temporal forms of aesthetic participation enabled, perceived, and evaluated? Any extension

to other educational and cultural settings requires separate institutional and medium-specific examination.

Drawing as bodily-temporal and recursive enactment

The theoretical point of departure is a shift from drawing as the execution of prior mental content towards drawing as an activity in which perception, movement, attention, and material form emerge relationally. This shift does not deny intention, representation, imagination, or expression. It rejects only the assumption that these are fully formed before drawing begins and that bodily action merely transfers them onto a surface.

Ingold's account of lines provides an important point of orientation. A line is not only a static mark; it may also be understood as a trace of movement and a path generated through practice (Ingold, 2007). Walking, writing, weaving, and drawing bring forth lines through situated activity. The line therefore retains a temporal dimension after movement has ceased. It is materially stable, yet remains related to the gesture, pressure, direction, duration, and interruption through which it emerged. The completed mark does not reproduce the process in full, but it preserves aspects of its trajectory.

This processual view can be connected to enactive approaches to perception. For Noë (2004), perception is not the passive internal reception of sensory information but a form of bodily engagement. What is perceived depends on how an embodied agent can move, explore, and respond within a situation. Applied to drawing, perception and action cannot be separated into an initial act of seeing followed by a secondary act of execution. Movement produces a trace; the trace is perceived; that perception modifies the next movement. Material resistance, friction, pressure, scale, position, and visibility participate in the further organisation of the activity.

Drawing is therefore recursive. Recursion here does not refer to formal self-reference in a technical sense. It designates a structure in which what has already emerged becomes a condition of what follows. A line redirects attention; a dense area invites continuation or avoidance; a resistant surface alters pressure; an accidental mark changes orientation; a pause reorganises the relation to the page. The activity develops through the consequences of its own unfolding. Dewey's conception of experience as continuity is relevant in this context: experience modifies the conditions of subsequent experience rather than remaining an isolated event (Dewey, 1938). Similarly, Ingold's account of making emphasises correspondence with materials and emerging forms rather than the imposition of a pre-existing design (Ingold, 2013).

This recursive structure has consequences for how aesthetic meaning is understood. Meaning need not be located exclusively in what the final image represents or in what the

person later says about it. It may develop through the organisation of the activity itself: through approach and withdrawal, pressure and release, repetition and differentiation, continuation and interruption. A trace may function as orientation, contact, resistance, testing, rhythmic stabilisation, spatial exploration, or material inquiry without depicting a recognisable object. Such functions are not pre-aesthetic stages awaiting completion through representation; they are modes of aesthetic engagement in their own right.

The bodily-temporal character of drawing also complicates the distinction between process and product. The visible drawing is not irrelevant; it participates materially in the process. At the same time, the finished image cannot provide a complete record of its production. Two visually similar marks may have emerged through markedly different temporal and bodily courses. Conversely, an activity may be highly differentiated in tempo, intensity, attention, and material response while leaving a visually modest result. Inclusive art education therefore requires a mode of observation that attends both to the stabilised trace and to the unfolding activity without reducing either to the other.

Throughout this article, enactment refers to the situated process through which bodily action, perception, material, time, and environment are brought into relation. It does not imply spontaneous action without history. Every enactment is shaped by learned practices, bodily dispositions, available tools, social expectations, institutional arrangements, and previous experience. The concept of re-embodiment specifies how such established embodied relations may be renewed and altered within a present aesthetic situation.

For the purposes of this framework, an enactment is treated as aesthetic when attention and action are organised through qualitative relations among movement, material, trace, rhythm, intensity, variation, and spatial form. This working criterion is not intended as a normative threshold, a checklist of required features, or an external standard by which an activity can be classified as aesthetic or non-aesthetic. Rather, it identifies a mode of organisation in which qualitative relations become perceptually salient, are explored, varied, sustained, or responded to within the unfolding activity. Such organisation may arise through the actions of the participant, the affordances and resistance of materials, the pedagogical situation, or their interaction. It may coexist with representation, expression, or explicit artistic intention without depending on any one of them. Because the aesthetic significance of an enactment cannot be established through external observation alone, its interpretation must remain provisional and responsive to participant communication, situational context, and the developing course of the activity.

Re-embodiment as sensory-material reorganisation

Embodiment is a broad theoretical term referring to the constitutive role of the body in perception, cognition, affect, action, and meaning-making. Embodied approaches emphasise

that cognition and learning are grounded in bodily action and sensorimotor engagement (Shapiro & Spaulding, 2021), while arts education research specifies how artistic learning develops through sensory experience, material practice, and social interaction (Hermans & Bremmer, 2015). The term re-embodiment also has important precedents. Papadimitriou (2008) describes becoming en-wheeled as a situated accomplishment in which wheelchair users renegotiate past and new habits, abilities, and ways of acting. Standal (2011) develops re-embodiment phenomenologically in relation to the reorganisation of body schema through embodied learning and the incorporation of a wheelchair. These accounts establish that re-embodiment is not a new label introduced here. The present article shares their concern with continuity and change in embodied habit, but re-specifies the concept for recursive sensory-material processes in drawing.

In the present framework, re-embodiment designates the renewed enactment and potential reorganisation of sedimented embodied relations within a present practice. The term does not imply that the body was previously disembodied, nor that an original or authentic bodily state can be recovered. The prefix re- marks recurrence under altered conditions rather than a return to an intact origin. Established dispositions recur, but their enactment may be stabilised, differentiated, interrupted, or transformed.

The expression sedimented embodied relations is used in a phenomenological sense, drawing on accounts of bodily habit and sedimentation as historically formed, largely pre-reflective structures of perception and action (Merleau-Ponty, 2012). It refers here to ways of orienting, moving, attending, exerting pressure, approaching, withdrawing, pausing, repeating, and responding. These relations are neither fixed motor programmes nor hidden contents stored intact within the body. They are dispositions or possibilities of action and perception that become actual only within concrete relations among body, material, space, task, other persons, and emerging form.

Re-embodiment is analytically useful because adjacent concepts name different aspects of the process without fully specifying their conjunction. Embodiment names the general bodily condition of perception and action; habit foregrounds continuity; enactment foregrounds situated emergence. Re-embodiment identifies the more specific process in which an established embodied relation recurs and is potentially reorganised through recursive material and perceptual feedback. Its contribution therefore lies not in coining the isolated term, but in requiring continuity and change to be considered together within a present drawing practice and in specifying their conjunction as sensory-material reorganisation.

In the present account, sensory-material reorganisation occurs when an established bodily relation is renewed under conditions that alter how perception, movement, material, and visible or tactile consequences are connected. The term does not describe the transfer of intact content between sealed senses, codes, or media. In the present account, drawing is

understood as a multisensory practice; what recurs is not an intact content but a relation or disposition. Pressure, boundary, resistance, approach, interval, pulse, or interruption may, for example, become differently available to perception and action when movement through a tool produces a visible, tactile, and spatially persistent trace.

Re-embodiment is a theoretical model of situated reorganisation, not an empirically established developmental pathway. It concerns present practice and does not posit the transfer of an intact early sensory organisation into drawing.

Accordingly, re-embodiment cannot be inferred from a single mark or isolated movement. The concept is warranted only where there is evidence of both continuity and change, drawn from repeated or longitudinal observation, comparison across materials and situations, participant communication, or documented responses to material and pedagogical events. Without such evidence, the more cautious description is multisensory or materially mediated enactment.

Analytically, re-embodiment can be considered where three dimensions intersect:

1. an embodied relation or disposition is renewed within practice;
2. it enters a recursive relation with material and perceptual feedback; and
3. its further enactment is stabilised, varied, interrupted, or reorganised through that relation.

These criteria distinguish re-embodiment from bodily action in general and keep the concept open to empirical scrutiny and revision. Immediate adjustment to a tool, surface, or task should not by itself be described as re-embodiment. The term is reserved for cases in which evidence across situations supports both the recurrence of a historically established embodied relation and its reorganisation, rather than mere accommodation, in the present activity.

Re-embodiment also has a critical function in inclusive art education. It shifts evaluation away from an assumed endpoint of normal development. A repeated movement need not be read as the unchanged residue of an earlier stage; it may be a renewed organisation whose differences are small, processual, and significant. A pause need not mark an absence of activity; it may reorganise attention and bodily orientation. At the same time, neither repetition nor pause is intrinsically positive. The concept suspends premature deficit interpretation without assigning emancipatory meaning in advance.

Graphic prosody: the temporal-dynamic articulation of drawing

If drawing is understood as bodily-temporal enactment, time cannot remain an external container in which the activity occurs; it is an internal dimension of how drawing becomes

organised. An analytical distinction is useful between time as measure and time as structure. Time as measure concerns quantifiable duration, pace, efficiency, sequence, and visible progress. Time as structure concerns the qualitative organisation of activity through rhythm, interval, recurrence, acceleration, slowing, hesitation, interruption, densification, and pause. Both dimensions coexist. The difficulty arises when metric time becomes the dominant standard by which participation is assessed.

Educational institutions necessarily organise time. Lessons begin and end; tasks have deadlines; groups share spaces and schedules. Yet institutional time is not neutral. Schooling commonly treats time as a resource to be managed and as a measure of orderly progression. Recent historical scholarship has examined how measured time became connected to disciplinary and productive forms of educational organisation (Hoffmann-Ocon et al., 2024). In art education, this logic appears in expectations that learners begin promptly, work continuously, complete a product within a lesson, demonstrate visible progress, and move on at an appropriate moment. Such expectations privilege particular body-time configurations while rendering others problematic.

The concept of prosody provides a vocabulary for examining qualitative temporal organisation. Across spoken, signed, and gestural communication, prosodic organisation may involve intonation, rhythm, tempo, intensity, duration, repetition, and pause (Applebaum et al., 2014; Esteve-Gibert & Guellaï, 2018). Research on visual and multimodal prosody further shows that head, hand, facial, and postural movements can be temporally coordinated with communicative organisation (Esteve-Gibert & Guellaï, 2018). A closely related line of research suggests that handmade graphic traces may retain aspects of the prosodic organisation of the gestures that produced them and may support graphetic empathy in later perception (Johannessen et al., 2021). The present account differs, however, by focusing not on reconstructing the gestures that produced finished traces or on a reader's sensorimotor resonance, but on the observable temporal-dynamic organisation of drawing as it unfolds in educational situations. The transfer of prosodic thinking to drawing nevertheless remains heuristic. Drawings are not treated here as utterances, and graphic traces are not assumed to be organised according to a grammar directly equivalent to linguistic syntax. This does not deny that drawings may exhibit visual conventions, compositional principles, or forms of visual grammar. Graphic prosody is neither an extension of visual prosody in linguistic communication nor a notation of vocal prosody. No claim is made that the term graphic prosody is introduced here for the first time; rather, the article stipulates a specific descriptive use of the term for the analysis of drawing in inclusive educational situations. Graphic prosody designates the temporal and dynamic articulation of drawing through modulations of movement, material contact, and the emerging trace. It directs attention not primarily to what a drawing depicts, but to how the drawing activity unfolds. A movement may be abrupt or sustained, forceful or tentative, rapid or slow. Repeated marks may

establish continuity, intensify contact, test resistance, support orientation, or introduce variation. A pause may separate phases, prepare a change of direction, coincide with overload, or accompany withdrawal. However, none of these qualities carries a fixed or universal meaning. Their significance must be interpreted in relation to the person, the material, the situation, the history of the activity, and the available forms of communication. Graphic prosody cannot be reconstructed reliably from the finished image alone. A trace preserves partial indications of pressure, direction, density, and interruption, but it does not transparently reveal pace, bodily effort, attention, discomfort, decision, or support. Process-oriented observation is therefore necessary. Even then, observation provides no direct access to subjective meaning. Graphic prosody is an analytical concept for describing temporal organisation, not a code for deciphering inner states.

Four concepts used in this article should be kept distinct (see Table 1):

Concept	**Analytical focus**
Rhythm	Relations of repetition, interval, continuity, and variation
Graphic prosody	Qualitative temporal-dynamic modulation of drawing as an unfolding activity
Recursion	Feedback through which what has emerged modifies subsequent perception and action
Re-embodiment	Renewed enactment and potential reorganisation of sedimented embodied relations

Table 1. Conceptual distinctions within the proposed framework. Wolfgang Weinlich (own elaboration).

The concepts describe distinct but intersecting dimensions. Rhythm concerns relations of recurrence, interval, continuity, and variation. Graphic prosody concerns the broader qualitative modulation of an unfolding drawing activity. Recursion identifies how an emerging trace or material event affects what follows. Re-embodiment concerns how established bodily relations may be resumed and reorganised through recursive sensory-material feedback. Stern's (2010) forms of vitality provide an important neighbouring account of the dynamic organisation of experience through force, movement, space, and temporal contour. Whereas Stern's concept addresses dynamic experience across different domains, graphic prosody is narrower in scope and more explicitly observational: it describes the temporal-dynamic organisation of drawing activity without treating its dynamics as direct evidence of affect, subjective meaning, or vitality. The distinctions matter because otherwise every

repetition risks being interpreted simultaneously as rhythm, meaning, learning, and transformation. The added value of graphic prosody lies in integrating temporal, dynamic, sequential, material, recursive, and situational dimensions of modulation within one descriptive framework, without treating them as a semantic, psychological, or affective code. For theoretical and empirical inquiry, graphic prosody can be approached through several analytically documentable dimensions. These should be documented across phases of an activity by noting what changes, what remains stable, and what follows a material, communicative, or pedagogical event. Documentation should distinguish between directly observable temporal and bodily events, properties inferred cautiously from the material trace, and information communicated by participants or supporters. The dimensions are descriptive rather than diagnostic and carry no predetermined meanings:

- temporal modulation: pace, duration, acceleration, slowing, hesitation, pause;
- dynamic modulation: pressure, intensity, force, release, and observable changes in grip, posture, movement amplitude, or requests for rest;
- sequential organisation: repetition, variation, interruption, resumption, directional change;
- material relation: friction, resistance, tool use, surface response, density of trace;
- recursive organisation: visible ways in which an existing mark or material event redirects subsequent action;
- situational relation: task structure, assistance, communication, spatial arrangement, sensory load, and institutional time.

Hypothetical analytical vignette. A learner repeatedly draws closely spaced lines, pauses for extended intervals, and resumes in the same area. After a change from a narrow pencil to a broader, lower-resistance tool, grip tension appears to decrease, movement amplitude increases, and the drawing extends beyond the previously repeated zone.

At the descriptive level, graphic prosody identifies repetition, pause, resumption, altered pressure, and a change in spatial organisation. Recursion is observable where the existing trace appears to orient subsequent action. Re-embodiment would remain a provisional interpretation and would require evidence that a previously established embodied relation recurs and is reorganised across situations. The observation does not in itself justify psychological or developmental claims. Pedagogically, the relevant question is how the change in material altered the learner's possibilities for orientation, continuation, and agency.

These dimensions strengthen description without resolving interpretation. A long pause may belong to aesthetic orientation, but it may also indicate discomfort, uncertainty, sensory overload, inaccessible conditions, or refusal. Repetition may provide pleasure, security,

exploration, or formal intensification; it may also occur under constraint or because alternatives are unavailable. Prosodic description should therefore precede causal or evaluative interpretation. Such interpretation must remain provisional and be checked against situational context, participant communication, and changes following support or altered conditions. Graphic prosody thereby interrupts the automatic conversion of temporal difference into deficit without assigning positive meaning to every non-normative temporality.

Graphic prosody consequently broadens the field of what can count as aesthetically relevant. It relativises the exclusive priority of semantic legibility and verbal explanation without dismissing either. Aesthetic sense may be organised through temporal and bodily articulation before, alongside, or independently of recognisable representation. Participation can thus be perceived in the developing relation to movement, material, trace, and situation, even where a shared pace, a conventional product, or a verbal account is absent.

These conceptual distinctions provide the basis for examining how bodily-temporal drawing processes may be reduced by institutionally established criteria of aesthetic meaning and participation.

Six deficit logics in inclusive art education

Deficit logics are not reducible to individual prejudice or pedagogical error. They are culturally and institutionally embedded patterns of interpretation that make historically specific norms appear natural. Bourdieu's concept of doxa is useful here: assumptions become especially powerful when they are no longer perceived as assumptions but as the self-evident order of a field (Bourdieu, 1977). In art education, such beliefs may concern what a drawing should show, what artistic development should look like, how a learner should work, or how participation should become visible. Ableism and deficit thinking give these beliefs normative force by presenting particular bodily and cognitive capacities as neutral prerequisites rather than privileged forms of access and recognition (Campbell, 2009; Patton Davis & Museus, 2019).

The following six deficit logics (see Table 2) are analytical ideal types rather than exhaustive or mutually exclusive classifications. They are distinguished not by particular learner behaviours, which may look similar across situations, but by the external criterion through which those behaviours are evaluated: the graphic product, the legibility of subjectivity, the direction of change, the temporal organisation of the process, the demonstration of knowledge, or the social visibility of involvement. The categories were reconstructed from recurring normative criteria in art education, developmental discourse, Disability Studies, and theories of participation. In concrete situations several may operate simultaneously. A repetitive, non-figurative drawing activity, for example, may be judged as representationally

empty, developmentally delayed, temporally unproductive, cognitively unreflective, and insufficiently participatory. The shared structure is consistent: aesthetic enactment is measured against an external criterion treated as universally valid.

Deficit logic / primary object	**Implicit norm**	**Typical reduction**	**Counter-perspective**
Representational / graphic product	Meaning requires recognisable figuration	Non-figurative traces are preliminary, unfinished, or meaningless	Drawing may organise movement, material relation, orientation, and temporal form
Expressive / legibility of subjectivity	Subjectivity must become interpretable as intention or emotion	What cannot be decoded is treated as lacking expression or personal significance	Subjectivity is also enacted through situated ways of moving, attending, and responding
Developmental / direction of change	Change follows a linear sequence toward predetermined competence	Repetition or return is read as stagnation or regression	Recurrence may stabilise, differentiate, and reorganise practice
Temporal / organisation of process	Valid participation is continuous, efficient, and visibly progressive	Slowness, pause, or interruption becomes lack of engagement	Time is also a qualitative structure of orientation and participation
Cognitive / demonstration of knowledge	Understanding must be verbally or propositionally explicated	What cannot be explained is considered not understood	Knowledge may be embodied, sensory, practical, and medium-specific
Participatory / social visibility of involvement	Participation must be productive, communicative, and visibly active	Quiet, delayed, observational, or nonproductive presence appears absent	Participation concerns access, agency, involvement, and negotiable forms of presence

Table 2. Six deficit logics in inclusive art education. Wolfgang Weinlich (own elaboration).

The representational and developmental logics were reconstructed primarily from histories and theories of drawing development and assessment (Anning, 1999; Longobardi et al., 2015; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987; Penketh, 2024; Toomela, 2003); the expressive and cognitive logics from theories of expression, embodied knowledge, and verbal explication (Dewey, 1934/2005; Eisner, 2002; Johnson, 2007; Noë, 2004); the temporal logic from scholarship on educational temporality and crip time (Hoffmann-Ocon et al., 2024; Kafer, 2013; Samuels, 2017; Smith, 2024); and the participatory logic from disability-critical accounts of access, involvement, and agency (Kuppers, 2013; Leahy & Ferri, 2022; Penketh, 2017, 2020; World Health Organization, 2001).

Representational deficit: the norm of recognisable figuration

The representational deficit arises when meaningful drawing is equated with recognisable depiction. Under this logic, graphic activity acquires value to the extent that it produces identifiable objects, narratives, symbols, or increasingly realistic forms. Non-figurative traces are then positioned before art proper: they appear as preparatory, immature, accidental, or incomplete.

Research on children's drawing has often privileged the development of recognisable forms and communicative representation. Anning (1999) demonstrates the educational importance of drawing as a mode of learning, but the wider developmental tradition has frequently treated early graphic activity primarily in relation to later figuration. Longobardi et al. (2015) show that scribbling has historically been described as meaningless or merely kinaesthetic despite evidence that it can involve intentional and sense-making processes. Penketh's (2024) history of disability and art education further demonstrates how apparently universal accounts of vision, child art, psychology, and assessment have participated in the production of ability norms. The problem is not the study of representation, but the conversion of one possible aesthetic achievement into a universal measure of graphic meaning.

A process-oriented perspective widens the interpretive field. A line can orient the body in space, maintain contact with a surface, test the behaviour of a material, establish a pulse, intensify an area, or sustain attention. These functions may coexist with representation or remain independent of it. Graphic prosody makes their temporal organisation perceptible, while re-embodiment draws attention to how established bodily relations may be renewed through practice. The deficit therefore lies not in the absence of figuration, but in an interpretive frame unable to recognise non-representational aesthetic organisation.

Expressive deficit: subjectivity as decodable inner content

The expressive deficit emerges when artistic activity is expected to communicate an inner state that observers can identify. A drawing is then treated as meaningful when it can be read as evidence of an intention, feeling, personality, or experience. Where such decoding fails, the practice may be dismissed as empty, mechanical, or impersonal.

Dewey's theory of expression provides a corrective. Artistic expression is not the discharge of a complete internal state into an external form; it develops through the transformation of experience in relation to material and medium. Emotional discharge alone is insufficient because expression requires organisation, selection, resistance, and form (Dewey, 1934/2005). This account undermines the container model in which an inner meaning exists first and is subsequently transmitted.

Re-embodiment shifts the question from what hidden content a mark reveals to how embodied subjectivity is situated and potentially reorganised within the activity. Ways of approaching a surface, sustaining or interrupting contact, modulating pressure, directing attention, responding to material change, and accepting or refusing support are forms of agency and orientation. They should not automatically be interpreted as symbols of an inner state; neither should they be treated as devoid of subjectivity because they resist verbal or emotional decoding. Koch's (2017) framework of embodied aesthetics similarly brings together art perception and active art-making within an embodied-enactive account of aesthetic experience. The expressive deficit is produced when recognition of the person depends on the observer's capacity to translate aesthetic action into legible psychological content.

Developmental deficit: linear progression and the interpretation of regression

Developmental models have made important contributions to the study of children's drawing, but they become exclusionary when descriptive sequences are transformed into universal norms of competence. Stage-based accounts in art education and developmental research have commonly described progress from early scribbling and schematic forms towards increasingly differentiated and realistic representation (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987; Toomela, 2003). Such models are historically and theoretically specific and should not function as neutral scales against which every drawing practice is measured.

The developmental deficit appears when recurrence is read only as a failure to advance. Repetition becomes stagnation; return to an earlier form becomes regression; inconsistency becomes lack of consolidation; and open-ended exploration becomes absence of goal

direction. This interpretation imposes a linear temporal order on processes that may be recursive, situational, and medium-dependent.

Re-embodiment offers a different account of recurrence. Established forms of action remain available and can be re-enacted under changing material, sensory, affective, and social conditions. Their return is not necessarily identical repetition. Minor differences in pressure, interval, scale, direction, duration, or attention may reorganise the practice. Development can therefore include stabilisation, differentiation, interruption, reorientation, and renewed access rather than only progression towards a predefined representational endpoint. Not all repetition constitutes development; developmental judgement requires evidence beyond the mere recurrence of a form.

Temporal deficit: pace, continuity, and visible progress

Temporal deficit logics arise when participation is assessed through institutionally preferred rhythms of work. Appropriate engagement is expected to begin without delay, proceed continuously, demonstrate concentration, and produce visible progress within a given period. Slowness may be construed as incapacity; pause as disengagement; densification as fixation; interruption as restlessness; and repeated beginnings as a failure to sustain a task.

These judgements convert metric time into a norm of bodily validity. They privilege learners whose rhythms align with lesson structures, productivity expectations, and the temporal demands of group organisation. Those who require longer orientation, sensory adjustment, rest, repetition, assisted communication, or discontinuous work are placed under pressure to synchronise. Disability scholarship on crip time shows that temporal difference is not merely an individual characteristic, but emerges in relation to expectations of speed, predictability, productivity, and normative futures (Kafer, 2013; Samuels, 2017). Inclusion becomes conditional on temporal assimilation when an institution treats one body-time configuration as the unmarked standard.

Graphic prosody shifts attention from whether an activity conforms to the expected pace to how its time is organised. Hesitation, repetition, pause, acceleration, and resumption may be constitutive elements of aesthetic orientation. Recent work on neurodivergent temporality in higher art education likewise shows how institutional time can constrain participation, while temporal difference can also become a source of critique and structural change (Smith, 2024). Neither interpretation should be assumed in advance. A pause may support reorientation, but it may also signal discomfort, overload, uncertainty, exclusion, or a need for assistance. Temporal deviation should therefore be described and situated before it is corrected or celebrated.

Cognitive deficit: knowledge as verbal explication

The cognitive deficit ties understanding to propositional articulation. A learner is considered to understand an aesthetic process when they can explain an intention, justify a decision, name a concept, or describe the meaning of a work. Where such verbalisation is unavailable, delayed, non-conventional, or undesired, the activity may appear cognitively weak or merely sensory.

This narrowing underestimates the epistemic specificity of artistic practice. Eisner (2002) describes the arts as forms of thinking in which perception, imagination, qualitative judgement, and discernment are developed within particular media. Dewey (1934/2005) likewise understands experience as an active organisation of perception, action, feeling, material, and situation. Johnson (2007) locates meaning in embodied patterns of movement, affect, and organism-environment interaction, while Noë (2004) treats perception itself as a skilful activity. Together, these approaches support an expanded conception of knowledge as embodied, sensory, practical, and non-propositional.

In drawing, understanding may be enacted through the modulation of pressure, anticipation of material response, differentiation of intervals, recognition of spatial limits, or recursive continuation of an emerging form. Such processual indications do not make understanding transparent, but they constitute relevant evidence that should not be discounted solely because verbal explication is absent. This understanding may later become available to language, but language is not its sole condition. Nor should nonverbal action be idealised as pure or authentic knowledge. The epistemological point is narrower: inability or refusal to provide a verbal account does not justify the conclusion that no understanding is present.

Participatory deficit: visibility, productivity, and normative presence

The participatory deficit arises when involvement is equated with visible production, continuous action, verbal exchange, or socially recognisable presence. A person appears to participate when they make something, respond promptly, follow the shared task, communicate in expected ways, and remain visibly engaged. Quiet observation, delayed response, parallel activity, repeated action, withdrawal, refusal, or a modest material result can then be interpreted as absence.

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health defines participation as involvement in a life situation rather than as productivity alone (World Health Organization, 2001). Disability research further shows that cultural participation is shaped by accessibility, institutional practices, social attitudes, resources, and opportunities for involvement, not simply by individual capacities (Leahy & Ferri, 2022). Disability performance theory likewise

questions normative assumptions about presence, agency, and artistic legitimacy (Kuppers, 2013).

An inclusive account of participation must recognise different modes of involvement, including sustained making, intermittent action, observation, reception, parallel activity, and supported communication. Refusal and the decision not to proceed are not simply additional forms of participation. Rather, the right to refuse is a condition of non-coercive participation, and refusal may itself communicate a demand to change the terms of the situation. At the same time, withdrawal can also be produced by inaccessible materials, inadequate support, exclusion, or fatigue. What matters is whether a person has genuine access, can influence conditions, can accept or decline support, and can have their mode of engagement recognised without compulsion.

Taken together, the six deficit logics reveal a common normative architecture. Meaning is attached to figuration, subjectivity to decodable expression, development to linear advancement, valid process to conformity with common time, understanding to language, and involvement to visible productivity. Re-embodiment and graphic prosody do not replace these dimensions with a new universal standard. Their critical function is to make the standard itself visible and to reopen the question of how aesthetic meaning and participation are organised in particular situations.

Inclusion as a relational and institutional condition

The preceding argument requires a shift in the concept of inclusion. Inclusion cannot be treated as a supplementary method applied to an otherwise unchanged model of art education, nor can it be reduced to the physical presence of different learners in a shared room. It concerns the material, temporal, communicative, social, and institutional conditions under which aesthetic practices become accessible, sustainable, negotiable, and recognisable. This position is consistent with anti-ableist approaches to art education, which examine how curricular and pedagogical arrangements produce and privilege particular norms of ability, rather than treating support primarily as remediation of an individual lack (Penketh, 2020; Wexler, 2016). This position is also compatible with Ferri's (2025) embodied account of accessibility, which connects legal understandings of access with lived bodily experience and everyday practice. This relational understanding moves beyond adaptation to a pre-existing norm. Adaptation may be necessary and valuable, particularly where materials, spaces, communication, or tasks are inaccessible. Yet adaptation remains limited when the dominant form of practice itself is not questioned. Providing more time for a product-oriented task, for example, may support access while leaving intact the assumption that a recognisable product is the decisive outcome. Inclusive art education therefore asks not only how an individual can enter an established activity, but also how the activity's

criteria, temporal order, materials, and forms of recognition might themselves be reorganised.

Inclusion is relational because participation arises through relations among persons, materials, spaces, institutional expectations, pedagogical decisions, and available forms of support. It is institutional because these relations are shaped by curricula, assessment practices, lesson schedules, staffing, architecture, resources, and professional norms. It is political because the power to define meaningful participation is unevenly distributed. The ideal of the independent art learner can itself operate as an ableist fiction when interdependence, assistance, and shared decision-making are treated as lesser forms of learning (Penketh, 2017). Teachers, institutions, researchers, and observers often possess greater authority than participants to name what is happening, determine when intervention is required, and decide which actions count as progress.

The concepts of re-embodiment and graphic prosody must therefore be linked to agency. A process-oriented perspective should not authorise more refined external interpretation while leaving participants without influence over that interpretation. Observation of rhythm, pause, pressure, or repetition cannot substitute for communication, consent, expressed preference, supported decision-making, or attention to refusal. Where conventional speech is unavailable or insufficient, inclusive practice requires other communicative possibilities. These may include gesture, gaze, movement, augmentative and alternative communication, material choice, withdrawal, changes in bodily tension, or the involvement of trusted supporters. None should be treated as transparent; their significance requires situated and revisable interpretation.

A neurodiversity perspective further challenges the assumption that differences in attention, sensory processing, repetition, movement, and temporal organisation are deviations from a single normal developmental trajectory (Singer, 1999; Walker, 2021). In art education, this perspective supports recognition of heterogeneous modes of sensory and temporal engagement. It does not imply that every difference is free from difficulty or that support is unnecessary. Neurodiversity is not a denial of impairment, distress, or unequal access. Its critical contribution lies in separating difference from automatic devaluation and directing attention to the relation between embodied variation and environmental demands.

Inclusion can thus be described as a relational quality of aesthetic situations. It emerges where different bodily-temporal modes of practice are made possible without being assimilated to one dominant form; where access to materials, space, time, communication, and support is actively organised; where participants can influence the conditions of their involvement; and where difference is neither pathologised nor romanticised. In this account, inclusive quality is indicated by access, agency, communicative plurality, negotiability, and the revisability of pedagogical interpretation. Such situations need not be harmonious. Different

rhythms and requirements may compete for space, attention, quiet, assistance, or time. Inclusion therefore involves ongoing negotiation rather than the simple coexistence of differences.

This formulation also prevents the concept of enabling from becoming vague. Enabling is not non-intervention, unrestricted choice, or the absence of pedagogical responsibility. Every arrangement enables some actions and constrains others. The relevant question is whether constraints are transparent, revisable, and responsive to heterogeneous forms of participation, or whether they silently reproduce norms of representation, development, time, cognition, and productivity.

Pedagogical consequences: responsive guidance and interpretive restraint

The following principles are consequences of the theoretical reconstruction rather than a universal catalogue of methods. They translate the institutional account of inclusion into pedagogical judgement. If drawing is understood as bodily-temporal, recursive, and materially situated, responsibility shifts from directing every learner towards a predetermined achievement to organising conditions in which different modes of aesthetic enactment can begin, continue, change, pause, and end.

Responsive guidance rather than normative steering

The distinction is not between guidance and freedom. Art education always structures practice through materials, spaces, prompts, demonstrations, time frames, group arrangements, and forms of attention. The distinction lies between normative steering, which directs activity towards a privileged outcome, and responsive guidance, which remains attentive to the developing relation among person, material, trace, and situation.

Responsive guidance may involve offering a tool, adjusting the position of a surface, reducing sensory load, extending or clarifying time, changing the scale of an activity, enabling communication, or protecting a repeated action from premature interruption. It may also require stopping an activity, modifying a material, or providing direct support where discomfort, anxiety, external pressure, inaccessible materials, exhaustion or overload is present. Openness is not pedagogical passivity; it is the disciplined refusal to identify difference with failure before the conditions of the activity have been examined.

Pedagogical time as availability

A prosodic perspective does not abolish schedules, but it changes how pedagogical time is understood. Time becomes not only a limit, but a form of availability. Learners may require

time to approach a material, establish bodily orientation, repeat an action, recover from interruption, or communicate a decision. A pause may belong to the activity rather than stand outside it. Repetition may sustain contact with the task rather than prevent progress.

This does not mean that all activities must continue indefinitely. Shared educational settings require limits, transitions, and negotiation. The inclusive task is to distinguish necessary organisation from unnecessary synchronisation. Where possible, temporal structures may provide different entry points, variable durations, opportunities to return to unfinished work, parallel rhythms, and alternatives to completing a common product within a single session.

Material accessibility as aesthetic condition

Materials are not neutral carriers of intention. Format, weight, friction, resistance, texture, smell, sound, visibility, and the behaviour of the trace shape what movements become possible and how they are perceived. A tool may amplify a small movement, demand excessive grip, produce unwanted sound, or make pressure highly visible. A surface may stabilise action, create sensory discomfort, or invite particular forms of repetition.

Material accessibility should therefore be understood aesthetically as well as functionally. The question is not only whether a person can physically use a material, but what rhythms, intensities, scales, and modes of contact it permits. Inclusive arrangements may involve alternatives in tool size, resistance, surface orientation, reach, contrast, tactile feedback, or digital and analogue media. These alternatives should expand possibilities without predetermining a specific symbolic result.

Observation without diagnostic capture

Observation is never neutral. It may reproduce deficit logics when it records only recognisable representation, task compliance, verbal explanation, or product completion. Process-oriented observation attends instead to where movement begins, changes, repeats, densifies, pauses, resumes, or responds to material events.

Description should precede interpretation. Observers may record changes in pressure, pause length, spatial return, or pace after a tool change, but should not immediately infer anxiety, pleasure, fixation, intention, or developmental level. Graphic prosody supports such description without granting privileged access to subjective meaning. Because disabled participants are often subjected to professional and diagnostic readings of their bodies, interpretation must remain constrained by the participant's agency, communication, history, and situational conditions; where meaning is uncertain, that uncertainty should be preserved.

Repetition and pause without romanticisation

A critique of deficit interpretation must not reverse the value hierarchy. Repetition, slowness, interruption, and pause may support orientation, pleasure, continuity, sensory regulation, or reorientation, but they may also reflect discomfort, anxiety, external pressure, inaccessible materials, exhaustion, overload, withdrawal, or lack of alternatives. Their meaning cannot be determined from appearance alone. Responsive guidance therefore protects non-normative temporal organisation from automatic correction while remaining ready to provide relief, change, or support. The central questions are how the temporal organisation functions in the situation and whether the person can influence what happens next.

Participation, refusal, and negotiation

Participation should not be demanded in one visible form. Observation, intermittent action, parallel activity, delayed response, and supported making may all belong to an inclusive aesthetic situation. Refusal is not identical with participation, but the right to decline is indispensable to participation that is not coercive. Refusal may also act within the situation by altering its terms and prompting a change of material, task, support, proximity, or timing.

At the same time, non-participation should not be romanticised or left uninterrogated where it results from inaccessible materials, inadequate support, exclusion by peers, or institutional neglect. Pedagogical responsibility includes examining whether withdrawal is chosen, imposed, or produced by the arrangement. Inclusion requires opportunities not only to take part, but also to negotiate the terms of participation.

Limitations and research agenda

The framework developed here has clear limitations. First, re-embodiment as sensory-material reorganisation is a theoretical construct. This article does not provide direct empirical evidence for its operation in drawing, and its empirical adequacy in inclusive art-educational settings remains to be established. The concept should therefore guide inquiry rather than function as an established explanatory mechanism.

Second, graphic prosody is proposed as a heuristic and descriptive concept. Its analytical dimensions require methodological development and empirical examination. Research would need to distinguish carefully between observable temporal-dynamic organisation and interpretations of intention, affect, or meaning. Process documentation through video, movement analysis, material traces, interactional records, and participant communication may be relevant, but no single method can provide transparent access to lived experience.

Third, the six deficit logics are theoretical ideal types rather than empirically generated categories. Their adequacy must be tested in concrete fields of inclusive art education,

including different age groups, institutional contexts, disability experiences, cultural settings, and pedagogical traditions. Additional logics may need to be identified, while some of the proposed categories may overlap more strongly than the present differentiation suggests.

Fourth, drawing is an exemplary rather than universal medium. The concepts of prosody, recursion, and sensory-material reorganisation may be relevant to other artistic practices, but their meanings will change with medium-specific relations among body, material, space, temporality, technology, and social interaction. Cross-media research should therefore avoid treating drawing as a general template for the arts.

Fifth, any observational framework risks reproducing the power asymmetry it seeks to criticise. Future research must include participants' perspectives and examine how consent, supported communication, refusal, and interpretive authority are organised. Research on inclusive art education should not only document individual drawing processes, but also analyse institutional time, assessment, access to materials and spaces, staffing, curriculum, and the distribution of decision-making power.

Sixth, the article draws primarily on scholarship from European and North American contexts. Since understandings of art, education, disability, communication, and participation vary culturally and historically, the framework should not be assumed to apply unchanged in other settings. Its relevance and limitations require context-specific examination.

These limitations define a research agenda. Empirical studies can investigate how drawing processes unfold through rhythm, repetition, material resistance, pause, and recursive feedback; how participants describe or otherwise communicate their own experience; how pedagogical interventions alter temporal and material organisation; and how institutional norms shape what becomes visible as participation. The purpose of such research would not be to validate a new normal form of drawing, but to examine whether the proposed concepts support more precise and less reductive accounts of aesthetic practice.

Conclusion

Inclusive art education cannot be secured by inclusive intention alone. It depends on the concepts through which aesthetic practice is perceived and evaluated. Where recognisable representation, decodable expression, linear development, common pacing, verbal explanation, and visible productivity function as unmarked standards, difference is readily transformed into deficit.

This article has proposed an alternative theoretical architecture. Graphic prosody provides a descriptive vocabulary for the temporal-dynamic organisation of drawing; recursion identifies the feedback structure through which emerging traces modify subsequent action; re-embodiment offers a cautious processual model of how established embodied relations

may recur and change through sensory-material reorganisation; and the six deficit logics identify institutional criteria through which these processes may be misrecognised.

The framework does not displace representation, expression, development, language, or products with a new privileged norm. It changes the order of judgement. Description of the activity and its conditions precedes evaluation against an assumed endpoint; interpretation remains revisable; and the participant's communication, agency, and right to refuse constrain the authority of external observation.

Inclusion consequently appears as a relational and institutional quality of aesthetic situations. It requires access to materials, spaces, communication, time, and support; recognition of heterogeneous bodily-temporal modes of practice; opportunities for influence and negotiation; and interpretive restraint where meaning remains uncertain. Difference is neither a deficiency to be compensated nor an inherently emancipatory resource. Its educational significance depends on whether the situation allows it to act, change, and be recognised without predetermined devaluation.

The decisive question is therefore not whether a learner's aesthetic practice is sufficiently representational, progressive, efficient, verbal, or productive. It is whether the aesthetic situation — its materials, timing, communication, support, and institutional criteria — allows different forms of embodied and temporal participation to emerge, be sustained, be negotiated, and matter.

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Art, Heritage and Education as Vectors of Cultural Inclusion: Postcolonial Perspectives from Angola

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Abstract

Despite growing international recognition of cultural rights and inclusive education, cultural inclusion in many postcolonial societies continues to be framed primarily in terms of access to cultural institutions and educational opportunities. This chapter argues that meaningful inclusion requires a broader perspective that recognises communities as active producers, interpreters and transmitters of cultural knowledge. It examines how art education can position living heritage as a resource for cultural participation, epistemic justice and inclusive cultural development in postcolonial Angola. Drawing on decolonial approaches to art education, critical heritage studies and theories of cultural citizenship, the chapter develops an integrated theoretical framework combining Bhabha's (1994) concept of the Third Space with Benjamin's (1968) understanding of art as cultural mediation and Bürger's (1984) conception of the avant-garde as social practice. It introduces two complementary conceptual contributions: Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality, which explains the coexistence and interaction of colonial, postcolonial and Indigenous temporalities, epistemologies and cultural imaginaries in contemporary Angola; and the Third Avant-Garde, which conceptualises how communities transform these layered cultural conditions through artistic, educational and participatory practices. Building upon Veiga's (2019) reinterpretation of the avant-garde, the chapter understands the Third Avant-Garde not primarily as an artistic movement, but as a socially and pedagogically situated practice through which communities reinterpret living heritage, generate knowledge and renegotiate cultural authority. The discussion draws on Angolan case studies involving traditional festivals, rituals, music, dance, craftsmanship and community-based educational initiatives. Rather than treating heritage as an object of preservation, the analysis demonstrates how

participatory art education enables communities to reinterpret cultural traditions, strengthen cultural agency and generate knowledge through collaborative learning. Living heritage is understood not simply as something transmitted across generations, but as a dynamic process continually negotiated, reinterpreted and re-created through artistic and educational practices. These experiences demonstrate how heritage can function simultaneously as a pedagogical resource, a field of cultural participation and a catalyst for social inclusion. The chapter concludes that art education contributes most effectively to inclusive societies when it moves beyond the transmission of artistic knowledge and becomes a space where heritage, community participation and cultural creativity converge. Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality identifies the historical and epistemic conditions within which these processes unfold, while the Third Avant-Garde conceptualises the artistic and pedagogical practices through which communities transform them. Together, these concepts reposition communities from being represented primarily as bearers of heritage to becoming active agents in its transformation and in the production of contemporary cultural knowledge.

Keywords

Art Education; Cultural Inclusion; Living Heritage; Third Avant-Garde; Epistemic Justice; Postcolonial Angola.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, cultural inclusion has become a central concern in international debates on cultural policy, education and sustainable development. International frameworks, particularly the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), have reinforced the understanding of culture as a fundamental dimension of citizenship, democratic participation and human development. Contemporary scholarship, however, increasingly argues that cultural inclusion cannot be understood simply as access to cultural institutions or educational opportunities. Rather, it concerns the capacity of individuals and communities to participate actively in the production, interpretation and transmission of cultural knowledge. The central challenge is therefore no longer simply who has access to culture, but whose knowledge is recognised, whose heritage is legitimised, and who possesses the authority to shape cultural meanings (Fraser, 2008; Sen, 1999; Smith, 2006).

These questions acquire particular significance in postcolonial societies, where educational systems and cultural institutions continue to negotiate historical asymmetries inherited from colonial rule. In many African countries, colonial education privileged European artistic

traditions and epistemologies while marginalising Indigenous knowledge, oral cultures and community-based artistic practices. Although political independence transformed institutional structures, many symbolic hierarchies continue to shape the ways in which cultural heritage is represented, transmitted and legitimised through formal education. Consequently, the challenge facing contemporary Art Education extends beyond widening participation in existing cultural systems towards creating conditions in which diverse knowledge traditions can encounter, negotiate and contribute on more equal epistemic terms to the construction of cultural meaning.

The Angolan context provides a particularly significant setting in which to examine these issues. Since independence in 1975, Angola has made substantial progress in recognising culture as a public good through constitutional guarantees, heritage legislation and educational reforms. Nevertheless, important challenges remain. Cultural infrastructures and institutional resources continue to be unevenly distributed across the country, while many community-based knowledge systems remain underrepresented within formal educational curricula. Traditional festivals, oral traditions, ritual practices, music, dance and craftsmanship continue to function as living repositories of collective memory and cultural identity, yet their educational potential remains insufficiently explored. These circumstances make Angola an especially relevant context for investigating how Art Education can move beyond access-based approaches towards more participatory, culturally responsive and epistemically inclusive forms of educational practice.

Against this background, the chapter addresses the following research question:

> How can Art Education move beyond access-based models of cultural inclusion by transforming living heritage into a mechanism for cultural participation and epistemic justice in postcolonial Angola?

To address this question, the chapter brings together perspectives from Art Education, Heritage Studies, cultural policy and decolonial theory. Rather than treating these fields as separate theoretical traditions, it develops an integrated analytical framework through which living heritage is understood simultaneously as cultural memory, pedagogical knowledge and a resource for democratic participation. Particular attention is given to Bhabha's (1994) concept of the Third Space, UNESCO's (2003) understanding of intangible cultural heritage as a living process continuously recreated by communities, Critical Heritage Studies (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013), and decolonial pedagogies inspired by Freire (1970), Mignolo (2011) and Moura (2010). Together, these perspectives illuminate how educational environments become spaces where multiple epistemologies encounter one another through artistic practice, dialogue and community participation.

Although these bodies of scholarship have substantially advanced understanding of cultural participation, heritage and educational inclusion, they provide less conceptual clarity on how

living heritage may operate simultaneously as a pedagogical resource, a field of cultural negotiation and a source of contemporary artistic innovation within postcolonial educational contexts. Existing approaches tend either to privilege cultural preservation or to analyse artistic innovation separately from community-based educational processes. Consequently, they do not fully explain how educational practices can transform living heritage into new forms of creativity, cultural participation and epistemic agency without severing its relationship with community memory and inherited knowledge. This conceptual gap provides the rationale for introducing the notions of Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality and the Third Avant-Garde as complementary frameworks capable of explaining how heritage, education and community participation interact in the production of artistic innovation and epistemic transformation.

In response to this conceptual gap, the chapter advances two complementary conceptual contributions. The first, Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality, explains how multiple historical temporalities, epistemologies and cultural imaginaries coexist and interact within contemporary Angola. Rather than conceiving colonial, postcolonial and Indigenous histories as successive stages, the concept demonstrates how these historical formations remain simultaneously active, overlapping within the present and shaping educational, artistic and cultural practices in ways that cannot be adequately understood through a linear historical model. The second contribution, the Third Avant-Garde, provides the analytical framework through which these historical and epistemic interactions are interpreted. Drawing upon Benjamin's (1968) conception of art as cultural mediation, Bürger's (1984) interpretation of the avant-garde as social practice and Veiga's (2019) reinterpretation of the avant-garde in relation to tradition, the chapter argues that artistic innovation in postcolonial contexts emerges not necessarily through rupture with the past, but through processes of critical re-signification, recombination and creative reinterpretation of living heritage within collaborative educational and community-based practices. Together, these concepts provide a framework for understanding how Art Education can contribute to the redistribution of cultural and epistemic authority by transforming living heritage into a source of creativity, participation and social innovation.

Rather than serving merely as illustrations of theoretical arguments, the Angolan case studies constitute the empirical core of the chapter. The analysis of the Luvale Traditional Festival, together with educational initiatives centred on music, dance, ritual practices, craftsmanship and participatory heritage projects, demonstrates how living heritage functions as a process of cultural mediation through which participation, creativity and epistemic justice are negotiated in everyday educational contexts. These cases suggest that meaningful cultural inclusion depends less on institutional access alone than upon the capacity of communities to participate actively in the interpretation, transmission and transformation of their own cultural knowledge. In this sense, living heritage is not treated as a static cultural object or

simply as content to be incorporated into the curriculum, but as a dynamic epistemic and pedagogical process through which learners, communities and cultural practitioners produce and negotiate knowledge. When critically and inclusively mobilised, living heritage can become a powerful educational resource for fostering cultural participation and epistemic justice.

The chapter is organised into six sections. Following this introduction, the second section develops the theoretical framework by examining the relationships between cultural inclusion, living heritage, Art Education and epistemic justice. The third outlines the research approach and situates the discussion within the contemporary Angolan context. The fourth analyses selected case studies illustrating heritage-based Art Education in practice. The fifth discusses their theoretical implications while further developing the concepts of Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality and the Third Avant-Garde. The concluding section reflects on the contribution of the chapter to international debates on Art Education, Heritage Studies and decolonial pedagogy, arguing that living heritage should be understood not merely as a cultural resource to be safeguarded but as a dynamic foundation for cultural democracy, educational transformation, epistemic plurality and more inclusive futures.

Finally, this chapter builds upon the author's sustained programme of research on Art Education, intangible cultural heritage, cultural policy and participatory pedagogies in Angola (Gumbe, 2007, 2015, 2023; Gumbe & Gumbe, 2025; Gumbe, 2026). Rather than introducing isolated theoretical constructs, the concepts of Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality and the Third Avant-Garde emerge from this cumulative body of research, which has progressively examined the relationships between living heritage, educational practice, cultural policy and community participation in postcolonial Angola. The chapter therefore presents these concepts not as abstract theoretical propositions detached from empirical experience, but as the conceptual consolidation of a sustained empirical and theoretical research trajectory. Together, they provide an integrated analytical framework for understanding how living heritage becomes a resource for cultural participation, epistemic justice and artistic innovation in postcolonial societies.

Art education, living heritage and cultural inclusion

From cultural inclusion to cultural agency

International debates on cultural inclusion have progressively shifted from concerns with access towards broader questions of participation, recognition and cultural agency. The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) established culture as a fundamental human right closely connected to democratic participation and sustainable development. Yet access to cultural institutions

alone does not guarantee meaningful inclusion. As Fraser (2008) argues, social justice requires both the redistribution of resources and the recognition of cultural difference, while Sen (1999) emphasises people's effective capabilities to participate actively in shaping social and cultural life.

Within this perspective, cultural inclusion becomes inseparable from cultural citizenship (Stevenson, 2003). Participation is therefore understood not simply as attendance at cultural activities but as the capacity to influence the production, interpretation and circulation of cultural knowledge. The central question consequently shifts from *who participates* to *whose knowledge, histories and cultural practices are recognised as legitimate*.

This question acquires particular significance in postcolonial societies, where colonial legacies continue to shape educational institutions and cultural hierarchies. In Angola, many forms of community knowledge remain marginal within formal education despite their continuing importance in everyday cultural life. Cultural inclusion therefore requires educational approaches capable not merely of expanding access but of recognising multiple epistemologies and redistributing cultural authority.

Art education as cultural mediation

Art education provides one of the most significant educational spaces through which this broader understanding of cultural inclusion may be realised. Rather than functioning exclusively as aesthetic instruction, it enables learners to interpret cultural experience, negotiate identity and participate actively in processes of cultural production.

While educational inclusion has traditionally focused on ensuring the participation of learners with disabilities and special educational needs (UNESCO, 1994; Ainscow & Ferreira, 2003; Rodrigues, 2003), postcolonial contexts require expanding this perspective to include questions of cultural representation, epistemic recognition and heritage. Inclusion therefore concerns not only who is present within educational institutions but also whose cultural references become visible within educational processes.

The work of Ainscow and Ferreira (2003) is relevant here as a reference on inclusive education and the removal of barriers to participation; it should not, however, be presented as a study specifically entitled “Art Education as Cultural Mediation”. In this chapter, the expression “Art Education as Cultural Mediation” refers to the broader argument developed by the author: namely, that artistic learning can create dialogical conditions in which community knowledge, heritage and institutional education are brought into critical dialogue.

This broader understanding converges with Moura's (2010) conception of heritage education as an integral component of art education. Critiquing ethnocentric educational models that privilege dominant European cultural narratives, Moura advocates intercultural pedagogies

grounded in critical inquiry, dialogue and the recognition of cultural diversity as a pedagogical resource rather than as supplementary content. Although developed within the Portuguese context, her perspective offers an important framework for Angola, where integrating local heritage into educational practice constitutes a necessary condition for cultural inclusion and epistemic justice.

Freire's (1970) conception of education as a practice of freedom similarly positions learners as active producers of knowledge rather than passive recipients of information. Barbosa's (1998) Triangular Approach reinforces this perspective by integrating artistic production, interpretation and contextualisation within dialogical learning processes, while hooks (1994) argue that democratic pedagogies emerge through dialogue, lived experience and the recognition of historically excluded voices.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that art education should be understood less as the transmission of artistic techniques than as a process of cultural mediation through which different knowledge systems encounter one another, negotiate meaning and generate new forms of cultural participation.

Living heritage and epistemic justice

This mediating role becomes particularly evident when Art Education engages with living heritage. The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) defines intangible cultural heritage as practices, knowledge, skills and cultural expressions continuously recreated by communities in response to their histories, environments and changing social realities. Heritage is therefore not a static inheritance but an ongoing process of cultural production.

Critical Heritage Studies further challenge preservation-centred understandings of heritage by demonstrating that heritage is socially constructed through processes of selection, negotiation and attribution of value (Smith, 2006). Heritage consequently raises fundamental questions concerning whose knowledge becomes publicly recognised and whose cultural practices acquire institutional legitimacy.

Within Angola, living heritage encompasses oral traditions, ritual practices, music, dance, craftsmanship and community-based learning systems that continue to sustain collective identities and intergenerational knowledge despite their historical marginalisation within formal education. This situation reflects what Fricker (2007) conceptualises as epistemic injustice, whereby particular communities are systematically excluded from the processes through which knowledge is recognised and validated.

Integrating living heritage into Art Education therefore represents more than a strategy for safeguarding cultural traditions. When approached through critical, participatory and

inclusive pedagogies, living heritage can become an educational process through which community knowledge acquires pedagogical legitimacy, enabling schools to function as spaces where multiple epistemologies coexist, are critically examined and mutually enrich one another. This perspective also builds upon the author's previous investigations into heritage transmission through educational practice (Gumbe, 2007, 2015), which demonstrated that ritual knowledge and community learning constitute significant educational resources rather than merely cultural expressions to be documented.

At the same time, the educational and inclusive potential of living heritage should not be understood as automatic or universal. As Critical Heritage Studies have consistently demonstrated, heritage is a social and political construction shaped by processes of selection, representation and power (Smith, 2006). Consequently, heritage practices may also reproduce gender inequalities, generational hierarchies, ethnic exclusions or unequal distributions of cultural authority. Decisions concerning whose traditions are recognised, who represents the community and who benefits from heritage valorisation are never politically neutral.

This is particularly significant in educational contexts, where decisions about what is selected, taught and represented as heritage can either challenge or reproduce existing hierarchies of knowledge and authority. The inclusive potential of living heritage therefore depends less upon heritage itself than upon the pedagogical approaches through which it is critically interpreted, collectively negotiated and participatively reconfigured within educational contexts.

Third Space and the Third Avant-Garde

The educational encounter between institutional knowledge and community heritage may be understood through Bhabha's (1994) concept of the Third Space. Rather than viewing tradition and modernity as opposing categories, Bhabha conceptualises cultural identities as emerging through ongoing processes of negotiation within hybrid cultural spaces.

Within Angolan Art Education, these encounters occur whenever local artistic practices, oral traditions and contemporary educational experiences interact. Schools therefore become spaces where living heritage is neither simply preserved nor replaced but continually reinterpreted through artistic practice and collaborative learning.

This interpretation converges with decolonial scholarship, which argues that epistemic plurality should challenge rather than simply replace universal models of knowledge (Mignolo, 2011; Escobar, 2018). Rather than rejecting academic knowledge, decolonial pedagogies advocate dialogue between different epistemological traditions capable of producing more inclusive forms of learning and cultural participation.

These perspectives also invite a reconsideration of artistic innovation. Benjamin (1968), particularly through his analysis of technological reproducibility and the changing social function of art, provides a way to examine how artistic meaning and reception are mediated by historical conditions. Bürger (1984) interprets the historical avant-garde as an attempt to reconnect artistic practice with social life. Veiga (2019), in turn, uses the formulation "Third Avant-Garde" in a study of contemporary art from Southeast Asia and its relation to tradition, showing how innovation may emerge through the creative reworking of inherited cultural forms. Kester's (2004) account of dialogical aesthetics further supports an understanding of artistic practice as collaborative meaning-making and knowledge production.

Taken together, these perspectives provide important foundations for understanding the relationship between heritage, education and artistic innovation, but they do not fully explain how living heritage may become a generative source of contemporary artistic practice within postcolonial educational contexts. Existing approaches tend either to emphasise heritage preservation and cultural continuity or to examine artistic innovation separately from community-based educational processes. The concept of the Third Avant-Garde is introduced to address this conceptual gap by bringing these dimensions together within a framework centred on participation, reinterpretation and epistemic plurality.

The conceptual proposal developed in this chapter builds upon these theoretical contributions while extending the author's previous research on heritage education, intangible cultural heritage and cultural policy in Angola (Gumbe, 2007, 2015, 2023, 2026; Gumbe, 2025). Collectively, these studies have progressively examined heritage transmission through ritual practices, the educational significance of the Luvale Traditional Festival, and the relationship between cultural governance, artistic creativity and community participation.

Building upon this cumulative research trajectory, the chapter proposes the concept of the Third Avant-Garde as an analytical framework for understanding artistic and educational practices through which living heritage can become a source of contemporary cultural innovation. Rather than opposing tradition and innovation, the Third Avant-Garde conceptualises creativity as emerging through the dynamic interaction between heritage, education and community participation, potentially redistributing cultural and epistemic authority while generating new forms of artistic and pedagogical practice. This framework provides the analytical lens through which the Angolan case studies discussed later in the chapter are interpreted.

The terminology requires a clarification of scope. The expression "Third Avant-Garde" is not claimed here as an entirely unprecedented phrase: Veiga (2019) has already employed it in a different geographical and art-historical context. The contribution advanced in this chapter lies in its reconfiguration for the Angolan and postcolonial field, where the concept is used to

analyse the intersection of Art Education, living heritage, community participation and the production of epistemic authority. The emphasis therefore shifts from identifying an artistic tendency to explaining a socially situated and pedagogically mediated process of creative reinterpretation.

From this perspective, the educational value of living heritage lies not in heritage itself, but in the pedagogical practices through which it is interpreted, negotiated and critically mobilised. Heritage does not automatically produce inclusion; rather, its potential to contribute to cultural inclusion depends upon how it is selected, interpreted and mobilised within educational and community contexts. It is these practices, not heritage alone, that create the conditions for cultural inclusion, epistemic justice and democratic participation.

Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality: memory, heritage and shared historical futures

Understanding how heritage generates contemporary artistic innovation also requires attention to the temporal dimensions through which postcolonial societies construct cultural meaning. Colonial histories did not disappear with political independence; instead, they continue to shape institutional structures, cultural memories and systems of knowledge production. Contemporary Angola therefore inhabits multiple historical temporalities in which colonial legacies, postcolonial transformations and future aspirations coexist.

To conceptualise this condition, the chapter introduces the notion of Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality. The concept describes the coexistence of interconnected historical temporalities across societies linked through the Atlantic colonial experience. Rather than interpreting postcoloniality as a linear transition from colonial domination to national independence, it emphasises the simultaneous presence of different historical rhythms, memories and projects of cultural reconstruction.

The adjective “Atlantic” is used relationally rather than as a claim that all Atlantic societies share an identical historical experience. It points to the connected histories, forced movements, colonial institutions, cultural exchanges and diasporic formations through which Angola has been linked to other Atlantic spaces, while keeping the Angolan experience as the empirical point of departure. “Post-imperial” signals that formal political independence does not bring the end of imperial formations in memory, institutions or cultural hierarchies; “co-temporality” describes their continued interaction with Indigenous and contemporary cultural projects in the present. The concept is therefore proposed as an interpretive framework to be tested and refined through further comparative research, not as a universal description of every postcolonial society.

This perspective draws upon Hall's (1990) understanding of cultural identity as a continuous process of becoming, Mbembe's (2001) analysis of the persistence of coloniality within the

postcolony, and Nora's (1989) reflections on the relationship between collective memory and identity. Within the Atlantic world, Angola occupies a distinctive position where African, European and diasporic histories intersect, generating complex negotiations between inherited memories, contemporary artistic practices and future cultural imaginaries (Gumbe, 2026).

Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality therefore provides the broader historical condition within which the Third Avant-Garde emerges. While the former explains the coexistence of multiple epistemologies and historical experiences, the latter explains how artistic innovation develops through educational encounters that creatively reinterpret living heritage. Together, these complementary concepts establish the theoretical framework that informs the empirical analysis presented in the following sections and support the chapter's broader argument that cultural inclusion depends upon recognising communities as active producers of knowledge, heritage and cultural futures.

Research approach and the Angolan experience

Rather than examining cultural inclusion through quantitative indicators of institutional provision or rates of participation, this chapter adopts a qualitative, interpretative and practice-based approach centred on the relationship between Art Education, living heritage and community participation. Consistent with the research question—How can Art Education transform living heritage into a mechanism of cultural inclusion and epistemic justice in postcolonial Angola? The analysis focuses not on measuring educational outcomes but on understanding how artistic and educational practices generate processes of cultural mediation, participation and epistemic recognition.

The discussion is informed by decolonial approaches to education, Critical Heritage Studies and participatory methodologies, all of which understand knowledge as socially situated, culturally negotiated and collectively produced rather than as a fixed body of information transmitted through formal institutions (Freire, 1970; Smith, 2006; Mignolo, 2011). From this perspective, living heritage is approached not simply as an object of preservation but as a pedagogical resource through which communities actively produce, reinterpret and transmit cultural knowledge.

Rather than evaluating educational policies through statistical indicators, the chapter investigates the educational processes through which heritage becomes integrated into artistic practice and learning environments. The emphasis therefore lies on understanding how these processes redistribute cultural authority, strengthen community agency and create opportunities for participation that extend beyond institutional access.

The empirical discussion draws upon a series of interconnected case studies developed in Angola over nearly two decades of research, professional practice and sustained collaboration with educational institutions, cultural organisations and local communities (Gumbe, 2007, 2015, 2023; Gumbe, 2025; Gumbe, 2026). These include projects involving ritual practices, traditional festivals, participatory cultural mapping, heritage education and community-based artistic initiatives. Although differing in geographical location and cultural specificity, the selected cases share a common characteristic: they demonstrate how communities become active producers, interpreters and transmitters of cultural knowledge through artistic and educational practice.

Rather than treating these experiences as isolated examples, the chapter analyses them comparatively to identify recurring patterns of cultural mediation. Attention is given to the relationships established between schools, artists, heritage bearers, traditional authorities and local communities, examining how these collaborative processes challenge conventional distinctions between formal and informal education, artistic production and cultural transmission.

Case selection follows three criteria: (1) the presence of identifiable artistic or heritage practices transmitted through community participation; (2) an explicit educational dimension, whether within formal schooling or community-based learning; and (3) the possibility of examining how knowledge, authority and cultural meaning are negotiated between generations and institutions. The chapter draws on the author's previously documented research and professional practice, including the studies and publications cited above, as well as the photographic records reproduced in this chapter. These materials are interpreted comparatively through a thematic reading focused on participation, modes of transmission, knowledge recognition and the relationship between continuity and creative re-signification. The cases are purposive and illustrative rather than statistically representative of all Angolan communities; accordingly, the chapter makes an analytical argument and does not claim to measure national prevalence or causal educational outcomes. The author's long-term involvement in Art Education and heritage work in Angola provides situated knowledge, while also requiring reflexive attention to the limits of professional proximity and to the need not to treat any single practitioner as the sole representative of a community.

The Angolan context provides a particularly significant setting for this analysis because it embodies the coexistence of multiple historical, cultural and epistemic trajectories. Like many postcolonial societies, Angola continues to negotiate the enduring legacies of colonial institutions alongside nation-building processes, African knowledge systems and contemporary global cultural exchanges. This coexistence reflects what this chapter conceptualises as Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality: the simultaneous presence of

overlapping historical temporalities through which colonial inheritances, postcolonial transformations and Indigenous epistemologies continue to interact within educational and cultural practice.

Although important progress has been achieved through constitutional recognition of cultural rights, heritage legislation and educational reform, significant challenges remain regarding regional inequalities, institutional centralisation and the effective participation of local communities in cultural governance (Constitution of the Republic of Angola, 2010; Cultural Heritage Law No. 14/05; Basic Law of the Education and Teaching System, Law No. 32/20; Ministry of Education of Angola, 2023). Living heritage continues to play a central role in community life through music, dance, oral traditions, ritual practices, craftsmanship and other forms of artistic expression that sustain collective memory and intergenerational learning. Yet this knowledge systems remain only partially integrated within formal educational structures.

Rather than approaching this situation primarily as a question of heritage preservation, the chapter interprets it as a question of educational transformation and epistemic justice. The central issue is therefore not simply how heritage can be safeguarded, but how educational practice can create the conditions through which communities participate as legitimate producers of cultural knowledge and artistic innovation.

Accordingly, the analysis combines empirical observation with conceptual interpretation. Bhabha's (1994) concept of the Third Space provides the framework for understanding educational encounters between institutional and community knowledge, while the concepts of Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality and the Third Avant-Garde, developed throughout this chapter, provide complementary analytical lenses through which the selected case studies are interpreted. Together, these concepts enable the chapter to move beyond descriptive accounts of heritage practice towards a broader explanation of how Art Education contributes to cultural inclusion, epistemic justice and the emergence of new cultural futures in postcolonial Angola.

Art education as cultural mediation: case studies from Angola

The preceding discussion argued that meaningful cultural inclusion depends not simply upon expanding access to cultural institutions but upon recognising communities as legitimate producers of cultural knowledge. This section examines how that process becomes visible in practice through four interconnected case studies drawn from Angola. Rather than functioning as illustrations of the theoretical discussion, these cases constitute the empirical core of the chapter. Collectively, they demonstrate how living heritage operates as an educational resource through which artistic practice, community participation and cultural transmission generate processes of epistemic recognition and cultural agency.

Although situated in different cultural contexts, the selected cases reveal common educational dynamics. They show how learning emerges through participation in artistic practice; how communities become active producers and interpreters of knowledge; and how living heritage provides the basis for contemporary forms of artistic innovation. Together, they illustrate the broader argument developed throughout this chapter: that Art Education contributes to cultural inclusion when it transforms heritage into a shared process of cultural mediation rather than an object of institutional preservation.

Living heritage as embodied learning: the Kyanda Ritual and the Luvale Traditional Festival

Among Angola's diverse cultural expressions, ritual practices and traditional festivals provide particularly significant examples of living heritage as an educational process. The Kyanda ritual tradition (Gumbe, 2003, 2007, 2015) and the Luvale Traditional Festival (Gumbe, 2023) demonstrate that cultural knowledge is transmitted not primarily through formal instruction but through participation in collective artistic practices.

From the perspective developed in this chapter, these practices represent forms of embodied learning. Knowledge is acquired through movement, sound, visual symbolism, material culture and social interaction rather than through verbal explanation alone. Learning therefore occurs through participation itself, as younger generations gradually acquire artistic competences, cultural memory and social responsibility by engaging with experienced practitioners, elders and community leaders.

The Kyanda ritual illustrates how artistic knowledge is inseparable from collective memory and community values. Ritual performances integrate dance, music, symbolic objects, spatial organisation and performative sequences into coherent systems of cultural communication. These artistic languages transmit ethical principles, historical narratives and shared understandings that cannot be separated from the social life of the community. Rather than preserving fixed traditions, ritual practice continuously recreates cultural knowledge through collective participation.

This perspective reinforces the argument developed earlier regarding the relationship between living heritage and epistemic justice. The educational significance of ritual lies not only in preserving cultural traditions but also in recognising community knowledge as a legitimate form of knowledge production. Ritual specialists, elders and participants therefore function simultaneously as artists, educators and custodians of collective memory, challenging conventional distinctions between formal education and community learning.



Fig.1 Ritual performance as a form of embodied cultural learning.
Women dancing during the *Offering to Kyàndà* ceremony.
Photograph by Jorge Gumbe (2003).

Comparable educational dynamics emerge within the Luvale Traditional Festival (Gumbe, 2023). The festival brings together traditional authorities, artists, craftspeople, musicians, dancers, elders and young people in a collaborative environment where artistic creation and cultural transmission become inseparable. Significantly, learning extends well beyond the public performances themselves. Throughout the preparation of the festival, costumes are produced collectively, musical instruments are constructed, performances are rehearsed and oral histories are shared across generations. The educational process therefore unfolds through sustained collaboration rather than isolated moments of instruction.



Fig. 2 Luvale Traditional Festival: collective performance and cultural transmission.
Traditional Festival integrating folk songs, dances, musical instruments, and craft displays from the Luvale community of Cazombo, Alto Zambeze.
Photograph by Jorge Gumbe (2023).

Participation becomes the central pedagogical principle. Children and young people acquire artistic skills and cultural understanding through direct engagement with performers, artisans and heritage bearers. Dance, music, storytelling, mask-making and craftsmanship operate not as separate artistic disciplines but as interconnected forms of learning through which cultural identity is continually negotiated, recreated and transmitted.



Fig. 3 Kyanda ritual: embodied cultural knowledge, symbolic objects and living heritage in Angola. Photograph by Jorge Gumbe (2003).

Viewed through the framework of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), both the Kyanda ritual tradition and the Luvale Traditional Festival demonstrate that heritage exists through its continuous recreation by communities. They are not fixed remnants of the past but dynamic cultural processes through which artistic practices, social values and collective identities are constantly renewed.

These examples suggest that living heritage can function as a powerful resource for Art Education when educational processes encourage inclusive participation, critical reflection and dialogue among different knowledge holders. By recognising ritual practices and festivals as spaces of learning, education extends beyond institutional boundaries and acknowledges multiple forms of knowledge production. Under these conditions, living heritage has the potential to contribute to cultural inclusion by positioning communities not only as bearers of heritage but also as active producers of knowledge, creativity and cultural futures.

At the same time, this potential should not be understood as automatic or uncontested. Ritual and festival practices may also embody internal hierarchies and unequal relations of power, including differences related to gender, generation, social status or authority over cultural knowledge. Their educational mobilisation therefore requires critical reflection on who participates, whose knowledge is recognised and who has the authority to represent the community. In this sense, the inclusive potential of living heritage depends not simply on its incorporation into educational practice, but on the creation of participatory and reflective

conditions through which existing hierarchies can be questioned and different voices can be heard.

Consequently, the educational value of ritual and festival practices extends beyond heritage safeguarding. They demonstrate that Art Education can function as a process of cultural mediation through which communities become recognised not only as custodians of heritage but also as active producers of knowledge, artistic innovation and cultural futures.

Artistic practices and living heritage

Beyond ritual performances and collective festivals, artistic practices constitute another important dimension through which living heritage is transmitted, transformed and continually recreated in Angola. Sculpture, basketry, weaving, ceramics and the making of traditional musical instruments embody complex systems of cultural knowledge in which technical expertise, aesthetic values, environmental understanding and collective memory are inseparable. Rather than existing as isolated artistic traditions, these practices demonstrate how creativity emerges through sustained relationships between people, materials and communities.



Fig. 4 Traditional basketry and pottery from Quimbele. Photograph by Maria Belmira (2024).

From the perspective of Art Education, such practices reveal that artistic learning extends far beyond formal educational institutions. Knowledge is acquired through observation, apprenticeship, participation and repeated engagement with materials, enabling younger generations to develop not only technical competences but also an understanding of the cultural meanings embedded within artistic production. Learning therefore occurs through practice itself, where making becomes simultaneously a process of artistic creation, cultural transmission and identity formation.

Wood sculpture, basketry, weaving and ceramics illustrate different expressions of this shared educational dynamic. Whether carving symbolic forms, weaving textiles, constructing baskets or modelling clay, practitioners combine manual skill with inherited cultural

knowledge, environmental awareness and aesthetic judgement. In each case, artistic objects function not simply as artefacts but as material expressions of collective memory, social values and local histories. Similarly, the production of traditional musical instruments demonstrates that artistic creation cannot be separated from the cultural contexts in which objects are performed, interpreted and transmitted.

These examples challenge curriculum models that confine artistic learning to classroom-based instruction or technical skill development. Instead, they reveal communities themselves as educational environments in which artists, craftspeople and heritage bearers simultaneously assume the roles of creators, educators and custodians of cultural knowledge. Artistic practice therefore becomes a form of cultural mediation through which technical knowledge, creativity and collective identity are continually negotiated across generations.

Viewed through the conceptual framework developed in this chapter, these practices further illustrate the educational significance of the Third Space, where inherited knowledge encounters contemporary artistic experience, generating new forms of cultural expression without severing connections with tradition. They likewise exemplify the logic of the Third Avant-Garde, in which innovation emerges through the creative reinterpretation of living heritage rather than through its displacement. Artistic production thus becomes a process of epistemic recognition, enabling communities not only to preserve cultural memory but also to participate actively in shaping contemporary cultural futures.

Rather than representing traditions passively inherited from the past, artistic practices demonstrate that living heritage is continually recreated through education, participation and creative experimentation. They therefore reinforce the chapter's central argument that cultural inclusion is achieved not simply by expanding access to artistic production, but by recognising community-based artistic knowledge as a legitimate source of creativity, learning and cultural innovation.

Community-based art education

Many educational experiences in Angola increasingly demonstrate that schools cannot function independently from the communities in which they are situated. Heritage-based educational initiatives show that meaningful learning can emerge through collaboration among teachers, artists, craftspeople, traditional authorities, cultural practitioners and local communities. Rather than treating communities as external contributors to school activities, these initiatives position them as active partners in educational processes and legitimate producers of cultural knowledge.

Within this perspective, communities are not merely sources of cultural content to be incorporated into the curriculum. Their practices, experiences and interpretations constitute pedagogical resources that expand the possibilities of teaching and learning. This challenges

conventional distinctions between formal and informal education by recognising community-based expertise as an essential dimension of educational practice and a potential basis for cultural inclusion.

This understanding resonates with Freire's (1970) conception of education as a dialogical process in which knowledge is constructed through interaction, experience and critical reflection rather than transmitted unidirectional from teacher to learner. Likewise, hooks (1994) argues that engaged pedagogy emerges when education values lived experience and incorporates voices historically excluded from institutional knowledge. Within Art Education, these perspectives support pedagogical approaches that recognise cultural diversity not as supplementary content but as a constitutive dimension of learning itself.

In the Angolan context, community-based art education assumes multiple forms. Local artists contribute creative expertise; traditional practitioners transmit technical, symbolic and environmental knowledge; elders preserve oral histories and collective memory; while teachers facilitate dialogue between community experience and formal educational objectives. Together, these actors create collaborative learning environments in which artistic knowledge circulates across generations, institutions and cultural contexts.



Fig. 5 Community-based art education: collaborative learning between schools, artists and heritage bearers. Photograph by Maria Belmira (2024).

Students participating in these initiatives engage in artistic workshops, storytelling, music and dance, craft production and heritage documentation. Through these experiences, they acquire not only artistic competences but also cultural awareness, critical reflection and a stronger sense of belonging. Learning consequently becomes a situated process in which knowledge develops through participation, observation and collaborative practice rather than through abstract instruction alone.

The participation of traditional authorities and cultural practitioners is particularly significant because it broadens conventional understandings of who may legitimately be recognised as

an educator. Community knowledge holders possess specialised expertise developed through long-term participation in cultural life. Their involvement demonstrates that education extends beyond classrooms and formal curricula, encompassing wider social, cultural and intergenerational networks of knowledge transmission.

This perspective closely aligns with Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning, according to which knowledge develops through participation in communities of practice. Students therefore learn not simply about cultural traditions but through active involvement in the social environments where those traditions acquire meaning. Artistic learning becomes inseparable from relationships, places, collective memory and cultural participation.

Viewed through the analytical framework developed in this chapter, these collaborative educational practices also exemplify the dynamics of the Third Space (Bhabha, 1994), where institutional and community epistemologies encounter one another through dialogue and artistic practice. Simultaneously, they provide conditions through which the Third Avant-Garde may emerge, insofar as creativity develops not through abandoning tradition but through its continuous reinterpretation within collaborative educational contexts. Community participation thus has the potential to transform living heritage into contemporary artistic practice and new forms of cultural knowledge.

Community-based art education can therefore contribute to cultural inclusion by transforming the relationship between schools and communities. Rather than positioning local knowledge as supplementary to academic knowledge, these approaches create dialogical environments in which different epistemologies coexist, interact and mutually enrich one another. Schools become spaces of cultural mediation where heritage, creativity and contemporary educational practice converge.

These experiences suggest that living heritage constitutes not only a resource for safeguarding cultural traditions but also a potential foundation for educational transformation. By recognising communities as legitimate producers of knowledge, Art Education can strengthen cultural agency, expand epistemic recognition and create conditions for more democratic forms of cultural participation. In doing so, it helps address the central research question of this chapter by demonstrating how heritage-based educational practice can, when critically and participatorily mobilised, transform living heritage into a potential mechanism for cultural inclusion and epistemic justice in postcolonial Angola.

At the same time, recognising heritage as an educational resource requires acknowledging that heritage practices may also embody internal tensions and unequal power relations. Living heritage is not intrinsically inclusive. As Critical Heritage Studies have shown (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013), heritage is socially constructed and may reproduce exclusions based on gender, generation, ethnicity or social status, while privileging voices as authoritative

representatives of community identity. Educational approaches therefore need to engage critically with these dynamics, creating participatory and reflective learning environments in which heritage becomes a space for dialogue, critical inquiry and democratic negotiation rather than a means of reproducing existing inequalities. The inclusive potential of living heritage thus depends not on heritage itself, but on the pedagogical conditions through which it is interpreted, negotiated and shared.

From living heritage to the Third Avant-Garde

Taken together, two case studies demonstrate that living heritage functions not as a static inheritance to be preserved unchanged, but as a dynamic process of creativity, learning and cultural negotiation. Rather than documenting isolated cultural practices, they reveal recurring educational dynamics through which communities reinterpret inherited knowledge, negotiate cultural identities and generate new forms of artistic expression. Across these diverse contexts, living heritage emerges simultaneously as cultural memory, pedagogical practice and a resource for cultural innovation.

The Kyanda ritual tradition and the Luvale Traditional Festival illustrate how embodied participation enables artistic knowledge, collective memory and intergenerational learning to be continuously recreated. Likewise, artistic practices such as weaving, sculpture, basketry, ceramics and the making of traditional musical instruments demonstrate that creativity develops through situated processes of making, observation and collaboration. Community-based art education further confirms that innovation arises when schools, artists, heritage bearers and local communities engage in sustained processes of dialogue and shared knowledge production.

Taken together, these experiences challenge linear conceptions of artistic modernity in which innovation is commonly associated with rupture from tradition. Instead, they suggest that creativity develops through continuity, reinterpretation and critical engagement with inherited cultural resources. Living heritage therefore becomes not a constraint upon artistic development but a generative resource through which communities continuously create new meanings, practices and cultural futures.

These empirical findings also illuminate the broader historical condition described in this chapter as Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality. The educational and artistic practices observed in Angola demonstrate that colonial legacies, Indigenous knowledge systems and contemporary cultural imaginaries coexist within the same social spaces rather than succeeding one another in a linear historical sequence. Heritage practices therefore become sites where multiple temporalities interact, allowing communities to negotiate the past while simultaneously imagining alternative cultural futures.

It is within this historical and educational context that the concept of the Third Avant-Garde emerges. Rather than constituting a new artistic movement, the Third Avant-Garde is proposed as an analytical framework for understanding forms of artistic innovation grounded in participation, epistemic plurality and cultural continuity. Drawing upon the interaction between living heritage, community participation and educational practice, it explains how creativity can emerge through the reinterpretation of inherited knowledge rather than through its rejection. In contrast to historical avant-garde movements that frequently associated innovation with rupture from tradition, the Third Avant-Garde understands innovation as a collaborative process through which heritage becomes a source of contemporary artistic creation, social participation and knowledge production.

This conceptual proposal builds upon the author's sustained programme of research on art education, intangible cultural heritage and cultural policy in Angola (Gumbe, 2007, 2015, 2023; Gumbe & Gumbe, 2025; Gumbe, 2026). The empirical experiences analysed throughout this section demonstrate the continuity of that research trajectory while providing the evidence from which both Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality and the Third Avant-Garde are developed as complementary analytical concepts.

The following discussion builds upon these findings by examining their broader theoretical implications for Art Education, Heritage Studies and decolonial pedagogy. It argues that the significance of the Third Avant-Garde lies not simply in offering a new conceptual category, but in providing a framework for understanding how living heritage can become a foundation for cultural inclusion, epistemic justice and more democratic cultural futures in postcolonial societies.

Concluding discussion: from Third Space to the Third Avant-Garde and Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality

The empirical evidence presented throughout this chapter demonstrates that art education contributes to cultural inclusion in ways that extend far beyond improving access to artistic activities or heritage institutions. Rather than functioning solely as a mechanism for cultural participation, art education emerges as a process through which communities reinterpret living heritage, negotiate cultural meanings and participate actively in knowledge production. Cultural inclusion should therefore be understood less as institutional access than as the expansion of cultural agency and epistemic justice.

This interpretation is illuminated by Bhabha's (1994) concept of the Third Space. Across the Angolan experiences analysed, schools, festivals, community workshops and participatory heritage initiatives function as hybrid educational environments where institutional and community knowledge meet through dialogue rather than hierarchy. Living heritage

consequently appears not as an immutable legacy inherited from the past but as a dynamic pedagogical process through which cultural meanings are continually recreated.

These educational encounters also reinforce decolonial perspectives that understand epistemic plurality as a condition for more democratic forms of knowledge production (Mignolo, 2011; Escobar, 2018). The significance of integrating living heritage into art education therefore lies not only in safeguarding cultural traditions but also in recognising historically marginalised knowledge systems as legitimate contributors to contemporary educational and cultural life. Heritage thus becomes simultaneously a pedagogical resource, a site of cultural negotiation and a means of redistributing cultural authority.

The empirical findings further challenge conventional understandings of artistic innovation based on a rupture with tradition. Whereas the historical avant-garde frequently associated creativity with aesthetic discontinuity (Bürger, 1984), the Angolan experiences examined here suggest that innovation often develops through the critical reinterpretation of inherited cultural practices. Rituals, oral traditions, music, craftsmanship and community artistic practices become sources of contemporary creativity precisely because they remain open to reinterpretation within changing educational and social contexts.

This interpretation extends Benjamin's (1968) conception of art as cultural mediation while broadening Veiga's (2019) reinterpretation of the avant-garde beyond the field of contemporary art. Creativity emerges not from abandoning cultural inheritance but from activating it through collaborative educational processes that connect memory, participation and artistic experimentation.

It is this educational dynamic that the chapter conceptualises as the Third Avant-Garde. Rather than designating a new artistic movement, the concept functions as an analytical framework for interpreting artistic and educational practices through which living heritage becomes a source of contemporary cultural innovation. The Third Avant-Garde explains how creativity emerges through the interaction between community participation, heritage transmission and inclusive pedagogies, transforming inherited cultural knowledge into new artistic languages, educational practices and forms of cultural agency.

The relationship between the Third Space and the Third Avant-Garde is therefore complementary. Whereas the Third Space explains the educational conditions under which different epistemologies encounter one another, the Third Avant-Garde explains the creative processes through which these encounters generate artistic innovation, educational transformation and the redistribution of cultural and epistemic authority. Together, the two concepts move the discussion beyond binary oppositions such as tradition and modernity, heritage and innovation, or formal and community education.

The Angolan experience also points to a broader historical condition within which these educational processes unfold. The practices examined throughout this chapter emerge in contexts where colonial legacies, African cosmologies, post-independence nation-building and contemporary global cultural exchanges coexist simultaneously rather than sequentially. Educational and artistic innovation therefore develops through the continuous negotiation of multiple historical, cultural and epistemological temporalities.

To conceptualise this condition, the chapter proposes Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality. Rather than interpreting postcolonial societies as progressing linearly from a colonial past towards a completed modernity, this concept highlights the coexistence of inherited histories, unfinished colonial legacies and emerging cultural futures. It provides the broader historical horizon within which the Third Space and the Third Avant-Garde become intelligible, demonstrating that artistic innovation and educational transformation are shaped by the interaction of multiple temporalities rather than by historical succession alone.

Taken together, the three concepts constitute an integrated analytical framework. The Third Space explains the educational arena in which different knowledge systems meet; the Third Avant-Garde explains how these encounters generate new artistic and pedagogical practices; and Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality situates these processes within the wider historical condition of postcolonial societies shaped by overlapping memories, identities and cultural futures. Collectively, they provide a coherent theoretical model for understanding how living heritage becomes a source of cultural innovation, epistemic plurality and democratic participation.

Conclusions

This chapter has argued that the contribution of Art Education to cultural inclusion in postcolonial societies cannot be adequately understood through access-based approaches alone. While expanding educational opportunities and cultural infrastructures remains an important public objective, the Angolan experience demonstrates that meaningful inclusion depends fundamentally upon recognising communities as active producers, interpreters and transmitters of cultural knowledge. Art Education therefore acquires significance not simply because it provides opportunities for artistic learning, but because it creates conditions through which diverse knowledge systems can participate on more equal terms in the production of cultural meaning.

By bringing together Art Education, Heritage Studies, decolonial pedagogy and cultural policy, the chapter demonstrates that living heritage is more than something to be safeguarded. When critically and inclusively mobilised, it can function as a dynamic educational resource through which artistic creativity, cultural memory and community participation reinforce one another. The Angolan case studies suggest that heritage-based

educational practices can strengthen cultural agency, foster epistemic justice and support more democratic forms of cultural participation grounded in local knowledge and collaborative learning.

The chapter's principal contribution is conceptual. It advances an integrated analytical framework that brings together the Third Space, the Third Avant-Garde and Atlantic Post-Imperial Co-Temporality to explain how living heritage can become a source of artistic innovation and educational transformation in postcolonial contexts. These concepts should not be understood as isolated theoretical propositions but as the synthesis of a sustained programme of research on Art Education, intangible cultural heritage and cultural policy in Angola. Together, they offer an analytical framework that may also be useful for investigating comparable dynamics in other postcolonial societies.

The chapter also contributes to international debates by reframing cultural inclusion as participation in the creation, interpretation and transmission of cultural knowledge rather than merely participation in existing cultural institutions. This shift from access to cultural agency has important implications for educational practice, suggesting that curricula, teacher education and cultural policies should engage more systematically with living heritage, community knowledge and collaborative forms of learning. When critically designed and participatory in orientation, such an approach strengthens the relationship between schools and communities while recognising cultural diversity as a driver of educational innovation rather than as supplementary curricular content.

At the same time, the chapter recognises that living heritage is not inherently or automatically inclusive. Heritage practices may embody internal tensions and reproduce inequalities related to gender, generation, ethnicity, class or social status, as well as existing relations of cultural authority and representation. Its potential contribution to inclusion therefore depends on how heritage is selected, interpreted and mobilised within educational contexts, and on whether pedagogical processes create opportunities for critical reflection, dialogue and meaningful participation among different knowledge holders.

Although grounded in the Angolan experience, the framework developed here has wider relevance for African and other postcolonial contexts in which educational systems continue to negotiate colonial legacies alongside contemporary aspirations for cultural democracy and epistemic plurality. Future research may extend this framework through comparative studies examining how different heritage traditions, educational systems and artistic practices can contribute to more inclusive, culturally responsive and socially transformative forms of knowledge production.

Ultimately, this chapter argues that the future of Art Education lies not in choosing between tradition and modernity, or between heritage and innovation, but in creating educational spaces where these dimensions interact productively. In this sense, living heritage is not

simply a legacy to be preserved; when critically mobilized through participatory approaches, it can become a creative resource through which communities imagine, negotiate and build more inclusive cultural futures.

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Artistic Education and Social Inclusion: Constraints and Opportunities

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Abstract

Artistic education incorporates theatre, music, visual arts, and dance, areas that can be used in different cultural actions to support the exchange of knowledge and social and community practices. The opportunities engendered to conceive interdisciplinary projects that draw on the arts to connect people from different places, allow us to create spaces that promote unity and the sharing of singular and distinctive ways of life. This greatly enriches us when we study them with a view to use them in collective projects that use different cultures and religious confessions. It also encourages the dialogue about culture, language and traditions of the countries involved. The work on social inclusion, reducing inequalities, combating prejudice and valuing human diversity, promotes interconnection between different peoples, races and ethnicities. In this sense, we thought of a series of actions based on the principles underpinning the four areas of artistic education to develop knowledge and establish learning goals based on the acceptance of the social and cultural differences of the individuals participating in these actions. The results prove the interest in this type of work and the close collaboration of everyone for collective success.

Keywords

Artistic Education; Social Inclusion; Integration; Interdisciplinarity.

Introduction

> Full citizenship can only be achieved through art, the only tool capable of changing one's worldview. (Boal, 1991, cited in Barbosa, 2011, p. 87)

In the transition to the 21st century, a shift is observed in the forms and methodologies of classical interventions on a social level. Nowadays, they are focused on the individual and practical work that can be established to put in practice their rules. Considering the environment in which they are embedded, they are developed to enable individuals to take responsibility for the changes they bring about in the world and in society. At the same time, the social and human development policies that have been implemented highlight the need to see ourselves as equals. They put us with the same rights and duties and without any form of exclusion or social vulnerability. In this sense, we can list, as a result of these inquiries at a global level, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document that outlines a set of rights, and also duties, that every human being must respect (United Nations General Assembly, 1948).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a charter of principles in which the rights and freedoms of the individual are established and defended. These are independent of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, religion, or any other condition of the human being. This Declaration was adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly in its Resolution 217A (III), 10th December 1948 and published in the Official Gazette, in Portugal, Series I-A, No. 57/78, 9th March 1978 by notice of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In this Declaration is listed the right: to life, liberty and security of person (Article 3); to be recognised everywhere as a person before the law (Article 6); to a nationality (Article 15); to property (Article 17); to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (Article 19). We also find listed the right: to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment (Article 23); to a standard of living adequate for the health, well-being, food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services of himself and of his family, such as the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control (Article 25); to education (Article 26); to participate freely in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits (Article 27); to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realised (Article 28). This Declaration also outlines duties (Article 30). This Declaration states the need to have respect for others in their characteristics, ways of being, existing, and thinking. This inevitably leads us to the concept of inclusion. At first glance, inclusion means creating accessible environments where all people have equal rights, duties and opportunities, overcoming historical, cultural and social barriers. Wherever or under whatever circumstances or age,

inclusion must be a reality at all times. At school, at work, or in the community, inclusion must necessarily promote empathy, reducing inequalities and strengthening social cohesion.

Inclusion, and social inclusion in particular, encompasses a set of actions and practices that guarantee free and equal access to all elements that ensure human survival at the physical, emotional, social and family levels. In this sense, humanity has been developing a set of policies that provide all people — regardless of social origin, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, economic condition or disability — with equal rights and opportunities in accessing goods and services, active participation in society, and recognition of their identities and potential, in order to build a richer society in terms of its cultural and humanitarian knowledge, as reflected in Articles 1 and 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948).

Social inclusion, aiming to mitigate inequalities and combat prejudice through the appreciation of diversity in order to promote interconnection between different peoples, races and ethnicities, also strives for the integration of diverse knowledge so that everyone feels part of the society at a given time or place in their lives. Inclusive proposals increase the conditions for participation by the most vulnerable people – based on age, sex, disability, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic condition or other factors – creating an ever-increasing number of opportunities to access resources, mitigating inequalities. Inclusion means ensuring that all people access social, educational and professional life with the same duties, rights and opportunities.

The European Union, of which Portugal has been a part since 1986, has promoted social inclusion through specific initiatives and legislation (European Commission, n.d.). The objective is to integrate vulnerable groups – people with disabilities, the elderly, children and migrants – into community life, guaranteeing access to work, education and basic services. The aim is also to promote gender equality (5th SDG) and reduce inequalities (10th SDG), two of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, as well as to guarantee access to decent work (8th SDG), the eradication of poverty (1st SDG) and hunger (2nd SDG), promoting health and well-being (3rd SDG) and quality education (4th SDG), essential elements for human development and survival (BCSD Portugal, 2022).

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, the objective of the 5th SDG, is a task that aims to end all forms of discrimination against all women regardless of their age and origin. Sexual discrimination exists everywhere in the world. This affects not only the least developed countries but also those where this issue should no longer manifest itself. Eliminating all forms of violence against all women in the public and private spheres, including trafficking, sexual exploitation and other types of violence and abuse against women, must be guaranteed. However, discrimination and social exclusion based on sex, still affect a large part of the world's population today. The fifth Sustainable Development Goal aims to guarantee

the full and effective participation of women in active life and work, as well as equal opportunities in the various fields of human activity. The Parity Law instituted in our country, as well as in many others abroad, shows us that equality of opportunity is still not achieved (Law No. 62/2017, Official Gazette No. 147/2017, Series I of 2017-08-01; Law No. 26/2019, Official Gazette No. 62/2019, Series I of 2019-03-28). The establishment of a Citizenship and Gender Equality Commission also reflects this disparity and the persistence of a form of discrimination that tends to perpetuate itself (Comissão para a Cidadania e a Igualdade de Género, n.d.). Reducing inequalities within a country, and between countries, can, both directly and indirectly, promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, regardless of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic condition. Consequently, it assures equal opportunities by reducing inequalities, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices, and ensuring greater equality of opportunity for all (SDG 10).

Inclusion is therefore one of the pillars upon which the promotion of human dignity is based, as reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also in the set of Sustainable Development Goals and the targets set for the year 2030 (BCSD Portugal, 2022). An inclusive society promotes and sustains a sense of belonging, and practices the respect for the origins and lifestyles of its members, seeking to ensure that everyone has access to goods and services with equal opportunities. In this sense, inclusion is a central concept in the goals and targets established by the United Nations. It can be the theme for diverse projects namely those present in this chapter.

While all these elements demonstrate an effort to promote social inclusion and the end of vulnerability and social exclusion once and for all, numerous studies and reports indicate that many people still suffer from some form of vulnerability or social exclusion today. Despite the progress made, many suffer from limited access to opportunities, whether in the economic, political or social fields. It is therefore urgent to promote inclusive education, implementing actions that shape the minds and hearts of young people, encouraging acceptance, inclusion, and integration. In this context, art is a powerful tool for promoting inclusion, as it allows for expression, dialogue and a sense of belonging to a group or place. Theatre, music, visual arts, and dance, and their practice, are elements that can offer a range of opportunities to launch debates on such pertinent and sensitive topics as inclusion, particularly, social inclusion.

Theatre of the Oppressed

To illustrate the relevance of artistic education in the development of artistic activities, we can give as examples, those that came out from the Theatre of the Oppressed approach. These examples, due to its characteristics, enable the development of a work in which discrimination, violence, and all forms of social vulnerability or exclusion, and other forms of oppression can be addressed with the participation of the community where the groups are

located. The Theatre of the Oppressed, as a process, designates a set of dramatic activities that make reference to the work developed by Augusto Boal at the Arena Theatre in São Paulo, Brazil, since 1956 (Boal, 2009). Its practice wants to create conditions so that those involved in the process can, through the exploration of theatrical language, develop their capacity for action and intervention in the space in which they are inserted and inhabit. The Theatre of the Oppressed encompasses various forms of communication. Among them, we can mention image theatre, invisible theatre, newspaper theatre, forum theatre, as well as the rainbow of desire, among others. Based on its characteristics, we perceive that it can be one of the most interesting manners to develop an inclusive activity. It also permits the discussion of relevant topics in this context, since all of them advocate a political, social, educational, and transformative attitude that includes the notions of dialogue, critique, autonomy and participation.

The Theatre of the Oppressed, practiced by numerous groups among the world, as well as in Portugal, aims to recreate reality and identify priority themes to be debated and resolved by each group or community. The collaborative process is the pillar of the action. The resulting work reflects the intentions of all participants. It is not an action proposed from above, but an action built from the bottom up. The Theatre of the Oppressed is a democratic process where everything is decided collectively, fostering group spirit, autonomy, responsibility, and stimulating motivation. It is the result of a group action, not an individual action. Its goal is the identification, discussion and resolution of a problem. It proves that it is relevant and current at a social level, because it entails reflection, intention and action. It is also a process of social intervention, promoting satisfaction and social well-being. According to Neves (2015, p. 7), "The Theatre of the Oppressed has, as its goal, social well-being through the promotion of the strengthening of citizenship and social justice. It also has been used worldwide for about 30 years as a democratic means of transforming society."

In line with the definition proposed by Carmo (2000, p. 61, authors' own translation), the Theatre of the Oppressed can be understood as a form of social intervention:

> (…) a social process in which a given person, group, organization, community or social network – the intervening system – assumes itself as a social resource of another person, group, organization, community or social network – the client system – interacting with it through a system of diversified communications, with the objective of helping it to meet a set of social needs, enhancing stimuli and combating obstacles to the intended change.

In this sense, we outlined a set of social interventions that aimed to promote inclusive moments, as well as the discussion of attitudes and practices in this context, because in the definition of Social Intervention that we cited (Carmo, 2000), we perceive that the Theatre of the Oppressed intervenes, and assumes itself, as a social resource that potentiates stimuli which promote social change. The Theatre of the Oppressed can, therefore, be perceived as

an important response at the level of social intervention within the scope of social policies, aiming to bring about change and the development of well-being at the individual and social level (Neves, 2015).

Free Yourself, Maria

The theatrical piece entitled Free Yourself, Maria, was performed in a school context, with a view to discussing important themes in contemporary society such as violence, discrimination based on age, sex, ethnicity, nationality and religion, in an appeal for reflection by all on human rights and social inclusion. Thus, and considering the use of artistic education in its various fields, namely theatre, music, visual arts, and dance, the students were invited to create a theatrical piece that would result in a theatrical exercise that had its public presentation on January 15th, 2020, at the Municipal Theatre of Guarda. It was a great opportunity to address such important issues. The students' work addresses social and gender-based discrimination, violence in dating relationships, domestic violence, and peer violence. They also write about all types of discrimination that stem from the actions of men in their environment. In this action, they were responsible for the writing of the script, the creation of the scenes, the sound design and the visual elements that formed the set design, to better illustrate their intentions.

The commitment and dedication of everyone involved was fundamental to the result achieved. The musical pieces chosen to underscore the dramatic intensity of the text were essential to stand out the dramatic intensity that the subject demands. Thus, the moments created to illustrate the different types of violence based on gender, age, race, social stratum and condition were fundamental to attaining success. Also, their performance was an excellent moment to show the importance of the scenes fashioned. Therefore, we also praise that the creativity put into the process to achieve success, namely the choice of musical elements that underscored the intensity of the scenes, was of paramount importance to the result obtained. Denouncing the lack of respect for Human Rights and the principles listed in the Sustainable Development Goals, the play had the impact that was initially anticipated. Free Yourself, Maria! gave voice to all the Marias who find themselves oppressed and overshadowed by the power of their oppressors. The play is an applause for all people, men and women, especially those who, often sheltering in silence, cope with the situations they experience and resist and suffer in the face of discrimination.

Arts have a fundamental role in giving voice to the individual oppressed by others and by the society. By creating a fertile environment and integrating everyone with a specific goal, we obtain various elements that contribute to the final result. In this sense, visual arts allowed the creation of the elements of the scenography present in this play. This action involved everyone in the creation of an element with a cultural identity that shows the places of those

who participate in them. It produced a multicultural mosaic that was a part of the whole. The result was an agglomeration of different ways of understanding the chosen theme.

Because we had prevue that it may be a small part of the large puzzle that will be the consolidation of the result, this action was an opportunity to address issues as those that promote adapted art activities to include people with visual, intellectual or motor disabilities. In this sense, and once again, we give voice to the least heard in our society. We can also create an opportunity to discuss pressing issues such as those we allow ourselves to list here, in light of the study of Human Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals in what are the objectives of this work, art and social inclusion.

In the particular case of Music, we know that it can be used as a form of social expression, promoting the strengthening of identity, especially that of young people, helping to integrate people of different ages, cultures and ethnicities. In this sense, the participants were invited to choose the music they considered the most appropriate to reinforce the idea of the text that served as the basis for their creation. Thus, the texts of the musical pieces were the starting point for this choice. The musical genre also had its role and importance. Some of the pieces by more recent authors address, impeccably and with a powerful rhythm of words and text, the themes that we did not want to ignore. Not only the text but also the music was, therefore, an important pillar to reinforce the environments that we wanted to create and that resulted in moments of great emotional intensity.

Finally, and no less importantly, we must mention dance and body movement in carrying out activities that value traditions other than Portuguese ones, namely those of Afro-Brazilian, indigenous, or popular origin, as a form of cultural inclusion. In this sense, dance has proven to be a very useful tool for blurring differences and promoting cultural diversity.

It is worth highlighting that artistic projects are an opportunity to foster self-esteem and empathy in individuals, establishing intercultural dialogue and social participation. They thus contribute to a more just and democratic society. Based on the recommendations made by the United Nations to combat social exclusion, we can emphasise the importance of implementing universal social policies. It is recommended that inclusive institutions be established to change social, cultural, and political norms, as well as the attitudes and behaviours of people in the society in which we live.

Final reflection

We are often confronted with discouragement and despondency face to face with situations and processes that require long periods and a great deal of energy to achieve the necessary change. However, we know that only change will confirm the full implementation of the various Sustainable Development Goals defined in the 2030 Agenda. So, why not change?

Through awareness and education for change, it is possible to change behaviours and actions. When in the hands of many, transformation can impact the state in which society finds itself. If we understand and accept that:

> A single individual cannot, by himself, change discriminatory and oppressive situations and structures, but the more individuals unite and act in concert in an organised way, the greater the possibilities of being able to produce consistent change together (Pinto, 2012, p. 65, authors' own translation).

In the actions carried out and the projects defined, we managed to change the way of being and thinking of some.

Theatre, as a tool for educational, social and cultural intervention, is an effective resource and a space for encounter, sharing and knowledge building. In the way it proceeds, it also proves to be a resource that enhances inclusive social and artistic practices, overcoming difficulties and gradually discarding vulnerabilities and fragilities present in its participants. From this starting point, our wish was to implement a resource that would give participants the opportunity to discuss and reflect on current and divisive issues in our society. Based on a typology of theatre that contradicts

> (...) the values that prevail in this hedonistic society cultivated by homo individualis, disconnected from the collective and from living in community (Lipovetsky, 2010), in defence of a non-formal education, in which theatre can see its particularities applied in the construction of an effective community, where discipline, creativity, imagination, and freedom of expression and communication predominate (Teixeira, 2019, p. 172, authors' own translation),

we promote an inclusive and participatory action.

In addition, and following what Teixeira (2019, p. 172) states,

> A community that has a time when theatre aims not only at artistic objectives, but also at social and educational ones, and that, by using theatrical resources, fosters participation, the exercise of citizenship, cohesion, autonomy, coexistence, and the construction and sharing of knowledge (Teixeira, 2019, p. 172, authors' own translation),

will be a better society and a more consistent world, with the guiding principles of social and human policies at the 21st century. In this sense, we believe that we have achieved, through the Arts, results that lead us to the social inclusion of all its actors, regardless of their origins, social stratum, or religion. In a society that strives to be just and equal in the opportunities and rights it grants to all its citizens, it is our intention to continue working to reduce differences and promote more just and fraternal societies, whether at work, at home, or in social settings.

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"What It Is Like to Be What You Are Not": Cultivating Empathy through Critical Visual Culture Education

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Abstract

This chapter explores how we learn to perceive and relate to forms of life different from our own, examining how art-based pedagogical practices can cultivate empathy through observation and imagination. The discussion emerges from two encounters with non-human beings: one situated in a Visual Arts and Technology class with students in their sixth year of schooling, and another revisited through personal texts written at different moments in life, reflecting on an early childhood experience. Together, these encounters reveal how responses to alterity are shaped by emotional, cultural, and educational conditions, raising questions about how empathy emerges, how it may be constrained when difference is perceived as threatening or disconnected from oneself, and how arts education can create conditions for empathetic relations. Bringing together perspectives on empathy, imagination, childhood, and more-than-human relations, the chapter considers how relationships with other living beings are learned and how children construct their ways of relating to shared worlds. It also examines drawing from a reference image as one arts-based pedagogical practice through which perception can be transformed by sustained looking, interpretation, and imaginative engagement. By slowing down judgement and enabling other ways of relating to what is unfamiliar, drawing can open possibilities for empathy and recognition of the interdependence that binds human and more-than-human life.

Keywords

Arts Education; Empathy; Event of Learning; More-than-Human Relations; Slow Looking.

Introduction

The ways in which we perceive and relate to forms of life different from our own are shaped by cultural, social, emotional, and educational contexts. Empathy, therefore, cannot be understood as an immediate response to difference, but as a relational and imaginative process through which we may attend to, interpret, and recognise experiences beyond our own. This raises important questions about how such capacities are formed and how education may contribute to creating conditions for their cultivation.

This chapter explores how relationships with difference are constructed and how education may contribute to transforming our relations with the world and its multiple forms of life. It examines empathy not as identification or the elimination of distance between beings, but as the capacity to approach experiences beyond our own while recognising their irreducible singularity.

Within this framework, Critical Visual Culture Education (Hernández, 2007; Freedman & Hernández, 2024) provides a space for inquiry, as artistic practices involve looking, interpreting, and representing in ways that may challenge established forms of perception. Drawing from a reference image creates opportunities for *slow looking* (Tishman, 2017) and raises questions about how perception can become a form of relationship. By bringing together perspectives from childhood studies, philosophy, visual culture, and arts education, this chapter argues that empathy is not produced by contact alone, nor can it be taught as a predetermined value. Rather, it emerges through processes of mediation that transform the conditions of attention through which difference is perceived. In particular, the chapter proposes that drawing from a reference image may constitute a pedagogical practice through which unfamiliar forms of life come into view through sustained observation, interpretation, and imaginative engagement.

The spider that died for being different
Duarte Paiva, Lourinhã, 2026

An unexpected situation occurred during one of the lessons, momentarily altering the pedagogical environment. A spider suddenly appeared in the classroom, triggering a collective reaction of fear and agitation. The students' attention was immediately diverted to this unforeseen presence, momentarily surpassing the attention directed towards the

teacher. Several students shouted, "Kill it! Kill it!", and before I could intervene, the spider was crushed to death under the repeated stamping of several students' feet. Faced with the incident, and having to make an immediate decision without any opportunity for further discussion, I continued with the lesson.

However, after the session had ended, the episode remained on my mind. I sought to understand the intensity of the students' reaction to the spider's presence and, over the course of approximately one week, reflected on the incident, unable to reconcile this collective response with an education that aspires to be reflective, critical, and empathetic. Half an hour before the following lesson, while having breakfast, I decided to bring the issue back into the classroom (see Fig. 1), transforming the episode into a pedagogical opportunity through didactic questioning and drawing from a reference image as intervention strategies.



Fig. 1 Reflection notes on the incident. Original handwritten notes in Portuguese (2026). Source: Duarte Paiva's notes.
Translation: "The Spider That Died for Being Different"; "What Are We Teaching Our Students About Life and the Right to Exist?"

At the beginning of the lesson, I asked the students whether they remembered what had happened and why their immediate reaction had been to destroy that living being. Their answers came quickly:

"— I was scared."
"— It's disgusting."
"— It's ugly."
"— It's different."

Then, I asked whether something being different justified its death. The responses became less immediate and more hesitant, alternating between "yes" and "no", accompanied by explanations and qualifications. The apparent certainty of their initial reaction gradually began to weaken. I continued the discussion by proposing a reversal of perspective: "What if you yourselves were the ones who were different? Would you deserve to die in that case?"

Initially, they answered "no", justifying their response by saying that they were "human". However, as the discussion progressed, new reflections began to emerge: "perhaps being different did not justify elimination"; "perhaps all living beings deserved to live"; "perhaps fear could be mutual, since the spider might fear humans just as much as humans feared the spider".



Fig. 2 Image of the spider projected for the activity, later annotated with students' spontaneous responses during the classroom discussion (2026).
Source: Pixabay (Photo by PublicDomainPictures) and Duarte Paiva's notes.
Translation: "I wouldn't want to be killed"; "They are living beings like us"; "Ugly"; "Fear"; "Disgust"; and "Dark".

This episode reminded me of an opinion article published in *Expresso* in June 2025, in which a teacher reflected on his experience of marking the national assessment tests taken by students in their sixth year of schooling (Costa, 2025). In one of the tasks, students were asked to write a narrative imagining what they would do if they encountered a baby animal. Some of the responses suggested a significant lack of empathy in the ways animal life was represented, expressing forms of violence, contempt, and social discourses reproduced without critical reflection. These examples raised the same concern: "What, after all, are we teaching our students?"

With the aim of re-signifying the event of the previous lesson, I then proposed an exercise involving drawing from a reference image. I projected an image of a spider and asked the

students to observe it carefully and draw it (see Fig. 2). Their initial reactions were marked by rejection and disgust. Many claimed they could not even look at the image. Gradually, however, their attention shifted from emotion to the task itself. They began to focus on the position of the legs, the proportions, the colours, and the details required to represent the spider. Within a few minutes, the spider ceased to be merely an object of fear and became a subject of observation. The initial revulsion gave way to curiosity and an interest in drawing (see Fig. 3). Through the act of observation, the students began to analyse, understand, and represent what they had previously rejected.

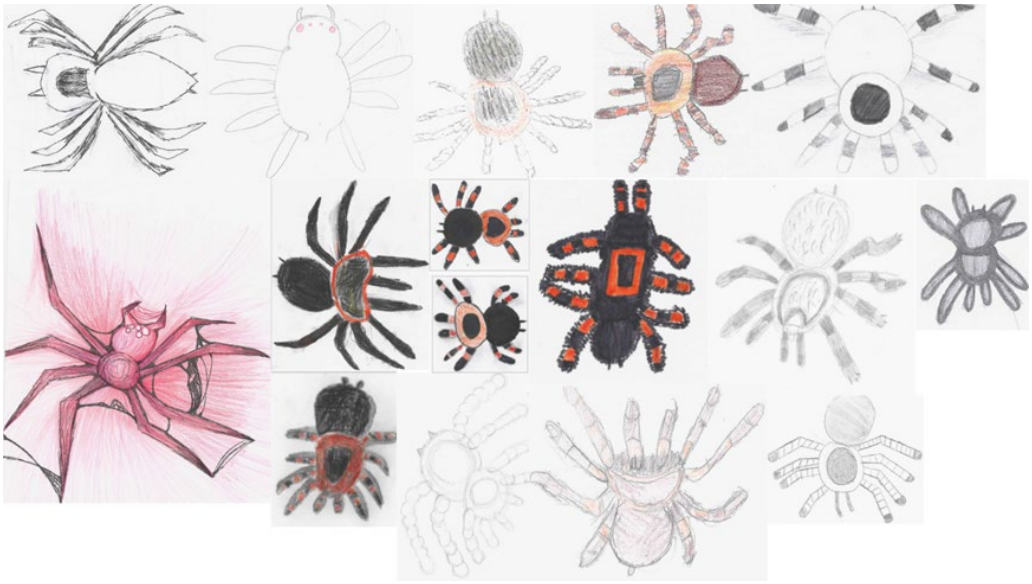

Fig. 3 Drawings produced by the students (2026).
Source: Photograph by Duarte Paiva, Lourinhã, 2026.

At that moment, I realised that drawing from a reference image can be an effective pedagogical strategy for cultivating empathy, as it compels us to look closely at an object, regardless of our initial emotional response. Drawing became a practice of attention and relationship, engaging cognitive, bodily, and affective processes that foster empathy, insofar as it requires observing, understanding, and responding sensitively to others, to the environment, and to human experience. By projecting the image of a spider and asking the students to draw it, it was possible to witness a gradual shift from revulsion to attention. Their initial reaction of fear was progressively replaced by observation of its form, the position of its legs, its proportions, colours, and details. For a moment, the spider ceased to be merely an object of rejection and became a subject of study, attention, and representation. Ultimately, it came to be accepted.

This moment enabled me to understand that drawing from a reference image can be a practice of proximity and empathy. Observing requires time, the suspension of immediate

judgement, and a willingness to acknowledge what stands before us. In this sense, drawing became relational. It became a means of directing the gaze, slowing down reaction, and opening a dialogue before definitive rejection. This dimension resonates with the idea that looking can itself be an empathetic act, as it involves attention, relationship, and openness towards the other, even when that other provokes discomfort.

This classroom experience was particularly significant in my own educational journey, influencing the construction of my professional identity as a teacher and clarifying the educational priorities I wish to pursue: educating for understanding, respect for difference, and critical reflection.

In this context, empathy is understood as the recognition that bodily differences or diverse ways of living do not determine unequal rights to exist. All beings share the condition of mortality and coexistence within the same common world. To educate while accepting the destruction of what is different is to legitimise a logic that, under different circumstances, could ultimately be directed against ourselves.

António Sampaio da Nóvoa, in a conversation with Ana Tudela de Sousa (2022) in which he quotes Bruno Latour, draws on a reinterpretation of *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka to propose that "we are all engendered and mortal bodies who owe our conditions of habitability to other engendered and mortal bodies of every size and shape" (p. 49). This perspective offers a fruitful way of thinking about the common good in education: we all depend on one another, both human and non-human. Teaching this interdependence may be one of the most meaningful educational acts in relation to our shared future.

Rosa Iavelberg, also in a conversation with Ana Tudela de Sousa (2022), argues that contemporary social issues should permeate school curricula whenever learning situations make this possible, since such themes emerge from the political, social, and cultural circumstances of both the present and the past (p. 56). Thus, the episode of the spider ceased to be an isolated incident and became an *event of learning* (Atkinson, 2007, 2011), that is, a moment of rupture that integrates ethical reflection and citizenship education, unsettling habitual *ways of seeing* (Berger, 1972/2018) and opening space for new ways of thinking and relating.

This experience marked a turning point in the way I understand my teaching practice. I realised that teaching often takes place in the unplanned moments of classroom life, where emotions, values, and worldviews emerge beyond the formal curriculum. By deciding to return to the *event* and transform it into a learning experience, I recognised the importance of listening to students, questioning apparent certainties, and creating time for collective reflection.

Such insight reinforced my conviction that schools should be privileged spaces for nurturing empathy, critical awareness, and respect for difference. It is necessary to go beyond the formation of academically competent students and, above all, to educate citizens who are more attentive, sensitive, and humane. At this point, Critical Visual Culture Education (Hernández, 2007; Freedman & Hernández, 2024) becomes particularly significant because it engages directly with perception, representation, difference, and interpretation, creating possibilities for transforming *ways of seeing* through artistic experience.

The bird I learned to see: part I
Ana Tudela de Sousa, Faro, 1994

I do not remember much of my childhood. Only a few scenes, some because I loved doing them and others because they marked me. I remember (and this must be my earliest memory) being in my bedroom, which had two floor-to-ceiling windows opening onto a balcony, sitting on my potty. It was afternoon, and it must have been summer or spring. Suddenly, a little bird flew into the room, chirping, and I became frightened. My father held the bird in his hand, and I remember, as if it were today, the feeling I had. It was a mixture of fear and pity, together with curiosity and affection for the little creature. My father had to let the bird fly because the commotion became overwhelming. As soon as the little bird spread its wings and flew away, I said to my father: "But I liked it!... I wanted the little bird."

I think that was the first time I felt that I had to choose, and that I was confronted with a confusion of feelings. I liked the little bird. I was afraid because it was the first time I had been so close to it. I knew that birds were born to be free. But, because I liked it, I also wanted to keep it close to me, to know it, to lose my fear. Which, in the end, was not really much. It was only the natural fear of the unknown. What made me cry out to my father, "Let it fly!" was, deep down, the distress of seeing the bird itself also frightened by everything that was happening, chirping frantically because it felt trapped.

The bird I learned to see: part II
Ana Tudela de Sousa, Faro, 2017

When I was little, so little that I still used a potty, I was sitting there when a sparrow burst into the room. The little creature flitted about, somewhat lost and disoriented, before my wide, bewildered eyes, at such close quarters as I'd never experienced before. My father, seeing how delighted I was by this event, caught the little sparrow and showed it to me. I was then overcome by a mixture of curiosity and fear. Curiosity was increasingly being overwhelmed by fear… I, who moments earlier had been skipping about with delight and longing to see that fluttering creature even more closely, now shrank back at the prospect of that wish coming

true. When asked, "Do you want me to let it fly?", I replied with conviction and desperation: "Yes!" Only to regret it immediately: "No." I wanted so much to touch the little bird… And throughout my life, the story repeats itself in different contexts, on different scales and with varying intensity.

A few days ago, my youngest son bumped into a little girl on the beach whom he'd played with a month earlier. As they sat there, washing the sand off their feet, she looked at him and he, recognising her straight away, remarked: "That girl is pretty." When she smiled and came closer, he blurted out, embarrassed: "Oh, I'm scared of her." Later, back at home, he had exactly the same reaction when he saw Paula Hering singing *Carinhoso* (2012): "This girl is really pretty… Oh, I'm scared of her." This simple, everyday story got me thinking. It took me back to two quotes from authors quite far apart in time. The more recent is by Pedro Paixão, who ends one of his early books (1996, p. 98) with this dialogue: "And what is love for, tell me? / It's for losing your fear." The second is by Leonardo da Vinci (c. 1492), for whom "great love is born of great knowledge of the [subject] that is loved, and if you do not know it, you can love it little or not at all" (1977, p. 242).

It is certainly an exaggeration to claim that it is love when a four-year-old recognises beauty in another child or in a singer and feels intimidated by it. But might that experience not contain the seed of what will later reach a different stage of maturity? Will one not find here the seed of love, a feeling that may begin with admiration, and the greater the admiration, the greater the fear? In my own childhood story, too, enchantment goes hand in hand with fear. An irrational, unjustified fear. Why is it that we fear so much that which we admire, yet do not understand, in this mixture of desire and dread?

And here lies the link to the second quote: "The more you know, the more you love." Could it be that by letting that unknown bird come closer, by observing it up close, by allowing it to hop onto our shoulders and gently peck at our open hand, we become more willing to love? Could it be that as we get to know (and understand) someone, fear diminishes and love grows?

Empathy as affective imagination

The two encounters examined in this chapter reveal a fundamental tension at the heart of empathy: encountering another being does not necessarily lead to recognition. Responses to difference are shaped by the meanings, emotions, and assumptions through which the world is interpreted. In the classroom episode, the spider's unfamiliarity was immediately perceived as a threat, resulting in rejection and destruction. Empathy did not emerge spontaneously. It required pedagogical mediation, questioning, and visual study based on a reference image that invited students to reconsider their initial response. In the childhood encounter with the bird, however, fear became intertwined with the recognition of another being's vulnerability. This response should not be understood as evidence of an innate disposition towards

empathy, but as emerging from experiences of care that shaped how other beings could be perceived and valued. Together, these encounters suggest that empathy develops through attention, interpretation, and reflection, making it possible to recognise another being as meaningful.

This understanding of empathy is particularly significant within inclusive education, where the challenge is not simply to accommodate difference, but to recognise the other as a subject with their own perspective, experience, and way of inhabiting the world. For Edith Stein, in *On the Problem of Empathy* (1917/1989), recognising another as a distinct subject of experience is fundamental to empathy. This process requires imagination: the capacity to approach realities beyond our own position, while acknowledging that they can never be fully possessed or known.

This ethical dimension is central to Emmanuel Lévinas's philosophy of alterity, developed particularly in *Totality and Infinity* (1961/1969) and further elaborated in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1974/1991). For Lévinas, encountering the *Other* does not depend on complete understanding or assimilation, but on the ethical demand arising from the presence of another subject. The *Other* cannot be reduced to our expectations, categories, or forms of knowledge. Their singularity calls us into a relation of responsibility, attention, and openness. Relating to difference therefore means recognising the ethical significance of a presence that remains irreducibly *Other*, rather than making the unfamiliar identical to ourselves.

Milan Kundera's reflection on compassion in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984) offers a complementary perspective. In Latin-derived languages, compassion is associated with *suffering with*, whereas Czech *soucit*, Polish *współczucie*, German *Mitgefühl*, and Swedish *medkänsla* express the idea of *feeling with*. Kundera, like António Lobo Antunes in *Os pobrezinhos [The Little Poor Ones]* (1993), questions forms of compassion that may unintentionally create asymmetrical relationships between those who help and those positioned as vulnerable. By contrast, *soucit* suggests an affective and imaginative engagement in which another's experience becomes meaningful without being appropriated. Kundera describes this form of compassion as "the maximal capacity of affective imagination" (1984, p. 19), suggesting that empathy involves being affected by another's existence.

This perspective is particularly visible in Tereza's relationship with her dog Karenin, where care emerges not from similarity, language, or social belonging, but from sustained attention to another form of life whose experience remains fundamentally different from our own. Her relation to Karenin suggests that empathy does not depend on fully understanding the other, but on becoming attentive to their needs, vulnerabilities, rhythms, and ways of inhabiting the world. Rather than erasing the distance between human and non-human experience, this relationship takes difference as the starting point for connection.



Fig. 4 Untitled from What It Is Like To Be What You Are Not, Rosemarie Trockel (1993). Offset lithograph and screenprint from a portfolio of eight photogravures and one offset lithograph and screenprint. From the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Source: Photograph by Ana Tudela de Sousa, Barcelona, 2026.

This resonates with Donna Haraway's (2003, 2008) notion of *companion species*, in which human and non-human beings are shaped through relationships of mutual involvement. Similarly, Anna Tsing's *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (2015) challenges the separation between human and non-human life by showing how lives emerge through entangled relations among species and environments. Vinciane Despret's *Living as a Bird* (2021), with its exploration of birds' territories, songs, and

forms of coexistence, invites us to attend to ways of living and relating that cannot be fully understood through human categories.

Taken together, the two encounters explored in this chapter highlight a central dimension of inclusion: learning to remain in relation with difference without transforming it into fear, deficiency, or dependence. Such an approach requires an ethical orientation that does not seek to resolve, domesticate, or overcome difference. Haraway's (2016) notion of *staying with the trouble* offers a way of thinking about this ethical stance: remaining with the difficulties and uncertainties of relating across difference rather than seeking to make them disappear. The *Other* can thus be encountered without being reduced to an object of reaction, protection, or control.

The capacity to imagine *What It Is Like To Be What You Are Not* (Rosemarie Trockel, 1993, see Fig. 4) is integral to empathy. As Martha Craven Nussbaum argues in *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (1995) and *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (2010), imagination is central to ethical life because it enables us to engage with experiences and perspectives beyond our own. Imagination opens worlds by bringing what we know into new configurations, making new possibilities of seeing, relating, and being together. Empathy, in this sense, is a practice of imagining otherwise.

Childhood, nature, and empathy

The relationship between childhood and nature has been shaped by a historically influential educational and cultural imaginary that associates childhood with openness, curiosity, sensory experience, and specific ways of engaging with the world. Within this imaginary, nature is not merely a physical environment but a formative space through which relationships with other forms of life are constructed. Yet this relationship is neither natural nor universal. It has been historically produced through particular conceptions of childhood, education, and human relations with the living world.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile, or On Education* (1762/1979) was instrumental in shaping one such conception, proposing a form of natural education centred on experience, observation, movement, and direct engagement with the world, through which children were understood to develop knowledge through their encounters with their environment. This conception informed later child-centred approaches, including Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1801/1896), Friedrich Fröbel (1826/2012), Maria Montessori (1948/1986), and John Dewey (1938/1997), which foregrounded observation, care, exploration, and participation in children's learning. Although these approaches did not theorise empathy in contemporary terms, they contributed to an educational imaginary in which children's ways of knowing and relating to the world are shaped through experience and engagement.

Tim Ingold (2000, 2011) further challenges the idea of the environment as a passive background, arguing that humans encounter and know the world through involvement, movement, and participation. Children therefore do not simply learn about nature as something external; they learn how to inhabit a shared world. Although other scholars have developed concepts such as *biophilia* (Wilson, 1984) and *connectedness to nature* (Mayer & Frantz, 2004) to emphasise the importance of human relationships with nature, the idea that children possess an inherent connection with nature requires critical examination. Donna Haraway (2008, 2016) and Vinciane Despret (2016) challenge the assumption that relationships between humans and other beings are natural, universal, or predetermined. Instead, they argue that ways of perceiving, knowing, and relating to other forms of life emerge through situated encounters, practices of attention, and specific conditions of relating. From the field of arts education, Cat Martins (2025) similarly questions the *naturalisation of childhood*, emphasising that qualities frequently associated with children, such as creativity, imagination, sensory openness, and closeness to nature, are not timeless characteristics but meanings shaped through historical and cultural processes.

Recognising this construction does not diminish the relevance of children's encounters with nature. It shifts attention from the encounter itself to how such experiences are interpreted and given meaning. Contact with natural environments does not automatically generate empathy or ethical relations. Encounters with other forms of life may evoke fear, rejection, curiosity, fascination, or care, depending on the meanings attributed to them and the contexts in which they occur. Such responses are shaped by families, educational practices, and cultural representations.

From this perspective, nature does not teach empathy. The ethical significance of children's relationships with other beings lies not simply in contact or proximity, but in how encounters become recognition, care, and participation. This is central to inclusion, since recognition of difference, within both human and more-than-human relations, is never given in advance. It is continually shaped through the worlds, relationships, and forms of mediation that make particular *ways of seeing* and relating possible.

Changing relations between childhood and nature

Childhood does not unfold in relation to a single, stable *nature*. The sociology of childhood has challenged the idea of *childhood* as a fixed, homogeneous, or universal category, emphasising instead its historical and cultural construction (Ariès, 1962/1960; James & Prout, 1997). This perspective is equally important for understanding children's relationships with nature, since children grow within particular social, cultural, and material contexts in which different relationships with animals, landscapes, and other forms of life become possible. What counts

as *nature*, and how children are expected to relate to it, reflect broader cultural assumptions about humanity and the living world.

The conditions shaping these relationships have changed significantly in contemporary societies. Urbanisation, institutionalised forms of childhood, and changing patterns of everyday life have transformed children's access to outdoor environments and altered the place of nature within childhood experience (James & Prout, 1997; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997). In many contexts, nature has shifted from being embedded in everyday life to becoming a distinct space associated with recreation, education, or environmental concern. Miles Richardson (2025) models a long-term decline in nature connectedness from 1800 to 2020, relating this trajectory to urbanisation, opportunities and orientations for engaging with nature, and intergenerational transmission. This resonates with Pyle's (1993) concept of the *extinction of experience*, which refers not only to the decline of direct encounters with other forms of life, but also to the weakening of the experiential conditions through which such relationships are formed. Research has therefore moved beyond asking whether children encounter natural environments to examining the meanings and qualities of those experiences. Meaningful relationships with nature are associated with continuity, participation, familiarity, and involvement rather than exposure alone (Chawla, 2015, 2020; Barrable & Booth, 2020). These perspectives challenge the assumption that nature produces automatic emotional or ethical effects. Encounters with human and more-than-human beings may evoke curiosity, fear, fascination, indifference, or recognition, depending on how they are interpreted and the contexts in which they occur. Nature should therefore not be understood as a direct source of empathy, but as a context in which children's ways of perceiving and relating to difference are formed.

This argument is explored in the documentary *The Beginning of Life 2: Outside*, produced by Maria Farinha Filmes (Terra, 2020), which examines how children's experiences of outdoor environments shape their representations of nature. Based on a study of children's drawings, the film explores how different childhood contexts give rise to distinct ways of imagining the living world. Rather than simply indicating different degrees of affinity with nature, these drawings reveal different ways of positioning childhood within it: while children growing up in urban environments often represented nature as separate from themselves, for example through a bird on a tree, those with more continuous experiences of natural environments produced more embodied representations, incorporating elements such as a hand, a leg, or a mother within the landscape.

What matters, therefore, is not contact with natural environments, but the conditions through which particular forms of relationship become imaginable. Some representations position nature as something to be observed from outside, while others suggest participation, belonging, and interdependence. Similarly, inclusive education requires more than the mere

physical presence of difference. It depends on the cultural, educational, and relational mediations through which relationships become meaningful.

How can arts education cultivate empathy?

If empathy cannot be reduced to proximity, arts education cannot be reduced to exposure. The classroom encounter with the spider became pedagogically significant not because students drew a spider, but because an initial response of fear and rejection was transformed into a process of attention, inquiry, and meaning-making. By returning to the *event*, the teacher created what Atkinson (2007, 2011) describes as an *event of learning*: a moment in which habitual *ways of seeing* are interrupted, opening new possibilities for thinking and relating to the world.

Such possibilities do not arise from the artistic activity itself, but from the pedagogical mediation that enables experiences to be revisited, questioned, and re-signified. Photographs, scientific illustrations, artworks, museum encounters, fieldwork, and visual or literary narratives can all become critical spaces for examining how difference is perceived, represented, and valued. Whether the subject is a spider, another animal, a landscape, or a human experience, the educational significance of these practices lies not in the specific forms they take, but in reconfiguring the conditions through which we learn to interpret the living world and respond to difference otherwise.

This understanding of mediation is already present in Almeida Garrett's reflections on education (1829). Rejecting both the mechanical imitation of models and the unmediated observation of nature, Garrett emphasises that "it is necessary to combine art with nature; equally, to help the latter through the former" (p. 231). For him, nature and art are complementary, yet neither nature nor artworks are, in themselves, educational. The tutor's role is to mediate between them, awakening children's attention and desire so that experience becomes meaningful. The flower is only one example: children observe it in nature, realise that it will wither, and then encounter its representation, understanding that drawing can preserve "what is destined to perish" (p. 231) (see Figs. 5-6). Garrett's most striking contemporary insight is that artistic learning emerges through pedagogical mediation, which brings encounters with nature and encounters with artworks into dialogue so that each gives meaning to the other.

Some trends in contemporary education also argue for the cultivation of attention and interpretation. Shari Tishman (2017), Senior Research Associate and former Director of Harvard Project Zero, whose work focuses on thinking, observation, and learning in and through the arts, develops the concept of *slow looking* as a practice of remaining with an image beyond first impressions. Susan Pantaleo (2017), Professor Emerita at the University of Victoria, whose research includes children's engagement with picturebook artwork, connects

the exploration of visual images with *critical thinking*. In her later work, Pantaleo (2020) examines *slow looking* through close observation and *visual meaning-making*, arguing that students need support to engage in this practice in order to develop the disposition to do so. These perspectives help clarify how pedagogical mediation can transform an initial reaction into a more attentive and interpretive engagement with what is seen, as illustrated by the classroom encounter with the spider. Such mediation may open other *ways of seeing* through dialogue or narrative approaches.





Figs. 5 & 6 *Codornizes*, Graça Morais (2018).
Source: Photograph by Ana Tudela de Sousa, Palácio dos Anjos, Algés, 2026.

Just as research on children's relationships with nature has suggested that contact with natural environments does not, by itself, cultivate empathy or ethical relations, engagement

with artworks and other cultural experiences does not automatically produce such transformations. Narratives may foster *affective imagination* (Kundera, 1984, p. 19) and broaden consideration of other perspectives (Mar & Oatley, 2008; Oatley, 2016), but their educational potential depends on the forms of pedagogical mediation through which children encounter, interpret, and discuss them (Chen, Lyu, & Zhu, 2025).

This argument resonates with Michèle Petit's understanding of *cultural transmission*. For Petit (2020), cultural mediators (parents, teachers, writers, artists, scientists, librarians, and others) present the world to children through "tales, songs, stories, picture books, family legends, memories" (p. 20). These mediations make possible encounters with "beings radically different from [themselves]", giving access to what they "felt, imagined, feared" and to the questions through which they sought to make sense of the world, "even if they lived centuries ago, even if they inhabited very different latitudes". Through these encounters with "other universes", children realise that "[they] are not alone in facing the questions" they carry; these questions have also been experienced, imagined, and represented by others across times, places, and cultures (pp. 18-19). Thus, the distance from "the strangeness of what is external to [them]" can be "reabsorbed" (p. 8).

Within the field of critical arts education, Rosa Iavelberg's concept of *cultivated drawing* (1993/2021) invites us to reconsider children's drawing practices beyond the idea of *free drawing* as spontaneous expression detached from culture. For Iavelberg, drawing is a cultural practice shaped by the contexts in which children participate and by the artworks and forms of visual representation with which they engage. Children do not draw from an empty space. They construct their forms of representation through relationships with cultural references. In this sense, the broader and more diverse the visual repertoires children encounter, the wider the possibilities for questioning established *ways of seeing*, considering other perspectives, and cultivating more attentive forms of relation with difference. Expanding these repertoires is therefore not simply a matter of increasing access to images, but of unsettling hegemonic *ways of seeing*, including anthropocentric assumptions that shape how other living beings are perceived and valued, denaturalising what appears self-evident, and opening perception to more inclusive forms of visual and cultural understanding.

In Fernando Hernández's approach to Critical Visual Culture Education, visual representations are not treated as stable objects of interpretation, but as cultural constructions through which *ways of seeing*, interpreting, and relating to the world are organised and contested. Learning emerges through the relationships established between visual representations, lived experience, social contexts, and cultural narratives. As discussed in *Espigadores da Cultura Visual* (Hernández, 2007), this educational approach shifts the emphasis from the transmission of knowledge towards the democratic construction of meaning, where interpretations are negotiated, challenged, and reconfigured through

dialogue. Kerry Freedman and Fernando Hernández (2024) revisit the relationship between culture, curriculum, arts education, and even landscape, considering how visuality participates in the production of knowledge, identities, and possibilities for making sense of experience. Critical Visual Culture Education therefore extends beyond images themselves to the social, cultural, and environmental processes through which meanings are constructed, circulated, and connected to values, identities, and ways of inhabiting the world. In this sense, it is not concerned with eliminating difference or achieving consensus, but with creating conditions in which different perspectives can encounter one another without being reduced to a single authoritative view. This understanding resonates with Rancière's (2004) notion of *dissensus*, Mouffe's (2013) concept of *agonism*, and Haraway's (2016) invitation to *stay with the trouble*: ethical and democratic relations are thus understood not through the resolution of difference, but through the capacity to remain with complexity, uncertainty, and alterity.

This conception of visuality is rooted in John Berger's work. In *Ways of Seeing* (1972), Berger argues that seeing is never a neutral or purely individual act. It is shaped by historical, social, and cultural conditions that influence what becomes visible, significant, and worthy of attention. *Ways of seeing* are therefore historically, socially, and culturally constructed rather than natural, shaping how relationships with others are perceived and imagined. This question becomes particularly significant in *About Looking* (1980). In the essay "Why Look at Animals?", Berger examines how modern societies have transformed relationships between humans and animals by separating them from shared environments and repositioning them within systems of observation and representation. The issue is not simply whether animals are physically present before us, but how they become understood within particular regimes of seeing. An animal may appear as a threat, an object, a resource, or a living being with its own existence. These possibilities are not determined by the animal itself, but by the cultural frameworks through which it becomes visible as a particular kind of presence. From this perspective, the classroom encounter with the spider can be understood not as a reaction to the spider itself, but as a reaction shaped by a particular regime of visibility. The pedagogical significance of the drawing activity did not lie in the act of drawing itself, but in creating conditions through which another *way of seeing* became possible. The spider did not cease to be different; what changed was the way that difference could be perceived, interpreted, and inhabited.

Critically oriented arts education can contribute to cultivating empathy by engaging the perceptual and imaginative processes through which relationships with difference are constructed. It does not teach children how to feel, nor does it guarantee ethical responses. Rather, it creates conditions in which immediate judgements can be questioned, unfamiliar forms of existence can come into view, and other possibilities of relation can be imagined. Within inclusive education, this capacity is fundamental. To educate the gaze is to expand the conditions of relation. By questioning how the world becomes visible and meaningful, Critical

Visual Culture Education may contribute to the formation of subjects capable of recognising difference, imagining forms of coexistence beyond habitual regimes of visibility, and participating more attentively in shared human and more-than-human worlds.

Conclusion: towards other ways of seeing and relating

The encounters explored throughout this chapter reveal a fundamental tension at the heart of empathy: the presence of another being does not necessarily lead to recognition.

Whether in relation to the spider that was killed in a classroom, the bird that entered a family home in childhood, or children's representations of nature, encounters with difference are always mediated by cultural, social, emotional, and educational conditions. Another being may become an object of fear, fascination, curiosity, care, or indifference depending on the meanings through which it is perceived. Empathy, therefore, cannot be understood as an automatic response to proximity, but as a relational and imaginative possibility through which another being becomes available for recognition without ceasing to be *Other*.

The relationship between childhood and nature examined in this chapter challenges the assumption that children possess an innate connection with the natural world or that contact with other forms of life necessarily cultivates empathy. Encounters with nature are not meaningful simply because they occur. Their significance depends on the contexts, narratives, and relationships through which they are experienced and interpreted. Nature may provide opportunities for attention and relational engagement, but it does not teach empathy by itself. The ways children learn to perceive, value, and relate to other living beings are shaped by the worlds they inhabit and by the forms of mediation through which these worlds become meaningful.

This understanding has profound implications for education. Children construct their ways of relating to shared worlds through the experiences, relationships, and cultural contexts in which they participate. Yet these possibilities are not equally available to all children. Public education therefore assumes a fundamental democratic role: it is a space where children can encounter experiences, perspectives, and forms of life beyond those immediately present in their everyday contexts. Its purpose is not only to transmit knowledge, but also to expand possibilities of perception, recognition, and participation.

Within this framework, critically oriented arts education emerges as a significant, although not exclusive, educational context. This chapter does not argue that artistic practices are empathetic by nature, nor that they produce ethical transformation by themselves. Rather, their potential lies in the pedagogical mediations through which encounters can be revisited, interpreted, and reconfigured. Artistic practices can interrupt habitual *ways of seeing* and

create conditions in which unfamiliar forms of life can be encountered through attention, imagination, and recognition.

The classroom episode involving the spider illustrates this possibility. The students did not develop empathy because they learned to like the spider or because the animal became familiar in a way that removed its difference. Through sustained observation and visual study, they were invited to return to an encounter initially shaped by fear and rejection. Drawing became a practice of attention: a way of slowing perception, questioning immediate reactions, and allowing another form of life to become visible beyond the first impulse of avoidance or destruction. The significance of this experience lay not in drawing itself, but in the pedagogical mediation through which the encounter was revisited, interpreted, and opened as an *event of learning*.

From this perspective, inclusion cannot be reduced to the presence or accommodation of difference. It requires a transformation in the conditions through which difference becomes visible and is recognised as a possibility for relation. To educate for inclusion is therefore also to cultivate other *ways of seeing* and relating: ways that allow difference to be encountered without being reduced to threat, deficiency, or distance. This is not only an educational concern, but an ethical and democratic one, since the ways in which beings become visible and recognised shape the possibilities of coexistence within shared worlds.

For Maxine Greene (1995), imagination is inseparable from agency and democratic participation. It enables individuals not only to perceive the world differently, but also to envision how it could be otherwise. The democratic significance of arts education lies in expanding the possibilities for critical judgement, ethical action, and collective transformation. Ultimately, cultivating empathy through arts education does not mean teaching children to overcome difference, but creating conditions in which they can question what appears inevitable, confront dominant meanings and assumptions, and imagine other ways of living together.

In this sense, the humanising role of education acquires renewed significance in a contemporary world marked by acceleration, instrumentalisation, and increasing technological mediation. In *The Great Dictator* (1940), Charlie Chaplin's warning against the dehumanising forces of his time remains profoundly relevant: "Don't give yourselves to these unnatural men, machine men with machine minds and machine hearts! You are not machines! You are not cattle! You are men!" (Chaplin, 1940). His words remind us that education cannot be reduced to the preparation of individuals for efficiency or competition, but must sustain the capacities that make shared life possible: relating, recognising, caring, imagining, and *Reimagining Our Futures Together* (UNESCO, 2021).

Education is therefore not only a process of learning about the world, but also of learning how to inhabit it with others. Human beings become human through relationships with other beings.

Note

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Portuguese sources are by Ana Tudela de Sousa.

Dedication

This chapter is dedicated to my father, who showed me worlds beyond my own, introduced me to the sparrow that entered my childhood home, and taught me the deeper meaning of empathy; and to all the birds I set free or unintentionally lost, whose encounters taught me about care, fragility, and our shared existence. Ana Tudela de Sousa, July 2026.

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In/Accessibilities: Cultural Engagement and Higher Arts Education in a Peripheral Context in Portugal

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Abstract

In the context of inclusion, reflecting on in/accessibilities in cultural engagement and higher education requires examining who effectively has opportunities for contact, participation, and involvement in cultural and artistic practices. This chapter explores how different forms and degrees of engagement with the arts and culture shape the educational experiences of students at the School of Education of the Polytechnic University of Viana do Castelo (UNIPVC-ESE). It focuses particularly on students' engagement with cultural activities in Viana do Castelo and their perceptions of the relevance of these experiences to their academic, artistic, and personal development. The discussion draws on the author's experience as a lecturer in Fine Arts and Cinema and on a quantitative study of cultural participation habits, interests, and perceptions among 93 participants: 87 students from four arts-related programmes and six lecturers. The analysis considers the frequency and forms of cultural participation, geographical and institutional conditions that facilitate or constrain access, and perceptions of the role of higher education in promoting cultural engagement. Findings reveal a discrepancy between students' relatively limited participation in institutionally organised activities and their strong recognition of their educational value. Information, mobility, time, geographical location, and the perceived connection between cultural activities and programmes of study emerge as important factors shaping participation. The chapter argues that higher arts education can play a significant role in reducing cultural inaccessibilities, particularly in peripheral contexts, by developing sustained, participatory, and territorially connected approaches in which students are not only audiences but also creators, mediators, organisers, and active participants in cultural life.

Keywords

Artistic and Cultural Activities; Higher Arts Education; Cultural Participation; Cultural Access; Fine Arts; Cinema.

Introduction

Access to culture and participation in artistic and cultural activities are increasingly recognised as important dimensions of inclusion, citizenship, and education. In higher education, particularly in arts education, access cannot be understood simply as the physical availability of cultural facilities or events. It also depends on the conditions that enable students to encounter, understand, participate in, and contribute to cultural and artistic practices. Information, time, financial resources, mobility, previous experiences, institutional support, and the perceived relevance of activities to students' educational trajectories may all influence participation.

In this chapter, in/accessibility is understood as a multidimensional condition that shapes people's actual possibilities of encountering, participating in, and contributing to artistic and cultural life. Accessibility therefore extends beyond the physical availability of cultural opportunities to include information, mobility, time, territorial location, financial conditions, perceived curricular relevance, and opportunities for meaningful participation. The prefix in- draws attention to the forms of exclusion, limitation, or uneven access that may remain invisible when cultural provision is considered only in terms of availability. From this perspective, in/accessibility refers not to a fixed condition but to a dynamic relationship between cultural opportunities, institutional conditions, and individuals' capacities and motivations to engage.

This chapter examines these questions at the School of Education of the Polytechnic University of Viana do Castelo (UNIPVC-ESE), located in northern Portugal. Viana do Castelo is geographically peripheral in relation to Portugal's principal cultural centres, particularly Porto and Lisbon, while possessing a significant cultural heritage and an active network of cultural organisations. This tension between cultural provision and cultural accessibility provides the context for the present study.

The discussion first briefly situates the study within recent Portuguese initiatives addressing culture and higher education, particularly the National Arts Plan (Plano Nacional das Artes – PNA), Campus Cultural, and the Observatory of Art and Culture in Higher Education. These initiatives reflect a growing recognition of higher education institutions as cultural institutions that connect teaching, research, cultural participation, and society.

The chapter then presents a case study conducted between May and July 2026 at UNIPVC-ESE. Drawing on the author's experience as a lecturer in Fine Arts and Cinema, the study examines the cultural participation of students and lecturers, their perceptions of local cultural provision, barriers to participation, and the educational value they attribute to cultural activities.

The central question is not simply whether students participate in cultural activities, but how, where, and why they participate, what prevents greater engagement, and how they perceive the relationship between cultural participation and their education.

Arts, Culture and Higher Education in Portugal

The National Arts Plan and the institutional framework for culture in Portuguese higher education institutions

Student engagement in cultural activities has increasingly become a concern not only for lecturers but also for higher education institutions and cultural policy-makers in Portugal. One significant development has been the inclusion of higher education within the National Arts Plan (PNA), as part of its Strategic Plan 2024-2029. With a team of 24 people, including inter-regional coordinators, the PNA promotes coordination between cultural and educational institutions, local authorities, and associations. With a view to implementing the constitutional principles of access to culture and with a particular focus on children and young people, the PNA organises its work around three areas: (a) Cultural policies and territorialisation; (b) Thought and mediation; and (c) Education, participation and access. The inclusion of higher education within this framework is particularly relevant because it recognises that cultural participation should not end with compulsory schooling. Higher education institutions are also important environments for developing cultural citizenship, critical thinking, artistic practice, and relationships with local communities.

On 10 March 2026, the author took part in one of the events organised by the PNA, the Campus Cultural workshop, held at Casa Comum in Porto. The workshop brought together lecturers from several higher education institutions in northern Portugal and presented the current Strategic Plan, as well as research addressing the institutional role of culture in higher education.

Following a study carried out in Brazil between 2023 and 2025 (Falcão, 2025), Professor Andréa Falcão, associate researcher at the CRIA Laboratory / PPG-Artes / EBA at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), is currently undertaking research in Portugal. The study is based on a consultation with Portuguese public higher education institutions and aims to map the institutional framework for culture in Portugal. This research, conducted in partnership with the National Arts Plan (PNA) and the Council of Rectors of Portuguese

Universities (CRUP), through its Specialised Committee on Art and Culture, forms part of Falcão's postdoctoral project at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Porto (FLUP / U.Porto).

The project recognises public higher education institutions (IPES) as key actors within the country's cultural ecosystem and acknowledges the cross-cutting nature of culture across teaching, research, and outreach. Its aim is to gather data on the presence of arts and culture in public higher education institutions in Portugal and to provide an overview of how the cultural field is structured and how cultural management is organised within Portuguese universities and polytechnics.

The study seeks to identify existing potential, the main challenges, and the achievements already made, while also contributing to a better understanding of the dynamics of art and culture in higher education. In the longer term, this information may support the development of public policies for the arts, culture, and heritage within higher education institutions. These objectives are part of the broader PNA project for public higher education institutions, Campus Cultural. The research includes an "Institutionality of Culture" survey, addressed to the person responsible for culture within each institution. Two further surveys were also designed:

- "Cultural Mapping", aimed at units across each institution, seeking to map existing cultural spaces, initiatives, actors, and partnerships, while identifying challenges and priorities relating to infrastructure and the creation, production, circulation, and dissemination of artistic and cultural activities and projects.
- "Cultural Profile", designed to understand the artistic and cultural interests, habits, and practices of academic communities, as well as the barriers that may hinder cultural participation.

The results of this project will be particularly useful in understanding how Portuguese higher education institutions currently organise and support cultural activity. They may also provide a basis for coordinated action across institutions and for aligning institutional practices with national cultural policies.

Universities and polytechnic universities should therefore be understood not merely as places where culture happens, but as intrinsically cultural institutions. As well as being privileged spaces for the production and dissemination of knowledge, they are important social institutions for addressing contemporary challenges, including the defence of democracy, the fight against disinformation, the recognition of diversity, dialogue between different fields of knowledge, and environmental sustainability.

In this context, cultural sectors within higher education institutions may be understood as "part of the country's heritage, with a significant national and international impact",

contributing to the promotion of the right to education, culture, the arts, and cultural citizenship. As Mencarelli (2025, p. 14) argues, such sectors act as "catalysts and disseminators of knowledge production" and facilitate the relationship between higher education institutions and civil society in the artistic and cultural sphere.

Observatory of Art and Culture in Higher Education

Another initiative contributing to this discussion is the Observatory of Art and Culture in Higher Education, whose mission is to strengthen and raise the profile of artistic and cultural practices within higher education, promoting the university as a space for creation, enjoyment, participation, and cultural dialogue.

The Observatory is a research project based at the Institute of Sociology of the University of Porto, coordinated by Inês Barbosa, João Teixeira Lopes, and Paula Guerra. It is being developed in collaboration with the Rector's Office of the University of Porto and the Council of Rectors of Portuguese Universities (CRUP), and also involves the National Arts Plan. Funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), the project runs from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2028.

Its specific objectives are:

- to promote arts and cultural practices within Portuguese higher education;
- to critically reflect on conditions of access to cultural creation and enjoyment within higher education;
- to analyse the presence or absence of arts and humanities within academic curricula;
- to study ways of recognising and integrating popular, traditional, and community knowledge within academic contexts;
- to affirm the role of culture in promoting inclusion, well-being, and local development (Institute of Sociology, University of Porto, n.d.).

These objectives are pursued through four main lines of action: mapping cultural spaces, initiatives, and actors within higher education institutions; analysing current cultural policies and institutional practices; connecting higher education institutions, cultural organisations, and communities through collaborative networks; and promoting cultural, educational, and artistic outreach activities involving students, researchers, lecturers, support staff, and non-academic audiences (Institute of Sociology, University of Porto, n.d.).

On 10 February 2026, the author attended a meeting of this working group on Culture, representing the PUVC. This working group forms part of ORSIES – the Observatory on Social Responsibility and Higher Education Institutions – which addresses three areas: Ethics, Environment, and Culture. Its purpose is to stimulate, systematise, and share good

institutional practices and to contribute to reflection and strategic guidance in these fields (ORSIES, n.d.).

Together, these initiatives demonstrate a growing recognition in Portugal that cultural participation in higher education requires institutional strategies rather than isolated activities. They also reinforce the relevance of examining participation at a local level, where questions of geography, mobility, institutional resources, and relationships with cultural organisations become particularly visible.

Case Study at UNIPVC-ESE

Context

Viana do Castelo is a city in northern Portugal with approximately 86,000 inhabitants and a rich historical, artistic, and cultural heritage. Its cultural ecosystem includes museums, theatres, exhibition spaces, architectural landmarks, music and theatre organisations, audiovisual associations, festivals, and community groups. The city also provides access to significant natural and heritage resources, including its coastal landscape, historic centre, religious traditions, and connections to the Portuguese Coastal Way to Santiago de Compostela (Câmara Municipal de Viana do Castelo, n.d.).

The Polytechnic University of Viana do Castelo (UNIPVC) operates across several municipalities in the region. UNIPVC-ESE, in Viana do Castelo, includes programmes in the arts, among them Higher Professional Technical Courses in Arts and Technology (AT) and Illustration and Graphic Production (IPG), and bachelor's degrees in Arts and Digital Cinema (ACD) and Fine Arts and Artistic Technologies (APTA).

The institution has its own cultural resources, including the Oficina Cultural exhibition space, university libraries, and student artistic initiatives. It also maintains relationships with local and regional cultural organisations.

The context was therefore characterised by a combination of cultural resources and geographical peripherality. Viana do Castelo is neither culturally isolated nor comparable to a major metropolitan cultural centre. This tension between cultural availability and cultural accessibility was central to the study.

Background and objectives

The study was grounded in the author's experience as a lecturer in Fine Arts and Cinema at UNIPVC-ESE. Teaching regularly incorporated study visits, exhibitions, screenings, workshops, student exhibitions, and collaborations with cultural organisations. These

activities included encounters with local heritage and contemporary artistic practices, as well as practical workshops in photography and other media.

This experience, together with the author's involvement in cultural and audiovisual organisations and research activities, provided the initial motivation for examining how students participate in cultural life, what barriers they encounter, and how they perceive the relationship between cultural engagement and their education.

The main aim of this study was to understand the relationship between cultural participation and the educational experience of students at UNIPVC-ESE, with particular attention to activities taking place in Viana do Castelo. More specifically, the study sought to:

- identify students' and lecturers' cultural participation habits;
- identify perceived barriers to participation;
- examine perceptions of local cultural provision;
- understand how students evaluate the educational value of cultural activities;
- identify activities students would like to experience more frequently;
- provide evidence for future cultural and educational strategies at UNIPVC-ESE.



Fig.1 Visit to the Santa Luzia Ancient Settlement Viana do Castelo, Portugal (2026).
Raquel Azevedo Moreira

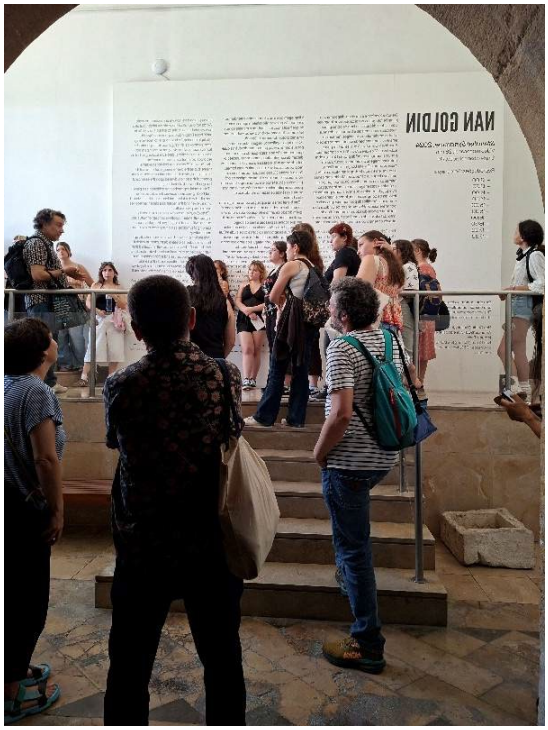

Fig.2 Visit to the Coimbra Biennial, Sala da Cidade Coimbra, Portugal (2026).
Raquel Azevedo Moreira



Fig.3 Exhibition “Clamor”, Estação de Viana
Viana do Castelo, Portugal (2026).
Raquel Azevedo Moreira



Fig.4 Cyanotype Workshop, UNIPVC-ESE
Viana do castelo, Portugal (2026).
Raquel Azevedo Moreira

Methodology

A quantitative study was conducted at UNIPVC-ESE between May and July 2026. A questionnaire was used to examine cultural and artistic participation, cultural access and the local area, higher education and cultural participation, and participants’ final reflections.

The questionnaire was completed anonymously and voluntarily by 93 participants: 87 students and 6 lecturers. This difference could be seen as a limitation, particularly when comparisons are made between students and lecturers. Two versions were used, differing only in the identification section. The substantive questions were identical.

The questionnaire contained 13 questions, including two open-ended questions. It was organised into four sections:

- Cultural and artistic participation
- Cultural access and the local area
- Higher education and cultural participation
- Final reflections

The following analysis is primarily descriptive and should be understood as relating to the specific institutional context rather than as statistically representative of Portuguese higher

arts education. Open-ended responses were used to complement the quantitative data and clarify students' perceptions of opportunities and barriers.

Profile of respondents

Six lecturers and 87 students from four arts-related programmes at UNIPVC-ESE participated in the study.

The student sample comprised 45 students enrolled in CTeSP programmes (Higher Professional Technical Courses): 35 in Arts and Technology (AT) and 10 in Illustration and Graphic Production (IPG). A further 42 students were enrolled in bachelor's degree programmes: 14 in Arts and Digital Cinema (ACD) and 28 in Fine Arts and Artistic Technologies (APTA). Approximately 40% of students enrolled in the programmes participated in the study.

Students from different years participated, with approximately 25% in their first year, 39% in their second, and 18% in their third; 17% did not indicate their year. Almost half (46%) were in the final year.

An important characteristic of the sample is students' geographical mobility. Around 41% lived in Viana do Castelo only during the academic term, while 25% lived there permanently. The remaining 34% lived in other towns and cities in northern Portugal, particularly Ponte de Lima, Braga, Barcelos, and Póvoa de Varzim. This mobility is relevant when interpreting participation because access to activities may depend on academic schedules, transport, and the timing of events.

Most students (88.5%) were aged between 18 and 22. The sample was predominantly female (59%). The six lecturers were aged between 34 and 62, and four lived in Viana do Castelo.

Data analysis and results

The data analysis that follows was carried out at an overall level, allowing for a broader interpretation, and was also conducted by course, to enable a detailed and comparative analysis of the data across the different artistic disciplines. As the number of participants varies by course, the responses were calculated based on the total number of respondents per course.

The questionnaire comprised 13 questions, two of which allow for more detailed responses, and was structured into four parts: I – Cultural and artistic participation; II – Cultural access and territory; III – The relationship between higher education and cultural participation; IV – Final reflections. The data analysis and presentation of results follow this same order.

Cultural and artistic participation

Overall, the areas with the highest levels of participation were Music (15.7%), Visual Arts / Photography (15%), Cinema / Audiovisual (14.7%), and Cultural Festivals (14.6%). Theatre / Dance / Performance and Heritage / Museums represented 11.5% and 11.4%, respectively, while Literature (9.4%) and Design / Architecture (7.8%) recorded the lowest levels.

Patterns vary by programme. Visual Arts / Photography is particularly prominent among APTA students and lecturers, while Cinema / Audiovisual is more strongly represented among ACD students. Music is comparatively more important among CTeSP students, especially AT and IPG. Heritage / Museums is more frequent among APTA students, while Theatre / Dance / Performance is relatively prominent among ACD and AT students. Literature and especially Design / Architecture show lower levels of participation.

These results suggest that disciplinary proximity may influence cultural participation. Students tend to participate more frequently in cultural fields related to their programme, while other areas remain less explored. This points to an opportunity for greater interdisciplinary engagement.

Forms of participation

Almost all students (95%) usually participate in cultural activities as audience members. However, 39% also participate as artists or active participants, with the highest proportion among APTA students (46%). Technical and organisational participation is particularly relevant among CTeSP students, especially AT (31%), while only 2% participate as facilitators or educators.

Lecturers report broader forms of involvement: 100% participate as artists or active participants, 83% as audience members, 83% in technical or organisational roles, and 67% as facilitators or educators.

The difference suggests that students remain predominantly positioned as audiences, whereas lecturers more frequently move between different roles within cultural activity.

With whom and where do students participate?

Almost half of the students (47%) usually participate in cultural activities alone, while 76% participate with friends or family. Approximately one-third (32%) participate with classmates and only 11% with teachers or as a class.

Viana do Castelo is the most frequently mentioned location, with 45% of students participating there. Participation is highest among APTA students (61%) and lowest among IPG students (20%). Porto is mentioned by 38% overall, followed by other Portuguese cities

and Braga. Only 10% frequently participate abroad and 20% report online or digital participation.

These findings indicate that students' cultural lives extend beyond the immediate institutional and territorial context. Viana do Castelo is an important cultural reference point, but Porto, Braga, and other Portuguese cities also form part of their cultural experiences.

Cultural access and the local area

Students generally evaluate the cultural provision in Viana do Castelo as intermediate, with responses distributed as follows: 5% consider it very inadequate, 32% insufficient, 44% adequate, 18% good, and 3% very good. Lecturers are considerably more critical: 83% describe the provision as insufficient and 17% as very insufficient. This difference between students and lecturers is significant and suggests that the two groups may evaluate cultural provision according to different expectations and experiences.

Barriers to participation

A total of 65% of students identify barriers to accessing and participating in cultural activities. The most frequently identified barriers are lack of information or publicity (47%), distance or location (31%), financial cost (25%), lack of time (22%), lack of connection with the programme (20%), and transport (17%).

Among lecturers, 67% identify barriers, particularly lack of information or publicity (50%), followed by time, distance/location, and lack of connection with the programme (33% each).

These findings demonstrate that accessibility cannot be reduced to the existence of cultural activities. Students may not participate when activities are insufficiently publicised, difficult to reach, incompatible with their schedules, financially demanding, or perceived as disconnected from their studies.

The influence of Viana do Castelo

Students' responses reveal a complex relationship with the local context. Some describe Viana do Castelo as culturally rich, highlighting its heritage, natural environment, exhibitions, music, traditions, and historic spaces. Others argue that more could be done, particularly regarding contemporary visual arts and the diversity of cultural programming.

Transport is one of the clearest concerns. Of the students who provided reasons for their responses, 19 identify transport difficulties. Public transport schedules may conflict with cultural events, particularly those taking place early or late in the day. Some students also suggest decentralising activities within the municipality.

Lack of publicity is another recurring concern. Students describe difficulties in becoming aware of cultural events, suggesting that existing opportunities are not always visible to them.

The local context is therefore experienced ambivalently. Viana's cultural heritage and geographical setting constitute important resources, but its distance from major cultural centres and limitations in transport, communication, and contemporary programming can constrain participation.

Higher education and cultural participation

Students report relatively low participation in cultural activities organised by UNIPVC-ESE. Participation levels are as follows: 6% never participate, 38% rarely participate, and 35% participate occasionally. Only 18% participate frequently and 2% very frequently.

Lecturers participate more frequently, with 17% participating occasionally, 50% frequently, and 33% very frequently.

Yet students strongly recognise the educational value of cultural activities. The perceived impact is as follows: 22% consider that institutionally organised cultural activities have a very significant impact on their education, while 49% consider the impact significant. Only 3% report no impact.

The areas in which students perceive the greatest impact are artistic development (51%), technical skills (38%), critical thinking (35%), creativity (34%), social and professional relationships (30%), cultural participation (25%), and knowledge of the local area (10%). Artistic development is particularly important among APTA students (82%) and ACD students (50%).

Lecturers similarly perceive strong educational impact: 66% consider it very significant and 33% significant. Artistic development is again the most prominent area, followed by critical thinking and technical skills.

The central finding of the study is therefore a discrepancy between participation and perceived value. Students participate relatively little in institutionally organised cultural activities, yet they overwhelmingly recognise their educational importance.

Should higher arts education promote more cultural engagement?

The vast majority of students (93%) and all participating lecturers (100%) believe that higher arts education should provide more opportunities for engagement with cultural activities. This is the point on which the greatest consensus exists across the four programmes.

Open-ended responses reinforce this finding. Students frequently emphasise the importance of learning through direct experience. One student explains that practice and interaction are

important because they enable students to retain information and develop as individuals. Another states that cultural opportunities help students broaden their perspectives and develop critical awareness. Students also stress the importance of maintaining contact with cultural activities because arts education is directly connected to culture.

For some, such opportunities enrich knowledge of the arts and help students develop their own opinions and artistic styles. The responses also reveal broader concerns about higher arts education and the labour market. One student argues that higher arts education is underestimated in Portugal and faces social barriers, including limited employment opportunities after graduation. In this context, activities that provide technical knowledge, professional experience, and contact with the cultural sector are seen as particularly valuable.

Some students feel that certain programmes offer too few activities. In AT, for example, students call for more activities and visits to places connected to their professional field. ACD students emphasise the importance of access to experiences that would help them engage more deeply with their subject and support both academic and personal development.

APTA students highlight the need for greater consistency and equality in the promotion of opportunities. They also call for activities involving different techniques and artistic movements, and for opportunities to connect with the local community. One student argues that if the local authority does not provide sufficient cultural variety, other institutions have an important role to play.

Across these responses, cultural participation is therefore understood not as an optional complement to academic education, but as a form of learning in itself. Students describe cultural activities as opportunities for experience, knowledge, personal enrichment, critical reflection, and contact with different forms of artistic expression. As one student succinctly states: “Because art is important and changes lives.”

Cultural activities students and lecturers would like to experience

The final section of the questionnaire examined which cultural and artistic activities students and lecturers would like to attend more frequently. Students’ preferences vary by programme. AT students particularly mention Theatre, Music, Cinema, and programme-related activities. IPG students show interest in Music, Cinema, audiovisual activities, illustration, and printing workshops. ACD students emphasise Music, Cinema, audiovisual studies, and Theatre. APTA students particularly request exhibitions, art fairs, artist residencies, workshops, and study visits.

Lecturers express interest in Music and Visual Arts, followed by Photography, Theatre, Performance, and Dance. They also propose short technical training, contemporary art visits,

artistic residencies, and stronger relationships with local businesses and craft production centres.

These responses suggest that students and lecturers are not simply asking for more events. They are asking for different forms of cultural engagement, including workshops, study visits, exhibitions, professional encounters, residencies, technical training, and community-based projects.

This distinction is important. Increasing cultural participation may require moving beyond a model in which students are primarily audiences and towards a model in which they become active participants in cultural production and mediation.

Conclusion

This study provides an initial overview of cultural participation among students and lecturers at UNIPVC-ESE and of the relationship between students, cultural activities, and the local context of Viana do Castelo.

The findings reveal a complex relationship between cultural provision and cultural accessibility. Viana do Castelo possesses significant cultural, artistic, historical, and natural resources, and students recognise many of these strengths. At the same time, geographical peripherality, transport limitations, insufficient publicity, scheduling difficulties, and the perceived lack of connection between some activities and students' programmes can restrict participation.

The most significant finding is the discrepancy between participation and perceived value. Students participate relatively infrequently in activities organised by ESE-PUVC, but 93% believe that higher arts education should promote more opportunities for cultural engagement, while the majority consider existing activities to have a significant or very significant educational impact.

The challenge is therefore not simply to convince students of the value of cultural participation. They already recognise this value. The challenge is to create the conditions that make participation more accessible, visible, relevant, and sustainable.

Three priorities emerge from the findings. First, information and communication should be strengthened, since lack of publicity is the most frequently identified barrier. Second, cultural activities should be more closely connected with curricula, enabling study visits, workshops, exhibitions, screenings, talks, and professional encounters to function as extensions of learning. Third, territorial and interdisciplinary partnerships should be developed with cultural organisations in Viana do Castelo and neighbouring territories, including Porto, Braga, Galicia, and other regional contexts.

A further priority is to increase students' active participation. While 95% participate primarily as audiences, fewer participate as artists, organisers, technical collaborators, or educators. Higher arts education offers opportunities to challenge this hierarchy by involving students in the conception, production, mediation, documentation, and evaluation of cultural activities. Such approaches can simultaneously contribute to artistic development, professional preparation, communication skills, teamwork, and cultural citizenship.

Interdisciplinary collaboration can also expand students' cultural experiences. Bringing together photography, cinema, illustration, music, performance, theatre, design, architecture, and heritage would allow students to encounter artistic fields beyond their primary disciplines while strengthening the institution's role as a cultural platform within the local community.

The findings should nevertheless be interpreted with caution. The study is based on a relatively small, context-specific sample and a questionnaire designed primarily to provide a descriptive overview. The results cannot therefore be generalised to all higher arts education students in Portugal. Future research could complement the quantitative approach with interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and detailed case studies of cultural activities. These methods could explore more deeply why students participate or do not participate and how cultural encounters influence their artistic identities, professional aspirations, and relationships with the local community.

Ultimately, the question of in/accessibility is not simply whether cultural opportunities exist. It concerns who can reach them, who feels invited to participate, who recognises their relevance, and who is given the opportunity to move from spectator to participant and from participant to creator.

In a peripheral context such as Viana do Castelo, higher arts education can act as a bridge between local and global environments, cultural heritage and contemporary artistic practice, academic learning and community experience. By creating sustained opportunities for encounter, practice, dialogue, and participation, it can contribute to a more inclusive cultural landscape in which art and culture become integral to education rather than peripheral to it.

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Between Sound and Experience: Critical Listening in Arts Education and Teacher Education

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Abstract

This chapter examines the role of critical listening in initial teacher education for primary and lower secondary school teachers in Portugal, foregrounding sound, silence, and noise as central dimensions of aesthetic, educational, and civic experience. Drawing upon scholarship in arts education, acoustic ecology, and sound studies, it proposes an understanding of listening as a practice of attentiveness, interpretation, and critical engagement with social and cultural contexts. The chapter presents a series of pedagogical experiences developed within initial teacher education programmes, including the exploration of soundscapes, the creation of graphic scores, the production of audiovisual micro-narratives, and the didactic transposition of sound-based practices into educational contexts. It ultimately argues that critical listening can contribute to a more inclusive, participatory, and reflective approach to arts education.

Keywords

Critical Listening; Arts Education; Teacher Education; Sound Practices; Inclusive Education.

Introduction

The growing recognition of the sensory, relational, and participatory dimensions of arts education has increasingly foregrounded the role of listening within contemporary pedagogical thought. In a context characterised by the acceleration of everyday life, information overload, and the growing mediation of experience, listening has become a particularly significant practice, insofar as it involves attentiveness, suspension,

interpretation, and openness to diverse perspectives and ways of experiencing the world. Within the field of teacher education, this issue assumes particular relevance, as critical listening constitutes an aesthetic, methodological, and ethical competence with direct implications for the development of educational practices that are more reflective, inclusive, and socially situated.

This chapter proceeds from the premise that sound, silence, and noise should not be regarded merely as secondary elements of educational experience, but rather as fundamental categories through which the relationship between art, learning, and citizenship can be conceptualised. Drawing upon contributions from arts education, acoustic ecology, and sound studies, it proposes an understanding of listening as both a mode of knowing and a practice of attentiveness to the world. From this perspective, listening also involves interpreting contexts, recognising social and cultural dynamics, and cultivating dispositions towards coexistence, collaboration, and dialogue. Arts education therefore emerges as a privileged domain for fostering forms of listening that integrate aesthetic sensibility with critical awareness.

Within the context of initial teacher education for primary and lower secondary education in Portugal, this perspective is particularly productive. On the one hand, the role of the arts within educational curricula continues to require sustained theoretical and methodological reflection. On the other hand, future teachers require pedagogical repertoires that enable them to design meaningful, interdisciplinary learning experiences adapted to specific educational contexts. In this regard, critical listening provides a framework for action and reflection that supports the development of educational proposals grounded in the observation, creation, and analysis of accessible sonic materials. At the same time, it reinforces the inclusive dimension of arts education by recognising diverse modes of perception, expression, and participation.

The chapter is structured around an approach that brings together theoretical discussion, pedagogical experiences, and critical reflection. It begins by examining listening as an aesthetic and educational practice, distinguishing between sound, silence, and noise as pedagogical categories. It then outlines the principal theoretical perspectives underpinning the discussion, followed by an exploration of the relationship between critical listening and citizenship and an examination of the role of listening in initial teacher education. Finally, the chapter discusses pedagogical experiences developed within teacher education programmes in order to demonstrate the potential of sound-based practices to promote a more inclusive, participatory, and reflective model of arts education.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework underpinning this chapter brings together contributions from arts education, acoustic ecology, sound studies, and critical approaches to listening as a social and cultural practice. This interdisciplinary perspective enables sound to be understood not merely as an object of aesthetic appreciation, but as a situated form of experience through which individuals construct knowledge and engage with the world. It therefore shifts the understanding of listening from passive reception towards an active process involving attention, interpretation, reflection, and meaning-making.

A distinction between hearing, listening, and critical listening is central to this perspective. While hearing refers primarily to the physiological capacity to perceive sound, listening involves attention, interpretation, and engagement with sonic experience. Critical listening extends this process by encouraging reflection on the cultural, social, and ethical dimensions of sound, including the ways in which sonic environments shape relationships between individuals, communities, and places.

In *Art as Experience*, Dewey (1934/2010) advances a conception of art and experience that challenges the separation between everyday life and aesthetic experience. For Dewey, aesthetic experience does not constitute an autonomous domain detached from ordinary life; rather, it represents an intensified form of lived experience characterised by continuity, coherence, and meaning. From this perspective, arts education should not be understood solely as the transmission of artistic techniques or the appreciation of artistic objects, but as the creation of experiences through which individuals perceive, act, feel, and reflect in interaction with their environments.

Eisner's (2002) perspective further develops this understanding by arguing that the arts cultivate qualitative, perceptual, and interpretative forms of thinking that cannot be reduced to verbal or analytical reasoning. According to Eisner, arts education refines perception, expands imagination, and develops forms of judgement based on nuance, ambiguity, and informed choice. This contribution is particularly relevant to critical listening, which involves capacities such as selective attention, perceptual discrimination, contextual interpretation, and the construction of meaning.

Acoustic ecology introduced an important shift in the understanding of sound by moving attention beyond the musical work towards the sonic environment as a meaningful whole. Schafer (1977/1994) developed the concept of the soundscape to describe the sonic environment of a particular place, composed of natural, human, and technological sounds that express ecological, cultural, and social relationships. This perspective has significant implications for arts education because it allows sound to be approached both as creative material and as an indicator of the conditions and dynamics that shape lived environments.

Listening to a soundscape therefore involves recognising patterns, contrasts, densities, and silences that contribute to the experience of place.

Sound studies have further expanded approaches to sound by examining its historical, cultural, philosophical, and political dimensions. Sterne (2012) demonstrates that technologies and formats of sound reproduction are not neutral but are shaped by historical, institutional, economic, and perceptual conditions. This perspective highlights that listening is always socially situated and influenced by technologies, cultural conventions, and everyday practices. Complementing this approach, Voegelin (2010) emphasises the relational and interpretative nature of listening, arguing that sonic experience does not provide transparent access to reality but rather opens spaces for uncertainty, dialogue, and alternative forms of understanding.

Listening as an aesthetic and educational practice

Within the framework of arts education, listening cannot be reduced to the passive act of hearing; rather, it constitutes a way of engaging with the world in which perception, attention, and interpretation are inextricably intertwined. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey (1934/2010) argues that aesthetic experience is not a domain separate from life but an intensification of everyday experience, characterised by continuity, organisation, and meaning. From this standpoint, listening entails being fully engaged with one's environment, recognising its sensory qualities, and attributing meaning to them through lived experience. Listening thus becomes a practice that cultivates both sensibility and thought, connecting the body, memory, and critical consciousness.

Schafer (1977/1994) made a seminal contribution to this field by introducing the concept of the *soundscape*, understood as the sonic environment of a particular place, composed of natural, human, and technological sounds. By shifting attention from isolated sounds to the sonic environment as an integrated whole, Schafer demonstrated that listening also involves interpreting the relationships between space, culture, and ecology. This perspective is particularly valuable for arts education because it enables sound to be approached both as expressive material and as an indicator of the living conditions and social dynamics of a community.

The distinction between sound, silence, and noise is likewise pedagogically productive. Sound may be approached as an organised, intentional, or emergent phenomenon, explored through its timbral, rhythmic, and spatial properties. Silence, far from representing a mere absence, may be understood as a moment of suspension and preparation for experience. Noise, frequently regarded as interference, may instead be reconfigured as a critical category insofar as it reveals tensions, inequalities, and forms of sonic coexistence. Voegelin (2010)

emphasises precisely this point, arguing that listening constitutes a form of sensory and relational knowledge that remains open to incompleteness and ambiguity.

Aesthetic experience in relation to the sonic environment therefore emerges through attentive engagement with the qualities of what surrounds us and through the capacity to transform such attention into reflection and creative practice. When student teachers explore soundscapes, record everyday sounds, create graphic scores, or produce audiovisual micro-narratives, they are not merely developing technical competencies; they are also learning to listen with greater attentiveness and critical awareness. This constitutes a mode of learning that integrates thought and action, sensation and interpretation, experience and communication.

Critical listening and citizenship

The relationship between critical listening and citizenship may be understood through a conception of listening as a social, ethical, and political practice. If aesthetic experience is intrinsically linked to democratic experience, then listening critically entails active participation in the construction of the common good, recognising that collective life is also organised through regimes of attention, visibility, and audibility. Citizenship, in this sense, extends beyond the formal exercise of rights and responsibilities; it also encompasses the capacity to listen, to interpret contexts, to embrace difference, and to act responsibly within shared social spaces.

Voegelin (2010) argues that listening is neither a transparent nor a neutral act but a situated practice shaped by historical, cultural, and relational conditions. Listening does not provide immediate access to the truth of the world; rather, it opens a space of indeterminacy in which the individual encounters alterity and the inherent incompleteness of perception. This openness is especially significant for conceptualising citizenship, as it educates individuals to live with plurality, ambiguity, and the recognition that reality is never entirely given or fully knowable.

From the perspective of sound studies, this issue acquires further depth. Sterne (2012) demonstrates that sound plays a fundamental role in organising both public and private spheres, shaping processes of inclusion, exclusion, and belonging. Critical listening is therefore not confined to an aesthetic exercise; it also constitutes a means of interrogating the social structures that regulate presence, participation, and voice within the public domain. Within educational contexts, this approach proves particularly fruitful because it enables meaningful connections to be established between arts education, inclusion, and civic education.

Schools are places where students learn not only curricular content but also ways of living together, attending to others, and recognising one another. By incorporating practices of

critical listening, arts education can help render audible the silences, margins, and asymmetries that permeate school life. Listening to others, listening to the environment, and listening to oneself thus become central pedagogical practices for nurturing a democratic culture grounded in mutual recognition and participation.

Listening in initial teacher education

The integration of critical listening into initial teacher education is of particular importance at a time when arts education is increasingly expected to contribute to a more holistic, sensitive, and reflective model of professional preparation. Following Dewey's (1934/2010) educational philosophy, learning arises through experience and its meaningful reconstruction. Consequently, preparing teachers in arts education requires the creation of learning situations in which they are able to experiment, observe, interpret, and design pedagogical practices that integrate perception, action, and reflective thought.

Eisner (2002) reminds us that the arts cultivate perception, qualitative judgement, and the capacity to engage with complexity—competencies that are indispensable to all educational professionals. In the case of listening, this entails learning to distinguish timbral differences, spatial dynamics, sonic densities, and the relationships between silence and noise, while also interpreting the educational significance of these distinctions within specific pedagogical contexts. Listening thus becomes a practice through which auditory awareness is cultivated alongside an investigative disposition towards educational reality.

Within initial teacher education programmes, critical listening may be fostered through pedagogical approaches that combine aesthetic experience, contextual analysis, and didactic design. The exploration of soundscapes, the collection of everyday sounds, the creation of graphic scores, and the production of audiovisual micro-narratives enable student teachers to move beyond transmissive models of learning towards inquiry-based and creative pedagogies. These practices encourage engagement with accessible materials while introducing methodologies readily adaptable to primary and lower secondary education.

Listening in initial teacher education also possesses a significant ethical and relational dimension. By engaging student teachers in active listening, collaborative work, and collective discussion, these experiences contribute to the development of professionals who are more responsive to the diversity of learners and to the varied forms of participation that characterise classroom life. Voegelin (2010) illuminates this process by conceptualising listening as an open, provisional, and relational practice that does not seek to impose a single, fixed meaning but instead remains receptive to what emerges through encounter and dialogue.

Methodologies and pedagogical approaches

The methodologies employed to develop critical listening within teacher education are grounded in an experiential, inquiry-based, and collaborative approach to learning. Consistent with Dewey's (1934/2010) educational philosophy, they proceed from the premise that knowledge emerges through the interaction between the individual and the environment, with experience constituting the point of departure for the construction of meaning. Within this framework, pedagogical practices extend beyond the mere transmission of content, inviting student teachers to observe, explore, transform, and communicate their sonic experiences.

A primary methodological dimension involves the use of observational and recording practices focused on the sonic environment. The exploration of soundscapes, particularly through *soundwalks*, enables prospective teachers to develop heightened attentiveness to the sounds of everyday life while recognising the relationships between place, memory, and social context. Schafer (1977/1994) assigns a central role to the soundscape in fostering an ecological understanding of the environment, and this perspective is especially valuable in educational settings, where sound can be investigated both as an object of analysis and as a medium for creative expression.

Another significant pedagogical strategy is the creation of graphic scores, understood as visual representations of sonic, temporal, and spatial qualities. This approach facilitates movement between listening and visualisation, promoting an interdisciplinary mode of inquiry that integrates sound, image, and movement. By inviting students to organise their sonic experiences through symbols, lines, colours, or abstract forms, this activity encourages not only the perception of the properties of sound but also their creative interpretation and representation. Eisner (2002) emphasises the importance of modes of thought grounded in qualitative discrimination and imagination, and the graphic score exemplifies this integration of perceptual sensitivity and symbolic construction.

The production of audiovisual micro-narratives likewise constitutes an important pedagogical strategy, as it encourages the construction of compact units of knowledge through the interplay of sound, image, and language. These narratives integrate documentary and poetic dimensions, making visible the capacity of future teachers to combine observation, editing, and communicative intention. Through this process, students develop competencies in selection, composition, and interpretation while simultaneously strengthening their awareness of the situated nature of all forms of representation.

Particular emphasis should also be placed upon the use of simple and accessible resources that require only modest technological infrastructure while remaining readily adaptable to diverse educational contexts. Portable audio recorders, mobile phones, paper, pencils, drawing materials, and basic digital editing platforms provide sufficient means for the

development of meaningful pedagogical activities. This methodological choice is especially significant within teacher education because it demonstrates that educational quality depends less upon technological sophistication than upon the clarity of pedagogical objectives and the educational relevance of the experiences designed.

Methodological context

The pedagogical experiences presented in this chapter were developed within initial teacher education programmes for pre-primary, primary, and lower secondary education at a higher education institution in Portugal. Rather than reporting the results of a formal empirical study, the chapter offers a theoretically informed reflection on pedagogical practices implemented in teacher education. The learning experiences described were designed to foster critical listening through activities such as soundwalks, soundscape exploration, the creation of graphic scores, and the production of audiovisual micro-narratives. The discussion is informed by observations of the learning processes, the pedagogical artefacts produced by student teachers, and the collective reflections that emerged during the activities. The analysis seeks to identify the educational potential of these practices for developing critical listening and supporting their subsequent didactic transposition into primary and lower secondary school contexts.

Pedagogical experiences

The pedagogical experiences developed within the framework of critical listening sought to integrate aesthetic education, theoretical reflection, and didactic transposition through the use of sound-based practices that were accessible, conceptually rigorous, and pedagogically transferable. Consistent with Dewey's (1934/2010) philosophy, these activities were founded upon the principle that knowledge emerges through lived experience and its subsequent reflective elaboration. Listening was therefore conceived not as a passive exercise but as a practice of inquiry, interpretation, and creative engagement.

One of the principal experiences centred upon the exploration of soundscapes through *soundwalks*, audio recording, and the analysis of familiar environments, including schools, surrounding urban spaces, green areas, and everyday indoor settings. Within primary education, this activity may be implemented with pupils through a guided soundwalk in the playground, corridors, school courtyard, or outdoor surroundings, followed by the recording of the most salient sounds and their classification into straightforward categories such as natural sounds, human sounds, mechanical sounds, and unexpected sounds. Such activities foster both an interpretative understanding of place and reflection upon the relationships between environment, everyday life, and citizenship.

The creation of graphic scores constituted a second major strand of the work, functioning as a medium through which listening could be translated into representation and composition. In school settings, the activity may begin with listening to recorded sounds or a short musical excerpt, after which pupils are invited to represent what they hear through lines, colours, shapes, textures, or symbols. The subsequent sharing and collective discussion of these graphic scores demonstrates that the same sonic experience may generate multiple representations, thereby reinforcing the understanding that listening is itself an interpretative act.

The production of audiovisual micro-narratives represented a third pedagogical component of particular significance, as it enabled the integration of sound, image, language, and editing within a concise narrative form. In school contexts, this activity may take the form of short videos constructed from images captured by pupils together with sounds collected from their everyday environments. The brevity of the final product facilitates its implementation within classroom settings while providing an accessible means of discussing concepts such as authorship, perspective, framing, and the relationship between sound and image.

Discussion of the pedagogical experiences

The pedagogical experiences presented in this chapter illustrate the educational potential of critical listening as a means of integrating aesthetic experience, creative practice, and pedagogical reflection within initial teacher education. Rather than reporting the findings of a formal empirical study, the following discussion reflects on the educational possibilities that emerged through the implementation of the proposed activities and their relevance for future teaching practice.

The exploration of soundscapes through soundwalks and everyday sound recording encouraged student teachers to engage more attentively with their sonic surroundings. Classroom discussions and the analysis of recorded materials suggested that these activities prompted participants to notice aspects of the acoustic environment that often remain overlooked, including the coexistence of natural, human, and technological sounds, as well as the expressive role of silence. Such experiences provided opportunities to consider how sound contributes to the perception of place, everyday life, and social interaction, reinforcing the educational value of listening as a practice of observation and interpretation.

The creation of graphic scores further demonstrated how listening can be connected to visual representation and creative interpretation. As student teachers translated their listening experiences into lines, colours, symbols, and abstract forms, it became evident that the same sonic stimulus could generate multiple visual responses. The subsequent sharing and discussion of these representations highlighted the interpretative nature of listening and encouraged reflection on the diversity of perceptual experiences. In this sense, graphic

notation functioned not only as a creative exercise but also as a means of exploring different ways of understanding and communicating sound.

Similarly, the production of audiovisual micro-narratives encouraged participants to reflect on the relationships between sound, image, and narrative construction. By selecting, editing, and combining visual and sonic materials, student teachers explored how meaning is shaped through multimodal composition. These activities also created opportunities to discuss authorship, perspective, and representation, illustrating the potential of audiovisual practices to support interdisciplinary approaches within arts education.

Collaborative work represented another significant dimension of the pedagogical experiences. Collective listening sessions, discussions of graphic scores, and the presentation of audiovisual productions fostered dialogue, negotiation of meanings, and shared reflection. These interactions suggested that listening is not solely an individual perceptual activity but also a relational practice through which participants negotiate interpretations, recognise different perspectives, and construct shared understandings. Such collaborative processes are particularly relevant for teacher education, where dialogue and responsiveness to diverse viewpoints constitute essential professional competencies.

The pedagogical experiences also highlighted the feasibility of implementing sound-based educational activities using simple and widely available resources. Mobile phones, portable audio recorders, paper, drawing materials, and basic digital editing applications proved sufficient for developing meaningful learning experiences. This reinforces the view that the educational value of such activities depends less on technological sophistication than on clearly defined pedagogical intentions and thoughtfully designed learning experiences.

Finally, the activities encouraged student teachers to consider how these approaches could be adapted to primary and lower secondary education. During the planning and discussion of classroom applications, participants explored ways of translating soundwalks, graphic scores, and audiovisual projects into age-appropriate learning experiences connected with arts education, environmental awareness, language development, and citizenship education. This process of didactic transposition reinforced the versatility of critical listening as an interdisciplinary pedagogical resource.

Taken together, these pedagogical experiences suggest that critical listening provides a productive framework for connecting aesthetic education with reflective teaching practice. By encouraging future teachers to observe, interpret, create, and discuss everyday sonic environments, the activities contributed to a broader understanding of listening as an educational practice that supports creativity, collaboration, inclusion, and critical engagement with the social and cultural dimensions of lived experience. Although these reflections are grounded in pedagogical practice rather than formal empirical research, they

illustrate the educational possibilities of integrating sound-based approaches into initial teacher education and point towards fruitful directions for future research.

Analysis of the pedagogical experiences

The analysis of the pedagogical experiences revealed a coherent set of outcomes relating to aesthetic development, critical listening, and the capacity for didactic transposition. First, a marked enhancement of students' perceptual awareness was observed. Participants demonstrated a more intentional mode of listening, distinguishing with greater precision variations in intensity, texture, rhythm, density, and spatial characteristics. This development extended beyond improved auditory discrimination, reflecting instead a more reflective engagement with both the surrounding environment and sonic materials.

A second significant outcome concerned the development of aesthetic sensitivity. The activities demonstrated that listening, when cultivated through structured and creative pedagogical approaches, enhances the ability to perceive subtle qualities of sound and to recognise the expressive value of elements frequently overlooked, such as silence, noise, and everyday sonic events. In this respect, arts education proved particularly effective in creating opportunities for students to experience, interpret, and represent sound in diverse ways, thereby fostering a disposition closely aligned with what Eisner (2002) describes as qualitative thinking and perceptive judgement.

The collaborative dimension likewise emerged as a substantial educational gain. Group work, the sharing of sound recordings, collective discussions of graphic scores, and the presentation of audiovisual micro-narratives encouraged processes of negotiation, reciprocal listening, and the co-construction of meaning. These experiences demonstrated that listening is not merely an individual competence but also a relational practice that structures pedagogical life. From the perspective of teacher education, this finding is especially significant, as it prepares future teachers for educational contexts characterised by diversity, collaboration, and the need to mediate between multiple voices and perspectives.

Another noteworthy outcome was the students' capacity to design creative learning activities using simple and widely available resources. The use of mobile phones, portable recorders, paper, drawing materials, and basic editing applications confirmed that pedagogical quality depends not upon technological sophistication but upon educational intentionality and the relevance of the learning experiences proposed. This finding enhances the practical feasibility of implementing such activities in primary and lower secondary education, where resources may be limited and methodological flexibility is often essential.

From a critical perspective, the findings further demonstrate that listening can function as a means of interpreting social and cultural contexts. Through the analysis of soundscapes,

students recognised that sounds reveal patterns of spatial occupation, rhythms of everyday life, forms of social proximity, and modes of coexistence. This insight shifts listening from a purely contemplative activity to an interpretative and civic practice. Rather than simply learning to hear more acutely, future teachers learn to ask what sounds reveal about places, communities, and the conditions under which educational experience is produced.

Implications for educational practice

The integration of critical listening into arts education carries significant implications for educational practice at curricular, methodological, and relational levels. First, it reinforces the need to incorporate experiences of listening, sound analysis, and interdisciplinary creative practice into initial teacher education programmes. Second, it confirms the value of pedagogical approaches that are simple, accessible, and adaptable to diverse educational contexts while effectively integrating inquiry, creativity, and critical reflection.

Finally, critical listening contributes to a more inclusive pedagogy by recognising and valuing diverse modes of perception, expression, and participation. By approaching sound as experience, language, and relationship, arts education can foster a school culture that is more attentive, collaborative, and democratic. Within this perspective, educating for listening entails preparing professionals who are capable of recognising the educational significance of sound and of creating the conditions through which pupils may inhabit the world with greater perceptual openness, critical awareness, and aesthetic sensitivity.

Conclusion

Critical listening offers a valuable framework for rethinking arts education as a practice that integrates aesthetic experience, critical reflection, and civic engagement. By foregrounding sound, silence, and noise as meaningful dimensions of educational experience, this chapter has argued that listening extends beyond auditory perception to become a mode of inquiry, interpretation, and participation. Drawing upon perspectives from arts education, acoustic ecology, and sound studies, it has demonstrated the educational potential of listening to foster attentiveness, creativity, collaboration, and an awareness of the social and cultural dimensions of everyday sonic environments.

The pedagogical experiences presented illustrate how accessible sound-based practices, including soundwalks, soundscape exploration, graphic scores, and audiovisual micro-narratives, can support the development of critical listening within initial teacher education. These experiences encourage future teachers to engage with sound as both an expressive medium and a pedagogical resource while designing learning opportunities that are interdisciplinary, inclusive, and responsive to diverse educational contexts.

Ultimately, educating for critical listening means preparing teachers who are capable of recognising the educational significance of sound and creating learning environments in which pupils develop greater perceptual awareness, interpretative capacity, and aesthetic sensitivity. In this sense, listening becomes not only an artistic competence but also an ethical and democratic practice, contributing to more reflective, participatory, and inclusive approaches to arts education. Future research may further explore the impact of sound-based pedagogies across different educational settings and examine their contribution to the development of broader artistic, social, and civic competences.

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Adult and Youth Education (EJA): The Impact of the Educational Process on the Lives of Young People and Adults

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Abstract

Youth and Adult Education (YAE) is aimed at individuals who, due to their particular circumstances, are not served by mainstream education and who, by enrolling in this educational modality, have the opportunity to overcome previous school failure. This paper reports on a qualitative study conducted with YAE students to understand the impact of the schooling process on the lives of young and adult learners enrolled in this educational modality. To this end, drawing on the Thematic Life History approach, we conducted semi-structured interviews with two YAE students, although only one interview was selected for analysis in this paper. We developed three analytical categories based on the study's objective and the theoretical assumptions of Critical School Psychology and Cultural-Historical Psychology: the interruption of the schooling process; YAE: social meaning, personal meaning, and motive; and the school and the fulfilment of its educational function. Our findings indicate that the interviewee's educational trajectory, including both the interruption and resumption of her studies, is shaped by socioeconomic and labour-related factors within a class-divided capitalist society. Furthermore, the findings suggest that YAE fulfilled its educational function by fostering significant changes in the student's way of being and relating to the world, thereby contributing to her process of humanisation.

Keywords

Youth and Adult Education; Inclusive Education; Cultural-Historical Psychology; Thematic Life Story; Schooling Process

Introduction

Article 205 of the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil establishes education as a universal right (Brasil, 1988). However, an examination of Brazil's colonial history and its enduring effects on contemporary society reveals structural conditions that shape the country's sociopolitical and economic organisation. These conditions are deeply marked by inequalities in the distribution of resources among different social classes. As a result, education ultimately reproduces the inequalities that underpin Brazilian society (Souza, 2011; Castro & Cruz, 2024).

In response to the processes and consequences of persistent exclusion across generations, scholars critical of prevailing social and educational structures began advocating, in the late twentieth century, for educational approaches that could effectively address the needs of the population examined in this study: young people and adults enrolled in Youth and Adult Education (YAE). Despite their diverse backgrounds, these learners share a common characteristic: interrupted schooling trajectories. In this sense, YAE can be understood as an important dimension of inclusive education, as it seeks to address educational exclusion and uphold the right to education for young people and adults whose schooling has been interrupted. YAE represents a powerful means of promoting social change, as it provides these individuals with access to educational spaces that broaden their understanding of the world and foster self-awareness by integrating personal experiences with curricular content. Consequently, learners can develop their own ways of engaging with the world, recognising that they can also draw on the knowledge acquired through formal education. Thus, YAE is more than an educational provision that acknowledges the existence of inequality in Brazil: it contributes directly to addressing and transforming these inequalities and to redressing the historical debt arising from the denial of access to formal education, particularly among the working class (Castro & Cruz, 2024).

Freire (2021) emphasises the need for an educational praxis committed to the ethical and political emancipation of human beings, one that goes beyond the mere acquisition of technical and utilitarian knowledge. Such an approach must take into account each student's personal experiences and life circumstances while respecting their individuality as a social and thinking subject. After all, it is “in true learning conditions that students turn into real agents in the construction and reconstruction of transmitted knowledge, along with

educators, who are equally affected by the process" (p. 28). From this perspective, education can profoundly transform our way of being and engaging with the world. When implemented thoughtfully, critically and systematically, education can broaden students' knowledge and enable them to understand the world more fully and engage with it in richer, more complex and more critical ways. In light of these considerations, the present study aimed to understand the role of the schooling process in the lives of young people and adults enrolled in YAE.

Youth and adult education: a proposal for intervention against inequality

The schooling process in Brazil has perpetuated a culture of exclusion because it has been shaped by a context marked by inequality across different spheres of society. In response to this reality, education professionals and scholars have sought to develop educational approaches that take into account the national context and the specific characteristics of the population they serve, while recognising the need for new ways of conceptualising and implementing education. These approaches aim to promote progress from a critical perspective and challenge the culture of exclusion that has persisted for so long (Souza, 2011).

The existence of Youth and Adult Education (YAE), established under Law No. 9,394 (Brasil, 1996), reflects a history of struggle and commitment to inclusive and democratic education. YAE is a free educational modality offered to individuals who did not have access to primary and secondary education at the expected age or who were unable to complete these stages of schooling. Classes are held in the evening and take into account students' characteristics and interests, as well as their living and working conditions.

Souza, Checchia, Gonçalves, and Barone (2023) argue that examining Youth and Adult Education (YAE) from the perspective of Critical School Psychology makes it possible to understand its importance as a powerful public policy for addressing social inequality, prejudice, racism, and the violence experienced by individuals who have undergone school exclusion. After all, understanding individuals' schooling trajectories solely in individualising terms, while attributing students' success or failure to their aptitude, contributes to the perpetuation of inequality and prejudice without holding anyone socio-politically accountable for this process.

Considering the contradictions inherent in a class-based society (Souza, 2011; Souza et al., 2023), YAE occupies a dual position within this conception. First, its structure has been guided from the outset by students' educational trajectories and the specific circumstances of their lives. Second, its implementation seeks to make schooling a reality by recognising

individuals as agents capable of transforming their own lives and addressing the school exclusion they have experienced up to adulthood. An important aspect of this transformative process is the interventionist role played by education and educators. From the perspective of Cultural-Historical Psychology, the relationship between human beings and the physical and social world is always mediated. Education must therefore enable individuals to appropriate the cultural products of their society. As Leontiev (2004, p. 22) states, "According to this theory, individuals only develop in a concrete relation with social reality. Humanization only takes place by means of the appropriation of what was historically produced by humanity."

Consequently, mediation is a necessary condition for effective learning in the relationship between educators and students. In this context, teachers act as mediators. As Corrêa (2017, p. 382) explains, "it is up to teachers to plan their pedagogical work while taking into consideration that they are mediators of a culture that is socially appreciated. Teachers are situated between students and curricular knowledge, with the task to conduct the former and take possession of the latter." Similarly, Facci (2004, p. 78) points out that "educators in general need to pay attention to peculiarities of the psychological development in different evolutionary stages so that strategies can be established to benefit the appropriation of scientific knowledge." Thus, YAE educators are responsible for developing educational practices that involve intellectually challenging activities and are connected to students' life contexts.

It is essential to reaffirm the distinctive nature and importance of Youth and Adult Education (YAE), which is characterised by specific arrangements designed to meet the educational needs of a distinct group within the broader education system. YAE serves individuals who are capable of actively participating in society and contributing to social change. It is important to recognise that these young people and adults have had limited or no access to formal schooling.

As social, historical, and cultural beings, they possess knowledge and experiences accumulated throughout their lives and require the support of cultural institutions capable of fostering the full development of their potential. Thus, people are not merely repositories of knowledge; rather, they are individuals capable of constructing knowledge and engaging in learning (Vargas & Gomes, 2013, p. 451).

YAE must adopt an inclusive praxis to address the specific needs of its students and fulfil its primary objective: to contribute to the development of autonomous and critically aware individuals who cultivate curiosity as an integral part of their everyday lives.

Participation in YAE can therefore transform the narratives that young people, adults, and older adults construct about themselves and the world around them. Investigating these narratives is consequently a valuable means of understanding human development as shaped

by the schooling process, drawing on Cultural-Historical Psychology in dialogue with Critical School Psychology. This perspective takes into account the historical, political, social, and institutional roots of educational experiences, as well as the relationships established in the teaching and learning process (Souza, 2017). It also assumes that school psychologists have a political commitment to promoting high-quality, democratic education and to challenging adaptationist conceptions of psychology as a science and profession. Finally, it is important to emphasise that the inequality and exclusion present in society do not arise from biological differences; rather, they stem from the profound social and economic inequalities that shape each individual's educational trajectory.

Methodology

In this study, we aimed to interview only students in the third year, as they were the ones who were closest to our research objectives. We chose interviews because they provide an opportunity to explore specific themes in depth from the interviewees' perspectives. Interviews encourage the narration of important events in the lives of interviewees and their social contexts, in addition to facilitating the sharing of personal stories, experiences, and living conditions. They are also an appropriate resource when working with a small number of participants (Muylaert et al., 2014).

Following initial contact with the principal of a public school in the municipality of Uberlândia, Minas Gerais, an interview was arranged with the coordinator of the evening classes (EJA classes are held in the evenings) in order to introduce the research to both the coordinator and the students. Initially, seven students expressed an interest in participating; however, due to some setbacks, two students were interviewed. For the purposes of this article, we selected the report of Sabrina[1], aged 24.

The interview was conducted through WhatsApp messages. We sent the questions to the student so that she could answer them freely and at a time that was convenient for her. Sabrina responded to each question through a series of audio messages. The interview script consisted of the following questions: 1) How old are you? 2) What was your school trajectory like before you entered EJA? Why did you choose EJA? 3) Has EJA changed your life? If so, how? Can you provide details? 4) Would you like to add anything to what has already been said?

Based on a reading of the interview transcripts, we conducted a thematic analysis using the theoretical references that guided the research and taking into consideration the objective of the interview. Three thematic axes were identified: 1) The interruption of the schooling process; 2) EJA: Social Meaning, Personal Meaning, and Motivation; and 3) School and the Accomplishment of Its Educational Function.

Analysis of the interview with Sabrina

This section presents an analysis of the interview based on the three thematic axes outlined above.

The interruption of the schooling process

Drawing on the principles of Cultural-Historical Psychology, Abrantes and Bulhões (2016) argue that understanding human development requires moving beyond the biological and chronological maturation emphasised by biologising perspectives. As they state, “Contrarily, they are all conditioned by socioeconomic factors that make up the historical moment in which the individual is inserted” (p. 244). Consequently, understanding the characteristics of a particular stage of development requires consideration of individuals' relationships with their concrete material conditions and with the social, historical, political, and economic contexts in which these conditions emerge and take shape. In this regard, the concept of the leading activity is particularly relevant: “This activity serves the function of ‘guide’ for individuals’ psychological development at certain moments of their existence, constituting itself as a decisive activity among other social activities that make up the experience” (Abrantes & Bulhões, 2016, p. 241). At each stage of life, the leading activity acts as a driving force for transformations in an individual's relationship with reality.

Sabrina describes how beginning to work during early adolescence became central to other dimensions of her life. At a very young age, she had to confront the realities of capitalism by taking on part-time work: “I went to school and kept part-time jobs to help provide sustenance to my family.” As a member of a working-class family, she had little choice but to work under precarious conditions, a situation shared by other young people in similar circumstances and characteristic of the socioeconomic conditions experienced by the working classes (Abrantes & Bulhões, 2016). Work thus became the leading activity in Sabrina's life during adolescence, demanding time and commitment that limited her opportunities to engage in other activities that could contribute to her development and education.

Faced with the need to meet her basic needs, Sabrina decided to enter the workforce, and work became her leading activity, as is often the case for individuals from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. According to Leontiev (2004), the leading activity is not necessarily the activity in which individuals achieve the most. Rather, it is the activity that “determines the most important changes in the psychological processes in children and the psychological particularities of their personalities at a given stage of their development” (p. 312). The emergence of the leading activity therefore triggers and sustains the most significant psychological transformations in human development during particular periods of life.

As Trindade et al. (2023, p. 293) argue, understanding youth development requires attention to the positions individuals occupy within the material conditions of their lives. Sabrina is a young woman who must contribute to meeting basic needs, such as food and clothing, and therefore has to work to secure these necessities. As she explains, “The most important thing in our lives was our job and our sources of income so that we could dress and feed ourselves. But then I no longer had to go to school [...].” Her educational trajectory, particularly the interruption of her schooling, is shaped by the conditions associated with her socioeconomic class, which directly affect her development.

Given that working is an unavoidable necessity under her economic circumstances, it determines Sabrina's relationship with her studies. She explains: “I chose to keep my job [...] and set my studies aside” and “so I could help pay the rent and other house expenses... I prioritized my job [...] and stopped going to school for three years.” Like many young people enrolled in YAE, Sabrina needed to work and was unable to continue her studies. Her educational trajectory was therefore interrupted as she prioritised employment, which offered the prospect of meeting her basic needs and ensuring her family's survival.

The importance of schooling for human development lies in the significant transformations it can bring about in how individuals understand themselves and position themselves in the world. Schooling expands their knowledge and resources for understanding reality, thereby enabling richer and more complex forms of interaction with it. This is because “(...) it is in the movement of appropriation of scientific knowledge that students propel the development of their higher psychological functions and, consequently, of their very constitution” (Trindade et al., 2023, p. 281). The absence or interruption of formal education can significantly affect individuals' intellectual development. Sabrina describes experiencing these effects when she returned to school and found that “there was so much brushing up to be done.” After leaving school for three years, she experienced an interruption in her educational trajectory as a result of the demands imposed by capitalist socioeconomic conditions.

Sabrina's account is consistent with Abrantes and Bulhões' argument that “young people from the working class have to contribute to productivity at the same pace and model of exploitation that is imposed on adults (...) and have to discontinue their intellectual development in all its complexity” (2016, p. 248). The material conditions shaping these young people's lives are incompatible with their right to education, as guaranteed by Brazil's *Statute of the Child and Adolescent* (*Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente*, ECA, 1990), since this right is not adequately upheld in practice. The interruption of schooling therefore also interrupts educational development and compels students to prioritise employment as the leading activity in their lives.

YAE: social meaning, personal sense, and motivation

At a certain point in her life, Sabrina finds herself in a situation in which her interrupted schooling begins to constrain her professional opportunities. As she explains, "I was handing out resumes and many companies rejected my requests, no matter how much previous experience I had in higher positions." Faced with these restrictions on her professional prospects—a particularly important dimension of life in a capitalist, class-divided society—Sabrina responds: "with the help of this person I live with nowadays, one day I said, 'Well, it is time to go back to school, right!?'" With its specific organisational structure, YAE represented an appropriate means for Sabrina to overcome the barriers associated with her incomplete schooling. Its flexible structure would allow her to remain employed, which was essential to her survival, while improving her prospects for personal and professional development. As she explains, "The YAE is very important; [...] it was wonderful to be able to keep my job. The YAE helped us a lot because they provide us with the opportunity to study the content of two years in one year [...] you can finish the course faster and start making plans."

According to Longarezi and Franco (2013, pp. 94–95), "the origin of human psychological functions is located in the process of internalizing external activities, which takes place by means of man's activities in relation to others men and with nature." In examining the relationship between human beings and the world, Vygotsky highlights two important concepts: social meaning and personal sense. According to Asbahr (2014, p. 268), Vygotsky argues that "meanings are historical and transitory products and they reflect social relations; they are the product of the objective conditions that originated them and reflect objective reality in a special way by means of a generalization." The sense of a word, in turn, comprises the totality of psychological phenomena that it evokes in our consciousness. Sense is therefore a dynamic, fluid, and complex formation, comprising several zones of varying stability (Vygotsky, 1934/2001). Social meaning and personal sense are thus central to understanding the constitution of consciousness, as they illuminate fundamental aspects of how we understand the world as social beings.

Social meaning emerges from the historical development of humanity through its activities and the forms of social organisation that arise from them. Unlike personal sense, it is socially constituted and shared, whereas personal sense is dynamic and specific to the individual (Asbahr, 2014). Individuals encounter socially established meanings upon entering the world; these meanings are not created by each individual independently but are appropriated as consciousness develops. However, individuals can attribute personal sense to socially established meanings. The personal sense of a given meaning changes according to the circumstances and experiences of the person who attributes it. Throughout an individual's life, the same meaning can therefore acquire different personal senses.

Another important concept in this discussion is motivation, given its close relationship with personal sense. Asbahr (2014, p. 268) explains that sense is "created by the objective relation between the thing that provokes action by an individual (motivation for activity) and the thing to which action is oriented as an immediate result (end of action)." Motivation and the intended outcome of an activity are therefore central to the experience of personal sense and to understanding how it is constituted for the individual. It is essential, first, to identify the motive that gives rise to the activity.

To understand the social meaning of YAE, it is necessary to consider its legal and theoretical foundations. YAE is an educational modality offered free of charge, with evening classes designed to accommodate its target population, many of whose members work during the day. It is intended for individuals who did not have access to, or were unable to complete, basic and secondary education at the expected age. Designed specifically for this population, it constitutes a distinct component of the formal education system (Souza, 2011). From this perspective, the social meaning of YAE can be understood as the resumption of schooling and the appropriation of curricular knowledge through formal education.

Sabrina decided to enrol in YAE because she believed that doing so would improve her employment prospects. Initially, therefore, YAE acquired a personal sense for her that was associated with this specific purpose, rather than being understood primarily through its broader social meaning. Improving her educational qualifications offered her the prospect of accessing professional opportunities that she perceived as better, as illustrated by the following excerpt from her interview: "I was handing out resumes but many companies rejected me no matter how much previous experience I had in more important positions. I saw that it was very important in my life, right? That is when I decided to get YAE." Sabrina's account reveals that her engagement with YAE was initially driven by motives associated with the demands of the labour market. As she further explains, "it was great that I did not have to quit my job [...] many companies rejected me even though I had previous experience in higher positions."

For Sabrina, YAE represents an opportunity to broaden her professional prospects by acquiring qualifications that meet the demands of capitalist society. Despite the challenges and difficulties she continues to face in pursuing her future goals, she recognises the importance of learning, as reflected in her testimony: "You are there to really learn. So the YAE was very important to me."

However, as Sabrina experiences life as a YAE student, she discovers an educational space in which learning acquires a meaning that extends beyond employment. She reflects: "I thought I knew everything... Almost. But then, when you go back to school, you realize that you do not know everything, you were not aware of everything." She explains that returning to school has changed her understanding of the world. School helps individuals recognise the limits of

their knowledge and identify what they still need to learn. It also provides opportunities to appropriate new knowledge. As discussed in the theoretical framework, the relationship between educators and students is essential to the effectiveness of the schooling process. Learning takes place through teachers' mediation of students' relationships with knowledge. In this regard, Sabrina states: “the teachers, at least in the school I attended, are really good. I think that makes a difference, right? You are there to learn for sure.”

Initially, Sabrina's decision to enrol in this educational modality was motivated by the desire to meet the demands of capitalist society. However, as she became increasingly interested in curricular content, she gradually came to experience the broader social meaning of YAE. Through this process, she began to elaborate and reconfigure the “cultural-historical patrimony (signified field) so that when she appropriates knowledge and uses it, she is able to give it meaning” (Longarezi & Franco, 2013, p. 94). Personal sense expresses “(...) the individual’s relation with the internalized objective phenomena” (Asbahr, 2014, p. 268) and must be understood in relation to the motive that generates the activity.

Sabrina began her educational trajectory in YAE because she needed to obtain better qualifications. However, according to her account, despite having experience in positions typically occupied by individuals with higher educational qualifications, she was neither invited to interviews nor offered employment. Resuming her schooling did not simply lead her to focus on curricular content; it also helped her persevere through exhausting circumstances, as studying itself became a motivating activity that acquired personal significance. She explains: “I left work and went straight to school. At 11 pm I arrived home. But then I had to wake up at 6 in the morning. It took a lot of determination.”

The interviewee also describes how the COVID-19 pandemic affected her circumstances. Beginning in 2020, the pandemic necessitated isolation and social distancing, requiring societies worldwide to adapt and adopt remote alternatives for activities that had previously taken place in person. Education was profoundly affected, both globally and in Brazil. It was in this context that Sabrina began considering resuming her studies, but the pandemic imposed significant barriers that delayed her plans. As she recalls, “[...] it was during the pandemic that I decided to do the CESEC[2]. I signed up for classes and then there was the pandemic. The only option was remote education and I did not do it.” Faced with the need to resume her interrupted schooling, she eventually decided to return to her studies in 2022, after a two-year delay. As she explains, “I finally opened my eyes and said to myself, ‘Well, it is time to go back to school, right?’”

As a “(...) being that appropriates and transmits the social-historical practice by humanity and with the possibility to go through changes in a relation of double constitution” (Longarezi & Franco, 2013, p. 94), Sabrina illustrates a form of human development that cannot be reduced to biological and chronological maturation. Her trajectory demonstrates how development is

profoundly shaped by relationships with concrete material conditions, through which social meaning, personal sense, and motivation are continually reconfigured as she engages with YAE.

The school and the fulfilment of its educational function

The cultural development fostered through learning in school underpins the importance of education. By facilitating this process, schools enable individuals to develop their specifically human capacities through the appropriation of scientific knowledge. Furthermore, Freire (2021) argues that education should enable students, through their relationships with others, to recognise themselves as a "social and historical being, as a thinking, communicative, transforming, creative and dream-realizing being" (p. 42). In this sense, the knowledge Sabrina has appropriated brings her closer to what can be understood as the fundamental purpose of education: the development of human potential.

Sabrina describes the profound impact that YAE has had on her life. Through her relationship with knowledge, she has become aware of changes in how she sees herself and how she relates to the social context in which she lives. As she explains, "Everything got better, my general knowledge, the way I talked, and the way I thought. I used to think I knew everything [...], but then when you go back to school, you finally realize that you don't know everything [...]." She also highlights how learning new things helped her recognise the need to consolidate and expand her knowledge: "I needed a lot of brushing up: my knowledge in math and Portuguese – my way of talking." Her educational development is driven by her desire to establish a better relationship with the world around her, particularly through her interactions with others. As Vargas and Gomes (2013, p. 452) explain, "Education can promote mental development as the socially elaborated content of human knowledge and the cognitive strategies for internalization are employed in social and educational interactions". The impact of YAE on Sabrina's social relationships becomes apparent when she acknowledges "the importance of really having knowledge. It makes a huge difference… in social matters, right? When it comes to talking to people it makes a huge difference."

The motive that initially led Sabrina to resume her studies—improving her employment prospects—is also connected to the knowledge she acquired. This illustrates one of the fundamental functions of schooling. Obtaining her secondary school certificate was important to Sabrina, particularly because it was a requirement for accessing employment opportunities. As Saviani (1991, p. 7) states, "Knowing how to think and feel; to know how to want, to assess, and to take action it is necessary to learn, which implies educational work." Sabrina's account illustrates how her educational experience subsequently enhanced her employment prospects through activities that directly contributed to her intellectual

development. She explains: “During job interviews, it makes a huge difference having written all those compositions... and the development of learning how to write well.”

Sabrina's narrative therefore suggests that the school fulfilled its educational function by fostering her human development and the development of her higher psychological functions, including language, perception, and attention. Initially, Sabrina viewed schooling primarily as a necessary step towards obtaining better employment. Through her educational experience, however, she came to recognise the importance of knowledge for her quality of life, broadening the ways in which she relates to the world and to other people. Her experience enabled her to see the world from a new perspective.

Conclusions

This study aimed to understand the impact of the schooling process on the lives of young people and adults enrolled in YAE. Sabrina's narrative reveals that she belongs to a population group that has historically experienced restricted access to education and opportunities for intellectual development. These individuals must contend with financial pressures arising from a society characterised by socioeconomic inequality and injustice. As a member of the working class, Sabrina had to take on low-paid work from an early age, sacrificing considerable time and energy. Consequently, she soon faced the need to leave school and confront the hardships of working life. Paradoxically, however, her experience of the labour market eventually became one of the factors that motivated her to resume her studies. She became aware that her interrupted schooling restricted her professional opportunities and recognised the importance of returning to education.

YAE emerged as an educational modality that enabled Sabrina to reconcile these competing demands: earning a living while completing her schooling. She was able to remain employed while completing her studies in less time than would typically be required in conventional educational programmes. In this sense, YAE can be understood as an inclusive educational policy because it responds to the social, educational, and material conditions that have historically prevented young people and adults from accessing or continuing their education. Inclusion, therefore, involves more than providing access to education; it also requires creating the conditions necessary for students to remain in school, appropriate knowledge, participate in social life, and develop their potential.

Through this renewed educational experience, Sabrina developed an interest in knowledge that enabled her to envision new possibilities for her life and transform her relationship with herself and the world. This process involved the re-elaboration of social meaning, personal sense, and motivation in relation to schooling. Through this process, the school was able to fulfil its fundamental function of promoting human development and emancipation. Sabrina's experience demonstrates that inclusive educational practices can help overcome barriers to

schooling while expanding the possibilities for individuals to understand themselves, relate to others, and participate in society.

Sabrina decided to return to school because she believed that YAE would help her meet the demands of the labour market. By the time she obtained her diploma, however, she was able to recognise the broader changes that education had brought about in her life. YAE had helped her establish herself differently in both personal and social terms. This transformation extended beyond the demands of working life, as Sabrina became increasingly engaged in the educational process with greater interest and commitment. Her narrative shows that inclusion is not simply a matter of placing individuals within an educational institution; it is also a process through which they are recognised as historical and social subjects and given opportunities to develop through access to socially produced knowledge. In recounting her own story, Sabrina illustrates her capacity to draw on "one of the most significant advantages of human beings – the capacity to go beyond conditioning elements" (Freire, 2021, p. 27), thereby continuing to learn and develop what may be considered one of the defining characteristics of human beings: their humanity.

Despite its limitations, this study invites further investigation into the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on this educational modality. Further research into the impact of YAE on the educational trajectories of young people and adults is also needed to enable us to hear more stories like Sabrina's and better understand the conditions that shape their educational experiences. Such research is important for strengthening inclusive educational practices and policies that recognise education not as a privilege, but as an inalienable right. In this regard, and in keeping with Paulo Freire's perspective, learning can be understood as a political act through which individuals develop their capacity to understand and transform the world.

Notes

1 In order to preserve the participant's identity, the researchers came up with a fictitious name.

2 "The School Centro Estadual de Educação Continuada de Uberlândia – CESEC, Uberlândia, is a state public school that is supported by the State Government of Minas Gerais and is focused on the Education of Young People and Adults (YAE) in the mode of semi-onsite learning." Available at https://cesecuberlandia.wordpress.com

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Inclusive Design as an Interdisciplinary Approach to Teacher Professionalisation

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Abstract

The increasing diversity in contemporary classrooms demands a redefinition of teaching skills, requiring approaches that transcend traditional pedagogical boundaries. This chapter analyses the potential of Inclusive Design as a strategic, interdisciplinary approach to teacher training and professionalisation. Inclusive design can be considered as an approach to professionalisation in different areas of education and training. Students and teachers of all curricular units can find participatory approaches through Inclusive Design which can be mapped, represented and evaluated using a matrix (MID). The concepts developed by Paula Trigueiros in *Inspiring designers: Mapping as a means to inspire Inclusion through Design* (MID) (2024) and by Susanne Römer in *Inklusive Lernszenarien: Das Konzept der reflektierten Selbsterfahrung(en)* [Inclusive Learning Scenarios: The Concept of Reflective Self-Experience(s)] (2023) demonstrate this approach through a constructive intersection. Inclusion is thus understood as a process of mutual participation that can be advanced individually through creative thinking, observation and self-experience. Moving away from a purely reactive stance toward curricular adaptation, Inclusive Design advocates the proactive creation of learning environments, materials, and strategies that are inherently accessible to all students from the outset. Through a theoretical review and the analysis of interdisciplinary practices — at the intersection of educational sciences, design, and digital technologies — this study examines how integrating these principles into initial and continuing teacher education can foster the development of critical and reflective competencies. The findings suggest that a design-based mindset empowers educators to act

as change agents, transforming classroom heterogeneity into a pedagogical resource and consolidating equity as a core pillar of professional teaching identity.

Keywords

Inclusive Design; Teacher Professionalisation; Interdisciplinarity; Inclusive Education; Teacher Training.

“Learning designers” are designers

The term design has expanded considerably in comparison with contemporary discourse and today goes beyond its traditional associations with industrial, graphic or architectural work. It increasingly includes ideas for the conception, structuring and implementation of solutions in various areas. It becomes interesting when this extended definition is transferred to systems, such as educational offerings. The experts in these systems could then be referred to as “learning designers”. Teachers are inextricably linked to a process of creation, problem solving and user orientation. This reflects the work of their colleagues in other design disciplines. Their responsibilities include creating curricula, developing engaging learning experiences, designing teaching materials, and structuring educational environments. Their work has a direct impact on the accessibility, effectiveness and equity of learning for different groups. Reflecting on these processes considering the inclusive principles is therefore becoming increasingly important. The idea that “learning designers are also designers” underscores a broader understanding of design, here as a universal activity of conscious design and problem-solving. Regardless of the sector – be it physical products, digital interfaces, services or education systems – the basic principles of design remain unchanged: understand the needs of users, develop solutions iteratively and strive for optimal results. Consequently, the challenges faced by designers, such as navigating through complex information, taking into account different user profiles and fostering innovation, are universal in all these different areas. The challenges of information overload, the preference for intuitive tools and the pressure of lack of time and cognitive stress are of great importance for learning designers who need to bring together pedagogical theories, subject-didactic approaches and the different needs of learners. This universality suggests that solutions developed for a particular design area could provide a transferable framework for further developing inclusion in all design disciplines, including education. The applicability and potential impact of Inclusive Design as a meta-discipline can therefore be considered cross-disciplinary.

> The starting point for this proposal is the belief that Design can be more inclusive when designers have a more informed perception of the problems, and hence of the opportunities available that enable them to push for a better world. (Trigueiros, 2024, p. 97)

From design to inclusion

How can design shift from a purely material and commercial focus to a socially and educationally oriented mission of inclusion? To explore this, design students observed how individuals with specific needs creatively solved daily challenges using small adaptations of conventional materials or "tools". By engaging directly with these individuals, the students learned about their firsthand experiences and aspirations. This shift in perspective — moving from abstract technical design to empathetic, personal contact in real-world situations — allowed students to develop functional and appealing tools that truly "solved problems for people".

Through this process, the students redefined their professional mission: their role was now to identify and solve "good problems". They began transforming standardised everyday objects that previously acted as barriers, adapting or repurposing them for new situations. Driven by creative thinking, they developed simple, meaningful, and aesthetically pleasing solutions that restored dignity to previously frustrating tasks.

A perfect historical example of this inclusive evolution is the pair of glasses. Initially, eyeglasses were an expensive, specialised luxury available only to a privileged few. Later, they became a social stigma — mocked as a visual defect. Today, however, they are a universally affordable, accepted, and even fashionable everyday accessory. The journey of the glasses — from a rare "reading stone" to a stigmatised necessity, and finally to a democratic design success — perfectly illustrates how specialised tools can successfully transition into universal, inclusive solutions.

> I recently got my first pair of reading glasses. Having wanted glasses since I was a child, I now feel somewhat ambivalent towards them and have to make a concerted effort to wear them before my eyes begin to show the tell-tale signs of too much screen time. Personal adjustments aside, I am reminded of Graham Pullin's reflections on glasses in his compelling book Design Meets Disability. Glasses are a rare example of a product originally designed for disability that has transitioned from being a source of stigma for the wearer to becoming mainstream. In fact, for some people – my younger self included – wearing glasses is aspirational, an opportunity to quietly tell people something about yourself. It is a credit to designers that societal attitudes towards glasses have shifted so radically. And we need more of this. (Burrows, as cited in Trigueiros, 2024, p. 7)

Inclusive Design: creative thinking for a better world

Inclusive Design means developing and creating things and spaces in such a way that everyone can live better together. Existing specific details or processes that were once intended for very specific solutions can be seen as part of a whole, a development similar to an evolutionary process. It can therefore be asked whether this specificity, this process in a modified form, could be useful and supportive for other situations. Inclusive Design asks how this diversity perspective of existing things, methods, and situations could be used more proactively in all areas of life. Inclusion should not be understood as a freeze in the coexistence of people, but as a basic approach to creatively thinking about traditional and standardised situations. This rethinking lays the basis for diverse participation in the whole.

Students recognised that disabilities and impairments — i.e., barriers — arise only from a rather bad, incorrect, or standardised design. This also applies to other social contexts. What constitutes a future "good design" there? Design should be able to construct something in such a way as to achieve something positive with it. With this paradigm shift, products, services, and even systems can be challenged in terms of the degree of their inclusive design. This inspiring, creative approach helps to develop and design solutions that make sense for people and support participation in a world that, above all, overflows with experience. In a figurative sense, Inclusive Design can be seen as an approach to triggering justice and positive social change. Taking on this mission as a social goal appears to be a complex challenge that can never be completely solved. But it's not about good or bad design; it's about making it better or worse, as illustrated by C. Ryan.

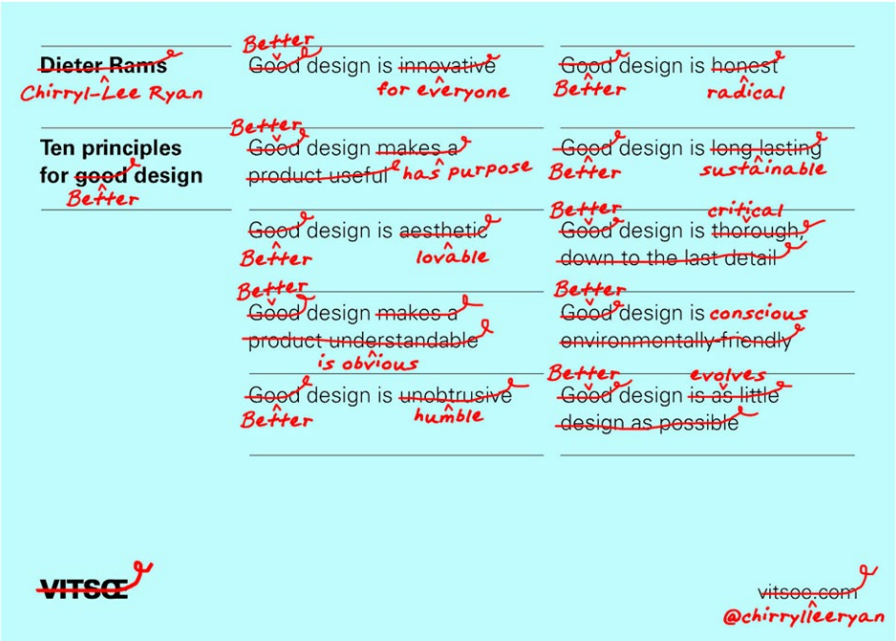

Fig. 1 Changing the of Dieter Rams' "10 principles for Good Design" to better Design (C.Ryan, as cited in Trigueiros, 2024, p. 39).

Much of what has been taken for granted so far – here in the classic design course – can no longer be maintained under the idea of Inclusive Design due to increasing complexity and societal challenges. The new approach also fits with the requirements for sustainable development:

> The adjective "inclusive" is probably the most repeated word in the United Nations' seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). Talking about sustainability is almost akin to promoting balanced, socially inclusive and responsible solutions. (Trigueiros, 2024, p. 14)

The experience with Inclusive Design can be applied to educational and social science courses with the following questions: How can we develop "good / better education", "good /better school", i.e. inclusive, participatory education? Which approaches, structures, and methods would only have to be adapted with a view to individual needs? How is it possible to turn the perspective and not to see the problem in the challenges of certain groups of people, but to recognise solutions in variations of existing concepts and offers? Leading questions could be: How is it possible to meet all students with suitable offers and structures? How can equitable participation in education be achieved? Which approaches to learning and teaching are good for everyone? The starting point of the considerations begins with an overview of the existing offers and methods (content, organisation, time, personnel, …). Curiosity about Inclusive Design should be continually fostered among students across all teacher education programmes. For student teachers, even small creative steps can help them to develop and adapt teaching and educational offerings and structures creatively, so that all children can participate in education.

From the specific to the general – Inclusive Design in pedagogy

In everyday school life, tools and methods have been and continue to be developed to help pupils learn better. Especially in the field of special education, well-evaluated concepts and preventive support measures can be found, which can be used to address specific needs. These offerings can be identified as tools in the context of Inclusive Design. In inclusive teaching and learning settings, teachers often recognise that these tools could also be meaningful and effective for all other children. The following are some well-known examples:

- text optimisation, voice sensitivity, visualisation, low-noise environment, subtitling, Voice output, …
- peer learning, group work, projects, differentiation, individual adaptation of teaching periods, mixed-age groups, …
- time and classroom management, cooperation, team teaching, participation, …
- room design, specific adaptation of teaching materials, …

- team consulting, funding planning, multi-professional teams, social space orientation…

Some of these tools have already been developed independently of specific impairments in individual and inclusive learning settings, have been creatively adapted to the learning environments and people – designed – and are successively being incorporated into so-called "regular teaching". Also well-known "lighthouse projects" and award-winning schools testify that educational offerings can now be organised in more diverse and, consequently, more participatory ways and they are awarded for this! The trained eye and possibly the courage to professionalise and implement these experiences didactically and methodologically in the light of new requirements are still lacking. Or, as proposed in Trigueiros (2024): Teacher education students need to be made curious about Inclusive Pedagogy by having their creative ideas – adapted methods, concepts, structures – have a positive impact ("good problems") in terms of participation in education. What initial considerations could lead students and teachers to adapt – to design inclusively – educational offerings?

Trigueiros observed students with many talents and resources. However, she also saw their frustration and lack of motivation in her subject. The product designs contained little meaningful content and showed only short-term solutions. The results were also not very inspiring. Apparently, the previous design training involved conducting theoretical discourses and designing functional objects according to established criteria and traditional standards, which no longer make sense to the students: How was it possible to adapt the approach and questions of the study programme in light of these observations? What new goals need to be prioritised? One approach was that the field of Design had to engage more with current societal challenges. Students should design creative solutions to make the world a better place. Together with the students, the search for "good problems" started. Problems, questions and possible solutions initially focused on a specific person. Specific designs could then be transferred to other areas. In this process lies the common notion that "we are all a bit of designers" (Jones, as cited in Trigueiros, 2024, p. 40).

> In the academic context, exercises on Inclusive Design usually entail observing people. As well as raising awareness and empathy among young people, the purpose of this approach to the real world is to find a calling for the project, in other words, a good problem. (Trigueiros, 2024, p. 40).

They can use their skills to adapt the environment and thus change and improve it for people. In addition, they developed more self-confidence and gained motivation for their profession. The power of change lies in the small creative steps and adjustments to make participation in society more successful.

This access can be transferred to larger systems and concepts, such as educational offerings and inclusive teaching and learning settings, and can contribute to the professionalisation of

teachers in this context. The UN-Convention on The Rights of Person with Disabilities (2006) (UN CRPD) calls for an adaptation of the education system towards an inclusive approach, i.e. participation in the education of all persons. The current challenge is to develop models of educational offerings in education systems that adequately respond to the increasing heterogeneous demands of society. The educational structure and corresponding curricula, which were previously organised around a more linear progression of performance, preclude individual life biographies and developmental trajectories in all educationally relevant phases of life (kindergarten, school, education and university). An inclusive transformation of the education system can only take place through its constant changes with the aim of a common educational idea. Hensel (2025) summarises the challenge in his research study on educational and transition trajectories in a field of tension between continuity and discontinuity for people with different biographies and developmental trajectories as follows:

> One reason for this is that school is not assigned the task of providing support during crisis events in its traditional understanding as an institution for the education and upbringing of children and young people, nor in its legal requirements or social function attributions. (Hensel, 2025, p. 32)

As a consequence, the well-known principle applies: learners should not adapt to the education system, but educational offerings should adapt to learners. Access to and provision of education would therefore have to be developed in such a way that the greatest possible number of people could benefit from the education system, develop and be motivated to learn from it. In order to meet this requirement, flexibility, creativity and variability in educational offerings, together with a corresponding level of professionalisation among pedagogical staff, are prerequisites.

In the debate on Inclusive Pedagogy, according to Degenhardt (2025), the idea is currently changing from looking at the specificity of certain impairments to the category of "barrier as a central concept". The basis for this is, as an example here in the area of visual impairment and blindness, that only the maximum variety of the sighted can be taken into account. "The potential of disengaging from visual dominance in didactic settings cannot be lifted without an immanent presence of people with impaired vision and blindness (…) and pedagogical professionals in this area." (Degenhardt, 2025, p. 27) It was initially not relevant to describe the specific deficits of a particular group of people, but rather the social and educational difficulties, barriers and limits that conflict with the requirements of diversity. It is important to "promote the transition from inclusive solutions that follow barriers to inclusive solutions that anticipate barriers and are barrier-free in the coming years". (ibid. p. 28) Degenhardt argues that inclusion must finally be understood as a flexible process. The focus should not be on the child, as is demanded in many contributions, but on individual educational planning adapted to the child. Henriksen and Wanka (2025) continue to call for this urgent professional change of perspective, including in the understanding of Inclusive Design. They

clearly make this point in the context of people with complex impairments: The "principle of human potentials" demands for activity, stimulation and social inclusion on all (!) people. This has practical implications: It calls for the study of concepts of joint teaching and learning. Educational processes must be of high quality and be determined by the fundamental conviction that people do not want to be bored. They need and are looking for suggestions and impulses in a social community. It is therefore essential to identify the essence of the educational content – which is generally understood as a factual analysis – and to identify barriers to access. The reduction in the number of educational offerings to prevent alleged overloading must be replaced by the question: How can access to demanding and suitable content be realised? In practice, educational goals would be set with the knowledge that not all of them can be achieved. Nor does anyone assume that all educational offerings will be received in a lasting way by all pupils in mainstream schools. For people with complex impairments, this is exactly what is required. It is postulated in advance that this or that is too difficult, overwhelming, never achievable or too complicated. These people are deprived of the need for recognition, the experience of being evaluated. (Degenhardt, 2025, p. 191)

> To avoid creating barriers to access to education by addressing the needs and starting points of all learners, the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has become commonplace. (…) To identify potential barriers, the core of the subject matter must be named and known. (…) The mission is to identify the individual accesses of the pupils and to remove or reduce barriers. The fact that educational content (even demanding) is 'nothing for a particular pupil' must be well founded, e.g. by identifying this content as not significant for the lives of the learners or as not exemplary enough. However, the content of education itself must not serve as a reason. (ibid. p. 193)

The demand for inclusive didactics in the sense of educational equity and access to education applies here. Differentiated method teaching and individualised learning offerings alone do not ensure clear access to education. "Designing for many, instead of designing for money. (…) Students should be encouraged to work in this manner." (Papanek, 1971, as cited in Trigueiros, 2024, p. 24)

In the context of participation in education, the mandate for professionalisation could be reformulated as follows: develop educational offerings for all learners (designing), rather than teaching and assessing according to standardised specifications and linear offerings. Teachers should be empowered to analyse and creatively use the potential of existing offerings in a flexible and pedagogically guided manner, in order to ensure dignified and non-discriminatory participation in education for all. To achieve this goal, it is important to enhance teachers' professionalisation and provide them with appropriate criteria.

The initial spark for professionalisation in this context comes from conversations and observations on the ground to learn what people need (to learn) and what they need (to use) things for. Teachers need to be empowered to ask what learners are building to learn.

Students should engage in conversations with learners at the respective place of education, observe, analyse processes, try out and reject ideas together and in a participatory way. In the end, they may find that not only can their designs make sense for the specific requirements, but they can also make sense for others, making life and learning easier for many in one way or another.

Access to professionalisation in this sense can be found in the concept of 'reflected self-experience' (Römer, 2023) in which teachers are confronted in training settings with learning tasks or situations that seem to be overwhelming for them at the moment and that they consider insoluble. They adopt the perspective of students in the learning scenarios. The personal experience of failure despite a subjective perception of possessing existing competences causes some people to feel ashamed and not confident in their own abilities. If people are asked what kind of support they would have needed to cope with the tasks, they develop a variety of individual and often relatively easy-to-implement solution approaches or ways of differentiating educational offerings, without changing the actual performance requirement. The self-experienced shift of perspective and the subsequent reflection on it show them how teaching and learning offerings could often only be adapted and changed in small steps and individually in order to create a positive, inclusive teaching and learning atmosphere for everyone without limiting the professional performance goal. The shift in perspective introduced by Trigueiros in design courses, towards "good problems", and Römer's concept of reflected self-experience in teacher education, training and continuing professional development generate a form of empowerment for individuals and their respective professions.

Theoretical transfer and evaluation: Inclusive Design criteria and the MID approach

How does this pedagogical empowerment address the societal challenges in the educational context? What criteria could lecturers, colleagues and fellow students apply to inclusive teaching and learning opportunities in order to recognise noticeable and implementable changes?

Jones (Trigueiros, 2024, p. 43) developed the criteria of flexibility, professionalism in adaptation, integration of processes and social impact for Inclusive Design.

How is a transfer to Pedagogy conceivable?

- Flexibility: participate in the development of creative adaptations (spatial, temporal, personnel-related) and differentiations for the respective subjective requirements and individual learning requirements/conditions;

- Professionalism: use professionally and scientifically evaluated arguments to adapt to individual situations and professional content;
- Integration of processes: Exchange of experiences, transfer and cooperation in processes and structures (multi-professional team);
- Social impact: Appreciative and trusting relationship design in all teaching-learning processes.

Access to inclusive design encourages motivation for the chosen profession while requiring courage and innovation to think of creative solutions outside of norms. The approach of generalizing solutions found leads to the further development of the entire process: shaping participation in education. “There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem (…) Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but better or worse (…)” (Rittel & Webber, 1973, as cited in Jones, 2014, p. 6).

The MID matrix (Mapping as a means to inspire Inclusion through Design) accompanies the process of Inclusive Design in terms of content, structure and evaluation. MID was developed in the field of product design and can be applied in any field. MID is used to visualise ideas and creative solutions within the framework of Inclusive Design. The matrix is used at the beginning of each project. In order to work with it in a result-oriented manner, a task or an application goal is formulated or defined in concrete terms at the beginning. MID initially promotes the comprehensive search for existing solutions or best practices and draws on the diversity of existing and possible offerings. With the changed perspective of Inclusive Design, the search for solutions shifts to the level of existing market offers and to the degree of differentiation and specificity required by the application objective. Thus, the tools on offer are checked for their usability and customisation options, rather than individual people being assessed.

The reference model consists of two axes. The horizontal axis refers to the distribution networks of products and services in an existing market, with solutions for daily use placed on the left (Undifferentiated Market) and specific and technical objects (e.g. occupational activities, competitive sports and health) placed on the right (specialised market). On the vertical axis, the profile of the users is taken into account for each task: general profiles are placed above, and profiles with specific requirements below. These axes form four quadrants (Q1-Q4) in which products (here, tools) and/or services are placed according to the potential requirements or questions identified at the beginning of the process (Trigueiros, 2024. p. 103).

Practical adaptations and content modifications of the tools require dynamic, creative thinking, depending on the task. If suitable solutions are found for a question in all quadrants, this shows the intensity and functionality of an inclusive system. All people can then

participate in the task in their own way. It is a creative challenge to rethink existing structures and offers or to courageously change and adapt them according to the requirements. People learn to think "out of the box", to change concrete objects and seemingly standardised offers, i.e. to work in an "open-minded" way, whereby general comprehensive usage profiles are mapped above and the requirements of people with more specific needs are mapped below.

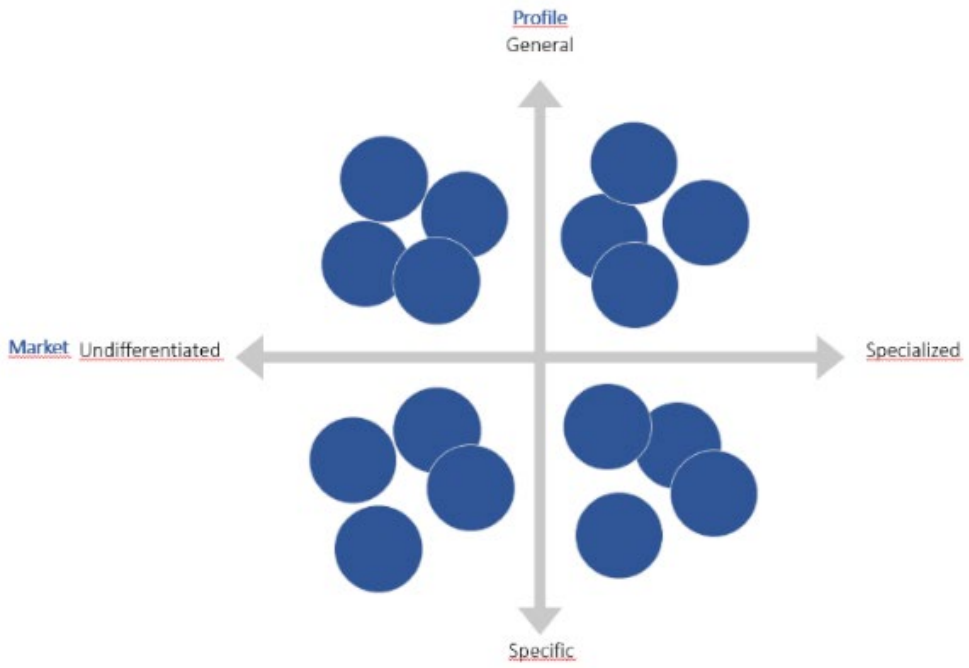

Figure 2: MID's visualisation of a fully effective inclusive system: all four quadrants are filled with different offers to solve a problem or a specific task.

Dynamics in the MID Illustrate Inclusive Processes

Possible shifts within the MID matrix illustrate how proactive solutions can be meaningfully adapted within the framework of Inclusive Design:

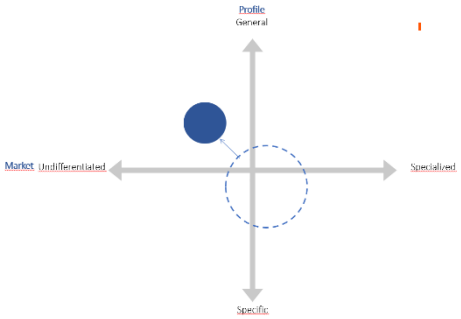	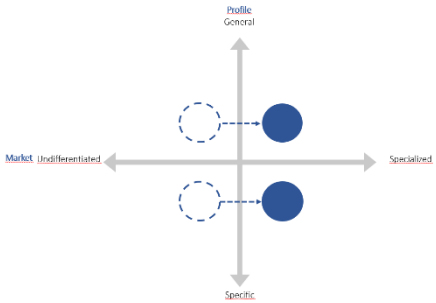
Developments of products found in Q2 Q3 and Q4 shall be transformed to move to Q1 promoting inclusion by increasing choices for everyone When specific, specialised tools (from Q2-Q4) become useful for everyone, generalisable 'good solutions' develop. Here you will find a variety of 'tools' for everyday needs that can be accessed and understood by everyone. Examples: spectacles developed from specific visual aids for all; specific voice input systems for digital texts become tools for people who cannot write alone/without aid; concepts/pictograms from the Supported Communication (UK) are used as guidance systems at airports; …	**Specific tools move into the more general market than variable offers.** Specialised/specific tools (from science, professional work contexts, …) serve a more general market/need via redesign and adaptation. Thus, more people use these means of access to be able to participate. Examples: Generally speaking, learning apps develop from specific apps for specific applications; special daylight lamps for greenhouse plants are also suitable for offices and night work; GPS systems for space probes are used for Auto-Navis; ramps for wheelchairs are useful for pushchairs, suppliers and rollators; …

Figure 3 a) Examples of dynamics in the MID (illustrations adapted from Trigueiros, 2024)

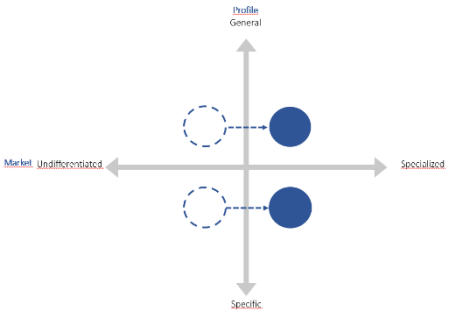	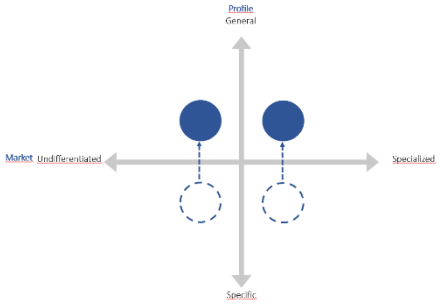
Generalised tools are used for specialised alternatives. Common products/offers receive a higher quality through professionally justified additions, extensions and functional changes, thus expanding their application possibilities for certain people/specific applications. Examples: via the smartphone, videos in sign language and language apps facilitate communication; tablets enable diverse individual learning opportunities via variable apps.	**Adapted tools are useful for more general applications, and thus interesting for the market again.** Complex, individual tools are often costly and hardly allow alternatives. Through creative adjustments for Q2 and Q3, practical alternatives can be developed more cheaply. Examples: rubber holders on pens for people with gripping problems can also be used to support writing in initial lessons; specific technical research on hearing aids supports, e.g., the music and construction industries by developing specific hearing protection devices.

Figure 3 b) Examples of dynamics in the MID (illustrations adapted from Trigueiros, 2024)

Practical Example 1

The lead task or application goal could be: What options (tools) are available on the market for the task of "Taking notes and keeping thoughts"? How can they be used creatively, and for whom and in which situation(s) can they be sensibly adapted?

What 'tools' are there to be used? How can they possibly be adapted for the necessary situations in teaching and learning settings?

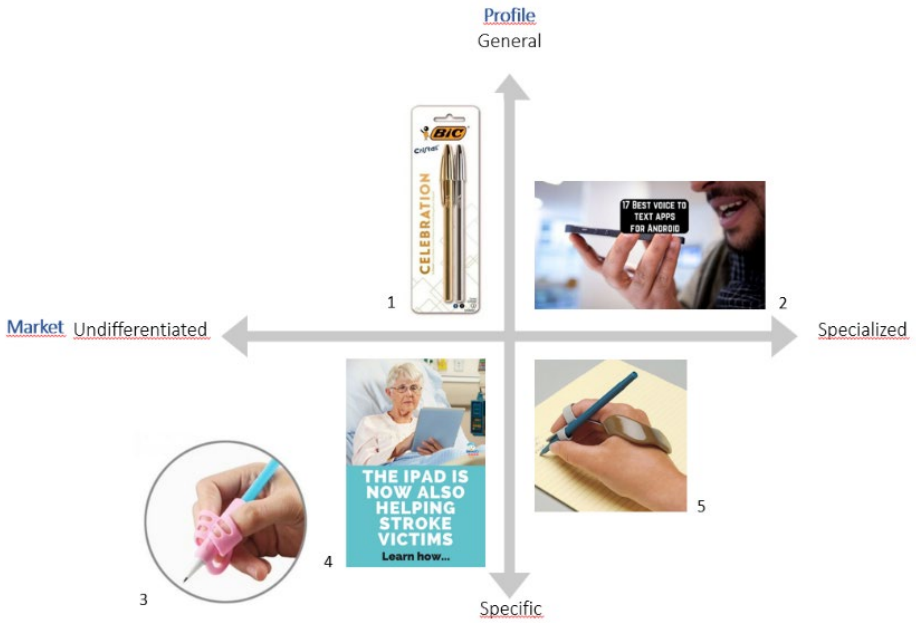

Fig. 4 Examples of how to map some existing tools for the task "talking notes during a class"

(Q1) A simple pen can be used in a normal notebook. There are many options, including colours, shapes, and types of markers and notebooks, available everywhere.

(Q2) In some specific contexts, such as field research or interview research, it may be useful to choose voice recording apps/devices and convert them to text.

(Q3) There are various devices that can be used by children when learning to write, for control or more precise hand movements. Also, the iPad, which is available on the general market, contains options for people with visual impairment or allows users to write directly with their finger.

(Q4) Offers (tools) designed individually for people with specific motor disabilities to facilitate holding a pen or pencil. These offers are individual productions from specialist shops.

Results: Through creativity, a variety of offers and the intention to enable everyone to write or record their thoughts, at least by technical means, the respective offers can be individually

adapted and used. A standard according to which writing (and learning to write) is only possible with a pen (a fountain pen in the second year of primary school) is overcome through this variety of offers, in order to provide universal access to the underlying (educational) idea: creating notes and recording thoughts. The possibility of variation supports a wide range of individual needs.

Learning to design educational concepts for needs: professionalisation of teachers

Until now, students in the field of design had not dealt with the living environment of people with disabilities. The same applies to the training of regular school teachers. Pupils with disabilities still do not pose regular challenges for those training to become teachers in mainstream schools, as they are usually still "supplied" (in addition) at special education schools or with specific assistance or by accompanying special education teachers in inclusion. The traditional structures will continue to be maintained. The Inclusive Design approach would allow students and teachers in continuing education and training to develop creative ideas that would provide them with realistic and practical solutions. Throughout the matrix, a wide range of mostly existing opportunities could be collected, which teachers can adapt in a variety of ways, flexibly and creatively for their teaching and learning offerings.

In the context of the Inclusive Design approach, the pedagogical-didactic function shifts from its traditional focus on teaching curricular content and ensuring its retention to the "form of the offering", which adapts to the learners' opportunities and resources. This type of thinking is the prerequisite for designing, for the teaching of design and for designing learning opportunities in a variety of ways. This requires a deep professional understanding of the learning objectives justified on didactic grounds in order to link the curricular content with the individual requirements of the learner. If this principle of access is incorporated into the MID, it will include approaches to professionalisation in the design of inclusive educational offerings.

Practical Example 2:

Application objective with regard to structural educational concepts: What is the 'educational market' already producing in terms of teaching and learning concepts, teaching and learning structures and offerings?

Q1: general & general Interdisciplinary teaching and learning opportunities; subject-linking teaching and learning opportunities; interest-based projects; year-to-year teaching and learning opportunities; temporal-development-logically adapted structures (bio-psycho-social approach); examples: community schools; general schools; …	**Q2: special & alternative** Gymnasium; distance learning; digital learning; individual learning; autonomous learning; informal learning; music schools, sports schools; sports clubs; services in the social sector; various elective areas: e.g. scientific; musical; linguistic; technical; sporting offerings; …
Q3: original & basic Tutoring institutions; free schools; digital tools and apps; multilingual teaching; classroom management; multi-professional teams; development plans; development reports; funding planning; suspension of grades; development talks; learning to learn; …	**Q4: individual & subject-specific** Supported communication; sign language; sign language interpreters; visualisation; assistance; simple language; easy language; compensation for disadvantages; lift, blindfold systems; wireless acoustic transmission equipment; behavioural training; digital apps; teaching and learning structuring; individual support planning; TEACCH[1] approach; hospital schools; special schools/special education schools; home-based learning; pedagogical teaching aids; …

Table 1 Examples of what the educational market already does/produces distributed in the MID

The completed matrix proves a variety of well-known concepts and tools for participation in education. In case of specific individual needs, the necessary parameters would have to be searched for and adapted to the situation on site. This calls for creative thinking, Inclusive Design in the sense of solving "good problems". In order to professionalise teachers, in addition to basic didactic and methodological training, competences and criteria such as change of perspective regarding the role as a teacher; reflection of one's own professionalism and profession with regard to the concept of education and the image of man; cooperation and dialogue; consulting in multi-professional teams; relationship work; pedagogical diagnostics and much more.

Final thoughts

Both approaches, the change of perspective advocated by Trigueiros in design courses and Römer's emphasis on reflected self-experience in education, and initial and continuing teacher education, generate a form of empowerment for individuals and their respective professions. The Inclusive Design approach and the overarching goal of solving "good problems" combine the competence and professionalism of designers of all kinds with the challenges of today's society. This approach requires a conscious, professional and thus theoretically enlightened approach in all areas in order to implement the expectations and needs of all people and thus the demands of society (here in the context of the UN CRPD).

[1] Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children.

The approach calls on professionals to apply their knowledge with sensitivity to the specific context of their respective areas, remain open to inspiration regarding possible directions for development, and have the courage to act. These requirements for change and adaptation call for a professional foundation that enables the recognition and generation of solutions, while also allowing openness, alternative approaches and room for the unusual. This form of professionalism entails certain skills:

> In all, these attributes shape the profile of extraordinary people: Sensitive, attentive, talented when it comes to communication and interpersonal relationships. Who need to study information in order to compare their proposals with the pragmatic criteria of the business world. "It's not easy being a good designer! (Trigueiros, 2024, p. 94)

In a figurative sense, Inclusive Design can encourage a greater focus on the new modalities of social practices and requirements in research fields in a wide variety of disciplines, in order to enable the participation and mobilisation of many people. It should be possible to think of inclusion outside disability or special education and the social and health sectors. Professionals should be sensitised to recognise barriers, so that participation and sharing and thus a successive positive change in the direction of the requirements of the UN CRPD become possible. By signing the UN CRPD, the state implicitly committed itself to the principle of equitable participation. This commitment forms part of an overall strategy that pertains to all areas of society and keeps social equality constantly in view, in the context of sustainable development. "Disability in this context does not primarily refer to the incapacity of a person and its causes, but rather to the obstacles to the development of capabilities." (Heimlich, 2014, p. 2)

Or with Trigueiros: "The success of a tool always depends on the skill of the person using it. We're looking forward to the next steps – when the MID Referential Model takes on a life of its own in the hands of other Inclusive Design enthusiasts." (Trigueiros, 2024, p. 129)

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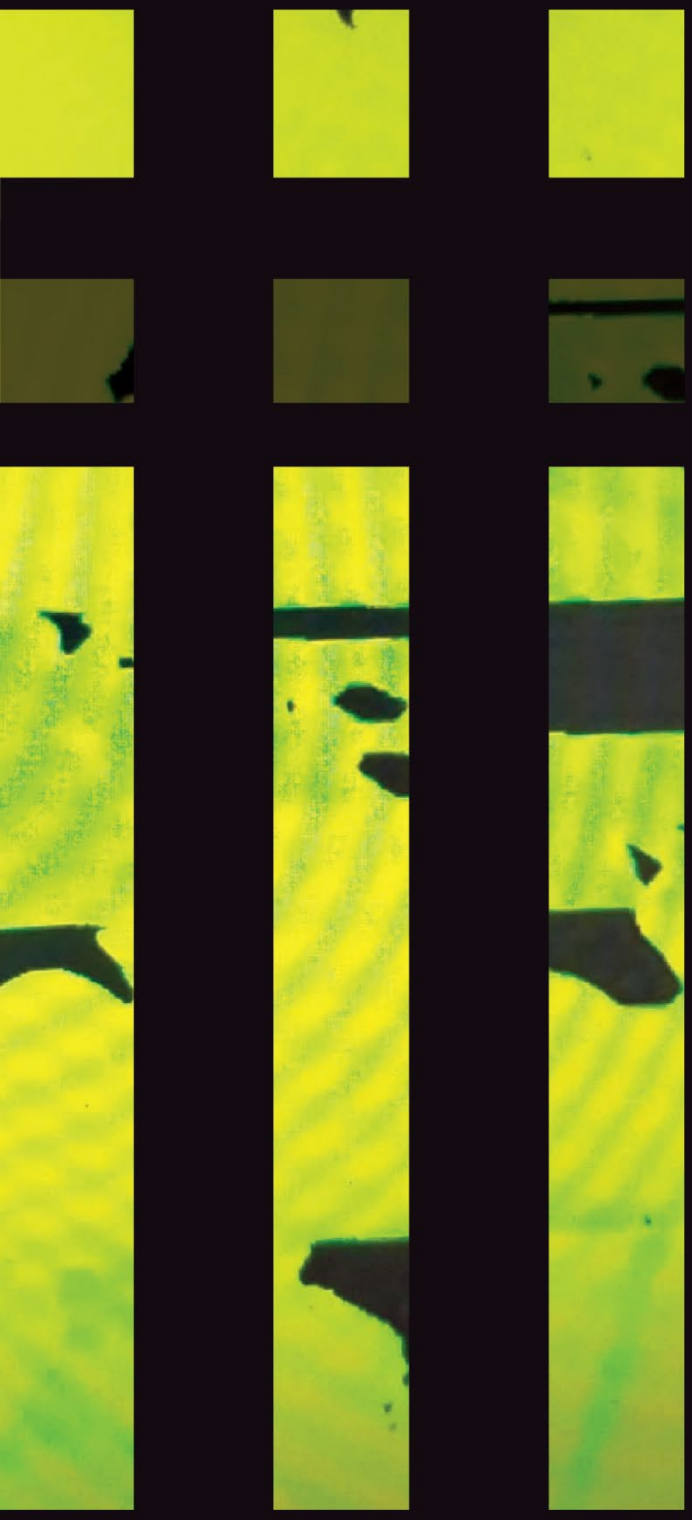

Part III

Embodiment, Multisensory Experience, Accessibility, and Technologies

Between Crises and Silences: Cartographies of the Disabled Child's Body in Everyday School Life

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Abstract

Inaugurating a field of listening for what the school rarely names, this article investigates the insinuated presence of pain in the everyday school life of children with disabilities. The object of study is the disabled child's body and pain, aiming to understand both within the school universe. Pain is not taken as a universal given, but as a possibility produced when bodies enter into crisis in the face of structures that are unresponsive to difference, constituting an interpretive key without occupying an exclusive place of analysis. It is assumed that not every bodily manifestation indicates felt pain; it may express tensions, disorganisations, self-regulation, or accumulations of experiences in environments that rarely welcome diversity. Through three case studies, analysed as sensitive cartographies, signs, screams, withdrawals, agitations, and disruptive behaviours are evidenced, often translated through pathologising lenses that disregard relational, pedagogical, and institutional contexts.

The narratives show that, even when named, pain emerges as a risk and an inscription left by practices oriented towards normalisation. By shifting pain beyond the exclusive field of health, the chapter positions the school as a territory of production, silencing, and misinterpretation of bodily crises. It is argued that legal inclusion, without practices sensitive to the body and to *affect*, can generate *incluexclusion*, in which physical presence does not guarantee recognition. Speaking of pain in education constitutes an indispensable ethical and political gesture, in dialogue with the work of Le Breton, Spinoza, and Merleau-Ponty in contemporary critical thought.

Keywords

Education; Body in Crisis; Disability; Pain; Affect.

Introduction

Understanding the *body in crisis* within the school environment requires, first and foremost, an ontological shift: the student is not a body one has, but a body one *is* (Chagas, 2023). From the phenomenological perspective of Merleau-Ponty (1945/1994), the body-subject is understood as *being-in-the-world*, an indivisible unity in which perception and experience actively interact with the environment. When the school is grounded in an exclusionary status quo, it not only fails to recognise this totality but neglects the student's singularity, actively producing the conditions for crisis.

In this scenario, the bodily manifestations often read by the institution as behaviours to be corrected become signs of a clash between the body-subject and the pedagogical structures that seek to regiment rhythms, movements, and attentions. The crisis is not an intrinsic characteristic of the subject, but a response to the closure of an environment that fails to welcome diversity, limiting the expression of life to what is most particular in a difference. The logic of normalisation operates in school institutions as a security device that scrutinises bodies, seeking to establish a homogeneity in which the *deviant* is marked to sustain the division between what is inside and what is outside the norm (Silveira, 2020).

In this process, manifestations of tension or resistance, such as screams, agitation, and withdrawal, along with the physical permanence of children with disabilities in school without recognition of their singularities, contribute to the sedimentation of the phenomenon here termed *incluexclusion*, a neologism formed from the words “inclusion” and “exclusion”, which invites a substantial reflection on everyday school life.

The idea of *incluexclusion* stems from the understanding that, within the very process of inclusion, exclusion can also occur. This makes evident that inclusion and exclusion are not entirely opposite or isolated instances, but can coexist, interact, and even overlap, overcoming a simplistic and mistaken view.

For Mantoan (2003), inclusion demands a profound transformation in the way the school is organised. The author criticises the fact that the school “became clogged with the formalism of rationality and split into teaching modalities, types of service, curricular grids, and bureaucracy” (Mantoan, 2003, p. 12, authors’ own translation). In this traditional model, teaching ultimately fails to address the real diversity of students. The inclusive proposal, in fact, seeks to break with this fragmented structure so that the school can resume its function of educating all, without exception. Mantoan further states that “inclusion (...) implies a

change in this current educational paradigm, so that it fits into the map of school education (...)" (Mantoan, 2003, p. 12, authors' own translation).

Exclusion, according to the author, is not limited to denying enrolment or removing a student; it also arises insofar as the school imposes a single standard of knowledge and only recognises the legitimacy of certain forms of knowledge. Even when access to education is democratised, schools remain closed to forms of knowledge and cultures that fall outside their traditional criteria. She adds:

> School exclusion manifests itself in the most diverse and perverse ways, and almost always what is at stake is the student's ignorance in the face of the standards of scientificity of school knowledge. (...) It thus excludes those who are ignorant of the knowledge it values and, in doing so, understands that democratisation is the massification of teaching and does not create the possibility of dialogue between different epistemological places, nor does it open itself to new forms of knowledge that have not, until then, fit within it. (Mantoan, 2003, p. 13, authors' own translation).

More precisely, both experiences — both that of inclusion and that of exclusion — merge in the process of constructing an educational community. Therefore, the combination of these words indicates that both inclusion and exclusion are continuous and active processes that occur simultaneously, rather than in isolation, in most cases, following the insertion of children with disabilities into the school. In this way, the existence of a space of "failure" or difficulty in fully recognising all students is acknowledged.

The concept of *incluexclusion* thus seeks to underscore how exclusion is often embedded within the dynamics of inclusion, an ambiguous phenomenon through which exclusion becomes evident even within a system that, in principle, seeks to include the subject who is physically present in the educational space, yet without effective participation or proper acceptance. In this sense, the school runs the risk of becoming a space of "inclusion as sequestration", in which the child's body is captured by the institutional structure without its difference being recognised in its potential (Silva & Leal, 2025).

Such a dynamic constitutes an ethical and political silencing. Silence here does not refer to the absence of noise, but rather to a "ritualised erasure of the body", in which sensory and cognitive differences are treated as deviations that should remain unnoticed. By failing to recognise the body as a territory of expression, the school neglects the fact that gesture, gaze, and movement also constitute legitimate forms of language.

The school, traversed by multiple historical ideologies and mechanisms of normalisation, is constituted as a space that regulates bodies and forms of knowledge. Within this movement, it tends to privilege abstract reason and begins to discipline the subject according to standards of normality, relegating to the margins those bodies that feel, experience pain, and communicate in other ways.

> From the perspective of anthropological, sociological, and historical studies, across the various approaches that have sought to answer the question of what a body is, the body is not treated as a natural given. Rather, these approaches seek to denaturalise what is perceived as an element of nature, whether in terms of social classification or rules of behaviour, highlighting the historicity of the transformations that define and represent it. It is important to note that the very idea of nature as a primary condition upon which culture is inscribed is itself deconstructed. (Mota & Machin, 2018, p. 416, authors' own translation)

Thus, the body of the child with a disability is not understood as a naturalised essence, but as a territory traversed by social, cultural, and pedagogical practices that confer meaning upon it. Within this context, pain is not merely biological; rather, it constitutes a language that exposes the fragility of school norms that continue to seek to normalise or silence these bodies.

With every act of silencing, and with every barrier imposed — whether physical, communicational, or attitudinal — the perception that these bodies remain at the margins is reinforced:

> The stages through which a particular version of the "human subject" endowed with certain fixed human capacities and a stable sense of its own identity and place within the order of Things first emerged in the modern age; how it became "centered" within the discourses and practices that shaped modern societies; how it acquired a more sociological or interactive definition; and how it is being "decentered" in late modernity. (Hall, 2004, p. 23, authors' own translation)

For example, a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), particularly those who are nonverbal due to their disability, often expresses pain in singular ways. Thus, when this body is traversed by impulses and agitation that cannot be translated into words, the absence of a language capable of communicating the intensity of what is being experienced may lead the child to seek relief through unexpected means, at times causing pain to others or even to themselves as a form of self-regulation. In such cases, the crisis ceases to be merely a physical symptom and also becomes a survival strategy in response to the sensory overload imposed by the world, which this body is unable to express verbally. With this in mind, we seek to challenge the historical silence surrounding the body of the child with a disability by proposing an interpretation in which the crisis is not merely a metaphor, but a physical and socially neglected reality.

In this sense, the body of the child with a disability is not merely a pedagogical subject, but also a territory of pain, a crisis inscribed in the *flesh*, penetrating the bones, and at the same time exposing the fragility of school structures in dealing with difference. What is at stake, therefore, is more than understanding the suffering caused by rejection; it is bringing to the

forefront the concrete pain of this body, which suffers without being understood and therefore remains rendered invisible, even within processes described as "inclusive".

> The notion of flesh is emphasised to demonstrate the possibility of an embodied reflection, reinforcing the idea that there is no separation between the physical, organic, and social dimensions of the human body, and that the body is, at once, both the object of interventions and the subject of existence (...) It further emphasises that fragmented perspectives on the body are insufficient and that analyses of the body are always subject to questioning, as they remain open-ended and unfinished. (Mendes, 2008, p. 186, authors' emphasis, authors' own translation)

Understanding crises and silences in the body of the child with a disability requires breaking with the narrow boundaries that schools continue to uphold. Crisis can no longer be understood merely as a clinical deviation or as a symptom to be normalised; it is also a cry for existence, a language of the body that reveals the contradictions of a school model which, while advocating inclusion, continues to reproduce subtle and everyday forms of exclusion. It is within this paradox between the discourse of inclusion and the reality of rejection that *incluexclusion* takes shape: the promise of acceptance that, by failing to recognise the wholeness of the body, perpetuates new forms of silencing. In this regard, it is important to emphasise that:

> (...) it is necessary to understand difference not simply as the result of a process, but as the very process through which both identity and difference (understood here as a result) are produced. (Silva, 2004, p. 76, authors' own translation)

The body of the child, in its condition as a living territory, expresses through pain both the violence of exclusion and the urgency of other ways of being in school. It is within this horizon that the next movement of this study is situated: to conceive of the body and *affect* (Spinoza, 1677/2023, p. 203) as key frameworks for understanding pain as a simultaneous manifestation of exclusion and possibilities for inclusion, in constant dialogue with school practices.

Cartographies of difference: disability, race, class, and gender in the production of incluexclusion

Throughout history, disability has often been understood as an individual condition, located within the body and explained in terms of biological or functional limitations. However, this understanding becomes insufficient when we observe that processes of exclusion do not affect all individuals in the same way; disability does not exist in isolation within social life. Rather, it is embodied in individuals who are already traversed by other social markers of difference, such as race, social class, gender, territory, generation, religion, and language.

Accordingly, understanding the body of the child with a disability requires recognising that it does not exist outside social relations but is constituted through them. From this perspective, intersectionality offers important contributions to the analysis of the experiences of children with disabilities within the school environment. More than simply adding categories together, this approach makes it possible to understand how different systems of inequality operate simultaneously, producing singular experiences of belonging, recognition, or exclusion. After all, "the totality of the discrimination experienced by a person is complex and greater than the sum of its parts" (Oliveira et al., 2020, p. 2, authors' own translation).

The issue is not merely to analyse disability, race, or class separately, but to understand how these social markers intersect and mutually reinforce one another in the production of social hierarchies. Intersectionality seeks to understand how race, class, gender, and other social markers of difference interact in the production of inequalities and in shaping individuals lived experiences (Oliveira et al., 2020).

This reflection allows us to challenge a question that is often silenced in debates on inclusive education: Do all children with disabilities experience school in the same way? Does an autistic Black child living on the urban periphery, the child of workers subjected to conditions of social precarity, experience the same processes of recognition as a White child from an economically privileged background? Although they may share the same diagnosis, they are unlikely to share the same conditions of existence. What is at stake is not disability alone, but the ways in which different social markers intersect within this body, producing distinct forms of visibility, acceptance, or rejection.

> The intersectional approach holds that no dimension of difference should be reduced to a single classificatory system, so as not to lose the analytical strength of the articulation it proposes among the social markers of difference. In doing so, it seeks to understand the multiple dimensions of inequality that shape and influence social positions, individuals lived experiences, and the power relations they establish within society. (Oliveira et al., 2020, p. 2, authors' own translation)

From this perspective, *incluexclusion* cannot be understood exclusively as an effect of disability. Rather, it emerges from the articulation of multiple systems of social classification that unequally distribute opportunities, affects, rights, and possibilities for participation. Some bodies are readily recognised as subjects of rights, while others remain under constant suspicion, being perceived as problems or threats, or as incapable or inadequate. Schools, even when committed to inclusive discourses, are not immune to these historical dynamics of power.

The narratives presented here provide insight into this complexity. When certain children are described as aggressive, disobedient, incapable of learning, or incompatible with the school environment, we are not confronted with merely neutral descriptions. More often, such

statements reveal socially constructed normative expectations regarding which bodies are considered legitimate within educational spaces.

In this sense, disability may operate as one of the elements used to justify exclusion, but it is by no means the only one. In many contexts, it intersects with racial prejudice, economic inequality, territorial stigma, and gender expectations, all of which intensify processes of marginalisation:

> In this context, the intersectional approach inaugurates a theoretical-methodological perspective that seeks to understand the complexity and irreducibility of one social marker of difference in relation to another. These markers are understood as social constructions that precede the existence of individuals and that, through their articulation, produce different possibilities of inclusion and exclusion, depending on a range of social factors. (Oliveira et al., 2020, p. 2, authors' emphasis, authors' own translation)

From this perspective, we propose the concept of intersectional pain. Unlike pain that is restricted to physical suffering or the limitations imposed by disability, intersectional pain is produced through the entanglement of multiple forms of denied recognition. It is the pain of existing in a body that simultaneously challenges ableist, racial, economic, and cultural norms. It is a form of pain that arises not solely from the bodily condition itself, but from the successive experiences of invisibility, silencing, and exclusion imposed upon certain individuals.

This understanding resonates with Le Breton's (2013) notion of *social pain* yet extends it by recognising that suffering is not distributed equally across all bodies. Some bodies bear additional layers of vulnerability produced by historical structures of inequality. Thus, the body of the child with a disability should not be understood exclusively as the territory of disability, but as a domain of intersections, disputes, and social inscriptions that generate distinct experiences of existence.

Within this context, the concept of *escrevivência* (a double-sided act of writing rooted in lived experience), as proposed by Conceição Evaristo (2005, 2020) offers an important interpretative framework. If *escrevivência* emerges from the embodied experiences of historically silenced subjects, it is possible to conceive that children with disabilities also produce their own forms of embodied *escrevivência*. Their gestures, movements, silences, crises, refusals, cries, and singular ways of inhabiting the world constitute embodied narratives that reveal both the pain and the potential of existing within contexts frequently marked by exclusion. In this way, the body comes to be understood as a living text, carrying memories, affects, and acts of denunciation.

Perhaps, therefore, the question is not why certain children experience crises. The more urgent question may instead be: Which bodies does the school allow to exist without being

driven into crisis? Within an institution historically structured around the figure of the universal student productive, rational, disciplined, and normatively compliant, some bodies must scream in order to be noticed. Others are not heard even when they scream. In this sense, crisis ceases to be understood merely as an individual event and instead exposes the fractures of a school model that continues to distribute recognition unequally.

> The intersectional approach considers that no difference should be reduced to a single classificatory system (...) in order to understand the various dimensions of inequalities that shape and influence social positions, the experiences of subjects, and the power relations they establish in society. (Oliveira et al., 2020, p. 3, authors' own translation)

It is precisely at this point that *incluexclusion* reveals its deepest face. It is not merely a matter of being or not being in school. It is about understanding who is authorised to fully belong to it. By cartographing the encounters between disability, race, class, gender, and territory, it becomes possible to perceive that inclusion is not a homogeneous experience. It is traversed by multiple power relations that produce different forms of presence, participation, and recognition. The challenge that imposes itself, therefore, is not only to include historically excluded bodies, but to transform the structures that continue to produce exclusions within the very processes of inclusion.

Body and affect: pain as a manifestation of incluexclusion, dialogues with everyday school life

To think about pain in the disabled child's body is also to assume a gaze traversed by *affect*. As a teacher of Specialised Educational Assistance (SEA), the author of this article proposes not merely a theoretical reflection, but an analysis born from practical experience, from daily encounters with bodies that carry invisible pains, dense silences, and movements so often ignored by the school space. What is intended here is to interweave lived narratives those that emerge from the classroom, the hallways, the gazes, and the everyday gestures with the theoretical foundations of Spinoza (1677/2023), Le Breton (2013), among others, expanded by the legislations that uphold the non-negotiable right of all children to education. If, for Spinoza, body and mind are inseparable, and every *affect* is an expression of the power to exist; and if, for Le Breton, pain is always a social, cultural, and symbolic phenomenon, it falls to the school to recognise that the pains of disabled children's bodies are not merely biological, but also the fruit of pedagogical structures that insist on not seeing them. *Incluexclusion* this double movement of welcoming and excluding is thus revealed in the way the school deals with those bodies that do not fit the mould of the idealised student, the universal student.

In light of these reflections, it becomes necessary to bring the discussion closer to the school floor, where theory and life intertwine. What Marciléia presents below emerges from her

experiences recorded over the years 2023 and 2024. These writings are not merely technical notes, but fragments of an ethnography traversed by her own presence, an *escrevivência* (Evaristo, 2005, 2020) that takes shape in the encounter between the educator-body and the child-body. In narrating these moments, Marciléia seeks to reveal the gestures, the silences, and the pains, but also the potencies that flourish, even when the school insists on denying them space. These are narratives that carry both the mark of research and the intimate trace of one who lived, felt, and allowed herself to be affected.

Between theory and practice: crises and silences of the child-body in crisis in the school space

The narratives that follow are not mere records of everyday school life but *escrevivência* that emerge from the *flesh* of experience. The cases narrated below, presented as fragments of the child-body in pain, reveal how the school, while welcoming, also silences, and how the educational space becomes a stage for tensions between the promise of inclusion and the reality of *incluexclusion*.

More than isolated episodes, these accounts are territories of analysis: the empirical practice of SEA dialogues with the theoretical frameworks of authors such as Le Breton (2009, 2011, 2013, 2018), Spinoza (1677/2023), Mantoan (2003), Evaristo (2005, 2016, 2020), among others, stitching theory together with life. In them, physical and emotional pain do not appear as a distant metaphor, but as a concrete presence, inscribed in bodies that insist on existing amidst norms that so often deny them.

These experiences, by intertwining empiricism and reflection, allow us to shift our gaze: to understand the school not only as an institution that teaches, but as a space of encounters, disencounters, and resistances, where the disabled child-body becomes language, denunciation, and potency whether the child who cannot keep up with the fast writing on the board, the student who does not participate in physical education class because their body "does not fit" the expected standard, or the one who remains invisible when their pain finds no language to be recognised.

Here, the concept of *incluexclusion* becomes evident. While children with disabilities are present in the school, they are also set apart, reduced to the condition of “universal students” who must fit into normative moulds of performance. As Mantoan (2003) warns, inclusion cannot be limited to enrolment: it requires the recognition of difference as constitutive of the human being. Everyday experience confirms this: being in school does not necessarily mean belonging to the school.

In SEA, this tension becomes even more visible. The body of the child with a disability, when traversed by pain, teaches that it is not merely a matter of offering pedagogical resources, but of building affective and caring practices, capable of listening to and recognising invisible

pains. Le Breton (2013) reminds us that pain is always a cultural and social experience, not restricted to the physical, but modulated by the meanings and significance attributed to it. Listening to the child's pain, in this sense, is also listening to their history, their culture, and their singularity.

Teaching practice reveals, therefore, that *affect* (Spinoza, 1677/2023, p. 203) become a politics of care, listening, and presence. It is in the relationship with the other that the school can overcome the Cartesian logic that fragments body and mind. And it is also in this relationship that the role of the educator is reconfigured: no longer as one who merely teaches content, but as one who sustains encounters that expand the power of life of all bodies, including those that hurt.

The narratives we present here are born from the traces of lived experience. As an SEA teacher, Marciléia kept a field diary, where she recorded the pains, the interrupted gestures, the dense silences, and the small flashes of joy of the children she accompanied. Each entry was more than a technical description: it was an attempt to capture what only the body dared to narrate. This methodological choice is anchored in ethnography, which demands from the researcher an implicated presence, attentive to the minutiae and subjectivities of everyday life (Ogbu, 1980; Silva & Mathias, 2018).

However, more than a method, the diary constituted itself as *escrevivência* (Evaristo, 2005, 2020), for each word was traversed by the embodied experience of one who lives and feels in everyday school life. Marciléia wrote not only as a researcher, but as a woman, a teacher, and a witness to the invisibilised pains that traverse the bodies of disabled children. In this gesture, research ceases to be distanced and becomes a political act of memory and resistance, transforming lived experiences into writing that interpellates, denounces, and announces other possibilities of looking at the child-body.

In this sense, we would like to share the case of a student with disabilities, enrolled in the 3rd year of Elementary School, who presented irritability and aggressiveness and who was non-verbal, initially producing only a few utterances.

The case of Ravi: an analysis of aggressive behaviours and pain

Ravi is a brown-skinned child, a student in the municipal public school system, belonging to a working-class family. His mother, from the state of Bahia, works as administrative support at a vehicle dealership, while his father, born in the state of São Paulo, works as a security guard. The family lives in their own home, in a backyard shared with other families, a reality that shapes their social and community context. During pregnancy and childbirth, there were some complications that marked the beginning of his life trajectory. Currently, Ravi undergoes medical follow-up and makes continuous use of medication, obtained through the Unified Health System (SUS). However, in some periods, the medication is not available in the

public network, causing involuntary interruptions in treatment. In these situations, the family, not always having the financial means to purchase the medication from the private network, must wait for the regularisation of supply, which can result in behavioural changes, increased agitation, and difficulties in his everyday school life.

Ravi, throughout his sessions, presented behaviours typical of his condition, with emphasis on episodes of high aggressiveness and irritability.

> Ravi, on a Monday morning at the beginning of the first semester of 2023, arrived at school extremely agitated, a reflection of the intense emotions accumulated over the weekend. His body seemed unable to bear all the internal tension: he screamed loudly, as if feeling great pain, the sensation was as if the pain materialised in every muscle and he quickly lost control, the repetitive stereotypes of his hands revealing his anxiety and inner discomfort. His classmates, focused on the teacher's lesson, were frightened by the shrill screams, and the entire classroom became destabilised. The teacher, trying to intervene, was pushed by Ravi, who then began pushing his friends and pinching a classmate who was trying to calm him down. Surprisingly, each pinch seemed momentarily to relieve his tension and inner agitation, providing a way for him to externalise the suffering he carried, without any feeling of guilt for the disturbance he caused. The tension reached its peak when Ravi left the room, pushing any body in his path. In the courtyard, he knocked over cafeteria benches and screamed as if his very body were an extension of his inner pain. Staff members tried to restrain him, but he pushed and scratched them, leaving visible wounds as a result of the loss of control he felt in his own body. The pain, whether emotional or physical, was not visible, but manifested itself through physical gestures and aggression, bodily responses to alleviate the suffering Ravi felt. In the eyes of the adults, however, the behaviour translated into incomprehension: “What is this child doing here?”, “Call his mother to take him away”, “He’s stubborn, he’s going to end up hurting himself”, “He doesn’t respect anyone”, “Better to send him away”. Ravi threw himself to the ground, rolling frantically across the space, hitting his hand hard against his belly, until the school administration called his parents. His mother arrived about twenty minutes later, trying to comfort him. Upon seeing her, Ravi pushed her and ran off again. In a quick gesture, he grabbed the skin of his mother's belly firmly and pinched it; she endured the pain, and gradually, her presence and firmness managed to calm Ravi's agitation. Slowly, he began to emit sounds and a few words, such as: “oi”, “iga”, “pã”, and “gua”. His mother immediately recognised that he was referring to “dor de barriga” (stomachache), “pão” (bread), and “água” (water), and small bread rolls and water were offered; Ravi ate, and little by little, his body and mind began to show signs of equilibrium. All of us — Ravi’s teachers and the school management team — were astonished to witness, for the first time, that he was able to establish communication, albeit rudimentary, with his mother. After all, at school, our communication developed through alternative communication boards, and on that day, even though the board was offered, Ravi refused and threw it far away. As if in a single chorus, we asked his mother: “He speaks?” and his mother, emotional,

> replied: “Yes”. After a few minutes, Ravi returned to the classroom and spent the rest of the day well. (*Personal archive of the researcher*, 2023, authors’ own translation)

Ravi's behaviour can be analysed in light of Spinoza's (1677/2023) theory, which understands *affects* as forces that can modify an individual's power of action, for during the weekends Ravi was closer to his parents, being deprived of affections, and upon arriving at school he begins the school routine, away from his parents, from family affections, and enters the limited routine of school education.

In this case, Ravi’s agitation is a manifestation of an affective potency that exceeds his limits, generating an emotional state that makes him more vulnerable and, consequently, more difficult to control. Spinoza (1677/2023) states: “By affect I understand the affections of the body, by which the power of acting of that body is increased or diminished, favoured or restrained, and simultaneously the ideas of these affections” (p. 203, authors’ own translation).

The impulsive behaviour of “screaming throughout the school” and “beginning to push his friends and pinch” suggests that Ravi’s body is trying to find a way to relieve internal tension. The pain, whether emotional or physical, is not visible here, but is represented by physical gestures and aggression, which are bodily responses to alleviate some suffering that Ravi feels. But in the eyes of the adults, it is: “What is this child doing here?”, “Call his mother to take him away”, “He's stubborn, he's going to end up hurting himself”, “He doesn't respect anyone”, “Better to send him away”.

However, in the school space, this body was translated almost exclusively as a threat, loss of control, a "problem to be removed from coexistence." The discourse of the adults reveals how the school often resorts to the mechanism of *incluexclusion*: the child is present but does not belong; occupies the physical space but is stripped of legitimacy. Here, the Cartesian logic that separates body and mind, reason and emotion, echoes, reducing the body in pain to an "error" that must be contained.

Le Breton (2004) explains that “the body is not only a place of suffering, but is also the means of manifesting it and, often, of understanding it” (Le Breton, 2004, p. 152, authors’ own translation). Therefore, Ravi's behaviour is an attempt to externalise and, in some way, cope with the pain he feels, perhaps due to his internal frustrations with coming to school. After all, after a weekend with the family, some traces of his behaviour were already expected, since, at other times, after returning from the weekend, Ravi usually comes back more agitated. However, the adult body is incapable of perceiving the reason that leads the child to act this way, preferring to understand it as an act of indiscipline and disobedience. It is, in short, an ignored body.

What at first glance could be named merely as aggressiveness in Ravi cannot be treated simplistically. More than an act of opposition or loss of control, this manifestation must be understood as a mode of existing and of expressing the intensity of affect (Spinoza, 1677/2023, p. 203) that traverse his body.

From the Spinoza perspective, therefore, *affects* are not reduced to automatic responses to external stimuli but operate as forces that amplify or reduce the power of acting. Thus, so-called 'aggressiveness' emerges as a bodily language of a body in pain, an effort at self-regulation in the face of *affects* that diminish its potency, revealing itself not only as a rupture of the school order, but as an expression of an existence that seeks to be recognised.

When Ravi "screams loudly throughout the school", this scream is not simply noise, but a way of releasing an emotional overload. Ravi's agitation and his aggressive behaviour at various moments, such as "very loud screams", are manifestations of an affective potency that finds no other outlet than in uncontrolled behaviours.

In this sense, Ravi's actions can be seen as a direct response to his uncontrolled emotions, which influence his ability to interact and learn appropriately in the school environment. Le Breton (2013) points out that pain, when externalised, can often be an attempt by the body to restore a lost emotional balance. In this sense, the physical pain caused by Ravi to others can be interpreted as an extension of his internal pain, trying, in some way, to "relieve" the tension accumulated in the body. Le Breton (2013) also states that:

> The body hurts because it is the place of pain; the senses, objects, perceptions are suffering, because they lead to suffering; even pleasure is suffering, because it is followed by suffering." The Sermon of Benares, the inaugural word of the Buddha, is an acknowledgment of the infinite pain that envelops man from birth until death. But Eastern spirituality does not fall into despair and makes the awareness of pain as fertile ground of existence a condition of relief. (Le Breton, 2013, p. 101, authors' own translation).

The question of physical pain becomes even more evident when Ravi, in a moment of crisis, "throws himself on the floor, rolls all over the floor", manifesting in an intense way the externalisation of his pain and discomfort. This gesture of throwing himself on the floor and rolling is a radical form of bodily expression which, according to Le Breton (2013), can be seen as an attempt to obtain relief, through an action that places the body in chaotic movement.

Ravi's emotional pain, which is reflected in his aggressive reactions, is also a physical pain, for the body is the first to show signs of suffering. When Ravi's mother arrives at the school, the student, upon seeing her, "pushes her and runs off". This aggressive movement can be seen as an impulsive response, a reflection of Ravi's inability to cope with fear or anxiety in that moment.

However, in a contradictory gesture, he "held firmly onto the skin of his mother's belly and pinched her". This moment can be interpreted as an attempt to express his anguish in a more intimate way, in a context of attachment, and at the same time a way of controlling his anxieties, or self-regulating through the body of the other. In this sense, the child manages to regulate his *affects*, establishing a relationship of trust and understanding. Ravi's mother plays an essential role in this process of emotional regulation, allowing him to calm down slowly.

Ravi's situation clearly exemplifies how emotional and physical pain intertwine in the school context. The aggressive behaviours and the difficulty in dealing with frustration are manifestations of an internal conflict, in which the crisis is expressed not only in the body, but also in behaviour.

It was within this horizon that Marciléia recorded in her field diary the moments when she witnessed the body exploding into screams, repetitive movements, and shoves. In the eyes of many adults, it was a matter of indiscipline, stubbornness, or even the idea that "he shouldn't be here". In her eyes as a teacher-researcher, what emerged was a body in pain, a *body in crisis*, which the school, amidst the silence of incomprehension, still does not know how to read.

The body, agitation and emotional regulation: the case of Theodor, 2024

Theodor is a white child, a student in the municipal public school system. His father is from the countryside of Minas Gerais and works as a mason, while his mother was born in the state of São Paulo and works at a clothing store. The family belongs to the working class and lives in a simple, own home located near the school. Due to his mother's employment, Theodor has access to private health insurance, which contributes to the monitoring of his health needs. Both parents work outside the home, and during the periods when his mother is at work, the child's care is undertaken by his father on his days off or by a caregiver hired by the family. His trajectory is marked by a supportive family network organised to reconcile the demands of work, care, and the monitoring of his development.

> At the beginning of the 2024 school year, I was working with student João on a syllabic memory game when the school coordinator knocked on my door, asking for help with Theodor.
>
> Theodor is a child with multiple disabilities. He is five years old and attends Phase 5 of Early Childhood Education in the afternoon session. His parents are very present and responsible, closely monitoring every detail of his specialised appointments — psychologist, paediatrician, and other professionals. He is also my student in the SEA. Theodor wears a chewy necklace, as prescribed by his doctor, to help him self-regulate during crises, since he often bites himself to calm down. He is still non-verbal, and his communication occurs through minimal gestures: a slight smile when happy, crying and agitation when uncomfortable. He struggles to maintain focus on proposed activities, almost always leaving them unfinished.

That day, the coordinator called me for help because Theo was in crisis. He was extremely nervous and agitated, even biting the classroom assistant, causing a bleeding wound. I asked an inspector to stay with João, who was nearly done with his session, and went to meet Theodor and the teacher. Upon arriving, I saw the scene: Theodor was crying intensely, waving his hands, letting out loud screams, hitting his own head, pulling his hair (he then tore out strands of his hair with his hand), and biting his hands. His movements were repetitive, disordered, and laden with pain. The other children, frightened, watched in silence, caught between fear and compassion. The teacher and the assistant had managed to take him to the garden, a place where he usually calmed down, but this time nothing worked. They even tried a bucket of water, a resource that often brought him tranquillity, but even that was ineffective.

As we tried to help Theodor in the playground, other people passed by and observed the scene: fellow teachers, inspectors, cleaning staff. Their voices cut through the space almost in chorus, phrases repeated over and over, laden with judgment: “Oh my, poor child, send him away”; “He can’t stay here, how can a child like that learn?”; “My God, look what he did to the assistant’s arm, poor thing, she only gets beaten”; “Good grief, he even hits himself, right? If it were only himself, that would be fine... the problem is he bites others who have nothing to do with it”. These words echoed around us, like invisible blows, producing a pain that was not only Theodor’s, but that of everyone who believes in the right of every child to exist in school.

Realising that each attempt only increased his agitation, I wondered whether the root of that crisis might not lie in some physical pain. I asked the coordinator to call the family and check if anything different had happened at home. The mother replied that Theodor had shown nothing unusual, although intense crises were part of his daily life. She said she could not pick him up but would send his sister.

With João already taken care of, I led Theo to the multifunctional resource room, accompanied by the teacher. He remained very agitated. I played a song that usually calmed him down, but it had no effect: the screams persisted, he pulled his hair with such force that he tore out entire strands, stomped his feet on the floor, and banged his head against his hands. The teacher, in despair, tried to restrain him and ended up crying, nervous, unsure how to act.

At that moment, I turned to a familiar resource: the Pilates ball, an object Theodor really liked. But he immediately rejected it. So, I sat on it and began to bounce, imitating a “horse-riding” motion, hoping to catch his attention. Slowly, the crying gave way to curiosity. His eyes fixed on me. I continued the movement, maintaining the rhythm, and invited him to come onto my lap. Theodor accepted. I placed him with his back to me, gently held his hands, and together we bounced on the ball. Meanwhile, I kept the music playing and, almost in a whisper, sang softly to him. I noticed that if I stopped the movement, the crying returned; so, I kept bouncing with him, sustaining that small pact of calm.

> The teacher, deeply shaken, was crying discreetly. I suggested she get some water and compose herself. She confessed she had never seen Theodor in such an intense crisis and that it caused her great anguish, as she was very fond of him. Shortly after, Theodor's aunt arrived. Upon seeing her, he smiled and ran into her arms. She immediately began the “horse-riding” motion, the same one we had done on the ball. Theodor smiled again, in relief, but cried whenever she interrupted the movement, demanding its continuation.
>
> The teacher returned and spoke with the aunt, explaining that it was the first time Theodor had reacted so intensely at school. The aunt thanked everyone for their care, reporting that the situation at home was similar, with nights when Theodor’s mother could not even sleep, so intense were the crises. The child was carried in his aunt's arms, still playing "horse-riding," alternating between crying and laughter.
>
> After Theodor left, I sought out the teacher to comfort her. We talked about the need to seek support from the Department of Education in order to secure more specialised care in the municipality and better support conditions. Then I went to the classroom assistant, who had been bitten. Her arm was injured, with deep bruise marks. We talked at length, reflecting on possible alternatives to improve care and prevent similar situations in the future. (*Personal archive of the researcher*, 2024, authors’ own translation)

The account of Theodor’s crisis, a child with autism, reveals a series of complex dynamics involving the child's body, his agitation, self-aggression, the relationship with the other bodies that accompany him, and the physical and emotional responses of his teacher, assistant, and aunt. In this context, it is possible to reflect on the importance of the body as the primary means of communication and emotional regulation for children, especially when they do not have verbalisation as an expressive resource.

During the crisis, Theodor presents intense behaviours such as crying, screaming, repetitive hand-waving movements, hitting his head, and pulling his hair actions that indicate a process of emotional and physical dysregulation. Theodor's self-aggression, therefore, can be seen as an attempt at non-verbal communication of his inner anguish, a "silent scream" of the body that finds no other outlet.

The encounter of Theodor’s body with the teacher: regulation through touch and movement

When the teacher-researcher interacts with Theodor, attempting to calm him through movement on a Pilates ball and physical touch, we can observe a form of encounter, or welcoming, in which the teacher becomes a source of physical and emotional support for the child. In that moment, the teacher uses her own body to provide a sense of security and comfort to Theodor, contributing to his emotional regulation.

This physical contact can be viewed considering Spinoza's (1677/2023) theory, which argues that human *affects*, emotions, and feelings are, essentially, bodily productions. When Theodor is touched and moved, as in the "horse-riding" movement performed by the teacher, his body is stimulated in a way that alters his emotional state. The teacher's body, in interaction with Theodor's body, acts as a mediation of *affects*, in which the teacher, through her care, her serenity, and her repetitive actions, has the potential to modify Theodor's emotional state. Spinoza (1677/2023) also argues that, through affectivity, we are constantly affected by our encounters with other bodies, and Theodor's regulation occurs through this affective interaction, capable of altering his *affects* or emotional states.

Ultimately, Theodor's emotional regulation occurred through affective interaction and non-verbal communication mediated by the body, evidencing the complexity of children's bodily experiences and the need for a sensitive and affective response on the part of professionals.

Such a scenario dramatises what Spinoza (1677/2023) already taught: the body is *affect* in living potency (conatus) and is strengthened in good affective encounters. The school, when it limits itself to routines and labels, ignores that inclusion is a gesture of instituted bodily *affect* and not merely physical presence guaranteed by law. As Conceição Evaristo reminds us in her *escrevivência*, pain, when named, opens a path for memory, recognition, and resistance:

> To think of *escrevivência* as a diasporic and universal phenomenon first prompts me to return to an image that lies at the heart of the term. At its core, the term is not understood as spelling or sound, but as a generative meaning, as a chain of meanings on which the term is grounded and through which its dynamics begin to unfold. (Evaristo, 2020, p. 29, authors' own translation).

O Theodor's body became *escrevivência*, activating the potential to exist through sensitive mediation. The words of the adults that echoed in the playground — "send him away", "how can a child like that can learn", "poor assistant, she only gets beaten", "if it were only himself, that would be fine" — reveal more than mere circumstantial comments. They materialise a conception of school still rooted in Cartesian thought, in which the ideal of a "universal student" — rational, disciplined, and predictable — prevails. Thus, the body that escapes this mould, like Theodor's, becomes a strange body, a body that disturbs, a body seen as "out of place".

Such utterances are not neutral: they carry within them a sentence of non-belonging. When they say Theodor should be "sent away", they inscribe exclusion as an immediate response to difference. When they question "how can a child like that learn", they reaffirm the idea that the educational process is only validated within the parameters of Cartesian normality, which prioritises the abstract mind to the detriment of corporeality. And when they justify that the problem is that he "bites others who have nothing to do with it", they reveal the utilitarian

logic that measures a child's right to remain based on the impact they cause on others, never on their own dignity.

These statements confirm the school's difficulty in accepting that body in its wholeness. A body that does not correspond to the normative standard is not recognised as legitimate, but as a threat, disorder, danger. Thus, Theodor not only suffers the symbolic pain of being reduced to a "non-place" in the school, but also the physical pain of his crisis. It is the very logic of *incluexclusion* that reveals itself: the child is inside the school space, but her presence is constantly questioned, denied, marginalised.

Therefore, Theodor's case makes evident that school inclusion must overcome the reactive mode, responding with grace and presence. It is urgent that the school recognise that the body that trembles, that hits itself, that bites in crisis, also has a voice — even if it translates into the rhythm of rocking, the gaze that lights up, or the touch that soothes.

A day of visits to the surrounding schools: Lico's case: pain, routine, and the weight of school structures

Lico is a mixed-race child, a student enrolled in the municipal public education system, and a resident of a peripheral neighbourhood. He lives with his mother in a simple two-room house located on land belonging to the paternal family. His family trajectory has been deeply marked by the death of his father due to Covid-19 in 2020. Since then, his mother has taken sole responsibility for the child's daily care, dedicating herself entirely to his support and, for this reason, she does not engage in paid professional activities. At certain times, she relies on the assistance of family members to help with caregiving demands. The family's primary source of income is the Continuous Cash Benefit (BPC/LOAS), equivalent to one minimum wage, granted due to the child's disability. Lico also depends on the services provided by the Unified Health System (SUS), receiving follow-up care and specialised assistance through the Psychosocial Care Centre (CAPS) and other services within the public healthcare network.

> Today was an external visit day. I visited three schools, with the last one being the Jardim Santana School. Upon arriving, I noticed something unusual from a distance. I heard a group of people speaking loudly and, as I approached the school gate, I immediately identified the sound of screams. I recognised it right away because I knew that sound: it was the student Lico. He receives AEE (Specialised Educational Assistance) support from me, and that type of scream was impossible not to recognise. What drew my attention the most was the increase in the intensity of the screams as I approached.
>
> I walked through the hallway and arrived at the principal's office, finding her at the door, going to check what was happening with the child. I asked whether I could help, and she said it was not necessary because she would return shortly to assist me. So, I sat down and waited for the principal. I noticed that the school was experiencing a

different type of movement, as it was undergoing renovations, with many people working on the premises.

Lico's screams intensified and became louder. This caught my attention even more, and, faced with those screams of pain and distress, I decided to stand up and go toward the child — or rather, toward the screams. At that moment, I encountered the principal coming toward me to ask for my help.

I entered the room and saw Lico sitting on the floor, nervous, with blood on his face and hands, extremely agitated. It was an anguishing and painful scene. Lico's screams reached my heart. The room was full of children, teachers, and school monitors, all trying to help, but Lico resisted everyone who approached him. He did not allow anyone to come near him.

At that moment, I asked the principal for assistance, requesting that the children go to the playground to carry out another activity together with their teacher. I also asked Lico's aide to accompany me and requested that the principal remain at the door to provide the necessary support. As a result, the previously crowded room became empty, and Lico gradually began to calm down, although he continued to scream, with longer intervals between the screams.

I tried to sit near Lico, but he moved away from me. I began making repetitive movements with my body to see whether he would imitate the same movements. Lico observed me and moved away. Gradually, I attempted to approach him and clean the blood running from his mouth. When I looked at his forehead, I noticed a lump, so I asked the aide what had happened. He explained quietly that Lico was nervous because he had been moved to another classroom due to the school renovation. There were many different people at the school, which made Lico more agitated. Because Lico had to leave his classroom, he did not want to remain anywhere other than his own space. This caused great discomfort for the child.

Then, Lico, agitated, ran into the new classroom and began walking from one side to the other, with the aide following him. This behaviour was common when Lico became agitated, but on that day, he was more distressed and ran faster than usual. Even though the aide attempted to provide support, Lico was unable to control his agitation and threw himself against the wall, hitting his forehead, which caused a large bump. He also struck his mouth against the wall, causing a cut and bleeding. Upon noticing the blood, Lico became even more agitated, screaming louder and covering himself with blood as he touched his mouth and face.

At that moment, the principal handed me a damp cloth to clean Lico's face, but he refused any approach, whether from me, the principal, or the aide. I gave the cloth to Lico so that he could clean himself, but he stood up and refused. I asked the aide to bring an activity that Lico enjoyed, and he brought a puzzle. Gradually, we began to interact with Lico.

I asked the principal to call Lico's mother to inform her about what had happened. Since it was close to dismissal time and knowing that Lico does not accept changes in

his routine, I suggested that his mother be informed that Lico would only leave with the school transport, as usual. If his mother came to pick him up earlier than his usual time, this would be another reason for him to become dysregulated. The principal then called the family.

With this, I continued interacting with Lico and the aide and managed to clean some of the blood from the wound and the stains on Lico's face. Dismissal time was approaching, so I said to Lico: "Let's get your backpack". He quickly stood up, picked up his backpack as if nothing had happened, placed it on his back, and went to the playground, accompanied by me and the aide.

I noticed that the aide was calmer at that moment, but initially he had been very agitated and said that he had never seen Lico in that condition. He told me that, although Lico occasionally became dysregulated, what happened that day was unprecedented, and the aide was very concerned about him.

I remained in the playground with Lico until the school transport arrived. Meanwhile, I asked the aide to drink some water, which he did, returning shortly afterward. When Lico saw the transport arrive, he became excited. I accompanied him until he entered the vehicle, but he did not accept my presence inside because I was not part of his transportation routine. Therefore, I advised the transport staff member about the care required with Lico due to the agitation and crisis he had experienced.

Since I could not accompany Lico on the transport, the principal decided to accompany him home in her own car in order to explain the entire situation to his mother. At that moment, I returned to the school and spoke with Lico's aide and teacher, reflecting on possible strategies to improve the support provided to him. It is important to highlight that both the teacher and the aide mentioned that this occurred because of the school renovation, which altered Lico's routine. In addition, the presence of unfamiliar people moving throughout the school from one place to another made Lico even more agitated. The fact that Lico could not remain in his usual classroom also contributed to his agitation.

The teacher suggested that, during the renovation period, it might be interesting to provide remote activities for Lico in order to prevent him from attending school, since this process had been extremely painful for the child. The teacher also emphasised that Lico should be attended by specialised schools, because that regular school did not have the conditions to support students like Lico and, therefore, he should not be there.

In the following weeks, I returned to the school to accompany Lico, who had no longer been attending the school unit since the last episode. His mother decided not to send him back until the end of the year, and the intern who accompanied him never returned. According to the principal, he had resigned after what happened with Lico because he was very afraid of the situation and decided to suspend his university studies. (*Researcher's personal archive, May 22, 2024, author's own translation*)

The child's bodily reaction: an in-depth analysis of bodily responses during crisis

To understand Lico's bodily reaction, it is essential to comprehend how the autistic child's body processes sensory stimuli. According to Posar and Visconti (2018), children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) frequently present alterations in sensory perception, which may manifest as both hypersensitivity and hyposensitivity to stimuli such as sounds, lights, textures, and even internal stimuli, such as touch and pressure on the body.

The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, when discussing the body as the subject of perception, observes that the body is the foundation of experience and that, when in crisis, it not only reflects emotions but also the limits of perception itself (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1994). For an autistic child, the experience of being overwhelmed by multiple stimuli simultaneously can disorganise the perception of the surrounding world, causing the body to be unable to find a way to stabilise itself, resulting in behaviours such as those displayed by Lico: agitation, self-injury, and the search for a "point of support".

Lico's movement of throwing himself against the wall can be understood as a manifestation of bodily dysregulation. His attempt to distance himself from any form of approach, whether from the principal, the aide, or his classmates, as well as his self-injurious behaviour, are clear signs of a body that can no longer integrate the reality surrounding it.

Lico's body is not merely a reflection of his internal experiences, but also the field of interaction with the school environment and with the other bodies around him. The school, when attempting to provide assistance, may inadvertently intensify the crisis, especially when it fails to understand the child's complex sensory and emotional needs. In the episode narrated here, the school renovation and the consequent disruption of his routine triggered an intense crisis in Lico, traversing his body through screams, self-injury, refusal of contact, and sensory disorganisation.

More than an isolated episode, the situation reveals the fragility of institutional conditions in dealing with difference. On the one hand, professionals mobilised efforts of containment and care; on the other hand, the absence of prior strategies and the team's lack of preparation generated fear, despair, and even professional withdrawal (as in the case of the intern who abandoned his position, or even the teacher's understanding that Lico should be assisted in another specialised school, which reveals a lack of clarity regarding this issue, although we had already reflected on it during meetings). In this context, Lico's pain exceeded the boundaries of his own body and began to permeate the entire school collective: administrators, teachers, aides, and classmates.

It is possible to interpret the scene in light of authors such as Skliar (2006), who denounces the tendency of schools to transform difference into a problem to be eliminated, and Mantoan (2003), who reminds us that true inclusion is not limited to physical access to school but

requires an institutional reorganisation capable of sustaining the right to permanence and learning. Likewise, the episode echoes the critiques of Le Breton (2013), when he argues that pain is not merely an intimate experience, but a social fact, inscribed in the gazes, reactions, and interpretations that make it visible or invisible.

Ultimately, Lico's absence from school until the end of the academic year cannot be explained solely by his condition, but rather by the way the institution dealt with the episode, reinforcing the idea that "inclusion" can still represent a veiled form of exclusion when the structure does not reorganise itself to welcome the body that deviates from the norm.

If the cases of Ravi, Theodor, and Lico reveal the pains that traverse the body of the child with a disability in everyday school life, they also announce the urgency of reflecting on the concrete conditions for the permanence of these individuals within the educational space. Schools often encounter these forms of pain as indecipherable enigmas, but they cannot evade the responsibility already established by legislation: the right of all children, without exception, to education.

Pain: deconstructing silences in the school environment of children with disabilities – reflections on experience (dialogues with practice)

The narratives of Ravi, Lico, and Theodor reveal a dimension that remains insufficiently named within the school context: physical pain. The child's body feels, reacts, and calls for attention, yet this experience is often misinterpreted or reduced to indiscipline, fragility, or mere caprice. Instead of recognising the body as a form of language, the school tends to frame it within behavioural norms that silence its pain.

The institutional gaze and the trap of incluexclusion

As The reactions of the management and teaching teams, expressed in statements such as "What is this child doing here?" or "It is better to send him [sic] away", materialise the phenomenon of *incluexclusion*. Ravi is physically present at school, but his subjectivity is rejected at the moment it deviates from the expected framework.

The school operates here under a logic of surveillance and control:

- Pathologisation of discomfort: Ravi's behavior is interpreted as "stubbornness" or "lack of respect," disregarding the fact that the school environment and its rhythms may themselves be the producers of the crisis (Christofari & Freitas, 2023).
- Ethical silencing: By suggesting that the mother take him home, the institution relinquishes its pedagogical role of transforming the complaint into a case study and

> an understanding of the context (Christofari & Freitas, 2023). The student is perceived as a foreign body that "destabilises" order, rather than as a child who screams because he is not understood in his own particularity.

Thus, understanding the suffering body within the school context requires moving beyond a biological perspective, recognising it as the result of multiple intersecting forces. As Mota and Machim (2018, p. 421) observe, bodies are products of the relationships between physiological and psychological dimensions, always mediated by the temporal experiences of individuals and collectivities. This understanding denaturalises pain and invites us to interpret it as a social phenomenon, inscribed within historical and cultural contexts, which traverses both the *flesh* and subjectivity.

The outcome of Ravi's case is fundamental to this research. Ravi's mother not only provides him with support; she endures the pain (the pinch on her belly) in order to establish a channel of connection. This "affective firmness" allows Ravi's body to move out of a state of defense and access language.

The discovery that Ravi was able to speak (expressions such as "oi iga", "pã," and "gua") revealed the gap between technical communication (the rejected communication board) and vital communication. Ravi was expressing basic physiological and emotional needs — stomachache, hunger, and thirst—that were completely ignored while the school focused on disruptive behaviour. This moment demonstrates that:

- A Ravi's primary communication is legitimate and functional, but it requires a "territory of listening" that the school had not yet constructed.
- The team's recognition of Ravi's speech ("He speaks!") marks the collapse of a preconceived image of incapacity, revealing the singular humanity that emerges when the gaze shifts from the diagnosis to the subject.

Transposing these conceptions into the school context, the gap between the reality of the crisis experienced by children with disabilities and the way in which schools interpret it becomes evident. Frequently, behaviours that express crisis are classified as indiscipline, tantrums, or inadequacy. Crises, in turn, are subjective attempts, not always successful, to endure, process, and give meaning to this pain.

It is at this point that the present study finds its justification: recognising crises as a subjective phenomenon through which pain is given form; and pain, in turn, as a physical, psychological, cultural, and symbolic phenomenon that reveals the extent to which schools need to prepare themselves to read, listen to, and accompany the bodies of children with disabilities.

Ravi's case establishes that crisis is an indicator that schools need to move toward a vital pedagogy, one capable of embracing difference as a form of potential rather than as a deficit. For the following analyses, we will maintain this focus: observing how the body "speaks"

through what the school calls a "crisis" and how normalisation devices attempt, unsuccessfully, to silence these existences.

The body as a territory of expression and the cartography of affect

The episode experienced by Theodor in the fifth stage of Early Childhood Education should not be reduced to a "disruptive behaviour". Through the lens of phenomenology, Theodor is a *lived body* (corps propre) that manifests itself as "being-in-the-world" (Chagas, 2023; Rosa, 2025). In a context in which verbal expression has not yet emerged, his body assumes the central role of language: smiling, crying, and agitation become the communicative tools of a subject who feels, perceives, and experiences the world with great intensity.

Theodor's crisis, marked by high-pitched screams, biting his own hands, and pulling out clumps of his own hair, reveals the materiality of a pain that overflows the skin. When the body enters into crisis, it is not merely "out of control"; rather, it is engaged in a struggle with an environment that often fails to embrace its singularity (Christofari & Freitas, 2023). The use of a chew toy and the search for self-regulation through physical pain (biting himself and hitting his head) are desperate attempts by a *body in crisis* to regain a point of equilibrium within an environment that has become sensorially or emotionally unbearable.

As Merleau-Ponty (1945/1994) argues, the body is the meaningful core of existence; thus, Theodor's repetitive and disorganised movements constitute his living expressivity, a form of primary communication that calls for a mode of listening that goes beyond the clinical gaze. While Theodor suffered in the schoolyard, the voices of classmates and school staff formed a *chorus of judgment* that materialised the dispositif of school normalisation. Statements such as "send him [sic] away" or "how can a child like this learn?" reveal the logic of biopolitics, in which the body that deviates from the norm is perceived as an "error" to be corrected or removed from social coexistence. This scenario exemplifies the phenomenon of *incluexclusion*:

- Pathologisation of the Other: The comments dehumanise Theodor, focusing exclusively on the injury inflicted on the teaching assistant while ignoring the boy's own suffering. The "deviant" is marked in order to sustain the division between those who "belong" and those who should be "sent away".
- Surveillance and Control: Guided by a rationality that prioritises conformity, the school scrutinises Theodor's body and condemns him as incapable of learning, transforming his difference into an absolute deficit.
- The Pilates Ball as a Territory of Encounter: The researcher's intervention through the "horse-riding" movement on the Pilates ball marks a rupture with the logic of physical restraint and judgment. By sitting on the ball and reproducing the

> movement that Theodor enjoyed, the researcher enacted a *sensitive cartography*, shifting the gaze from the "problem" to the plane of immanence the place where life pulses and seeks connection. In this process, the child ceased to be viewed as an "object body" to be controlled and came to be recognised as a "subject body." The Pilates ball thus ceased to be merely a physiotherapeutic resource and became a territory of encounter and humanisation, where movement produced the relief that the institutional structure had been unable to provide.

To overcome *incluexclusion*, it is essential that public administration provide the conditions necessary for specialised support that does not merely "accommodate" the child, but ensures the child's dignity and the right to exist fully within the educational space. Ultimately, this case points to the urgent need for support from the Department of Education. Inclusion cannot become a burden borne solely by the classroom teacher and the teaching assistant (who also leaves the experience physically and emotionally injured).

The body in crisis and the everyday life of the school environment

Lico's narrative demonstrates that "crisis" is not an intrinsic attribute of disability, but rather an event that emerges at the intersection between a body with singular ways of sensing and a school environment that becomes hostile (Christofari & Freitas, 2023). In Lico's case, the school renovation, the forced classroom change, and the presence of unfamiliar people circulating throughout the school functioned as sensory triggers that disrupted his *being-in-the-world*. Phenomenology teaches us that the body is not an object, but the very core of experience and perception (Rosa, 2025).

When the school ignores Lico's need for stability and predictability, it subjects his rhythms and movements to strategies of surveillance that disregard his subjectivity (Christofari & Freitas, 2023). Lico's *body in crisis* denounced this unbearable deterritorialization through intense screams and self-injury. The blood on his face and mouth, together with the impact of his body against the wall, materialise the pain of a subject who finds no porosity within the pedagogical space to exist according to his own needs (Chagas, 2023; Rosa, 2025).

The outcome of school withdrawal and ethical-political silencing: the logic of incluexclusion

An analysis of the institutional responses reveals the persistence of the phenomenon of *incluexclusion*, whereby a child's physical presence does not guarantee a sense of belonging. In Theodor's case, the response took the form of a moralising "chorus of judgment" calling for his expulsion. In Lico's case, institutional violence was even more structurally expressed through the teacher's suggestion that the student should attend a "specialised school."

This proposal for segregation functions as a biopolitical dispositif that seeks to sanitise the regular school environment by removing the body that "disturbs" the norm. Rather than transforming the school's complaint into an object of pedagogical reflection, the institution resorts to the logic of exclusion, treating the child's suffering as a problem of individual "adjustment" (Christofari & Freitas, 2023).

Theodor and Lico are targets of the same institutional machinery that prefers the shortcut of transfer or silencing as a solution to what the institution itself, through its inability to adapt, has helped to produce. The outcome of Lico's case — the school withdrawal decided by his mother and the resignation of the intern, who suspended his university studies out of fear — constitutes evidence of an institutional failure. This event demonstrates how the scrutiny of bodies and the primacy of a "school that works" for the ideal student undermine the potential for the humanisation of everyone involved (Christofari & Freitas, 2023).

The intern's fear and Lico's permanent withdrawal from school during the academic year crystallise an ethical-political silencing: the child is excluded because he does not fit the norm, while the professional is driven away by the trauma generated by a structure incapable of sustaining difference (Souza, 2022). Without a transition toward a practice that is sensitive to *affects* and to the distribution of the sensible, the school environment ceases to be educational and becomes instead a territory of withdrawal and misinterpretation of bodily crises.

The logic of normalisation operates within schools as a dispositif of surveillance that scrutinises rhythms, movements, and behaviours. The narratives demonstrate that when the child's body fails to conform to this regime of scrutiny, the institutional response is pathologisation or exclusion:

- The collective statements recorded — "What is this child doing here?" and "How can a child like this learn?"— materialise the phenomenon of *incluexclusion*. The student is physically present, yet his presence is appropriated by a structure that sees him only as a deficit.
- Lico's outcome represents the ultimate example of this silencing: his "removal" and the proposal to transfer him to "specialised schools" reveal a biopolitics that prefers exclusion to pedagogical transformation. The fear that led to the intern's resignation and to Lico's withdrawal from school crystallises the failure of an inclusion that is merely bureaucratic and insensitive to *affects*.

Thus, we begin from the assumption that the child's body, and particularly the body of the child with a disability, who is first and foremost a child, have been systematically neglected by schools. This neglect weakens not only the school experience but also the very conception of childhood constructed within these educational spaces. Recognising the relevance of this

debate, the present study set out to investigate its central object: to understand children's bodies in the school context, considering their forms of expression and communication as constitutive dimensions of the educational process.

Our proposal lies in understanding Sensitive Cartography as applied to these cases, which demonstrated that the path toward this transformation lies in the encounter. Ravi's mother's attentive listening, through which she translated his screams into needs (bread and water), reveals that vital communication is more powerful than the cold technicality of communication boards. Likewise, the intervention using the Pilates ball in Theodor's case demonstrated that rhythmic movement and the establishment of a shared sense of calm can replace physical restraint, recognising the body as a territory of invention rather than merely an object of control.

Intersectional analysis of the cases: social markers of difference and the production of incluexclusion

The analysis of the cases of Ravi, Theodor, and Lico demonstrates that the experience of disability is traversed by different social markers of difference, which produce distinct forms of access to rights, care, and recognition. Although all three children share the condition of being students with disabilities enrolled in the municipal public education system, their trajectories reveal different social realities, demonstrating that inclusion is not experienced in a homogeneous manner.

Ravi, a mixed-race child, the son of working-class parents and dependent on the Unified Health System (SUS) for the provision of medication, experiences a condition in which disability, race/colour, social class, and access to public policies intersect. His trajectory is marked by dependence on the public healthcare system for the continuity of his treatment, such that interruptions in the supply of medication directly affect his everyday school life. In this case, disability cannot be dissociated from the material conditions of life and the limitations imposed by unequal access to public services.

Theodor, in turn, also belongs to a working-class family and attends a public school; however, he presents social conditions distinct from those observed in the other cases. A White child, living in a family-owned house near the school and with access to private health insurance through his mother's employment, he benefits from resources that expand his opportunities for healthcare follow-up. Although disability also shapes his school experience, his racial position and access to private healthcare services constitute a differentiated social position in relation to the other children, demonstrating that disability does not produce the same effects for all individuals.

Lico, on the other hand, embodies a combination of social markers that intensify processes of social vulnerability. A mixed-race child living in a peripheral neighbourhood, residing in a

modest home and supported exclusively by the Continuous Cash Benefit (BPC/LOAS), his life trajectory was profoundly marked by the loss of his father during the Covid-19 pandemic. Dependent on public healthcare services for specialised follow-up and continuous care, his experience reveals how disability, race/colour, territory, poverty, and family composition intersect to produce additional challenges in accessing social rights. The absence of a second source of income and his mother's exclusive dedication to caring for her son further highlight the inequalities experienced by families of children with disabilities. These intersections present an analytical challenge, demonstrating that "it is necessary to consider how categories operate in combination, intensifying one particular marker in relation to another" (Couto, Venturi, & Machin, 2019, p. 2684, authors' own translation).

A comparison of the three cases makes it possible to understand that disability does not operate as a single analytical category. The social markers of difference do not accumulate mechanically; rather, they interact in ways that produce singular experiences of inclusion, exclusion, belonging, and recognition. While Theodor has conditions that broaden his access to healthcare services, Ravi and Lico depend entirely on public policies to guarantee their rights. Likewise, racial, territorial, and economic conditions produce different possibilities for social and educational participation.

> The intersectional perspective seeks to consider the multiple levels of articulation of social markers in the production of social processes of domination and oppression, aiming to establish itself as a conceptual and methodological alternative that interrogates the dynamics and complexity of interactions at both the individual and structural levels. (Couto, Venturi, & Machin, 2019, p. 2689 authors' own translation)

From an intersectional perspective, it becomes possible to understand that the processes of *incluexclusion* observed within the school context do not arise exclusively from disability. Rather, they are produced at the intersection of disability, race/colour, social class, territory, family structure, and access to public policies. Thus, rather than analysing only the individual characteristics of children, intersectionality makes it possible to reveal how social inequalities traverse their bodies and lived experiences, producing different forms of presence, participation, and recognition within the educational space.

Final considerations: the school environment as territory of life

It can be concluded that the *body in crisis* is, ultimately, an act of resistance. The analysis of the three students demonstrates that genuine inclusion requires transforming the school's complaint into a sensitive case study, one that seeks to understand the relational contexts that produce suffering (Christofari & Freitas, 2023).

This article therefore argues that schools must abandon the medicalising rationality that transforms difference into pathology. By embracing the singular humanity of Ravi, Theodor, and Lico, education assumes its ethical and political role: that of sustaining life in its plurality, transforming everyday school life from a territory of silenced crises into a space to produce existence and full citizenship.

When we understand the body of the child with a disability as a *body-territory* — a territory that bears the historical marks of exclusion, stigmatisation, and silencing — we cannot reduce it to the condition of a *body in crisis*, for this body also carries joyful encounters. If it is true that the school, as an institution, often fails to perceive the pain of these bodies — or, when it does perceive it, fails to discuss it or incorporate it into pedagogical discourse — it is equally true that this space can be re-signified as a place for the re-potentiation of life through *affects*, without forgetting that the school is also a place of joyful encounters.

In resonance with this perspective, Rubem Alves (1994) conceives childhood as a fertile territory of joy and of the desire to learn, placing the child's body at the centre of this proposition:

> A child's body is an infinite space in which all universes can exist. The richer these universes are, the farther the butterfly will fly, the greater the fascination, the greater the number of melodies it will know how to play, the greater its capacity to love, and the greater its happiness. (Alves, 1994, p. 58, authors' own translation)

In this sense, Alves (1994) calls upon the school to recognise the whole subject, including their experience, affectivity, embodiment, and imagination. He poetically reminds us of the field of possibilities that inhabits every child's body. Together, these perspectives point toward a pedagogy that does not neutralise the body but instead cultivates the universes it contains.

Merleau-Ponty (1945/1994), in turn, provides the phenomenological key for educational practice: perception is always embodied, and the other becomes present through our hands, gestures, and the micro-significations of the body, rather than solely through verbal expression. The inability of the school and its professionals to "see the invisible", the subtle expressions, rhythms, and singular ways in which a child exists constitutes both an epistemological and an ethical failure. A school that does not cultivate sensitive ways of seeing loses the opportunity to perceive *affects* and bodily manifestations that signal pain, anxiety, joy, or reservoirs of potentiality; in short, it loses the opportunity to respond pedagogically to what emerges before it becomes a crisis.

In this sense, the bodies of children with disabilities are not merely signs of individual suffering, but rather reveal a structural dimension of exclusion a pain that exposes the extent to which schools often still fail to ensure a territory of welcome and belonging for all childhoods.

To conclude this reflection without acknowledging the weight of the crises experienced by children with disabilities within educational institutions would be to disregard the extent to which the child's body continues to be perceived and experienced as a territory of exclusion. This exclusion is not expressed solely through physical removal, but also through silent gestures, averted gazes, practices that render children invisible, and discourses that deny their potential. This gaze, devoid of *affect* and sensitivity, underlies what we have termed *incluexclusion* that is, a presence marked by absence. The child is present, yet is not recognised; the child participates, yet does not belong.

In light of this, the urgency of imagining another school logic becomes undeniable: a school capable of looking beyond appearances, recognising bodies in their wholeness, and valuing what pulses, vibrates, and communicates within them.

It is within this context that the pedagogical implications drawn from Alves, Merleau-Ponty, and other scholars become particularly significant, enabling the advancement of a pedagogy that: (1) listens to and values the student's everyday experience; (2) nurtures the joy and creative potential of the child's body; and (3) prepares teachers to perceive, through embodied awareness — not only through cognition — the signs of pain and *affect*. This triad constitutes an ethical imperative: to transform the school from a normative filter into a map of encounters where the feeling body finds recognition, attentive listening, and meaningful mediation.

The cases of Ravi, Theodor, and Lico made it possible to understand that disability does not constitute a homogeneous experience, nor can it be explained through a single social marker. From an intersectional perspective, it became evident that race/colour, social class, territory, family composition, access to public policies, and conditions of care intersect in singular ways throughout each child's trajectory, producing different forms of participation, recognition, and belonging within the school context.

Thus, the processes of *incluexclusion* do not arise exclusively from disability, but from the intersection of multiple social markers of difference that traverse children's bodies and shape their everyday experiences. Recognising these intersections means shifting the analytical gaze from the individual condition to the social structures that produce inequality, making visible the mechanisms that expand or restrict children's possibilities for existence, learning, and participation within the school.

For there is no genuine inclusion without *affect*, and there is no *affect* without the encounter between bodies that recognise one another in their dignity and potential.

Note

In accordance with the ethical principles governing research involving human participants and to ensure the student's anonymity, all real names have been replaced with fictitious names throughout this chapter.

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Be Diverse, Be Inclusive, and Design with Meaning

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Abstract

Diversity is a fact; inclusion is a key principle, and the *Design for All* approach is a must. This chapter argues that the *Design for All* approach benefits everyone, and there are three primary reasons to support action for diversity and inclusion: ethics, regulations and profit. The chapter develops each argument in detail and concludes that both diversity and inclusion ensure that designs truly respond to the needs of all users when the *Design for All* approach is followed.

Keywords

Diversity; Inclusion; Design for All Approach.

Introduction

Why should users adapt to designs rather than designs adapt to users? This chapter argues that *Design for All* benefits everyone (designers, companies, customers, stakeholders, society). To illustrate, let me share a story with you. Once upon a time, there was a bazaar filled with people carrying all sorts of shopping bags (big, small; round, square; plastic, textile, and natural fibres; etc.). But, in the bazaar, there were also shop workers with trolleys and people who, for one reason or another, used a cane, a walker, a crutch, or a wheelchair. There were also people with roller skates, bikes, baby strollers, electric scooters, or skateboards. The space between shops enables everyone to move freely when shopping. And they all shopped happily ever after.

This bazaar, Pedro Garau's open-air food market in Palma de Mallorca, is a metaphor for a competitive marketplace with diverse customers. It highlighted how adapting design to users fosters greater inclusion and effectiveness for all. So, designers should prioritise *Design for All*

(not just for average users) when developing products, environments, programmes, and services.

There are three primary reasons (ethical, legal, and economic) to support action for diversity and inclusion. Designers need to focus on the *Design for All* approach (ethics). They must also follow the law, and public administrations must ensure that it is enforced (regulations). Finally, they need to work on increasing sales and maximising returns (profit).

Diversity, inclusion and design for all approach

Diversity is not an opinion; it is a fact. The world is diverse in age, race, sex, religion, opinions, abilities, and any other conditions. Therefore, inclusion is a key principle, an ongoing challenge, and a long-term vision for companies, designers, and stakeholders involved in design.

Indeed, the EIDD Design for All Europe (2004) stated that "everything that is designed and made by people to be used by people must be accessible, convenient for everyone in society to use and responsive to evolving human diversity". Furthermore, Gancho et al. (2022) assert that "design for inclusion strives to create equitable products and services by embracing the opportunities and challenges presented by a diverse population".

Diversity and inclusion must guide the *Design for All* approach. In fact, design is a "driver of user-centred innovation" (European Commission, Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry, 2012); that is, a "user-centred, creative development activity driving innovation" (Galindo-Rueda & Millot, 2015). Design needs to be "focused upon human needs and aspirations at a broader and deeper level than that of designing for people as users" (European Commission, Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry, 2012).

Here, Gancho et al. (2022) pointed out that "design, as a project method that is transversal to all areas of knowledge and directed to the human being, leads to diversity being permanently present in everything that surrounds the designer and that is part of his projects".

A "people-centred" approach can open up new opportunities for design (European Commission, Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry, 2012). Designers need to analyse human needs and aspirations, and require the involvement of end users at every stage in the *Design for All* approach (EIDD Design for All Europe, 2004).

This context encompasses *Design for All* (European Union), *Inclusive Design* (United Kingdom), and *Universal Design* (United States of America). These three key concepts collectively define the principle of "design for human diversity, social inclusion, and equality" (EIDD Design for All Europe, 2004).

Diversity, inclusion and design for all legal framework

Ignorance of the law is no excuse (*Ignorantia legis non excusat*). At the international level, in 1945, the United Nations presented the *Charter of the United Nations*. Article 1.3 advocated for "respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion".

Three years later, in 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Article 2 stated that "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status".

In 1950, the Council of Europe published the *European Convention on Human Rights*. Article 14 provided that "the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status".

Fifty years later, in 2001, UNESCO, a specialised United Nations agency, adopted the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*. Article 4 emphasised that "the defence of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity", and Article 5 claimed that "cultural rights are an integral part of human rights".

Four years later, in 2006, the United Nations concluded *the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and the *Optional Protocol*. Article 2 defined the meaning of universal design as "the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design; universal design shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed". Yet, Article 10 stated that "States Parties reaffirm that every human being has the inherent right to life and shall take all necessary measures to ensure its effective enjoyment by persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others".

Finally, in 2015, when setting the *17 Sustainable Development Goals*, the United Nations envisaged "a just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met". In fact, according to the Global Disability Fund (n.d.), "the SDGs contain 11 explicit references to persons with disabilities, and explicitly underscore the importance of leaving no one behind as a foundational element".

At the European level, the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* (European Union, 2016) is based on the principles of non-discrimination (Article 21), cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity (Article 22), and the integration of people with disabilities (Article 26).

However, the *Charter* did not attain full legal effect until the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon (2009).

Without question, international and European regulations on diversity and inclusion are mandatory rules. However, they had no legal effect until they were signed by Member States, and implemented by national, regional and local authorities.

At the national level, the *The Spanish Constitution* (1978) defined diversity as a human right and inclusion as a principle, specifically in Article 9.2 (freedom and equality of individuals and of the groups to which they belong), Article 14 (equality before the law), Article 49 (full individual autonomy and social inclusion of persons with disabilities), and Article 53.2 (individual appeal for protection or "recurso de amparo", in Spanish).

Following the *Spanish Magna Carta*, a set of national and regional mandatory rules were enacted to implement its principles. On the one hand, the *Royal Legislative Decree 1/2013, of November 29* (national regulation) focused on social inclusion and the rights of persons with disabilities. It presented social inclusion as a principle (Article 2.j). On the other hand, the *Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, of Education* (national regulation), the *Organic Law 3/2020, of December 29 amending Organic Law 2/2006* (national regulation), and the *Law 1/2022, of March 8, on Education in the Balearic Islands* (Balearic regional regulation) focused on educational inclusion for all students regardless of their background — including age, race, sex, religion, opinion, ability, and any other condition. They defined educational inclusion as a pedagogical principle applicable to all levels of education (from early childhood education to doctoral or equivalent level).

To sum up, international, European, national and regional laws mandate diversity and inclusion in design. International organisations, such as the United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the European Union, remind us of it. However, these regulations can be made effective only at the national and regional levels.

Diversity, inclusion and profit in design

Design is a non-technological type of innovation (OECD & Eurostat, 2018). Galindo-Rueda and Millot (2015) emphasise the importance of measuring innovation and economic performance of design, including design as an economic sector (a subsector of the cultural and creative industries), workforce skills and tasks, intellectual property rights, and as an element of innovation and innovation activities.

Undoubtedly, design is linked to innovation in the market (Galindo-Rueda & Millot, 2015). Indeed, the cultural and creative industries sector represents approximately 1.2 million companies (over 99.9% of which are small and medium-sized enterprises), employing 8

million people, and accounting for 3.95% of the EU's total value added (European Commission, 2024).

But design also implies attention to diversity and inclusion. The economic and innovative value of *Design for All* expands market reach and benefits businesses. It is important to bear in mind that, according to EUROSTAT, people with disabilities aged 16 years and over represent a potential market segment of over 90 million users (24% of the European Union's population in 2024). And the older you get, the more likely you are to have a disability. In fact, according to EUROSTAT, people aged 65 years or over represent a potential market segment of over 97 million users (22% of the European Union's population in 2024).

The primary objective of a business is to increase sales and create greater economic benefits (in the short term and in the long term). It is better and cheaper to *Design for All* (taking potential customers into account) than to adapt an existing design (with the additional financial outlay that entails). Just embrace the EIDD Design for All Europe (2004) motto: "good design enables, bad design disables".

Conclusion

So, why should users adapt to designs rather than designs adapt to users? Because *Design for All* benefits everyone. It is embedded in designers' beliefs (ethics), mandated by law (regulations), and it is worth it (profit). The world is diverse in age, race, sex, religion, opinions, abilities, and any other conditions. Therefore, inclusion is a key principle, an ongoing challenge, and a long-term vision for companies, designers, and stakeholders involved in design.

Designers should strive to create designs "of the people, by the people, and for the people" (to quote Abraham Lincoln), as well as with the people. Thus, international, European, national, and regional laws mandate diversity and inclusion in design. If ethical and legal reasons are not enough, the business case is equally compelling: embracing diversity and meaningful design drives profitability. By applying the *Design for All* approach in their own projects, designers can develop solutions that are both innovative and relevant, ensuring their designs truly address the needs of all users.

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Redistributing the Senses: Multisensory Aesthetic Experience and the Reconfiguration of Inclusive Art Education

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Abstract

The article develops an art education perspective on inclusion that goes beyond accessibility and differentiation. Using a theory-guided reflection on the practice of the workshop "The Journey of the Animals", it examines how a multisensory art setting reorganises possibilities for perception and expression, authorship, and communication. The workshop was conducted in the institutional context of Inclusion Day with 15 adult participants from various multi-professional fields. The analysis is based on observed actions and does not claim to provide empirical impact measurement. The central theoretical framework consists of Sensory Studies, Disability Studies, and Rancière's concept of the distribution of the sensible; aesthetics of experience, phenomenology, and other positions in art education complement this perspective. The article argues that inclusive art education begins where the conditions for aesthetic participation themselves are questioned and changed. Multisensory practice here does not appear as a compensatory method, but as an art educational strategy through which tactile, auditory, kinaesthetic, and nonverbal contributions can gain aesthetic significance. At the same time, multisensory settings are not automatically inclusive: their potential depends on voluntariness, choice, sensory sensitivity, and a reflective design of the conditions for participation.

Keywords

Inclusion; Art Education; Multisensory Practice; Aesthetic Experience; Participation.

More than access: inclusion as a question of aesthetic orders

Multisensory art education settings are not inherently inclusive. Their inclusive potential depends on a reflexive and responsive design that takes sensory sensitivities, individual boundaries, and different possibilities for participation into account. Inclusion is often understood in schools as a question of opportunities for participation: tasks are differentiated, materials are adapted, assistance is organised, and barriers are removed. These measures are important, because without them, many learning and experiential spaces would not be accessible at all. However, for art education, this perspective is not sufficient. In art lessons, participation depends not only on access, but also on which forms of perception and expression are recognised as valuable. The visual norm is especially formative in art education. Art is often organised around visibility, representation, image comparison, and verbal reflection. This system can be productive, but it is not neutral. It favors learners who can visually differentiate, articulate verbally, and present results in an argumentative manner. Other forms of aesthetic intelligence — such as tactile sensitivity, auditory orientation, kinaesthetic knowledge, or nonverbal resonance — can easily be marginalised as a result. Sensory studies show that perception is not only biologically, but also culturally and socially organised. Howes and Classen point out that societies prefer, cultivate, and imbue certain sensory modes with meaning. In many Western cultural and educational traditions, vision has been granted a particularly high epistemic status and associated with knowledge, control, and orientation (Howes & Classen, 2014). From this perspective, the visual dominance of art education does not appear as a natural given, but as a culturally developed order. From a disability studies perspective, disability and exclusion are produced through the interaction of bodily differences with social, institutional, and ableist norms that privilege particular bodies, abilities, and forms of expression (Dolmage, 2017; Goodley, 2014). Inclusive art education must therefore ask which modes of perception, bodies, and forms of expression should be recognised as aesthetically relevant. Against this background, the workshop "The Journey of the Animals" is analysed as an example from art education. It employs blindfolds, sound spaces, clay, movement, and animal perspectives. The guiding research question is: How does a multisensory art education setting change the conditions under which different forms of perception and expression, as well as types of authorship, are recognised as aesthetically significant? The article does not investigate the empirical effectiveness of the workshop or evaluate individual learning processes. Rather, its aim is to use theory-guided analysis of observed actions to reconstruct which orders of aesthetic participation the setting enables, disrupts, or continues to limit. The central thesis is: Multisensory aesthetic practice can shift visually dominated orders of participation, provided participation is voluntary and the setting is designed reflectively and includes different possibilities for involvement. Following Rancière, this can be understood as a change in "the

distribution of the sensible": the order that determines what can be seen, heard, said, and recognised as significant (Rancière, 2008).

Art, body, senses: theoretical perspectives

The central theoretical framework of this article consists of Sensory Studies, Disability Studies, and Rancière's concept of the distribution of the sensible. These frameworks enable the connection of cultural hierarchies of the senses, normative ideas of ability, and the political dimension of aesthetic recognition. Dewey's aesthetics of experience and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology additionally establish the experiential nature and embodiment of aesthetic education. Barad, Ingold, Kaprow, Biesta, Penzel, as well as Todd et al., are specifically referenced to relate materiality, material relationships, participation, art educational planning, and sensory pedagogy to the workshop. With Dewey, art is understood as experience. Aesthetic education is therefore not reducible to a finished artwork. It arises in the interplay of perception, action, material, resistance, affect, and meaning (Dewey, 2005). This perspective is important for art education because it shifts the focus from the product to the process. What matters is not only what is visible in the end, but how learners gain experience through doing, respond to situations, and develop agency. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology complements this idea by understanding perception as bodily situated. The body is not merely an instrument of execution, but a condition for relating to the world. Seeing, hearing, touching, moving, and affective responding are interwoven in experience (Merleau-Ponty, 2006). Multisensory practice is thus not just methodological variation, but a fundamental structure of aesthetic experience. Rancière opens up the politico-aesthetic dimension. Every social order determines what can be seen, heard, spoken, and recognised as significant (Rancière, 2008). Applied to art education, this means aesthetic participation depends on which senses, bodies, and forms of expression are legitimised. Inclusion is therefore not only a question of didactics, but also of the politics of perception. Sensory Studies broaden this perspective. Howes and Classen show that sensory orders vary historically, culturally, and politically. Perception is not only an individual achievement, but part of social practices and value systems (Howes & Classen, 2014). Art education can reproduce such sensory orders, but also disrupt them. Furthermore, the approach of sensory pedagogy is relevant for this article. Todd et al. (2021) criticise the fact that the bodily and sensory dimensions of education are often too little considered in pedagogical theory. They propose understanding aesthetics in education not only in terms of a theory of art, but also through perception, the body, and sensory encounter (Todd et al., 2021). The workshop can thus be read as a pedagogical situation in which education occurs through embodied, sensory, and situated experience. Multisensory practice is understood here as an epistemic strategy because it brings forth other forms of knowledge: tactile knowledge, auditory orientation knowledge, kinesthetic body knowledge, and material-based experiential knowledge. These

forms of knowledge are often less recognised in art education than visual representation or verbal reflection. Precisely for this reason, multisensory practice has inclusive educational potential. This perspective is significant for the art education discussion. Sindermann describes inclusive art education as potential-oriented and difference-sensitive (Sindermann, 2018). Multisensory practice in this context is a critical instrument that makes the silent norms of art education perceptible. Biesta's art education considerations are also relevant here. In *Letting Art Teach*, he develops a perspective in which art is not merely a means for conveying predetermined learning objectives, but can itself show something, interrupt habitual ways of perceiving, and bring people into a dialogue with the world (Biesta, 2021). The workshop is thus not only regarded as a method, but as an aesthetic encounter that can change perception, attention, and responsiveness.

Methodological approach and material basis

This article employs a theory-guided, reflexive analysis of practice in art education rather than an empirical evaluation of the workshop's effects. The material basis of the analysis consists of the workshop plan, the written performative scores, the actions observed by the authors during the workshop, and the course of the concluding reflection round. These materials were examined in relation to the central theoretical perspectives of Sensory Studies, Disability Studies, and Rancière's concept of the distribution of the sensible. The analysis focuses on selected situations in which the arrangement of sound, material, movement, space, and interaction appeared to reorganise possibilities for perception, material engagement, embodiment, communication, expression, authorship, and participation. The observed actions are treated as analytical examples through which the conditions created by the workshop setting can be interpreted. Statements made by individual participants during the reflection round were not systematically analysed as data. Neither the observed actions nor the participants' statements are used as evidence of individual experiences, learning outcomes, or the effectiveness of the workshop. Since the authors were involved in designing and conducting the workshop, the analysis represents a reflexive examination of their own practice and does not claim to provide an independent perspective.

The workshop as an experiential space

The following section presents the workshop "The Journey of the Animals" as a practical example of theoretically informed reflection on practice. The workshop took place in the institutional context of Inclusion Day and involved 15 adults from various multi-professional fields who participated voluntarily. Before the workshop began, participants were informed about the procedure, the materials, potential sensory stimuli, and the use of observed actions

for theory-guided reflection on practice; the necessary consent for data protection was obtained. Possible health-related considerations, including tactile hypersensitivity, allergies, and sensitivity to strobe or flashing-light effects, were also clarified. The two authors assumed different roles: one person narrated; the other read the scores, demonstrated individual actions, acted in the space, and accompanied the implementation. The reflection round aimed to collectively organise and verbalise the sensory and bodily experiences participants had during the workshop. The focus was on shifts between seeing and touching, between one's own and another's object, and between different modes of bodily engagement and spatial orientation. The reflection thus opened a space where participants could compare their perceptions and understand the significance of different approaches to collaborative creation. Since the workshop was conducted with adults from various professional backgrounds, the observations cannot be directly transferred to school learning groups. The resulting consequences should therefore be understood as theoretically grounded art educational perspectives, not as empirically validated action recommendations. The starting point was the consideration of how questions of inclusion can be addressed not primarily through explanations or discussions, but through embodied and aesthetic experience. The focus, therefore, was not on learning specific content or producing an artwork, but on jointly experiencing a series of situations in which perception, material, sound, movement, and encounter were continually reorganised. A story was told, and participants engaged with these situations through short performative scores, each of which was read aloud and opened up new possibilities for action. They were accompanied by pre-recorded sounds of different environments, which intensified the atmosphere and repeatedly changed spatial orientation. All participants then put on aprons. At the centre was a large table around which everyone sat. In front of each place was a lump of clay and two simple wooden sticks as modelling tools. Several bowls of water stood in the middle of the table. Sitting together around the table created a shared space for action. Everyone listened to the same sounds, encountered the same situations, and worked at the same table, although their experiences were not identical. At the beginning, each person drew an animal card by lot. Four animals — mole, bird, fox, and turtle — were available. The cards contained short descriptions of their habitats, movements, and particularly developed senses. The mole orientates itself by touch and vibrations in the ground; the bird by overview and air currents; the fox by smell, alertness, and hearing; and the turtle by slowness, contact with the ground, and its protective shell. The animals were not used as roles, but opened up different ways of relating to the environment. These associations are to be understood as aesthetic fictions. They do not claim ethological accuracy, nor do they establish fixed identity models. Participants were invited to experience the upcoming journey from the perspective of their assigned animal and to use its mode of perception as guidance for the situations ahead. The journey began with the narration of a calm autumn day in an orchard. While the first score was read, the clay lay untouched in front of the participants. As

light rain sounds began, participants were invited to imagine their finger as a single raindrop. Slowly, their finger touched the clay, leaving small indentations. As the rain on the audio track intensified, the activity changed: now several fingers were used to mimic the rain, which also changed the movement of the hands. Individual touches became a rhythmic play of several fingers, merging with the sound of the rain. The clay responded immediately to each touch — pressure, moisture, and rhythm inscribed themselves on its surface. Attention was focused less on forming a shape and more on how the material changed under their hands. The sounds were translated into touch. As the rain built up to a thunderstorm, the spatial atmosphere also changed and the room was darkened. Thunder, wind, and heavy rain acoustically filled the room. At the same time, short flashes from a strobe light interrupted the dim lighting. The rapid alternation of light and dark created a discontinuous sense of time: movements, including the modelling of the clay, appeared visually fragmented, like a sequence of frames. The next score prompted participants to create a shelter for their animal during the thunderstorm. The idea of the assigned animal now began to influence their actions. What form might give a mole a sense of security? What kind of shelter would a bird seek? Does a turtle even need an additional shelter, or does it already carry one? The imagined intensity of the rainfall also shaped these considerations: would a simple refuge offer sufficient protection, or would rising water and the possibility of flooding require an elevated, enclosed, or reinforced structure? As the clay yielded under their hands, caves, walls, hollows, raised platforms, and enclosed spaces emerged. The act of shaping developed through an engagement with the animal's particular needs and vulnerability. The clay became a place of care. Gradually, the sounds of the storm grew quieter. Afterward, participants voluntarily put on blindfolds and passed their clay objects to a neighbour. This temporarily reduced vision, while other senses like hearing, touch, movement, and spatial orientation came to the fore. The temporary limitation of sight was not intended as a simulation of blindness or visual impairment, but as an aesthetic-didactic irritation. Use of the blindfolds was voluntary; they could be removed at any time without affecting further participation. On this basis, the setting's focus shifted from visual control to shared multisensory exploration. The room was then half-darkened. With the temporary suspension of visual orientation, attention shifted more to the body, material, and touch. Hands explored the clay shelter more carefully, and movements slowed. Temperature, moisture, and the resistance of the clay became the main reference points. Attention concentrated on the immediate contact between body and material. Passing on one's own object also meant losing some familiarity; in its place came a foreign object, whose form could only be discovered through touch. Hands encountered pressure marks, indentations, thin walls, or massive forms, without knowing the thoughts or decisions behind them. For further processing, each participant received a neighbour's object. They explored the unfamiliar shelter, silently considering what their animal might fear and what it might need protection from. As participants continued shaping the object, questions

emerged: Should the existing shape be preserved or changed? How far can one's own shaping go? When does responsibility for another person's work begin? The reshaping became a silent dialogue between two people's traces. Shaping became a process of mutual response, with several hands and perspectives coming together in a shared object. With the audio transition to the city, the soundscape intensified again. Traffic and machine noises changed the atmosphere and led the story to a construction site. The adopted clay object was first rolled into a long strand. Participants then mimicked the movement of a steamroller heard in the audio, pressing the clay as flat and smooth as possible with both fists. The clay was worked from different positions and body postures: participants rolled it out, smoothed it with water, and exchanged places at the table with another person. The change of seat altered familiar spatial references, creating a new perspective, new neighbours, and different traces in the material. The narration then led participants across the still-wet concrete of an intersection, where the animals were to leave their tracks. Standing up and using the wooden sticks, participants drew the tracks and movement patterns of their animal in the clay, focusing on how the animal moves through its environment. Does it leave deep marks, fine lines, or barely visible touches? The engravings became translations of movement into material. Participants responded differently: some drew paw prints, others imitated movement rhythms. Later, the story moved to a market. Voices, footsteps, and busy activity filled the room. Participants were invited to imagine how their animal would orient itself in this dense environment. Would the fox follow a scent? Would the bird search for food from above? Would the turtle cautiously find its way among people? In this situation, participants were given a piece of fruit or vegetable under the table. Without seeing it, they explored its weight, temperature, surface, and shape. This tactile exploration led to a sculptural translation in clay: the score invited them to model the object they had felt. Blindfolds were again put on and the resulting shapes were passed on. Now, hands explored another person's work, trying to recognise solely by touch what fruit or vegetable had been created. Memory, material, and perception entered into open dialogue, with agreement and irritation equally part of the experience. Later in the workshop, the animals left the city; with the sounds of a river, the atmosphere calmed. The blindfolds were removed. Narration led the animals to a river they could not cross alone. A score instructed participants to each form a smooth, round stone. The stones were then arranged together to form a crossing over the river. Participants shaped the clay with slow, even movements into a smooth stone. The previously forceful interventions gave way to gentle stroking and smoothing. Working with water made the clay increasingly smooth and slippery. The material responded differently to the hands, and the body's rhythm changed as well. Once completed, the rounded clay stones were placed together on the table to form a shared bridge across the imagined river. After symbolically crossing this bridge, the participants entered the last setting of the narrated journey. On the other side of the river, the narration led into a forest, accompanied by appropriate forest sounds. Participants left

the table and assumed the posture of their animal. The previously developed animal perspective — through sound, material, and imagination — now shifted into the whole body. Some moved cautiously and close to the ground, others straightened up or tensed their bodies. It was particularly striking how some participants did not merely imitate their animal's posture, but visibly engaged with its perceptual mode. For a brief moment, the animal perspective became another way of perceiving oneself, the space, and others. The workshop concluded with a collective reflection around the table, with the temporary bridge installation at its centre as the only material remnant of the workshop. The focus was not on the resulting clay objects, but on the experiences of perceiving, orienting, and creating together. The reflection focused attention on the shifts between seeing and touching, between one's own and others' objects, and between sitting, standing, changing places, and different body positions. Issues of inclusion appeared less as an explicit topic of the workshop, but rather as a horizon for reflection: as the question of how different ways of perceiving, responding, and creating can coexist and be recognised.

When vision recedes: analysis of multisensory participation

The workshop "The Journey of the Animals" demonstrates that inclusion in art education is not achieved solely through adapted tasks or more accessible materials. What is crucial is how an aesthetic setting organises perception, action, and recognition. In the workshop, the usual standards of art education — seeing, overview, verbal explanation, and individual artistic output — temporarily lose their primacy. In their place come touch, sound, movement, material response, and shared responsibility. Artistic agency is now attributed to exploring materials by touch, responding to sound, taking up traces left by others, or assuming nonverbal responsibility in the collaborative process. The temporary darkening does not simply activate other senses; it disrupts an order in which seeing is often considered the most important medium of control, understanding, and evaluation. As soon as visual orientation is lost, hands, ears, posture, memory, and spatial awareness become media of understanding. This shift affects all participants. Those confident in visual creation may experience insecurity when visual control is temporarily taken away; at the same time, tactile, auditory, or bodily abilities can become more prominent. Thus, artistic agency does not appear as a fixed trait of a person, but as a relation between body, situation, and sensory order. With Howes and Classen, this can be described as an irritation of a cultural hierarchy of the senses in which vision is particularly closely linked to knowledge and orientation in Western societies (Howes & Classen, 2014). Sound constitutes a second important dimension. The noises of rain, thunder, city, market, river, and forest structure atmosphere, time, tempo, and action. Sound is not merely used as a background, but assumes a space- and time-structuring function. It can condense, calm, or activate situations, heighten tension, or enable shared attention without standardising participants' responses. The material clay also contributes significantly to this

aesthetic reordering. Clay is soft, moist, resistant, retains traces, and responds immediately to pressure and touch. Especially in phases without visual control, creation is experienced less as the realisation of an inner image and more as a response to the material's behaviour. Moisture, temperature, weight, and resistance become central. The material thus becomes not just a tool, but a dialogical counterpart. In line with Ingold, creating here can be understood as going along with the forces and properties of the material (Ingold, 2013). Barad's concept of intra-active materialisation helps further this observation. For Barad, matter and meaning are inseparable; matter is not a passive, pre-existing substance, but a dynamic process of ongoing materialisation that takes place in materially discursive intra-actions (Barad, 2007). Applied to the workshop, this means clay is not merely the medium for a pre-existing idea. It limits, enables, stores, changes, and elicits responses. Agency does not lie exclusively with the subject, but emerges relationally between body, material, sound, task, space, and other participants. The animal perspectives additionally open up different bodily modes of relating to the world: seeing, touching, listening, sensing, moving, slowing down, orienting oneself, and responding attentively to the environment. These do not function as fixed role-play, but as poetic orientation. Moving through one's surroundings at a slower pace can be understood not as a deficit, but as a distinct mode of perception and attentiveness. What may appear as caution can instead be recognised as a form of attentiveness. Participants are not sorted by support needs, but are given various aesthetic approaches to the world. This becomes especially clear in the passing of objects. The clay objects are passed on, explored by touch, and further worked. As a result, creation can no longer be attributed exclusively to one person. Whoever continues working perceives the existing traces and responds to them; whoever passes on the clay object simultaneously gives up part of the control over its further transformation. Authorship becomes relational and processual. Following Rancière (2008), this shift changes what becomes visible and recognised as meaningful participation in the art education space. In art education, particular value is often placed on controlled shaping, visual overview, individual authorship, and verbal justification. The workshop setting, however, also allows tactile exploration, auditory orientation, bodily response, nonverbal communication, and engagement with the traces of others to emerge as aesthetically meaningful modes of participation. When passed on, the material remains, while its form and meaning continually change. Creation thus does not appear as a finished result, but as a joint, gradually emerging process. This shift brings the conditions of collective perception, action, and participation to the forefront and thereby undermines an art education logic in which works are primarily evaluated as individual achievements. Kaprow's action- and participation-oriented understanding of art can be connected here. Kaprow shifts art from the autonomous object to situations, actions, everyday materials, participation, and experience (Kaprow, 1993). For the workshop, this is significant because the aesthetic quality lies not primarily in the clay object, but in the collective action: in touching, passing on,

responding, changing, and tolerating uncertainty. The workshop does not evidence inclusion in the sense of empirical impact measurement. However, it offers a model for how conditions for aesthetic participation can be organised differently. Visibility, verbal reflection, and individual perfection lose their self-evidence; tangibility, audibility, material response, shared authorship, and nonverbal communication come to the fore. In Rancière's terms, this can be described as a shift in the distribution of the sensible (Rancière, 2008).

From participation to co-creation: a discussion in art education

The analysis suggests that multisensory artistic practice can be understood as more than methodological variety. In the reflection on the workshop, inclusion does not emerge as an additional topic but as a question concerning the conditions produced by the aesthetic-pedagogical arrangement itself. Perception, materials, bodies, spaces, and social relations are configured in ways that allow different modes of response to acquire significance. The art educational relevance of the workshop therefore lies in a shift of perspective. Inclusion does not simply mean enabling learners to participate in already established forms of art education. Rather, it requires a critical examination of the norms that art educational practice itself produces and reproduces. Which senses are privileged? Which forms of expression are recognised as aesthetically meaningful? Which bodies are able to participate without being marked as exceptional or requiring adaptation? Which forms of knowledge remain unrecognised because they are not visual, verbal, representational, or oriented toward a finished product? Dewey's aesthetics of experience helps to ground this change of perspective. If art is understood as experience, the focus shifts from the finished product to the process of perceiving, acting, and making meaning. This is precisely what becomes apparent in the workshop: the clay objects are important, but not as finished works. Their meaning arises in the doing, in touching, in passing on, in responding to sound and material (Dewey, 2005). Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology further sharpens this idea. Perception is not purely mental and not reducible to seeing. The body is the condition through which the world is experienced (Merleau-Ponty, 2006). In the workshop, this embodied dimension is practically placed at the centre. Hands recognise forms, the body responds to sound, movement changes the relationship to space, and contact with the material becomes a distinct form of thinking. Movement, tactile encounters with the material, and embodied knowledge thus become significant modes of aesthetic understanding. Todd et al. provide a theoretical extension for this. They argue that education is often understood purely in terms of cognition, information, and measurable achievement, while the bodily and sensory dimensions of pedagogical situations remain underrepresented (Todd et al., 2021). The workshop addresses this gap. It shows that aesthetic education happens through bodily orientations, touches, sounds, movements, rhythms, and material resistance. With Rancière, this experience can be interpreted as politico-aesthetic. Every pedagogical situation

organises what can count as a contribution. In art education, this often happens through visibility, verbal reflection, and comparable products. In contrast, the workshop allows responses to be experienced as aesthetically significant. Its inclusive potential lies in reorganising the existing aesthetic order so that different sensory and bodily forms of participation can be recognised. Disability studies complement this perspective by showing that exclusion is produced through social, institutional, and ableist norms that privilege particular bodies and modes of participation (Dolmage, 2017; Goodley, 2014). Applied to art education, this means that even seemingly neutral criteria such as accuracy, overview, verbal explanation, or independent production can be exclusionary. The workshop temporarily opens up a space in which different ways of perceiving, expressing, and participating become aesthetically significant**.** Penzel makes it clear that inclusive practice in art education must be specified professionally. It requires tasks, materials, organisational forms, and diagnostic sensitivity that take into account different areas of development and heterogeneous approaches (Penzel, 2020). The workshop can thus be understood as a specifically art educational setting: it works not only with general openness, but with aesthetic means — sound, clay, narration, body, space, and participatory forms of action. Biesta further shifts the discussion from the question of learning outcomes to what art itself can show and open up in educational processes. His idea of "letting art teach" means that art is not just used as a didactic tool, but as an interlocutor that challenges attention, relation to the world, and responsiveness (Biesta, 2021). Applied to the workshop, this means: The aesthetic situation does not teach participants about inclusion. Rather, it opens up a situation in which changes in perception, dependence, responsibility, and recognition can be aesthetically perceived. No completed or permanent artwork was created in the workshop. While the clay objects remained materially present, their aesthetic significance lay above all in the performative process of collective listening, touching, moving, and responding; what remained were the experience and its documentary traces. The slowing down of perception was also significant. Careful listening and touching interrupted habitual ways of acting focused on quick orientation and immediate results. This became especially clear in contrast to the acoustic density of the urban space. Focusing on individual sounds, rhythms, and noises made the urban soundscape appear condensed and potentially burdensome within the workshop's dramaturgy. Depending on the participant and the particular phase of the workshop, the acoustic landscape could make both slowing down and sensory discomfort physically noticeable, although individual responses were not systematically assessed. This ambivalence highlights the need to design multisensory settings with care and responsiveness. Inclusive art education needs not only differentiated tasks, but consciously designed experiential settings in which different senses, bodies, materials, and forms of expression are recognised as legitimate and contextually significant sources of aesthetic understanding. Multisensory practice, in this sense, is neither simply a variety of methods nor

mere compensation. It disrupts the dominance of certain — especially visual and verbal modes of perception and thus opens up other possibilities for knowing, acting, and responding. Its inclusive effect does not arise automatically, but through the conscious organisation of spaces, materials, time structures, and social relations. Multisensory art practice thus becomes an art educational strategy through which conditions of participation can be made visible and changed.

Sensory challenge, risk, and responsibility: the limits of multisensory approaches

Multisensory practice is not automatically inclusive. Precisely because it can be intense, it may also become overwhelming. Darkness, loud noises, strobe lights, confined spatial situations, or material work close to the body can provoke productive irritation, but also stress, anxiety, or withdrawal. Inclusive art education must therefore not confuse irritation with imposition. The acoustic landscape plays a particularly important role: transitions between calming and activating sounds, slow and rapid rhythms, and natural and urban environments can shape participants' sense of time, bodily tension, attention, and spatial orientation. The use of blindfolds, strobe lighting, and intense soundscapes demonstrates that multisensory settings are not automatically low-barrier. Although the blindfolds could be removed at any time, what constitutes a productive irritation or an altered sense of time for some participants may result in sensory overload for others. Working with wet clay, fruit and vegetables, or scores involving proximity to the body also presupposes that tactile sensitivities, allergies, motor abilities, and personal boundaries are taken seriously. This results in a special professional responsibility. Participants must know what to expect. Health characteristics, tactile sensitivities, allergies, or possible reactions to light and sound stimuli must be considered in advance. Equally important are choices, breaks, spaces for retreat, and the option not to carry out certain actions. Inclusion does not mean that everyone has to participate in everything, but that different forms of participation are legitimate. Openness, too, needs structure. The analysis shows that aesthetic experience does not arise arbitrarily. Sound, material, transitions, narration, light, and movement were deliberately composed. This dramaturgy enables experience, but also guides it. Teachers and art educators must therefore hold the framework without claiming interpretive authority over the experiences of the participants.

With Barad, this responsibility can be understood as responsibility for the material-discursive design of the art educational setting. Spaces, materials, light, sound, tasks, and bodies are not merely external conditions; they also participate in shaping which possibilities for perception, action, and expression arise in a situation—and which are limited (Barad, 2007). Those who design an art education setting thus take responsibility for the conditions under which certain

experiences emerge and others are excluded. Inclusion is therefore not a state that is achieved, but an ongoing process of removing barriers and reflecting on conditions for participation (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Who is addressed by this setting? Who might be overwhelmed? Which senses and bodies are recognised? Which remain subordinate or overlooked?

Consequences: sensory understanding, shared authorship, reflexive planning

Three consequences for art education, art mediation, and the training of art educators can be derived from the analysis. First, inclusive art education should explicitly recognise sensory understanding. Touching, listening, moving, and sensing are not merely supplementary to visual or verbal forms of learning; they constitute distinct pathways of aesthetic education. Strategies such as extending the body through tools and materials or temporarily working with the non-dominant hand or just a finger can interrupt habitual sensorimotor routines, shift tactile attention, and open up unfamiliar ways of perceiving and acting. Their educational value lies not in simulating disability, but in making embodied habits and norms of artistic practice perceptible and available for reflection. In this way, art education can open up experiential spaces in which different forms of perception are not fundamentally hierarchised, but are recognised as relevant and contextually significant avenues of aesthetic understanding. Howes and Classen show that sensory orders are culturally shaped; art education can either confirm or alter these orders (Howes & Classen, 2014). The concept of sensory pedagogy developed by Todd et al. (2021) also makes clear that pedagogical situations are always bodily and sensory encounters. Second, material, body, and authorship should be conceived relationally. Materials such as clay open up possibilities for action, record traces, offer resistance, and make various forms of ability perceptible. Inclusive art education thus asks not only what can be made with a material, but also what relationships, movements, and perceptions it enables. Barad's understanding of materiality as dynamic becoming supports such a perspective, since materiality is understood not as a passive prerequisite, but as a dynamic component of materially-discursive practices (Barad, 2007). Authorship likewise need not always be individualised. Collective works, object transfers, further processing, and cooperative processes shift the attribution of individual achievement and distribute aesthetic responsibility among multiple participants. Kaprow's participatory understanding of art offers an important reference point here, as it conceives art as action, situation, and participation (Kaprow, 1993). Third, inclusive settings must be designed professionally and reflexively. Scores alone are not enough. Transitions, rhythms, atmospheres, breaks, intensities, and spatial arrangements are also crucial. Multisensory settings, in particular, must be carefully composed to ensure that openness does not turn into

overwhelm. Reflection should be organised in multiple channels. Language remains important, but must not be the only legitimate form of meaning-making. Showing, moving, touching, reshaping, comparing, listening, or performative responding can also function as forms of reflection. For the training of art educators, this means that inclusion cannot be conveyed solely through theoretical knowledge or collections of methods. Students should practically reflect on their own norms of perception. This suggests that future art educators should also critically examine their own artistic practice and the norms, habits, and assumptions that shape it. They should experience what it is like to create without visual control for a time, to encounter material as resistance, to communicate nonverbally, or to share authorship. Such self-experiences are not to be understood as simulations of disability, but as reflection on one's own norms, routines, and dependencies of perception. Only then does inclusion become comprehensible not just as a pedagogical mandate, but as a transformation of aesthetic conditions for perception and participation. On this basis, art educators should learn to didactically initiate, reflexively frame, and responsively accompany bodily-sensory forms of experience, while opening up different forms of access and participation. Such settings must be adapted to the particular composition, needs, and sensitivities of each group rather than applied in the same way in every context. This is especially important because multisensory arrangements can create or intensify situations of vulnerability, for example when participants experience uncertainty, loss of control, sensory discomfort, or exposure in relation to others. The design of collective, processual, and multisensory settings therefore cannot be based solely on presumed knowledge of the group. It requires transparent information, meaningful choices, feedback loops, and the willingness to adapt materials, stimulus intensities, time structures, and forms of collaboration together with participants according to the situation. Penzel points out that inclusive art education requires concrete forms of planning and organisation in which workflows, assignments, and learners' social interactions are structured (Penzel, 2020). The workshop demonstrates that such planning does not have to contradict openness. On the contrary, only a clearly composed yet adaptable framework makes it possible for different ways of perceiving and acting to coexist.

Multisensory practice as a change of perspective: conclusion

In response to the research question, the theory-driven reflection on the workshop "The Journey of the Animals" suggests that multisensory art education can reconfigure the conditions of aesthetic participation by temporarily displacing the primacy of visual control, verbal justification, and individual artistic achievement. Sound, clay, animal perspectives, and the circulation of objects create a shared field of experience in which tactile, auditory, kinesthetic, and nonverbal forms of engagement acquire aesthetic significance. Participation is therefore not limited to visual oversight, verbal explanation, or individually perfected

outcomes; it also takes shape through embodied responsiveness, material interaction, shared authorship, and relational responsibility. Although the clay forms remained materially present, their status shifted throughout the workshop: begun individually, they developed into collectively shaped traces of an ongoing process. This shifts the art educational perspective: inclusion does not just mean enabling more people to access existing forms of art education. It means questioning the aesthetic orders of art education itself. The central question, therefore, is not only how everyone can participate, but under what conditions different modes of perception, expression, and creation are recognised as valuable. Multisensory practice can address this question not only theoretically but can also enact such a reordering and make it accessible to reflection in practice. The theoretical perspectives sharpen this thesis: Howes and Classen show that sensory orders are culturally shaped; disability studies make visible the normative effect of privileged abilities; Rancière allows the analysis of the shift in what is perceived and recognised as a valuable contribution. Dewey and Merleau-Ponty ground the processual and embodied nature of aesthetic experience, while Barad, Kaprow, Penzel, Todd et al., and Biesta further differentiate materiality, participation, art educational planning, and responsiveness. However, the workshop does not provide empirical evidence of effectiveness. Moreover, the newly emerging order is not unconditionally inclusive: certain materials, sounds, light stimuli, forms of movement, or narrative guidelines can still make participation difficult. Since teachers select and limit these conditions, the design of multisensory practice remains tied to pedagogical power and responsibility. Inclusive art education thus emerges as a reflexive practice of reordering: it begins when the aesthetic conditions of participation are opened to critical questioning and transformation.

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What Is Seen, What Is Imagined: Art Museums and Accessibility

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Abstract

This chapter seeks to stimulate critical reflection among colleagues, educators, artists, curators, and museum professionals on the accessibility programmes developed for visitors with low or no vision in art museums. To what extent can the materials produced for these audiences foster an aesthetic experience? How might we conceptualise the relationship between the image and its formation in relation to memory, imagination, and fantasy among people with low or no vision? In addressing these questions, I examine materials developed by the Lasar Segall Museum in São Paulo, with particular attention to a catalogue produced by the museum in partnership with the Municipality of São Paulo, as well as to the museum's tactile sculptures. I have also sought to engage in dialogue with art educators and museum visitors who experience and use these resources. In considering the roles of imagination and fantasy in the construction of aesthetic experience, I draw on the writings of Gianni Rodari, André Malraux, and Massimo Canevacci, alongside my own theoretical and associative reflections.

Keywords

Museums; Accessibility; Art; Low Vision; Museum Programmes.

Accessibility policies in museums: on the Lasar Segall Museum publication and other materials

Located in the city of São Paulo, the Lasar Segall Museum houses a collection of works by Lasar Segall, including paintings, prints, drawings, and sculptures. The institution also maintains an active printmaking studio, a cinema, a gallery for temporary exhibitions, and a

library with an important collection devoted to film studies. Replicas of original sculptures are displayed throughout the museum's corridors and gardens, where visitors with low vision or blindness are encouraged to explore them through touch.

As a starting point for discussing accessibility materials developed for blind and partially sighted visitors, I examine the publication *Segall Portátil* (*Portable Segall*). The first edition was published by the Lasar Segall Museum in 2015, with financial support from the Municipality of São Paulo, through a partnership involving the museum, the Brazilian Ministry of Culture, and the Federal Government. The cover introduces the publication as follows:

> Segall Portátil is an experimental project in language and accessibility for children and adults. In it, composers, designers, educators, illustrators, and an art critic create new forms of reading based on Lasar Segall's paintings, participating together in this editorial adventure (2015, p.2).

The publication opens with a quotation attributed to Lasar Segall:

> Every individual is a child of their own time, and their expression is the expression of that time. Their five senses remain open to perceiving everything that happens in the external world and penetrates the inner world. In some people these impressions quickly fade away; in others they begin to develop, take shape, and seek an outlet. Expression endowed with form becomes creation (2015, p.3).

The introductory text further explains:

> Segall Portátil is an experimental publication that proposes dialogues among tactile, visual, written, and auditory stimuli based on the work of Lasar Segall. People with or without visual impairments who are interested in Segall's painting, illustration, and sound art will encounter multiple ways of reading and seeing through this book, inspired by the creative force and poetic drift of André Malraux's imaginary museum (p.7)

The publication contributes to research on artistic languages and access to art by positioning Lasar Segall's work as a source of inspiration for contemporary artistic production. Rather than imposing rigid reading conventions or predetermined pathways, it encourages readers to imagine, reinvent, and explore different possibilities according to their individual experiences and interpretative frameworks, drawing on tactile, auditory, and visual resources.

As Georges Didi-Huberman (2011) argues, imagination is intrinsically linked to political engagement and plays a fundamental role in shaping how individuals understand and participate in political life. This perspective resonates with the museum's broader commitment to making artistic experiences accessible through different modes of perception and engagement.

The publication also acknowledges the contributions of its production team. The Museum's Educational Action Department coordinated the project. Daniel Bueno created the internal illustrations inspired by Segall's paintings, while Felipe Vilasanchez and Edu Cese composed the accompanying sound pieces, which are included on an audio CD and are based on the illustrations. Ferreira Gullar contributed commentaries on the visual elements, situating them within their historical contexts. Wanda Gomes and Fábio Brazil developed the publication's design, guiding readers' hands and eyes through its tactile and visual elements and providing the text in both Braille and print.

The publication describes its tactile production process as follows:

> Each painting is coated with a tactile varnish featuring specific textures corresponding to each colour within the image. Every double-page spread presents an illustration inspired by the painting alongside a free poem alluding to that illustration. Throughout the volume, Braille accompanies all typographic texts (2015, p. 53).

The publication further elaborates on its contribution to research on artistic languages and access to art:

> This work expands research into artistic languages and access to art by positioning Lasar Segall's work as a source of inspiration for contemporary artistic production. The book deliberately avoids rigid reading sequences or predetermined pathways. Instead, it affirms the freedom to imagine, reinvent, and experience different routes according to each reader's own repertoire and interventions, employing tactile, auditory, and visual resources" (idem, p. 53).

The editors conclude their presentation by referring to Georges Didi-Huberman's reflections on imagination and political engagement. His argument that imagination is fundamental to the ways in which individuals engage with the political sphere highlights the relationship between imaginative activity and political life. This perspective also invites reflection on the museum as a space in which artistic experience, accessibility, and different modes of perception intersect.



Figure 1. Cover of the publication Segall Portátil (Portable Segall).
Source: https://www.wgproduto.com.br/segall-portatil



Figures 2 and 3 (next page). Open spreads from the publication, showing double-page layouts and tactile textures applied to the paintings.
Source: https://www.wgproduto.com.br/segall-portatil



Imagination, concepts, and relationships among the arts

In reading the book's preambles, its stated intentions, and the references invoked to support the publication, one is led to consider the relationships between images and words, imagination, creation, and invention, particularly in the development of an educational and artistic resource conceived in response to the lack of accessible provision for visitors with low or no vision. The open-ended relationships established among the authors and creators suggest an intention to bring together multiple interpretations of Segall's paintings, as though music, textures, and Braille text might generate interpretive pathways and thereby enable an aesthetic experience.

What emerges is the invention of a fable whose effects cannot be measured in any straightforward manner, but which may nevertheless be understood as a form of fantasy that approaches an aesthetic experience. There is a sense of fulfilment in what appears to be the creation of a universe that navigates between the acknowledgement of a physical condition, low vision, and the existence of a museum devoted to an artist and his extensive body of work.

In considering the construction of such a fabular universe, with its highly particular internal logic and an ordering that challenges conventional forms of narrative construction, I turn to Gianni Rodari. In *The Grammar of Fantasy*, Rodari discusses fables that are copied and subsequently modified by children, drawing on A. K. Zholkovsky's account of systems of signs:

> A primary element that originally appears devoid of significance may, within a particular context, acquire decisive importance. This becomes possible because of the polyhedral and, so to speak, asymmetrical character of things: what is insignificant in one sense may, under specific conditions, become difficult and important in another (1973, p.176).

Rodari goes on to explain that, in physics and cybernetics, this phenomenon is known as amplification:

> In the process of amplification, a small quantity of energy, acting as a signal, sets into motion large quantities of stored energy, which are then released and produce effects of considerable magnitude (1973, idem).

According to Žolkovsky, amplification can be understood as a structure underlying every discovery, whether artistic or scientific." A secondary element of the original fable releases the energy of a new fable, functioning as an amplifier. The idea I evoke here, the creation of a fable as a resource for gaining a deeper understanding of the production of the various multimedia materials developed to translate paintings and drawings requires us to consider the generative potential of the concept of amplification.

Within the framework of of amplification proposed here, we may draw on concepts and ideas from other fields of knowledge rather than confining ourselves to the arts and the philosophy of art. Such displacements are important because they function as journeys across bridges and pathways that lateralise thought and, in doing so, seem to establish meaningful connections. In this context, another author I would like to introduce and bring into dialogue with the concept of amplification is Massimo Canevacci. In his book *The Anthropology of Visual Communication*, Canevacci proposes the concept of indiscipline as a methodological approach to expanding the relationships between the arts and their transductions.

Canevacci (2018) identifies three key elements. The first is reflexive ethnography, in which the researcher is neither neutral nor detached from the object of study, as is also the case with the authors and collaborators of *Segall Portátil*. Rather, the researcher reflects upon himself or herself, while anthropological methodologies challenge the dichotomies of space-time, nature-culture, and public and private. The second element is methodological astonishment, understood as the idea that to practise astonishment means learning to mix the familiar and the foreign. As Canevacci further observes, astonishment is the porous opening of intellectual sensitivity towards unanticipated discoveries. Finally, he proposes polyphonic composition, a concept that moves from its musical origins into a poetic-political narrative that combines differentiated forms within the research process through writing (essays, ethnopoetics, stories), visual media (photography, video, blogs), and the arts (music, essay, performance).

These two conceptual frameworks, emerging from distinct historical periods and geographical contexts, may enrich our understanding of how the publication for people with

low vision or blindness was conceived. Yet a fundamental question remains unanswered: does an aesthetic experience genuinely emerge through engagement with the tactile book, its texts, and its accompanying music? And, if so, how might such an experience be assessed?

By bringing together concepts that may not initially appear related in the making of a publication intended for a specific audience, I seek to address some of the pressing questions facing educators and artists. What is the actual reach of the practices and technologies developed in museums for this particular audience? How do the concepts underpinning the book's conception contribute to the appreciation and understanding of visual art?

The designers and educators selected an epigraph by Didi-Huberman addressing imagination and politics, alongside Malraux's proposal for an imaginary museum of sculptures. This museum comes into being within and through the book, functioning as a form of authorial curatorship that brings together works otherwise dispersed across museums and geographical territories. The book itself thus becomes the museum: an invented space designed to accommodate and bring together a diversity of works.

Epigraphs and statements are not merely conceptual points of entry; they also articulate a desire for aggregation and affiliation with groups that share a common set of ideas, as well as a collective impulse to formalise and disseminate personal and shared fables. These two conceptual frameworks permeate the publication, but they may also be understood as forms of amplification: expressions of a desire to extend the reach of Lasar Segall's works.

Ultimately, I argue that the forms of amplification envisaged by the book's designers express a desire to reach towards the immeasurable: the immeasurable dimension of aesthetic pleasure that emerges through the tactile encounter with textures and words, and through listening to sounds that emanate from painting and sculpture.

Elevating the aesthetic experience: fabulation and imagination

Memory is bound to objects and to the places in which they are situated. Its principal activity, reminiscence, is activated through touching, handling, or even vocalising an object and recalling its origins. Reminiscence elevates thought, drawing it into the domain of memory; it transports and propels us towards recollection, along with all its localising elements, such as place, light, voices or the absence of sound, affect, and other mechanisms associated with artefacts that we regard as mnemonic.These are sensations awakened by the touch of fabrics, paper, stones, or metals, as well as by smells and tastes removed from everyday experience and capable of carrying the mnemonic body towards places of childhood and youth, or towards unmapped and forgotten places. Although memory is physiologically associated with the plasticity of the brain, it is also dispersed throughout the body and its innumerable, complex relational senses.

The beauty of reminiscence lies in the way memories anchored in particular places manifest themselves when individuals evoke them in situations of mnemonic provocation. Collective and individual memories are, so to speak, culturally interwoven. Objects do not represent memory. It is therefore misleading, for example, to regard a photographic exhibition documenting a particular group or association as the memory of that group. The memory evoked by a photograph belongs, first and foremost, to the person who took it, rather than to those who were photographed. Viewers recognise themselves only from outside the image, persuading themselves that their own recollections are somehow contained within it, in relation to others. When we look at an image from the outside, we are compelled to accept the photographer's memory as belonging to everyone gathered around them. The image consequently becomes a document of an event or a testimony to a particular moment.

Yet, because of the intrinsic relationship between the image and its presence in the world, we continually recalibrate our individual memories through a process of collectivising the memories of others. But how does memory operate within groups of people with low vision or blindness? Can the memory of colour be evoked or reconfigured through sound, music, or textures, such as those incorporated into the Museum's publication? Is there any institutional assessment of these visitors' experiences and enjoyment during guided visits? In the specific case of the Lasar Segall Museum, I found no tabulated data, institutional records, oral responses, or other forms of testimony documenting the experiences of these groups.

I therefore believe that a sense of satisfaction emerges on both sides: among visitors with low vision or blindness and among the Museum's educators. This satisfaction may reside in fabulation, individual memory, and the power of amplification as an active, provocative force that generates sensations through touching and handling the works, as well as through engaging with the printed textures of the book. It is also connected to the theoretical references underpinning both the publication and the programme of guided visits.

The locus may itself be the fable: experienced individually yet collectively nourished by voices, prior forms of care, smells, and the body's movement towards the museum. An aesthetic experience grounded in visual education, the apprehension of images, the use of colour, the intellectual understanding of composition, and the selection of materials appropriate to each artistic medium does not appear to lend itself readily to assessment according to shared or universal criteria.

The educators inhabit a fable of satisfaction. Their assumptions emerge from the need to explore the senses as a fantastic space populated by stimuli: an active, energetic space in constant transformation, sustained by the desire to embrace all beings and transform everyday life through artistic experience. This is, ultimately, a humanist premise.

Postscript

Rereading this text after some time, I was reminded of the intellectual journeys I have undertaken throughout my academic life in an attempt to understand the relationships between art, memory, and visual education. I recall studying the Church Fathers in order to explore visual education through published records of Church Councils, as well as through the memories and confessions of the Fathers themselves. This intellectual displacement proved significant. I came to understand that the compositional and organisational structures of images constituted visual and pedagogical programmes of considerable depth.

I then began to understand the universe of images as an internally interconnected whole. Intellectually nourished by this insight, I immersed myself in Aby Warburg's scholarship, particularly his *Mnemosyne Atlas*. With some relief, I realised that these studies and investigations did not seek to prove or authenticate the relationships between image and memory, but rather to explore the ways in which such relationships might become intelligible. Moving further afield, I recall studying Gödel's theorems, which I confess I found particularly difficult, given the abstract and complex nature of pure mathematics. As I write this postscript, I find myself leafing through the Spanish edition of Douglas Hofstadter's brilliant book *Gödel, Escher, Bach*.

I would like to conclude with one final provocation: Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems, which I invoke here to establish a relationship between the worlds of art, museums, fabulation, and ethnopoetics. Two concepts are particularly relevant: consistency, whereby a formal system does not permit the derivation of a contradiction; and completeness, whereby every statement expressible within the system can, in principle, be proved or disproved according to its rules. As discussed in Hofstadter's book (p. 114), these concepts open up a broader reflection on the limits of formal systems and the conditions under which statements can be established as true.

In summary, a system cannot, under certain conditions, establish all the truths concerning itself solely through the rules and resources it provides. For me, it was liberating to realise that understanding the world of art may require us to step outside it: to glimpse images out of the corner of our eye, to take a road that creates distance from our subject, and to look from afar in order finally to approach what we seek to investigate, connect, and provoke.

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Inclusion from the Perspective of Difference: The Experience of Including a Blind Student in Higher Education

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Abstract

The arrival of the first blind student at the Federal University of Alfenas, Minas Gerais (UNIFAL-MG) gave rise to intense and contradictory feelings. On the one hand, there was a sense of joy at welcoming a student who, despite the many barriers encountered throughout their educational journey, had reached the highest level of formal education in Brazil, reflecting the impact of inclusion policies implemented over the previous two decades. On the other hand, there was a sense of insecurity and fear that the institution was not adequately prepared to ensure access to course content and facilitate the student's effective participation in classroom activities. This event prompted the university's staff, particularly lecturers and administrators, to seek out strategies that had previously received little attention, setting in motion a creative process that challenged them to step outside their comfort zones. This process of promoting accessibility and inclusion was not guided by pre-established protocols. Instead, it was informed by an examination of the barriers present in the academic environment and the implementation of measures that considered students' individual circumstances and differences, as well as the dynamic and provisional nature of institutional and environmental conditions.

Keywords

Inclusion; Higher Education; Difference.

Introduction

Although educational policies stipulate the inclusion of all students in mainstream education, in practice, school systems continue to be shaped by processes of categorisation,

differentiation, comparison and standardisation. These processes give rise to practices such as the enrolment of students with disabilities in special schools and classes, the use of resource rooms for remedial tuition, curricular adaptations and other measures that ultimately fall short of inclusive education.

These school practices are underpinned by conceptions rooted in the Platonic philosophical tradition and its emphasis on the 'world of ideas'. Plato distinguishes between the intelligible world, the world of ideas, and the sensible world, the world of phenomena. The former corresponds to the original idea (model/identity), whereas the latter belongs to the realm of imperfect copies (simulacrum/difference), which are apprehended through the senses (Deleuze, 1974). Within this conception, a copy deemed faithful to the model is valued, whereas that which deviates from it is designated as a simulacrum and consequently regarded as inferior.

Plato's philosophical perspective influenced Western thought, which came to understand difference solely in terms of identity. This helps explain the emphasis placed on models that, being regarded as perfect, are expected to be replicated across a wide range of domains, including education: models of thought, science, schools, curricula, teaching methods, teachers and students.

However, this understanding of difference is limited, as it refers to the 'difference between' two things and is merely empirical, concerning only their corresponding extrinsic determinations. For Deleuze, difference must be understood from another perspective: as difference, which is intrinsic to all people and makes each person unique and constantly changing (Deleuze, 2021). By restricting its understanding of difference to the external attributes that distinguish students from one another, schools adopt practices that differentiate certain groups, such as students with disabilities. Such differentiation can lead to exclusionary and ableist practices that deny these students opportunities equivalent to those available to their peers.

The realisation of inclusive education, however, necessarily entails the recognition of multiplicity and difference. Difference is neither a privilege nor a disadvantage attributed to individuals or groups; rather, it is intrinsic to everyone, making each of us unique and singular, while equally entitled to education. As Silva (2002, p. 2) argues, "difference has nothing to do with the different. Reducing difference to the different amounts to reducing difference to identity." The categorisation of those deemed different is established in relation to others. Difference, however, is not a relation between the one and the other but instead refers to a becoming-other (Silva, 2002).

Schools have mistreated, restricted, confined, isolated and even attempted to eliminate difference. Contemporary education continues to perpetuate standardising and homogenising practices. Within this educational model, "it is not the school that adapts to the

becoming of singularities, but rather the singularities that must adapt to the school's dominance and control, to its expectations regarding what is predictable and desirable within educational systems" (Pilan & Dias, 2019, p. 24). In this context, including students with disabilities has proved challenging and calls for a re-examination of the concepts and practices involved. If inclusion initiatives are designed to eliminate difference, it is impossible to speak of genuine educational inclusion.

This chapter draws on a doctoral research project that investigated accessibility and inclusion in higher education. It examines aspects of the experience of including a blind student at a federal higher education institution in Brazil. The discussion highlights the importance of hospitality and the valuing of difference in inclusive educational processes.

Methodology

This section draws on a doctoral research project conducted between August 2023 and December 2024. The doctoral thesis was defended in October 2025. Informed by post-critical approaches, the research employed a cartographic method to trace the process of including students with disabilities at the Federal University of Alfenas (UNIFAL-MG), where I work as an educator.

This cartographic approach differs from traditional methodologies in that it does not follow a prescriptive framework based on pre-established rules or predefined objectives (Passos & Barros, 2009, p. 17). Instead, everyday encounters and events determine what is relevant to addressing the research problem and, consequently, guide decisions about the actions to be taken, including the choice of data collection methods and the involvement of participants in the fieldwork.

Data were therefore collected from multiple sources, including observations recorded in a field diary; dialogues with students and professionals, documented through exchanges of messages, consultations, meetings, interviews and questionnaires; and documentary research. The data were presented, analysed and discussed through a chronological narrative of professional practice and research undertaken as intervention research, based on the premise that "to map, one must be within a territory" (Costa, 2014, p. 4). Drawing on schizoanalysis [1], the interpretation of the data considered the multiplicities within the territory, the connections between its elements, and the historical and political dimensions constituted therein, through a process of free association and free affirmation (Bom-Tempo, 2021).

In this section, I present selected dialogues with two teachers who shared their experiences of teaching biology and chemistry to a blind student. The research did not seek to produce a carbon copy of the reality under investigation, but rather to construct a rhizomatic map of

that reality through an ongoing process, recognising that cartography is always a work in progress.

Inclusion of people with disabilities in Brazilian higher education

In early 2023, Pedro [2], who is congenitally blind, enrolled on the Biological Sciences degree programme at the UNIFAL-MG. He completed his compulsory education in public schools and gained admission to university based on his score in the National High School Examination (*Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio*, ENEM), which assesses knowledge acquired during secondary education. This score is used in the Unified Selection System (*Sistema de Seleção Unificada*, SISU), a government platform that brings together available places at public higher education institutions across Brazil and serves as a major route to admission to public universities.

Over the past decade, the number of people with disabilities enrolled in higher education has almost tripled, largely reflecting the impact of inclusion policies implemented in Brazil. Among other measures, these policies require universities and federal institutes to reserve places for people with disabilities (Brazil, 2016). They have contributed to efforts to establish an inclusive education system, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, adopted in New York on 30 March 2007. The Convention was incorporated into Brazilian law with constitutional amendment status through Decree No. 6,949 of 25 August 2009 (Brazil, 2009).

The 2022 Census showed that, despite the progress achieved, substantial disparities in school attendance persist between people with and without disabilities. Data released by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, IBGE) indicate that 18.6 million people aged two years and over, representing 8.9% of this population, have a disability. The survey also shows that people with disabilities have less access to education at all levels than people without disabilities.

Table 1 – Comparison of educational attainment between people with and without disabilities aged 25 and over

Indicators	**Percentage of people with disabilities**	**Percentage of people without disabilities**
Illiteracy rate	19.5	4.1
No schooling or incomplete primary education	63.3	29.9
Completed primary education or incomplete secondary education	11.1	12.8

Secondary school leavers	25.6	57.3
Completed higher education	7	20.9

Compiled by the author based on data published by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2023).

This educational inequality between students with and without disabilities reflects an education system historically grounded in standardisation and not designed to recognise and accommodate difference. However, the inclusive education paradigm has prompted educational institutions to review their practices, structures and policies to ensure that all students have access to, participate in and benefit from learning opportunities in mainstream education.

In establishing an inclusive education system, the Brazilian Constitution guarantees the right to education and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability. It also provides for Special Education as a form of educational provision across all levels of education, with the necessary support to enable students with disabilities to participate in the educational process on an equal basis with others. This support is provided through Specialised Educational Support (*Atendimento Educacional Especializado*, AEE). The Brazilian Inclusion Law defines reasonable accommodations as necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments, tailored to individual needs, to ensure the exercise of rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others (Brazil, 2015, Art. 3).

Inclusion from the perspective of difference

The arrival of the first blind student at UNIFAL-MG brought the challenges of including, within a standardised education system, a student whose experience differed from that of the sighted students with whom the teaching staff were accustomed to working. This prompted debate about difference and gave rise to intense and contradictory feelings. On the one hand, there was the joy of welcoming a student who, despite the many barriers encountered throughout their educational journey, had reached the highest level of formal education in Brazil. On the other hand, there was uncertainty and fear that the institution was not adequately prepared to ensure access to the same academic content as other students and to facilitate the student's effective participation in classroom activities.

Student support services, such as the Accessibility and Inclusion Support Unit, together with university managers and teaching staff, mobilised to identify and secure accessibility resources. Initial measures included the production of tactile materials by professionals with relevant experience and the establishment of partnerships with external institutions, which provided a range of materials that had already been adapted. Subsequently, these initiatives were strengthened and expanded through the recruitment of student scholarship holders to produce and adapt materials under the supervision of teaching staff and to help overcome

barriers relating to mobility, participation in laboratory activities, access to technology and other aspects of academic life.

Although some measures to promote accessibility and inclusion are broadly applicable to particular types of disability such as the use of tactile teaching materials for blind students, it is essential to understand disability in terms of the interaction between an individual's characteristics and their environment. Accordingly, the Accessibility and Inclusion Support Unit developed a case study to identify barriers that may limit or prevent students with disabilities from accessing the same academic content as their peers and participating fully in academic activities. The case study also serves as the basis for developing an individual support plan that specifies the measures required to remove barriers within the academic environment. In Pedro's case, the plan included, in addition to the production of tactile materials, adapting texts for audio access, providing support in the use of accessible resources, organising study materials for use outside the classroom, advising and coordinating with teaching staff on teaching strategies, and providing assistance with mobility and laboratory activities.

From the institution's perspective, the support plan is neither fixed nor rigid. On the contrary, it must remain flexible and form a rhizome with teaching staff, other institutional professionals, support assistants and the students receiving support themselves. It is progressively constructed and developed through mapping and, like the map described by Deleuze and Guattari (1995), is 'open, connectable in all its dimensions, dismantlable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification (...) it can be torn, reversed, and adapted to assemblages of any kind' (p. 30).

Accordingly, the measures outlined in the plan are implemented progressively and evaluated continuously through meetings, conversations, email exchanges and other forms of dialogue. This ongoing evaluation makes it possible to identify progress and determine whether adjustments are needed. The support plan therefore does not simply involve the repeated application of the same measures. Rather, it is grounded in the recognition of each student's inherent difference and singularity, as well as in the understanding that each student interacts with the academic environment in a unique way. Support measures are thus shaped and adapted throughout each student's academic journey, in accordance with the guidelines for removing barriers.

Many of these measures are closely linked to classroom teaching. Teaching a student whose characteristics differed from those of the students teachers were accustomed to teaching brought existing fears to the fore and required lecturers to rethink and adapt their practices. This is evident in the accounts of two lecturers who taught Pedro and participated in a study on accessibility and inclusion in higher education (Oliveira, 2025). The lecturers reported

feelings of insecurity and even prejudice concerning the student's ability to learn certain content:

> Well, when he arrived, I don't think it was insecurity; it was despair (...) we were told (...) that we would have a blind student and that classes would start the following week. It was like that; I don't remember the exact timeframe, but between finding out and meeting Pedro, there were about four or five days (...). So, I was like, 'Oh my God, this boy is here and I need to do something'. (...) The first thing was to overcome my own prejudice. Then, the second thing was 'What do I do? Right, he's here and I've got to manage this. What am I going to do?'
>
> (Carolina, teacher, 6 Aug. 2024, as cited in Oliveira, 2025)

> I was terrified, "I was terrified, because (...) I always say that my gift is teaching; I love teaching, and I care deeply about my students — whether they are learning or not. So, when I found out about Pedro, I was terrified, because histology is basically about images, and these are images that we cannot feel because they are microscopic. So, I said, 'My God, how on earth am I going to teach this boy?' (...) At that point, I hadn't the faintest idea what to do or how to go about it (...)
>
> (Júlia, teacher, 26 June 2024, as cited in Oliveira, 2025).

Despite acknowledging their fear, insecurity and prejudice, the teachers were concerned about and committed to promoting the student's genuine inclusion, ensuring that he could access the same academic content and participate in the same activities as his peers. This concern is particularly relevant, as the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream education has revealed various shortcomings, including the adaptation of content through differentiated teaching practices or the simplification of learning objectives. Rather than fostering inclusion, such practices may restrict these students' opportunities to access advanced levels of knowledge commensurate with their abilities.

By contrast, inclusion entails promoting accessibility by removing barriers that arise from the interaction between a person's disability and the educational environment. To address these barriers, legislation provides for the implementation of so-called 'reasonable adjustments' [3], which involve providing the resources and services necessary to enable all students to participate in the educational process on an equal basis with others.

The teachers' accounts reveal their uncertainty about teaching a student who does not fit the standard profile of a sighted student. They had traditionally planned their lessons on the assumption that their students could see; however, Pedro's arrival in their classrooms required them to rethink their teaching strategies. Despite having received no formal training in inclusive education, the teachers took the initiative to study and develop practices that

would enable them to teach Pedro, not by simplifying or modifying the content, but by making it accessible through appropriate resources.

The teachers came to realise that they could not simply reproduce existing models of teaching, lesson planning, learning materials and assessment. Instead, they had to embrace difference and, in doing so, create new practices, becoming teachers in a state of 'becoming-simulacrum', which 'never ceases to dwell on the play of its own proliferation' (Corazza, 2008). In this way, they broke with 'Representation' (the repetition of the Same) and opened themselves up to 'Difference' (the creation of the New), constructing and enabling new experiences within the plane of immanence in which they operated (Corazza, 2008).

During the meetings organised by the Accessibility and Inclusion Support Unit at the end of each semester, where Pedro's forthcoming courses were presented to the teaching staff, Júlia was able to identify materials and strategies to improve the accessibility of the content taught in her module:

> (...) The cell biology lecturer had already taught him the course, which is more or less a complement to histology, so I went to see her. She showed me the slides she had prepared, but those were just for the practical part. I said, 'But what about the theory? How am I going to teach it?' So, I spent about six months in a state of panic, wondering what I was going to do and how I was going to do it. Then I thought, 'No, how am I going to teach this?' From then on, wherever I went, I saw macroscopic histology. I would look at something like a string of pearls and say things such as, 'That could be a protein' or 'That could be a cell'. Then I started thinking and structuring the lesson in my head, but I only became confident about how I was going to teach it during the first lesson (...). Hilda showed me her materials, and I immediately thought I said something like... At first, because histology is microscopic, I had not imagined using something macroscopic that he could feel. Then, when Hilda showed me her materials, I said, 'Ah, so that could work.' Hilda was a great help during those few minutes of conversation (...)
>
> (Júlia, teacher, 26 June 2024, as cited in Oliveira, 2025)

Despite all the preliminary study and discussion, Deleuze (2021) reminds us that 'One never knows in advance how someone is going to learn [...] There is no method for finding treasures or for learning' (p. 222). Consequently, the teachers had to embrace the immanence of the learning process and work within it as they developed their teaching practices. Both Carolina [2] and Júlia came to understand inclusion as a process of mapping in which barriers are identified as they emerge from the interaction between the student's individual characteristics and the conditions of the educational environment, and appropriate resources and services are put in place to overcome them. Their accounts illustrate how they mapped the student's characteristics and the conditions of the environment while exploring and developing strategies to teach Pedro:

> I downloaded a Braille dictionary, and then I kept searching, searching, searching for the most comprehensive versions possible (...) how many times did I sit here, staring out of the window, and, like, it would be 10 or 15 minutes before that thought would pop into my head: 'Gosh, the bloke told me to use sand, but the sand won't work, what if I used something like this, like this, like this'." And in this process, much of the material I used with Pedro was created (...). It's a challenge. When we got to the bit about reactions, I was like, 'How on earth am I going to adapt a chemical equation?' (...) Then, for about five minutes, I was like: 'No, hang on, a chemical equation is a chemical language. So I don't have to adapt it. I have to write it in Braille, but he has to run his fingers over it and recognise NaCl as a set of chemical information. And there's no way I can adapt that. He has to recognise that chemical language even if it's written in Braille for him." (...) Just as there's an English translator, there must be a Braille translator." Then it clicked, and I typed in "Braille translator." A few websites popped up where I could enter the chemical equation, and it would translate it into Braille. And then I'd just go through it checking: 'No, there's a closing bracket missing here, there's a superscript missing here, this and that are missing here.' So, I'd copy that out and then I'd make changes based on my dictionary
>
> (Carolina, teacher, 6 Aug. 2024, in Oliveira, 2025)

> During our first conversation, I realised how I was going to work with him. So I talked to him about what would be best for him (...) then I left the lesson and said: 'I already know which approach I'm going to take.' But anyway, at the end of every lesson, everyone else would leave and I'd stay with him in the classroom for about 40 minutes. Then, I'd bring some modelling clay and we'd start building things. As he told me about his difficulties, I'd say: 'No, I need to do this.' So, we spent the whole term building things. In fact, he didn't like the material at all in the first week. I adapted my approach as I saw how he was learning. There were things that didn't work out (...). So that's how my approach gradually took shape, and it was all very intuitive (...). Yeah, because I realised that his sense of touch was really important to him, so I just asked him questions. On the first attempt, I asked him questions without letting him handle the materials, and I could see that he was a bit lost. When I handed him the materials, I realised that he knew everything. I then understood how important it was for him to feel the materials to identify them and tell me what they were. So I said, 'Right, Pedro, we're going to work with the materials. I'll hand them to you, and you'll tell me what you know about them.' And he really took off. So that was very important.
>
> (Júlia, teacher, 26 June 2024, as cited in Oliveira, 2025)

Through the contingencies of the educational process, the teachers came to realise that providing Pedro with access to the content of their respective subjects required resources and teaching practices beyond those they had previously used. Nor could the most appropriate strategies be determined in advance; instead, they had to be tested, explored and

refined through observation and study. However, transforming long-established teaching practices requires considerable effort and commitment on the part of teachers. It is therefore essential to recognise that inclusion does not simply mean placing students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms while adapting content or lowering educational objectives. Rather, it involves creating the conditions necessary for accessibility by rethinking teaching practices and developing educational resources that respond to the diversity of learners:

> In the first lesson, what I had planned was that (...) I would just cover the theory and talk, while he would simply listen, and then, during the practical session, he would look at the slides. Then I realised it wasn't working; I could see that he was completely lost. In the second lesson, however, I already knew what I was going to teach. I had bought some materials, taken a short course in biscuit modelling, and made everything out of modelling clay to bring to class. I could see what a difference it made. I would say, for example, 'The cell is cubic', and then I would give him a cubic cell model to feel. 'The cell is plate-like', and I would give him the model to feel. By the end of the lesson, he knew everything. Then I would say, 'So, tell me what you've learnt.' He would pick up the models and start explaining, and I could see that this made a huge difference to him. He was absolutely delighted. He would say, 'Júlia, this material is brilliant! Júlia, I've learnt everything!' He was absolutely chuffed! (...) It's hard work for any teacher because we have to step outside our comfort zone. I think I've been teaching for 28 years, and I've been teaching in the same way for 28 years. Pedro took me out of my comfort zone. He made me teach differently; he made me produce teaching materials. My materials used to be limited to what I showed on the projector, but I had to produce physical materials and reinvent myself. And that's hard work, everyone. But I think it's part of our profession. So, I set up a sort of workshop at home, and then, on Saturdays, I would go around those R$1.99 shops looking for materials. From there, I would think, 'No, this can be used to make this texture, and this can be used to make that one.' And I reckon there are people who simply don't want to put in the effort. It's a labour-intensive process; it takes you completely out of your comfort zone. You have to think, you have to build things, it isn't easy. But Pedro doesn't give up. He gets a bit disappointed when he can't understand something, but it isn't his fault; it's because he doesn't have the resources he needs to understand it. (...) I noticed a difference. At first, I found it difficult to work out how I was going to teach him. Once I learnt how he learnt, I had no difficulty at all. (...) I see it this way: I learnt much more from Pedro than he learnt from me. Definitely.
>
> (Júlia, teacher, 26 June 2024, as cited in Oliveira, 2025).

The student considered the teachers' efforts and creativity in developing teaching materials and strategies fundamental to his learning. During support sessions, he emphasised the importance of tactile materials in helping him understand the content covered in class. Conversely, he explained that, in the absence of such tactile references, the content became inaccessible to him (Oliveira, 2025).

The teachers' accounts also revealed that the adaptations made by Carolina and Júlia concerned the methods and resources used in teaching and assessment, rather than the content itself:

> I actually had to teach him how to carry out stoichiometric calculations, and he learnt how to do them. I couldn't decide what he was or wasn't capable of doing. Often, a thought would cross my mind: 'It's not up to me to decide what he is or isn't capable of learning.' To me, Pedro is a student with his own differences, but he is a chemistry student all the same (…). That's why there was the issue of the graph, for example, and the chemical equation. He has to understand this language; he has to understand this mathematical tool called a graph. He needs to understand what an axis is, what the x-axis and y-axis are, and so on. So, I have to work on these concepts with him in a different way, but I still have to teach them. In the first exam, I didn't feel confident enough to include calculus. But when we got to the second part of the course, Pedro aced the calculus section!
>
> (Carolina, teacher, 6 August 2024)

Pedro highlighted these and other strategies employed by Carolina. He explained that verbal descriptions of experiments and the use of different textures and temperatures to illustrate the changes produced by chemical reactions made the content more accessible to him (Oliveira, 2025).

Although students with disabilities are classified within a broad category that includes people with visual impairments and blindness, each student is unique and interacts with their environment and its conditions in their own way. Barriers emerge from this interaction and call for a range of responses. Neither individual nor environmental factors can be addressed through predefined protocols; instead, they require a process of mapping that takes into account the student's abilities and interests, the characteristics of the subjects and their content, the physical environment, and the teachers' knowledge. Carolina and Júlia paid close attention to both the student's individual characteristics and the conditions of the educational environment, continually seeking strategies to overcome the barriers they encountered. They understood inclusion as a process grounded in the recognition of 'difference in itself', rather than 'difference between students'. Their practice also reflected a commitment to Rancière's (2011) principle of the equality of intelligences and Derrida's (2003) conception of hospitality.

Rancière (2011) starts from the premise that the equality of intelligence is not an objective to be achieved, but a presupposition to be verified — a starting point for educational practice. As López (2021) explains, intelligence, in Rancière's account, is not a faculty possessed by an individual, but a disposition: an openness to the world that cannot be accumulated or owned, but can only be verified and inhabited. For Derrida, offering hospitality to difference means

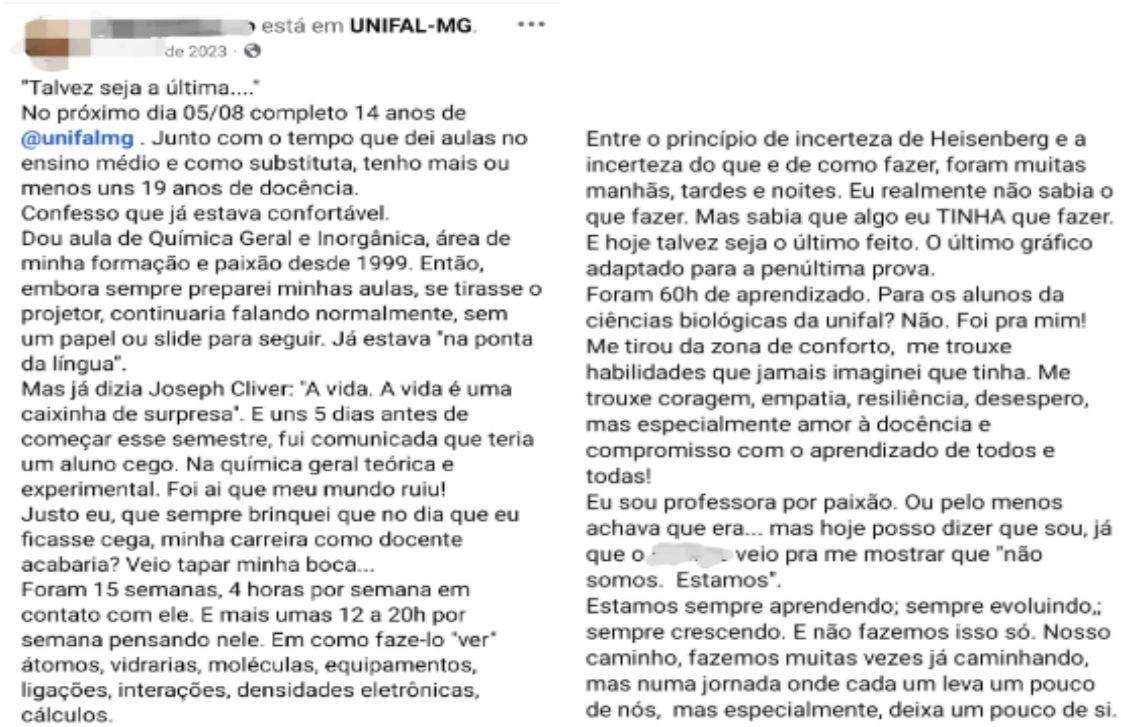
making room for the other in their singularity, without attempting to control or assimilate them or requiring them to become like us.

From the moment Pedro arrived at the institution, he demonstrated his willingness and determination to study biology. Carolina and Júlia, in turn, offered hospitality to difference, creating the conditions in which he could demonstrate his ability to learn. When educators are willing to embrace each student's difference, the outcomes can be surprising, as the teachers' social media posts during the research illustrate:

> In the post (on social media), I said that I had learnt from him and he had learnt from me, because every week we were learning how to study together. And every week I studied alongside him as well. We'd arrange a time, and I'd study alongside him. And from there, we gradually found a way for him to understand.
>
> (Júlia, teacher, 26, June 2024, in Oliveira, 2025)

> At the same time, I feel so, so satisfied because, as I said, I cried on a few nights out of despair, and today I can see that I managed it.
>
> (Carolina, teacher, 6 August 2024, in Oliveira, 2025)

And here, a social media post, by Carolina, another teacher (2024) is reproduced :



está em **UNIFAL-MG**.
de 2023 ·

"Talvez seja a última...."
No próximo dia 05/08 completo 14 anos de @unifalmg . Junto com o tempo que dei aulas no ensino médio e como substituta, tenho mais ou menos uns 19 anos de docência.
Confesso que já estava confortável.
Dou aula de Química Geral e Inorgânica, área de minha formação e paixão desde 1999. Então, embora sempre preparei minhas aulas, se tirasse o projetor, continuaria falando normalmente, sem um papel ou slide para seguir. Já estava "na ponta da língua".
Mas já dizia Joseph Cliver: "A vida. A vida é uma caixinha de surpresa". E uns 5 dias antes de começar esse semestre, fui comunicada que teria um aluno cego. Na química geral teórica e experimental. Foi ai que meu mundo ruiu!
Justo eu, que sempre brinquei que no dia que eu ficasse cega, minha carreira como docente acabaria? Veio tapar minha boca...
Foram 15 semanas, 4 horas por semana em contato com ele. E mais umas 12 a 20h por semana pensando nele. Em como faze-lo "ver" átomos, vidrarias, moléculas, equipamentos, ligações, interações, densidades eletrônicas, cálculos.

Entre o princípio de incerteza de Heisenberg e a incerteza do que e de como fazer, foram muitas manhãs, tardes e noites. Eu realmente não sabia o que fazer. Mas sabia que algo eu TINHA que fazer. E hoje talvez seja o último feito. O último gráfico adaptado para a penúltima prova.
Foram 60h de aprendizado. Para os alunos da ciências biológicas da unifal? Não. Foi pra mim! Me tirou da zona de conforto, me trouxe habilidades que jamais imaginei que tinha. Me trouxe coragem, empatia, resiliência, desespero, mas especialmente amor à docência e compromisso com o aprendizado de todos e todas!
Eu sou professora por paixão. Ou pelo menos achava que era... mas hoje posso dizer que sou, já que o [redacted] veio pra me mostrar que "não somos. Estamos".
Estamos sempre aprendendo; sempre evoluindo,; sempre crescendo. E não fazemos isso só. Nosso caminho, fazemos muitas vezes já caminhando, mas numa jornada onde cada um leva um pouco de nós, mas especialmente, deixa um pouco de si.

Translated post

_____ is at UNIFAL-MG.

On 5 August, I will complete fourteen years at UNIFAL-MG. Including the time I spent teaching in secondary education and working as a temporary lecturer, I have approximately nineteen years of teaching experience.

I must admit that I had become comfortable.

I teach General and Inorganic Chemistry, the field in which I was trained and which has been my passion since 1999. Although I have always prepared my lectures carefully, I had reached a point where, even if the projector failed, I could continue teaching without notes or slides. The content had become second nature to me.

But as Josef Cliver used to say: "Life. Life is a box of surprises."

About five days before the beginning of the semester, I was informed that I would be teaching a blind student in both the theoretical and laboratory components of General Chemistry. At that moment, my world seemed to collapse. Ironically, I had often joked that if I ever became blind, my teaching career would be over. Life found a way to prove me wrong.

For fifteen weeks, I spent four hours each week in direct contact with him. Beyond that, I devoted between twelve and twenty hours every week thinking about him: how I could help him "see" atoms, laboratory glassware, molecules, equipment, chemical bonds, interactions, electron densities and calculations.

Caught somewhere between Heisenberg's uncertainty principle and my own uncertainty about what to do and how to do it, I spent mornings, afternoons and evenings searching for solutions. I genuinely did not know what to do. What I did know was that I had to do something. And today, perhaps, it is the last task. The last adapted graph for the final examination.

Those sixty hours were a period of learning. Learning for the Biological Sciences students at UNIFAL-MG? No. They were sixty hours of learning for me.

This experience took me out of my comfort zone and revealed abilities I had never imagined I possessed. It brought me courage, empathy, resilience, moments of despair, and, above all, a renewed love for teaching and a deep commitment to the learning of every student.

I have always believed that I was a teacher because of my passion for teaching. Or at least I thought so. Today, however, I can say with certainty that I am, because _____ came into my life to remind me that we do not simply *are*; rather, we are always *becoming*.

We are constantly learning, constantly evolving and constantly growing. We do not do this alone. Our paths are formed as we walk them, in a journey where each person carries away a little of who we are and, perhaps more importantly, leaves behind a little of themselves.

Social media post – Carolina, a teacher, 2024.

Conclusion

Although Brazilian legislation mandates the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream education and promotes policies to facilitate access, the reality within educational institutions reveals numerous obstacles to the effective realisation of this right. To a large extent, these obstacles stem from characteristics of education systems based on standardised practices and conceptions that fail to accommodate the diverse needs of students. Faced with the obligation to include students within an exclusionary structure, educational institutions often limit themselves to implementing an 'inclusivist policy' that places students with disabilities in mainstream schools while perpetuating practices that differentiate, stigmatise and individualise the educational process. However, the process of including Pedro demonstrated that inclusion is possible when the differences between students are recognised and welcomed, enabling each student to participate in a shared educational programme according to their abilities. Achieving this required moving away from pre-established protocols and practices in favour of identifying barriers that might emerge from the interaction between the student's characteristics and the educational environment.

Teachers Carolina and Júlia conducted their teaching in recognition of the dynamic and provisional nature of institutional and environmental conditions. They also viewed Pedro as a person who could not be defined by a single characteristic — disability — but was instead

continually developing and becoming. Within the unpredictable and contingent context of the educational process, they devised and developed solutions that enabled Pedro's participation and learning. This experience demonstrated that, despite the challenges, it is possible to envisage pathways towards an education conceived as a shared project built upon multiple differences. As a shared project, it excludes no one and is therefore necessarily inclusive.

Notes

i The perspective of schizoanalysis was proposed by Deleuze and Guattari as a critique of psychoanalysis; when applied to educational research, it involves considering the multiplicities of a territory, the connections between its elements, and the historical and political dimensions constituted within it (Bom-Tempo, 2021).

ii The data presented in this text were previously reported in my doctoral research (Oliveira, 2025). The names of the research participants have been altered to ensure anonymity.

iii Necessary and appropriate adaptations, modifications and adjustments that do not impose a disproportionate or undue burden, where required in each case, in order to ensure that persons with disabilities can enjoy or exercise, on an equal footing and with equal opportunities as other persons, all fundamental rights and freedoms (Brazil, 2015, Art. 3).

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The Digitally Entangled Body: AI, Image, and Dance

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Abstract

Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love. is a dance production created by Jhalak Dance Company that included AI-generated media. The live performance took place at Studio 909 in Honolulu, Hawai'i, in April 2024. Integrating choreography with AI-generated imagery across publicity media and stage projections, the project situates the dancing body within algorithmically produced environments. The choreography questions what it means to be human and how we see, feel, and think about the body. AI is a performer in the production in the role of an aesthetic technology that reframes presence, expands notions of the body, situational awareness, perception, and relationality. Choreographies created for the performance examine the social choreography of images probing how identity and abstraction are mediated through screens. This paper contributes to conversations of futurist imagining of the body in an image-saturated time where the divide and the connections between live and digital presence have increasingly porous boundaries on stage and screen.

Keywords

AI; Image; Body; Embodiment.

Introduction

I am a professor at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). I currently sit on two campus wide AI committees. Everyone on these committees is grappling with the fast paced changes that AI is bringing to the fields of the arts and humanities and trying to come up with solutions to support positive learning environments using AI, particularly within educational writing

and critical thinking. In our UHM Department of Theatre and Dance, faculty and students are regularly evaluating how AI will impact the field of the Performing Arts and creativity. On social media, I recently saw AI robots dressed in costumes dancing in large synchronized ensembles along with human bodies at the 2026 Spring Festival Gala produced by the Chinese Media Group. The America's Got Talent 2026 live competition show presented Yufei Wu, a 26-year-old robotics engineer performing with a cohort of 8 humanoid robots to Lady Gaga's Abracadabra. I am in awe at the possibilities AI technology possesses and have always been interested in the intersections of dance and technology. At the same time these experiences have left me for the first time with a great feeling of despair at what I see might be the future loss of individualized critical thinking and the potential for dancer's bodies being replaced by robots instead of audiences experiencing the transference of the wisdom, knowledge, and liveness of the human body. So rather than go entirely off grid from public infrastructure or adopt an analog living lifestyle, I decided to dive into my own AI questions as they relate to dance from personal experience and a recent artistic project. In this paper I reflect on AI imagery through photo and video to exploring perspectives on what it means to be human in this digital world. What follows are some musings.

Embodiment and dance in the AI era

Bodies simultaneously inhabit physical environments, networked platforms, and increasingly sophisticated artificial intelligences (AI) that generate representations of movement and the body. As AI may become more embedded within artistic production, choreography enters a new period of transformation. The field of Dance Studies has historically responded to photography, cinema, video, motion capture, and digital performance technologies through dance scholarship. Generative AI presents a speculative horizon in which movement itself can become computationally imagined on the stage and screen. AI systems can create images of imagined dancers, often with strangely twisted or missing body parts, or even simply through taking an original photograph of a dancing body and creating new backgrounds behind it. Both are commonly used AI technique for any savvy smartphone user.

Dance Mogul Magazine proposes positive contributions to the dance field in their recent article "Practice Video Culture and AI Dance Content: The New Formats Shaping How We Learn Movement." (Dance Mogul, 2026). AI can simplify technical tasks for dance creators by automating video formatting, captioning, tracking movement, cleaning visuals, and translating instructional content. In dance education, it can support learning by breaking down movement, providing feedback, and creating more accessible teaching materials, while still relying on the expertise of teachers and dancers. AI can also serve as a creative sketchbook, allowing choreographers to experiment with staging and movement ideas before rehearsals without replacing artistic authorship. The growing use of AI in dance extends

beyond choreography and technique into visual media. As Dance Magazine observes, many artists are embracing AI as a creative partner that can expand aesthetic possibilities and create jobs in the dance industry (Lauren Wingenroth, 2023). At the same time, Nuno N. Correia and William Primett's article "Understanding the Use of AI in Contemporary Dance: Perspectives from Practitioners" suggests that one of the reasons dancers have not jumped on AI so quickly is because dance generally requires real time interactivity to implement the video dance transfer with AI. (Correia and Primett, 2026). The AI technology for real time implementation dance video is not as developed as it is for texts and photography.

Much of the innovation in AI is emerging from Language Models, through tools like ChatGPT, DALL-E, and Google Gemini or Diffusion Models for images. Like a dance improvisation might be devised by a prompt, these data systems respond to language and image prompts and reply with a plethora of possibilities. Scholar Allegra De Fillipo and Michela Milano assert in their article "Fostering human–AI collaboration in robotic dance creation through large language models" that researchers are investigating collaborative models that focus on aspects of original artistic style and voice preservation as well as the psychological impacts of working with AI. (DeFillipo & Milano, 2026). Recently I have heard university students refer to AI as "the knowledgeable other" going to AI sites with questions about dance history and future careers instead of exploring the library or seeking the advice of experienced artists, scholars, or professors. A colleague recently shared they go to AI for psychological advice. Yet some of the largest current limitations of AI center around creativity, historical information that is misrepresented, and lack of grasping emotional expression and experience.

Researcher Zihe Yu in the article "The Era of Intelligent Dance: AI-Driven Innovation and Practice in Dance" proposes that AI has the potential to create intelligent dance resource hubs but at this time lacks standardization in the collection process. There is the danger of any virtual post on social media for companies to infringe on privacy rights by collecting images. Notably there are 3 major AI dance initiatives sponsored by Google including the Google Arts and Culture Lab working with notable choreographers like Wayne McGregor, the Google AI Choreographer Project which generates 3D dance movements based on music input, and the Gemini Choreography Integration which creates 3D dance steps based on lyrical prompts and has been used for stage composition for reimagined ballets. (Yu, 2026). Researchers are beginning to use AI style transfer technology to explore body language and movement characteristics as a tool to experiment with mixing dance genres in choreography. Speculation is not merely imagining technological futures but creating new relationships among bodies, machines, and images.

One of the central points of Dóra Horváth's study in "Curtain Call for AI: Transforming Theatre Through Technology" is that AI's role in theatre extends beyond artistic production to include audience management, marketing, and promotional practices, demonstrating that

computational technologies increasingly shape how audiences encounter and interpret performance before attending the event itself. AI participates in constructing expectations, framing spectators' interpretations before attending a show, and influencing engagement with the live work. (Dóra Horváth, 2025).

Choreography offers a site for exploring embodied possibilities within AI. Dance in live performance insists upon embodiment as lived experience. Movement remains inseparable from sensation, memory, vulnerability, affect, and touch. Instead of asking whether programmed AI robotic machines can dance, or whether computational systems can analyze movement in performance, the choreographic process invites the question: What does dance reveal about being human in an age increasingly mediated by AI and technology?

AI research creation and collaborative methodology in dance visuals

The rehearsal process of the live dance performance *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love.*, created by my dance group, Jhalak Dance Company, and presented at Studio 909 in Honolulu, Hawai'i, in April 2024, prompted me to consider what dance might reveal about being human in an age increasingly mediated by AI and technology. This inquiry became a central point of departure during the creation of aspects of the work as well as post production reflection. For the live show, I served as the artistic director and the cast included dance filmmaker Larry Asakawa, musicians Maya Sypert and Thomas Yee, poet Sai Bhatawadekar, and dancers Sami L.A. Akuna, Hannah Archer, Tina Chan, Krystian Leialoha Fernandez, Cy Higashi, Nani Marcos, Julian Myrland, Lance Sabado, Ariana Smith, and Katelyn Wyatt. Photographers included Kaveh Kardan Photography for the publicity images and Greg Noir for the performance documentation. Developed through Practice as Research (PaR), the performance integrated contemporary dance and yoga choreography with AI-generated imagery across publicity photographs, promotional media, and photo and video projections used on the stage. The images served as scenography, and in some cases AI became an active image collaborator, producing speculative environments in which the dancing body negotiated shifting relationships among flesh, image, and perception.

Drawing on Robin Nelson's framework for Practice as Research (PaR) methodology, in this article I situate the project *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love.* within the growing body of dance and AI scholarship as outlined above, through a process in which practical, embodied, and conceptual forms of knowing informed one another through the creative process, the artistic explorations, and the knowledge generated through doing, making, performing, and reviewing the work. In Nelson's understanding of PaR, practice itself produces knowledge through the dynamic relationship between know-how, know-that, and know-what. Robin Nelson states, "Knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question: who decides

what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided."(Nelson, 2013) I evaluate this project by considering how the embodied experiences of the dancers, the aesthetic and technical experiments with AI-generated imagery, and my ongoing critical reflection as artist-researcher within the context of other scholars revealed new understandings of the relationship between dance, digital mediation, and computational collaboration. This evaluative process recognizes both the successes and limitations of the use of AI in performance and publicity, treating unexpected outcomes and unresolved questions as meaningful forms of research knowledge that can inform future iterations of the performance work and contribution to important questions being asked in the field of dance.



Fig. 1 Poster Image for *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love.* created for publicity. Original Photos: Kaveh Kardan. AI Poster design: Kara Jhalak Miller.

The development of *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love.* followed a devised improvisational and choreographic research methodology in which aesthetic experimentation and conceptual inquiry were intertwined. Dancers were invited to reflect on their personal relationships to their bodies and to images of themselves. Together we created both choreographed and improvisational scores that encouraged performers to highlight sensation, interiority, and relational presence. The incorporation of AI came from this research inquiry rather than initiating it. The performativity of AI in the context of this show was two-fold. The media element involved the publicity of the dancer's images with AI backgrounds on instagram, eventbrite, and for release to local media outlets, as well incorporated as projection design in the live stage production. The show choreographies

highlighted include *Filter*, a dance that probes how we each may uniquely see and experience the body through the images that we make, *Remember to be Human* an exploratory piece about honoring our ancestors, *Higher Ground* a duet about struggle and liberation, *Mesh* an ensemble reflection on abstraction and entanglement, and, *Self/ie* a solo that focuses on societal standards of beauty.

I experimented with the global creative platform Shutterstock to produce a show poster from word prompts. I tried collaborating with the Shutterstock AI inputting the key words from the show title. The results in some cases were humorous and all involved many layers and three dimensional forms in the bodily depiction result. Though I had already started rehearsing the project before the Shutterstock encounter, the final image selected from the Shutterstock AI collaboration then inspired some of the choreographic and costume choices I made in terms of layering moving phrases or isolating body parts, as well as choice of costume materials.



Fig. 2 Experimental Poster Images (not used for the show) created by text to image in AI for *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love.*



Fig. 3 Poster Images created by text to image in AI for *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love.* used for publicity.

I played with Photoroom, an AI-powered photo editing platform, to change and transform backgrounds behind the dancers for publicity purposes and for live performance projection. Photoroom was the most inventive place for exploration. The AI feature would completely take away a room background and transform it into another place. I tried out the app Fotor, a cloud-based photo editing and graphic design platform, to play with some of the video backgrounds. Using Fotor for video background was a little clunky. I couldn't get the AI video to separate cleanly from the dancing bodies without a white glow around the bodies. However playing with different backgrounds I ended up incorporating them into the live performance projection. One might ask in some of these instances if AI is serving a purpose

that is simply a faster version of Photoshop. However while photography documents dance and photoshop edits dance documentation, AI generates speculative worlds in the creative process.



Fig. 4 Projection Image for *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love.* created for show projection. Original Photo and AI Photography Design: Kara Jhalak Miller and Photoroom. Dancer: Tina Chan.

The experiments with Photoroom and Fotor were also what made me think most deeply about the ethics of replacing a background. As I was playing with changing the original photographed images and video of dancers, I began to contemplate how the dancer's body can remain responsive and relational in connection to place when partnered with unpredictable algorithmic environments. What are the artistic considerations in changing location specificity backgrounds in favor of relocating the body in aestheticized visuals? What counts as authenticity? Backgrounds are never neutral. They may possibly communicate time periods, place, geography, history, race, and architecture. The AI generated images invited viewers to witness a reconfigured corporeality, one in which flesh, image, and code coexist.

The divide and the connections between live and virtual presence are porous in these instances on stage and screen.

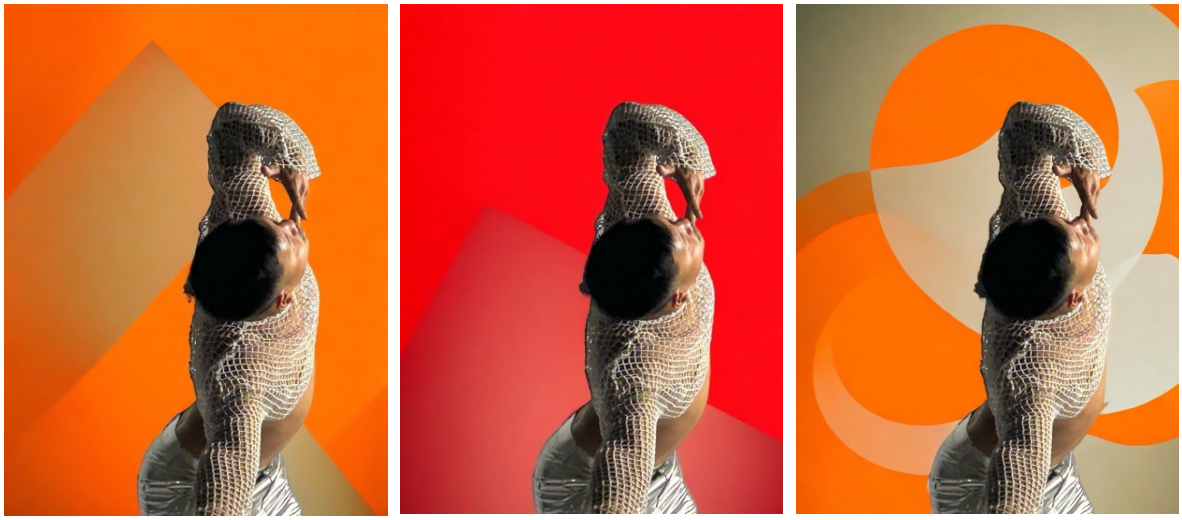

Fig. 5 Projection Image for *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love.* created for show projection. Original Photo and AI Photography Design: Kara Jhalak Miller and Photoroom. Dancer: Cy Higashi.

By integrating AI-generated backgrounds in photography and video, the technological collaboration in performance includes the live body and its digitally mediated surroundings. Rather than treating technology as an external addition or background to the dancing body, I approached the creative process as a combination of movement practice and aesthetic inquiry. As AI-generated images reconfigured, swirled, and abstracted the physical space the photos or images were taken in, the images of the dancers' bodies in AI environments evoke how the body's meaning might shift within the extensions of shapes and new architecture surrounding the dancers. The performance began long before audiences entered the theater. Viewers first encountered computational interpretations with dancing bodies before witnessing the dancers' physical presence in live performance at Studio 909. Digital speculation from the online viewer, press, or ticket buyer shaped audience perception before movement occurred.

The choreography for *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love.* primarily focuses on physical sensation, live movement performance, breath, and weight as primary expressive tools. The generating energy for the choreography was the lived experience of the performers and was created with lengthy discussion amongst the dancers in each piece. This was alongside direct and subtle layers of embodied creative thought about AI Performativity and the digital entanglement with mobile devices embedded in improvisational movement prompts. Several choreographies within the performance illustrate the dialogue between embodiment and digital mediation. Through the use of the photos and videos, the show also acknowledged that

the dancing body in images today is rarely simply itself. It is continually situated within networks of representation, screens, archives, and algorithmic circulation.

The original vision for the production was to incorporate large scale moveable video projector screens. Due to budget and location, this aspect was not realized in the 2024 production. Instead, we used a small movie screen located above the dancing space. Ironically though the digital medium inspired much of the production. I see each show that I create as an ongoing work in progress and in this context, perhaps the next iteration will have AI robots designing the visuals and holding a moveable cyc in the not so far off future.

Asakawa's dance film *~Journey~*, was screened at the top of the show. This opening piece served as a living digital archive about the dance company's recent tour to New York City. This documentary short about the making of the production "What is Revealed" was entirely filmed on an iPhone.

The *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love.* performance was divided into section themes from the production title. There were multiple dances for each section. Select pieces are highlighted below.

Bodies. The dance Filter examined perception and self-image. Dancers Akuna, Chan, Higashi, Miller, Sabado, and Wyatt improvised gestures associated with viewing, framing, and capturing images while holding bright colored lighting gels in their hands. These physical actions explored the notion that each person sees the world differently through individual and collective situated lenses. This movement idea played with how people uniquely interpret and frame bodies. The work emphasized that each viewer brings different perceptual filters to the body they see, filters informed by diverse cultural norms and personal memory. The play with handheld lighting gels also intentionally echoed the technological representation of AI filters in images and how this changes the viewers experience of an original body.

Physique. The ensemble work *Mesh*, explored entanglement. Dancers Fernandez, Marcos, Myrland, Smith, and Wyatt, moved in interwoven pathways, sometimes indistinguishable from one another. The piece emphasized collective corporeality and shape mixing. AI image visuals created from Karden's original photography combined with my experiments with AI multiplied the group's forms, suggesting an expanded field of relational presence to wave lines.



Fig. 6 Projection Image for *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love*. created for show projection. Original Photo: Kaveh Kardan. AI Photography Design: Kara Jhalak Miller and Photoroom. Dancers L to R: Krystian Leialoha Fernandez, Katelyn Wyatt, Cy Higashi.

The dance *Untameable*, danced by Akuna, Chan, Higashi, Sabado, and Wyatt, mirrored and explored ideas around bodily representation of gender in human and digital form. Set to Georges Bizet's Habanera from Carmen, the performers navigated moments of resistance, vulnerability, and transformation, revealing the body as a site of social expectation. Rather than presenting gender as fixed or stable, *Untameable* emphasized gender as a fluid and continual negotiation.



Fig. 7 Projection Image for *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love*. created for show projection. Original Photo: Kaveh Kardan. AI Photography Design: Kara Jhalak Miller and Photoroom. Dancers L-R: Tina Chan, Lance Sabado, Sami L.A. Akuna, Cy Higashi, Katelyn Wyatt.

Mind. Higher Ground, a dance duet about struggle and liberation performed by Akuna and Sabado, highlighted the negotiated relationality between bodies, one that was dominant and the other that was submissive. The dancers leaned into and resisted each other, tracing arcs of support, tension, and release, representing the power of limitations and expansions of thoughts that emerge in our minds. Projected images in this section included originally human made photography and video with AI edits, evoking the instability of striving toward uplift in a mediated world. *Self/ie*, a dance solo by Sabado with an iPhone, interrogated societal norms of beauty and self-representation, reflecting on the impact of social media. The dancer's gestures oscillated between confidence and self-surveillance. Through projected environments that shifted from glamorous to uncanny, the work questioned how digital infrastructures can both empower and constrain the ways bodies are valued and seen.



Fig. 8 Projection Video for *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love.* created for show projection. Original Video and AI Photography Design: Kara Jhalak Miller with Fotor. Dancers: Sami L.A. Akuna, Lance Sabado.

Soul. The duet *Spirals*, *Journey of the Soul*, reached for the invisible connections between the physicality of humans and animals. One dancer continuous circled the stage with a twenty foot green earth dress while another dancer holding found deer antlers appeared and disappeared under the fabric. While there was no projection for this dance, the piece was in part formed from recent news stories around the environmental impact of large computer and AI databases on land and all of earths inhabitants.

Flesh. The dance *Remember to be Human* honors ancestral presence through embodied memory. AI may generate infinite visual possibilities on the screen, yet ancestral knowledge remains fundamentally relational, transmitted through dancing bodies instead of databases. Two dancers cloaked in fabric brought the ancestors to carefully step among the younger generations of performers who are navigating this period of change. The work resisted technological narratives suggesting that computational archives cannot entirely replace embodied histories. This piece used no projection background and was a personal note to my future self to remember that I have a physical body with centuries of knowledge encoded in my DNA.

The finale piece *The Past and the Future are in the Present* incorporated AI generated video visuals of blades of grass and dewdrops as projection backdrop. The choreography included Yoga Asana mixed with contemporary dance. The choreography finished with all dancing bodies in Virabhadrasana warrior stance, with all eyes facing their one arm extended into the future, and the other arm behind them in the past, while the full torso was straddling in between them in the present. The dance explored the value and importance of equanimity in the midst of everchanging perspectives about bodies and digital space.

Ultimately, *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love*. suggests AI in this PaR study demonstrates how computational systems may function as a speculative collaborating tool that provokes new choreographic questions. This is at the same time while simultaneously revealing the enduring significance of lived bodily experience. The process of experimentation was a catalyst for reexamining expression and meaning as we continue to develop and create the next iteration of the work.

Ethics, ecology, and environment responsibility in AI dance collaboration

AI is an extractive system grounded in labor, environmental resources, and accumulated human cultural production. Every generated image carries hidden histories of human creativity, economic infrastructures, and computational power. Consequently, AI-generated choreography cannot be understood outside broader economies of images and labor. Bodies move not only through physical environments but through economies of data classification.

AI-generated dance images therefore participate within broader political questions concerning ownership, authorship, accessibility, and representation.

These questions became tangible during the development of *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul. Flesh.Love.* I employed image-generation platforms to create publicity materials and projection design after the choreographic inquiry had already begun. The AI-generated images extended the visual world of the performance and generated what I started calling a "non-place, place" location. The images could be seen as having been taken in a photography studio anywhere with a paper backdrop. The "non-place, place" raises questions about where these speculative environments originated, homogenization of the backgrounds, and what histories, datasets, and aesthetic assumptions the geometries and shaping around the dancer's bodies contained. I was intentionally experimenting with a particular visual aesthetic of geometry. The originality of the dance photographer and video maker, the photo and video editor playing with AI, and the AI datasets created the final image.

As Susan Kozel argues in "AI for AI: anteriority and interiority for AI inflected immersive dance", bodily representation in immersive technologies is not a neutral or purely technical outcome but an intentional aesthetic decision shaped through the relationship between artistic vision and technological affordances. (Kozel 2026). Kozel situates these practices within a longstanding history of live performance and digital technologies, suggesting that contemporary works gain depth and significance when understood through this lineage. At the same time, the author acknowledges that economic pressures within the arts often compel artists and researchers to frame their work as unprecedented in order to secure funding. This rhetoric of innovation, however, becomes seductive and risks obscuring historical precedents and limiting critical engagement with the broader aesthetic and choreographic traditions from which these works emerge. Inclusion within AI-assisted artistic practice requires transparency regarding technological collaboration while preserving human creative agency. Ethical use of AI in dance emerges through questioning how computational systems shape whose bodies become visible in text and image virtually, whose movements become datasets, and whose aesthetic traditions become normalized within AI transformation.

My artistic practice in this study resonates with Kozel's insistence that AI-inflected performance should be understood through its relationship to the longer histories of dance, performance, and technological experimentation. In *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love.* I approached AI-generated imagery as one layer within an already established choreographic and media practice. This positioning allows my work to participate in the history Kozel identifies while also extending its questions into the particular conditions of contemporary image-generation technologies. During the creative process, these ethical questions shifted from abstract concerns to practical artistic decisions. While experimenting with Photoroom

and Fotor, I questioned whether replacing the dancers' original environments merely aestheticized the body or fundamentally altered the meaning of place. A dance rehearsal studio in Hawai'i could suddenly become an entirely different "non-place, place" through the use of AI. Although visually compelling and creatively appealing, these transformations prompted me to examine what cultural and geographic landmarks of the dance studio disappeared when the original environment was algorithmically replaced. Just as dancing bodies are never simply bodies; they remember and communicate histories such as trauma, ancestry, cultural practice, and affect through kinetic transmission. Similarly, image backgrounds are never simply backgrounds; they communicate place, history, architecture, and memory.

Correia and Primett propose a series of recommendations for dance artists that use AI. A few highlights included not relating to AI as a human, and mindfulness around the neutrality of AI and corporate business ownership. (Correia and Primett, 2026). AI data centers consume immense amounts of electricity, require significant water resources for cooling, and contribute to increased carbon emissions, producing tangible ecological consequences (PBS News, 2026). The ethical considerations articulated by Correia and Primett and the PBS news article became particularly useful to my practice because they shifted my attention from what AI could produce toward how I was participating in the systems that produced those images. From a somatic perspective, the body may be understood not as separate from its environment but as continuously shaped by and responsive to the ecosystems that sustain it. Ethically dancers should contemplate the hidden material costs of AI and it's far-reaching environmental impact. This ecological awareness also informed the choreography itself. Although Spirals, Journey of the Soul contained no digital projections, the duet emerged in dialogue with discussions surrounding environmental footprints and the transcendence of the soul. Choreographic portrayal of a dancer wearing a twenty-foot green earth dress alongside another performer holding deer antlers reflected on human relationships with land and nonhuman life, reminding me that computational infrastructures ultimately remain dependent upon material ecologies. The absence of projected AI imagery in this section became as meaningful as its presence elsewhere in the production.

The January 2026 CalMatters investigation, "Generative AI is eating culture. See how close it's getting to disrupting dance," offers an important counterpoint to narratives that position AI as an imminent replacement for human dancers. Professional dancers, choreographers, Indigenous cultural practitioners, and dance educators interviewed throughout the article consistently argued that AI remains unable to reproduce the relational and culturally situated dimensions of dance: improvisation, kinesthetic intelligence, audience reciprocity, communal knowledge, and intergenerational transmission. The investigation presents dance making as a critical site for examining the limits of computational representation, suggesting that while AI may increasingly simulate movement or augment it, it continues to struggle with the lived,

social, and affective dimensions that constitute dance as an embodied cultural practice. (Khari Johnson, Levi Sumagaysay, Mohamed Al Elew 2026). My own experience throughout *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love*. reinforces this conclusion. AI-generated imagery inspired aspects of costume design, scenography, and audience interaction. None of the choreography though originated from algorithmic movement generation. The dances emerged through extended rehearsals, improvisational scores, somatic exploration, and conversations among performers about their lived experiences. AI expanded the imaginative visuals surrounding the work, yet the expressive force of the performance continued to reside within the dancers' breathing, sensing, remembering, and moving bodies. In this sense, AI functioned less as a collaborative choreographer than as a speculative visual collaborator whose greatest contribution was provoking new artistic questions rather than supplying creative answers in performance.

My engagement with this body of scholarship on AI and dance performance is situated within my own practice as a dancer, choreographer, teacher, and researcher working at the intersection of embodied practice and emerging technologies. *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul. Flesh.Love.* became a practice-based site through which I could encounter and complicate the questions raised by scholars such as Kozel, Correia and Primett, Wingenroth, Yu, and others examining the relationships among AI, embodiment, labor, representation, and ecology. Their scholarship provided critical frameworks for understanding questions that emerged materially within my own artistic process, while the making of the work, in turn, allowed me to encounter these questions through the specific conditions of choreography, improvisation, and performance and the sharing of the new insights and knowledge through direct artistic experience.

Future directions

Future directions for this study include expanding the Practice as Research inquiry through additional iterations of the performance *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love.* that investigate more directly how AI might function in real-time relationship with live dancing bodies. These PaR reflections suggest the possibility of understanding AI technologies as additional agents within choreographic and pedagogical processes. For dancers performing in AI projects, this invites further consideration of how AI technologies can alter presence, spatial awareness, and relationships between bodies, images, and environments. For dance teachers, this article suggests future research might investigate how technologically mediated practices can expand approaches to embodiment, critical media literacy, collaboration, and ethical engagement with emerging technologies, while maintaining the dancer's lived experience at the center of the learning process. For choreographers, this study intends to open questions about how projection, digital imagery, and AI, might function not

simply as aesthetic tools but as visual image based interlocutors that open up habitual ways of seeing and organizing the body, and produce new forms of relationality between human and design elements. The field of the performing arts should continue to investigate the ethical and ecological consequences of these technologies, asking what new artistic possibilities AI makes available, alongside what material resources, human labor, and environmental costs make those possibilities possible.

Proposing coexistence

Through the creative experimentation of photos and video with AI, the artifacts in the show propose coexistence. Human memory and computational memory operate differently but need not be mutually exclusive. Dance images become a space where these distinct forms of remembering encounter one another. This relational understanding ultimately defines the digitally entangled body. It is neither posthuman nor anti-technological. Instead, it recognizes that contemporary embodiment unfolds through continuous negotiation among physical sensation, digital mediation, environmental impact, and speculative futures. Choreography becomes an ethical practice for navigating these entanglements.

The performance of photographic and video images in *Bodies.Physique.Mind.Soul.Flesh.Love.* positions AI as a co-performer, an aesthetic technology and tool that reframes presence, expands notions of the body, situational awareness, and perception. A dance world increasingly shaped by AI offers the potential for a speculative methodology for imagining futures in which innovation deepens our humanity. While AI may generate ideas, texts, and images that are useful tools to aid dance artists, it cannot fully express or replace the vulnerability, empathy, artistic intuition, and embodied presence that define human dancing. The digitally entangled body represents the disappearance and reimagined reappearance of the human dancer in time and place, and the emergence of new choreographic relationships through which flesh, image, perception, and AI continually redefine what it means to move together in a world of flux.

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Reflections on the Marks of Thought in Isfahan

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Abstract

This chapter seeks to establish a dialogue between the classification of "types of thought" proposed by the Arabist philosopher Miguel Attie Filho and the architectural treasures of the historic Iranian city of Isfahan, focusing specifically on the Shah Mosque, a seventeenth-century construction. Although Isfahan is considered a UNESCO World Heritage Site (these are specific UNESCO heritage sites: Shah Mosque, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Ali Qapu and Qeyssariyeh), the entire city is currently at risk of total destruction. At a time when the city is the target of bombings by American imperialism, it is urgent that we turn our attention to its buildings, sculptures, paintings, and images while they still exist—not merely as images, but as structures and places that can be entered and experienced as part of humanity's legacy on Earth.

This chapter speculates that the physical and material destruction of Isfahan's buildings may also entail the destruction of unique manifestations of various forms of human thought on Earth, which can be perceived in the Mosque. By bringing art and philosophy into dialogue, this article aims to investigate the marks of thought manifested in the magnificent and geometrically structured Shah Mosque, how they articulate Islamic and Persian values, symbols, and history, and what happens to these marks of thought in the face of the threat of their destruction.

Keywords

Isfahan, Iran; Islamic Architecture; Sacred Geometry; Symbolic Thought; Marks of Thought.

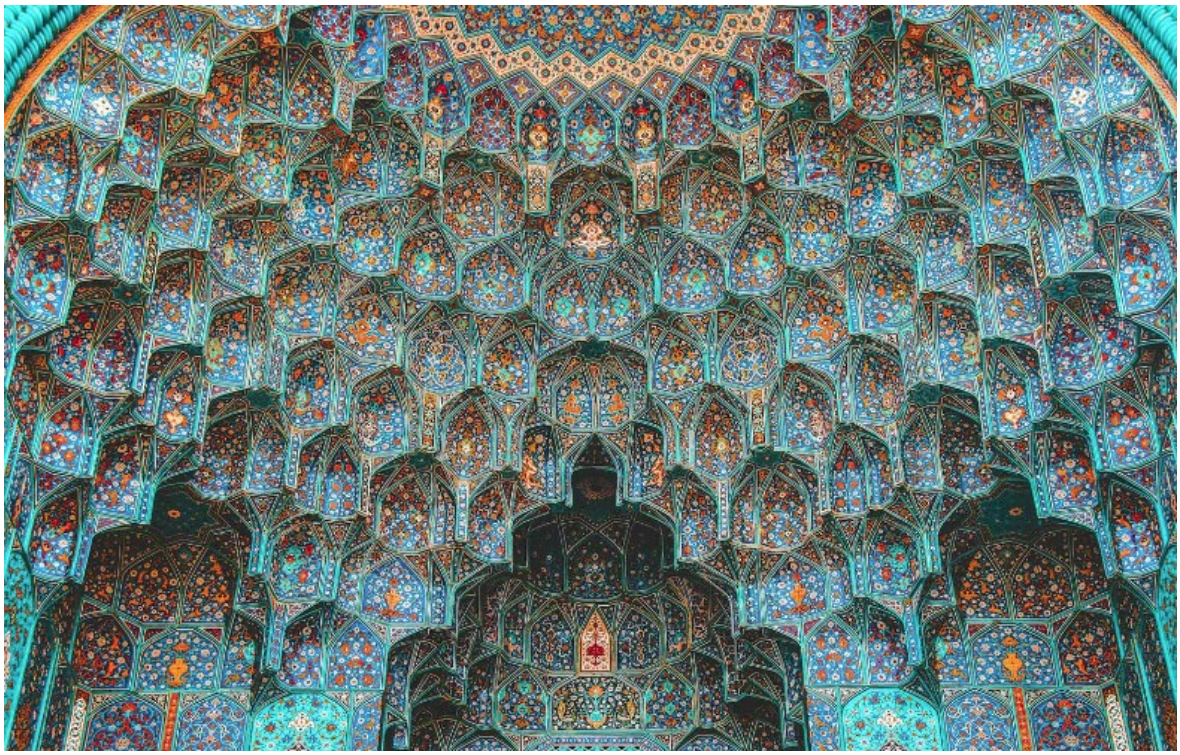

Fig. 1 Shah Mosque, 2020, Photograph by Shahab Zolfaghari

The risk of losing Isfahan

The writing of this text began on the day when Israel and the United States bombed one of the most beautiful cities in the world, a jewel of Persian and Islamic architecture: the millennia-old city of Isfahan, in Iran. Most sources regarding this bombing describe Isfahan as a city with "nuclear facilities," as if that fact justified the dropping of U.S. bombs. However, Isfahan predates its complex of nuclear energy research institutions. Following the US-Israeli strikes on Iran in 2026, concerns were raised about structural damage to the Shah Mosque in Isfahan. The bombing increased the inclination of one of the columns beneath the dome of the Shah Mosque (Imam Mosque), raising concerns about the stability of this historic structure:

> The Director General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Traditions of Isfahan Province stated that one of the columns beneath the dome of this Safavid-era mosque had shifted approximately 1.5 to 2 cm. According to him, this deformation was caused not only by the shock waves generated by the US bombs, but also by the uneven terrain. (...) A geotechnical specialist emphasized that dome structures are particularly sensitive to strong vibrations because of the way in which the structure is tensioned horizontally and vertically.According to the specialist, if the damage to the columns supporting the dome intensifies, there is a risk that instability could spread throughout the dome structure and eventually cause it to colapse. 1.

Our purpose is to discuss Isfahan, and specifically the dome of the Shah Mosque shown in the photograph at the beginning of this article. Before doing so, however, we will offer some

preliminary reflections on the threat currently facing the city. First, it must be stated that the source of the information concerning the bombing was not precisely a news report, since attacks of this kind committed by imperialist powers rarely become news. This was the case, for example, on February 28, 2026, when the United States bombed the Shajareh Tayeb primary school in Minab, Iran, killing 168 children at once.2. Likewise, it received little media attention, even within our universities, that all universities in Palestine were bombed and completely destroyed by Israel during the last three years of genocide broadcast through Palestinians' social media accounts. It is precisely in relation to this silencing, which contributes to genocide, that media conglomerates must also be held accountable, as Kelvin Araújo da Nóbrega Dias and Filipe Reis Melo (2024) explain in their article, "Thinking Palestine, Thinking Brazil: Imperialism, Colonialism and Militarization":

> The media constitute another fundamental element for understanding international conflicts and the relationship between capitalism and imperialism, given that they constitute an industry driven by profit and by the political-ideological interests of the dominant classes. The economic propensities of media owners affect the content and ideological bias of the news. In Brazil, the media are not democratized (Azevedo, 2006; Barbosa & Simões, 2017; Amaral & Machado, 2018), such that a large part of the coverage of international conflicts and wars by national newspapers consists merely of total or partial reproductions of foreign news agencies or hegemonic Western newspapers. Most of the news in circulation is based primarily on three sources that dominate the global information market: the Associated Press (USA), Agence France-Presse (France), and Reuters (United Kingdom) (Boyd-Barrett; Rantanen, 1998). Based on studies that provide media literacy (...), it is understood that, through the power to control information, it is possible to manipulate public opinion and create, in people's imaginaries, racist stereotypes concerning Arab peoples, associating them with terrorism, weapons, and murder, while Black and poor people are associated with drug trafficking and criminality in general. Thus, governments and states are able to obtain legitimization to justify their crimes. (p.319)

Thus, we can see how the same mechanism of dehumanization is employed both in the cases of the bombings against the countries of the Persian Gulf and the Arab Levant and in the Brazilian case, where the Black, mixed-race, and Indigenous populations likewise suffer from police violence and a genocide initiated in 1500 that is still ongoing.

In this way, we can perceive that the phenomenon of dehumanization is reflected not only in the normalization of bombings against such populations, but also in scholasticide and epistemicide, that is, the erasure of the knowledge and educational and research institutions that preserve the collective memory of these peoples and, therefore, of humanity itself. Beyond the people themselves, who are the greatest victims of this project of power grounded in violence, there is also the destruction of the symbolic and material heritage of these peoples.

There will not be enough academic production to account for all the archaeological sites destroyed by Israel in Palestine: perhaps it is not possible to contain so much human history within written works. But we will try. Attacks of this kind against the heritage of humanity have been committed freely by imperialist powers without any accountability, resulting in the permanent loss of the memory and history of entire civilizations in bombings that last only seconds.

These sites of human heritage are turned into rubble and destruction, while I undertake, in this essay, the beginning of an attempt to materialize in writing the deepest disappointment with the political and social organization of this world, which allows Isfahan to be bombed, just as historical cities in Palestine have been entirely destroyed (cities through which the history of thought, language, philosophy, and the transmission of knowledge passed, such as the historic cities of Akka, Caesarea Maritima, or Gaza, where approximately 1,500 years ago the greatest of all schools of rhetoric in the Greek language flourished)[3] by the same agents, with the acquiescence of the nation-states of this world.



Fig. 2. US bombing of Isfahan. Source: WAMA

Isfahan – capital of Persia

The US bombing of Isfahan targeted a nuclear research center (a direct attack on the autonomy and science of a people). Thus, fortunately, the part of the city that is more than 600 years old has been preserved, for the time being. The city was the capital of Persia during the latter part of the Safavid Empire (1501–1722), under the rule of Shah Abbas the Great. It was during this period that Isfahan became a landmark of Persian-Islamic architecture, with its large squares, avenues, and bridges, as well as madrasas and mosques. Historians have

recognized the Safavids as the rulers who laid the foundations for a national consciousness in Iran (then Persia), despite the country's great diversity of ethnic and linguistic groups, including Kurdish, Turkic, Arabic, Greek, Iranian, and other peoples, each with their own cultural, spiritual, and linguistic particularities. In the seventeenth century, under the Safavid dynasty, Jews, Georgians, and Indians lived together in Isfahan (which can be verified by the history of Persia itself).

Perhaps this atmosphere of coexistence and mutual respect had its foundations 2,600 years earlier, during the Achaemenid Empire, which had already practiced religious tolerance among Greeks, Egyptians, and Persians. Contrary to what is commonly taught in History and Philosophy, the idea of religious tolerance did not originate among the European Enlightenment thinkers; it had already been present much earlier in ancient civilizations such as Persia.[4]

The Safavid dynasty lasted from 1501 to 1722 and was founded by Ismail I, who is known to have been a Sufi, that is, a practitioner of Islamic mysticism. Shah Ismail initiated the commission for the illustration of the celebrated *Shahnameh* - the famous Persian Book of Kings, written in the tenth century by the Persian Muslim poet Ferdowsi [5] - and it was continued and brought to completion under his son Shah Tahmasp. The Shah's Mosque construction, in turn, began in 1611 under Shah Abbas I and continued through the 1620s, and was completed by 1630. Let us therefore turn to some details of its aesthetics that make it an expression of several forms of thought, not only because of its architectural and artistic elements, but also because of its location and internal structures. These structures lead visitors to make a half-turn to the right as soon as they enter through the portico, since the architect, Ali Akbar Isfahani, was concerned with the fact that the Mosque was not oriented toward Mecca, as required by Islamic religious practice. He solved this problem through a strategic architectural structure that forces visitors' bodies to turn toward the direction of the Islamic holy city. The Mosque is located in Naqsh-e Jahan Square, where it shares space with other magnificent buildings, such as the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, the Ali Qapu Pavilion, the Qeyssariyeh Portico, and the great bazaar of Isfahan.

Isfahan is half the world

Isfahan was called "half the world" by a visiting poet (legend has it that it was the French poet Mathurin de Reignier.). Its architectural jewels reveal more than the expression of the transcendence and spiritual rapture they evoke; they also reveal a political and social order whose highest foundation is Education. Every mosque should have a madrasa nearby, or a madrasa functioning within it, that is, a school. This reveals the principle expressed by the Sheikh who currently teaches at the madrasa of the Shah Mosque: "Islam does not recognize Science without Piety, nor Piety without Science." The Western idea of Science as supposedly

neutral and objective is already a modern and colonial invention. It is no coincidence that many of the Israeli bombs dropped on Gaza are called "dumb bombs"[6] dropped without direction or purpose, as though Science could produce something "dumb." But this is the effect of a Science that does not include the notion of piety in its definition. And what would a Science produce that recognizes itself as such only if it were also pious? At this point, let us look at the dome of the Shah Mosque from the perspective of thought, as a visible manifestation of forms of thought that participated in Persian life and philosophies.

Marks of thought in the Dome of Shah Mosque

The idea of "marks of thought" is present in the work *Marks and Thoughts: Notes on a History of Thought on Earth*, by the Arabist professor and philosopher Miguel Attie Filho, translator of the important work of Islamic philosophy *The Book of the Soul*, by Ibn Sīnā, written in the eleventh century of the Common Era. It is important to note that all dates follow the Gregorian calendar; within the Islamic world, however, they correspond to different years, since year 0 in the Islamic calendar corresponds to 622 CE in the Gregorian calendar, which was imposed upon the West through the Catholic Church during the colonial period. In this work, the author argues that what can be studied concerning thought on Earth are its marks, that is, the material traces left by thought, and that, on the basis of these marks, it is possible to refer back to the types of thought that generated them. This method operates as a "provisional tool for achieving an understanding of the unity and multiplicity of thought in its manifestation along the course of time on the planet Earth" (Attie, 2016, p. 62). Thus, the method, or tool, is merely "the means; understanding is the end." Since the method proposed by the author also emphasizes the importance of locating the marks under study temporally and spatially, that is, situating them within a chronology and a territory, it is appropriate to address the time and space of the mark of thought upon which we focus: the dome of the Shah Mosque, shown in Figure 1 of this article.

We are speaking of a context in which philosophy flourished both from philosophical questions awakened by the Islamic fact, such as "how is prophecy possible?", and from Aristotelian philosophy, which entered the Islamic world through translations encouraged by the Abbasid Caliphate as early as the ninth century. Thus, ideas such as the emanation of the cosmos from the celestial spheres and the Aristotelian theory of the four causes were combined in order to respond to the questions of that present. The notion of "intellect" connected the human intellect to an uncreated principle that generates the cosmos, an agent intellect, always in actuality, which at the same time ensures that our reasoning reaches the correct terms. To think, in fourteenth-century Islamized Persia, perhaps constituted an act much more associated with a connection to other orders of reality than with the modern

European notion of "reason," understood as an isolated manifestation of individuals whose minds do not mirror a greater order, but merely actualize a cerebral potentiality.

With regard to territory, let us reject the term "Orient": the invention of a world divided into East and West has prevented us from adopting a non-stereotypical and non-superficial perspective on the so-called "Eastern world," grouping together philosophies, peoples, and ways of life that are entirely different. Although the term "West" is used here in a political sense, that is, to denote a European and North American cultural and symbolic hegemony, the term "East" defines neither a type of thought nor a geographical location, as Miguel Attie Filho states: "In the geographical sense, there is no coincidence whatsoever between the Eastern Hemisphere and this supposed historical and civilizational East" (Attie, 2016, p. 287).

Thus, Isfahan was the capital of Persia at the time of the construction of the Mosque, and this meant that it was a center of transit and cultural and commercial exchange among diverse peoples speaking diverse languages, including Jews, Indians, Georgians, Greeks, Arabs, and many others. It also signified a period of strengthening Persian identity and nationhood, fostering a sense of unity above all through the affirmation of the Persian language, within an Islamized context in which Arabic asserted itself as the language of science and philosophy, and in which Islam adapted itself to local beliefs and customs in order to enable conversion to take place on a mass scale.

Another notion that must be deconstructed temporally and territorially is that of the Middle Ages. This classification, after all, would only make sense for Europe during the same period: the Persians did not suffer from a lack of basic sanitation or from an absence of knowledge concerning basic aseptic practices in medicine. Quite the contrary: Persian medicine was highly advanced, as were urban systems of sewage and sanitation. Although Isfahan was destroyed on numerous occasions, particularly during the period of the Mongol invasion, the city remained a center of culture and learning and represented a form of civilizational advancement in relation to Europe, to such an extent that someone who visited London during the same period and then traveled to Isfahan might have thought that they had traveled not only through space but also through time, given the civilizational disparity between that city and the largest European cities of the same period.

The East–West division model also attempts to import a (false) geographical division into the realm of thought, as though the division were also epistemological in nature. Thus, the terms commonly associated with "Eastern thought," which exclude logical thought from its manifestations, as though "Eastern" were synonymous with "transcendent," "mystical," and "spiritual," while "reason" and "logic" were absent, lose their meaning when we see how complex mathematical calculations were employed in the construction of the Shah Mosque precisely with the purpose of enhancing not only the perception of space but also the connection with the divine. The muqarnas, a type of cellular structure in the form of a

"honeycomb," which we see in the dome of the Mosque, were carved and painted in such a way as to take into account their effects on illumination, acoustics, and, of course, aesthetic contemplation. Creating an effect in which any sound is amplified, the muqarnas demonstrate that Persian artisans were also poets: their details reveal not merely adornments and ornaments, but also the art of calligraphy, combining the written word with architecture. And words, by virtue of the Arabic alphabet, also embody numerical relationships:

> In addition to the fact that numbers are the basis of every structure of Geometry, the relationship between numbers and letters reveals symbolic elements that directly demonstrate the bond connecting letters to the geometric universe. The first letter, for example, known as *alif*, corresponds to the number one, a number carrying the symbolic meaning of Unity and transcendence and which, according to this symbolism, can also be represented by a point. (...) As Bullāta observes, Arabic words also preserve, to this day, the semantic bond between discourse and image. (Leite, 2007, p. 89)

Regarding this relationship between the letters of the alphabet and mathematics, we recommend a careful reading of *The Symbolism of Geometric Patterns in Islamic Art*, by Sylvia Leite. In this work, the author provides some notions that may help us understand the type of thought we are encountering. First, it is necessary to understand that the "kaleidoscopic" or prismatic effect created by the Mosque's dome reveals a notion also present in other Islamic sciences: "The duality found in writing, grammar, phonetics, and syntax is, in fact, repeated at multiple levels," and also, "(...) the Persians expressed Unity through harmony, as can be seen in their blue domes [7] and floral ornaments" (Leite, p. 102).

These complex geometries, employed in the construction of the *muqarnas* as part of a work whose purpose was to create a space for spiritual contemplation, demonstrate how mathematical abstractions are intertwined with the spiritual dimension in the Shah Mosque. The *muqarnas* also reveal the relationship, articulated by philosophy, between unity and multiplicity, or between the One and the manifestation of plurality. How can God be One and yet creation be multiple? Perhaps this is the mystery disclosed through the manifestation of geometric patterns that seem to expand indefinitely before the gaze of those who look up at the entrance ceiling of the Mosque and contemplate the richly ornamented *muqarnas*:

> The objective laws of nature, made possible by the mathematization to which Husserl alluded, constitute not only a separation between sensibility and understanding but also, in our reading, a separation between nature and sensibility. In other words, the plastic world, in which forms, through their appearance, "praise" the Real, is the world that engages with sensibility: the mystic sees, hears, and feels—and this is not merely metaphorical (Machado, 2004, p.16)

The question had already been raised, even prior to the emergence of philosophy, by practitioners of Sufi mysticism, a tradition to which Shah Abbas I, who commissioned the

construction of the Mosque, belonged. In creating the geometric patterns of the *muqarnas*, the Persians drew upon the science of magic squares, possibly developed in ancient China:

> Magic squares are evident manifestations of the harmony of numbers and serve as interpreters of the cosmic order that governs all existence. They reveal certain hidden intelligences which, according to a preconceived plan, produce the impression of intentional design. (Keith Critchlow, quoted in Leite, p. 117). This form of reasoning transcends the quantitative dimension of number and enters into its qualitative dimension, which is intimately connected to the symbolic realm. For the Sufis, as for the Pythagoreans and philosophers of other traditional schools, numbers and their symmetries—including magic squares—represent the stages of creation, the ordering of created things, and the return of the manifested world to the original, Uncreated Unity. Furthermore, they make it possible to recognize analogous relationships among the different planes of existence. (Leite, 2007, p. 117).

The idea of analogy as symbol and repetition may be useful for understanding the characteristics of the type or types of thought present here. The kaleidoscopic effect of the dome reveals elements of Islamic mysticism because it is a totality contemplated at a single glance, yet a totality composed of smaller parts that are repeated in geometric patterns, as Beatriz Machado (2004) explains:

> Just as, in a kaleidoscope, one does not seek to focus on a single stone but rather on the beauty of the arrangement among all the stones, what matters in our conception is the idea of a set of relationships, of the fabric of reality. Reality is therefore not a thing, a stable form, a set of events in a linear succession of cause and effect, a repetition of natural laws, or a fixed organization. On the contrary, it is an endless combination of possibilities for arrangement and rearrangement. (p. 53)

Possible types of thought present: magical, mystical, coded, and scientific

Were the builders of Isfahan communicating something about reality? Certainly, the dome of the Shah Mosque reveals particular modes of thought; that is, the structure itself bears the imprint of the thoughts and ideas of its time and place. According to Professor Miguel Attie, these modes of thought include magical, mythical, initiatory, cryptic, speculative, mystical, theological, and scientific forms of thought. This typology is based not on systematizable fields or disciplines, but on the common assumptions and foundations underlying these different modes of thought. Each has its own forms of validation; none overlaps with or replaces another. Rather, they coexist and can be identified through the marks they leave behind. Regarding these marks, the method proposed by Attie Filho 2016) explains:

> The apprehension of the marks of thought takes place on two levels: first, my senses apprehend the materiality of the mark (...); then, my thought penetrates beyond this image, seeking to encounter the mode of thought that gave rise to such a mark. 8

How can we say that the *muqarnas* in the dome of the Shah Mosque reveal certain modes of thought and not others? Without claiming to assert something while denying what has not been said, we will attempt to approach this mark—both virtually and visually—by reflecting on the modes of thought that it may possibly reveal. This does not mean that the modes of thought that are not mentioned are absent; rather, it indicates which ones appear to be more readily discernible. In other words, we understand that the dome, beyond being an architectural and artistic phenomenon, manifests something belonging to the realm of thought. The first evident mode of thought is magical thought, since it is also the first in the chronological sequence of the manifestations of thought that have emerged. In fact, magical thought would constitute the foundation of all forms of thought, for:

> Interwoven with the forces of Nature, the realization that "there are forces" transforms perception, integrating the human being into an invisible world and compelling them to think magically—the first distinctive feature of human beings in the course of chronology. (Attie, 2016, p. 365).

In fact, magical thought would constitute a kind of common ground underlying all forms of thought, being a "type of minimal worldview that is always present in thought (...); therefore, magical thought is thought itself, which, in turn, defines the human being":

> The primary magical statement remains closely attached to the image and, in this near-mirroring of an admiring vision of reality, combined with the movements of the thought's surrounding context, almost without judgment—except for the recognition that *there are invisible forces that move things*—a statement proper to magical thought thus emerges. (Attie, 2016, p. 469).

These "forces," given that we are dealing here with a manifestation of the Islamic religion, whose fundamental premise is the radical affirmation of monotheism, are, in this case, Allāh, God Himself. But the notion that "there are forces" invisibly acting upon reality resonates with other ideas: the possibility of connecting with such forces through initiatory rituals, seeking to influence them, and the notion that these forces manifest themselves in a cryptic form that needs to be deciphered. Thus, we have a triad: magical, initiatory, and cryptic thought. In what way is the notion that "there are invisible forces" present in the dome of the Shah Mosque? The kaleidoscopic effect of the work, commissioned by the Sufi ruler of the Safavid dynasty, seems to cause its geometric patterns to emerge and expand, as though their very manifestation already revealed a human capacity to mirror that which cannot be objectively explained—the entire arrangement containing unity within itself while simultaneously revealing the multiplicity that can emerge from it. There are invisible and unknown forces, but perhaps we can mirror them, imagine them. It is also impossible to ignore

the presence of mathematics. In this sense, we might venture to suggest that mathematics is the science of patterns, and thus a tool of scientific thought, although the latter depends upon empirical criteria of validation. But, after all, would not the very possibility of constructing the structure and the geometric patterns that sustain it constitute a manifestation of scientific thought? We may also acknowledge that the Mosque bears the mark of scientific thought, insofar as it reveals the conversion of geometry into a formative aspect of the structure of the building—from mathematical precision to empirical realization. Furthermore, the objectivity of mathematics coexists with the inexplicability of magical thought, just as it coexists with notions of mystical thought that are also present in the dome. The Mosque enables those who enter it to engage in contemplation (*contemplatio*), which precisely seeks to reconnect the human being with the divine—the aim of mystical thought: "unlike the speculative thinker, the mystic affirms that there are spiritual realities upon which the intellect and reason are insufficient to touch." (Attie, 2016, p. 391). Although they might initially appear to be opposites, mathematics and mystical thought coexist: here, mystical contemplative flights are anchored in the science of patterns. It is also necessary to distinguish between, for example, a "Westernized" tourist, who is not Muslim, contemplating the dome, and a believer in the Islamic faith standing before the same work. There are aspects that someone who does not possess the spiritual and religious dimension—connected not only to the meaning and purpose of the Mosque's existence, but also to the way in which it mirrors a cosmic and spiritual order present within the religion—may perhaps lack the conceptual tools to apprehend:

> Universal manifestation is the unfolding of the *āyāt Allāh*, the "signs of God" (but also the "verses," since the word *āyāt*bears both meanings). These *āyāt* are constituted by "words," *kalimāt*, which in turn are composed of letters, *huruf*, which, in a certain sense, are the elementary particles of the revealed Book. (Chodkiewicz, quoted in Machado, 2004, p. 63).

Thus, what someone who knows the Qur'an and is familiar with the foundations of the religion sees and perceives when standing before the dome carries with it different marks from what is perceived by someone who does not possess all the notions conveyed by the religion, particularly the idea of the "signs" of God. In this way, we are also confronted with a form of cryptic thought, to be deciphered within the experiential perspective of the religion: "(....) at the core of cryptic thought, the basic and governing axiom is this: the forces encode their signs and, therefore, it is up to us to decipher them; that is, to remove the veil that conceals them so that the true meaning of what was previously incomprehensible may emerge" (Attie, 2016, p. 441). However, in order to be able to decipher the signs of Nature, one must first have been instructed—such instruction constitutes the initiatory path: "In this way, not everyone can read the signs, but only the initiated." Yet the initiatory path is marked by rituals, something that transcends what we are objectively seeing. Therefore, we have a manifestation of cryptic

thought, but we cannot fully assert that initiatory thought is also present in this mark of thought, since this transcends the objectivity of what is being observed. Nevertheless, we know that what is observed is "more fully seen," or perceived through details and marks that are not observable to those who have not been given the interpretive keys necessary to perceive the religious and spiritual dimension underlying the construction.

We can all see and contemplate the dome and experience sensations that have historically been understood as "transcendence"—the sensation of standing before something whose perception seems to lighten the weight of the body, while, for a fleeting moment, we become aware that people like us, in another place and another time, were able to construct this work and leave it as a legacy to all of humanity.This sensation is independent of initiation into the mysteries of Islamic mysticism or of participation in modes of knowledge transmission that make it possible to "decipher" what can be perceived beyond what is immediately evident to ordinary perception. That is, it is not necessary to understand the cryptic thought embodied in the dome of the Mosque in order to contemplate it. Likewise, initiation into mystical thought does not prevent us from recognizing something that is both necessary and, in the present global context, urgent: that the Mosque manifests, simultaneously, magical, mystical, cryptic, and scientific modes of thought belonging to a portion of humanity in Persia four hundred years ago—and that the fact that it still exists today should be celebrated, remembered, and defended.

Final considerations

We seek to employ the method proposed in the work *"Marks and Thoughts..."* with the aim of approaching Isfahan from a philosophical perspective, speculating and in this sense, the article constitutes a mark of speculative thought, about what types of thought might be manifested in the dome of the Mosque. This is a specific section of the construction, since attempting to encompass it as a whole would be an undertaking requiring a much greater degree of "initiation" into its own foundations and mysteries. In reality, my present gaze, from Brazil in 2026, upon the photograph of the dome is already immensely different from that of those who constructed it; therefore, we speculate, and only speculate. Regardless of who contemplates it, perceiving in Isfahan the manifestation of different types of thought should lead us to recognize the risk we run of losing paths already traversed in the history of thought on Earth, a risk experienced whenever places that embody the legacy of civilizations become targets of an unpitying science.

Observing Figure 1, which is a "detail" of the muqarnas carving constructed at the top of the dome above one of the entrances to the building, we may ask, philosophically, what the artists who carved and painted this ceiling, as well as all those who have been able to contemplate it

since the beginning of its construction, might have been seeing, thinking, imagining, and feeling.

Thus, every construction, article, text, artifact, or image produced by human groups in specific territories tells stories and reveals particular types of thought; that is, they are themselves marks of thought, the products of thought—it is through these marks that we can approach them. Thus, what is lost through the destruction of these marks is, beyond the materiality of the mark itself, human thought itself, which requires no "key" to be deciphered: it is accessible to everyone and constitutes all people. The encoded thought of which, we speculate, the Mosque may also be a mark, may perhaps signify not that an initiation into the key to the answer to the enigma to which it appears to respond is indispensable, but rather that the artisans who created it possessed a shared secret—as though they were reproducing the divine intention underlying the manifestation of reality itself, as though, by contemplating this radically human work, we might remember the signs of the intentions of the creative force of the Whole.



Fig.3 Sources:photo by Tomasz Parys (Fotolia)



Fig. 4 International Journal of Sciences Basic and Applied Research (IJSBAR)

Notes

1 West Asian News Agency (WANA): https://wanaen.com/structural-damage-worsens-at-isfahans-shah-mosque-dome-stability-at-risk/,

2 The numbers of the children killed are related by the people of Minab and the parents of the children: https://piaui.uol.com.br/revista/239/cavamos-os-escombros-em-busca-de-nossos-filhos/ (Report by the brazilian journalist Giovana Vidal).

3 In Byzantine Palestine, Greek was the language of literature and formal higher education. Gaza then boasted the most influential school of rhetoric in the Greek language in the world, where verbal rhetorical learning was taught as a fundamental component of the construction of legal, intellectual, and philosophical arguments" (Masalha, 2025, p. 42)

4 .https://www.biblioiranica.info/religion-in-the-achaemenid-persian-empire/

5 It should be noted, in passing, that this is one of the written and illustrated works most replete with detail, symbolism, and the labor of hundreds of illustrators for each of its 258 illustrations. It is also worth denouncing the fact that the work was dismembered and its pages torn out by the zionist Baron

Rothschild, who stole it in the nineteenth century. Regarding the *Shahnameh*, its illustrations can be viewed online at the following website: Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp · Persian Book of Kings

6 https://oglobo.globo.com/mundo/noticia/2023/12/14/quase-metade-das-bombas-usadas-por-israel-em-gaza-nao-tinham-alvos-especificos-diz-inteligencia-dos-eua.ghtml

7 A blue glass dish found in Nishapur, dating to the ninth century, demonstrates that the blue coloration in glass resulted from the addition of cobalt to the glass mixture. Other elements that produced the blue hue included indigo and lapis lazuli, to which cobalt was subsequently added, with its origins possibly linked to Mesopotamia. The indigo plant (*Indigofera tinctoria*) was exported from Persia to India; at the time, Persia was the principal source of the so-called "blue stones," and its products were also exported to China. Even today, cobalt is extracted from Iranian mines for the purpose of restoring and repairing the cracked stones that form part of mosques and architectural structures. Source: The Colour Blue in Persian Culture

8 Attie Filho, Miguel. *Marks and Thoughts – Notes on a History of Thought about the Earth*. São Paulo: Author's Edition, 2016, p. 351.

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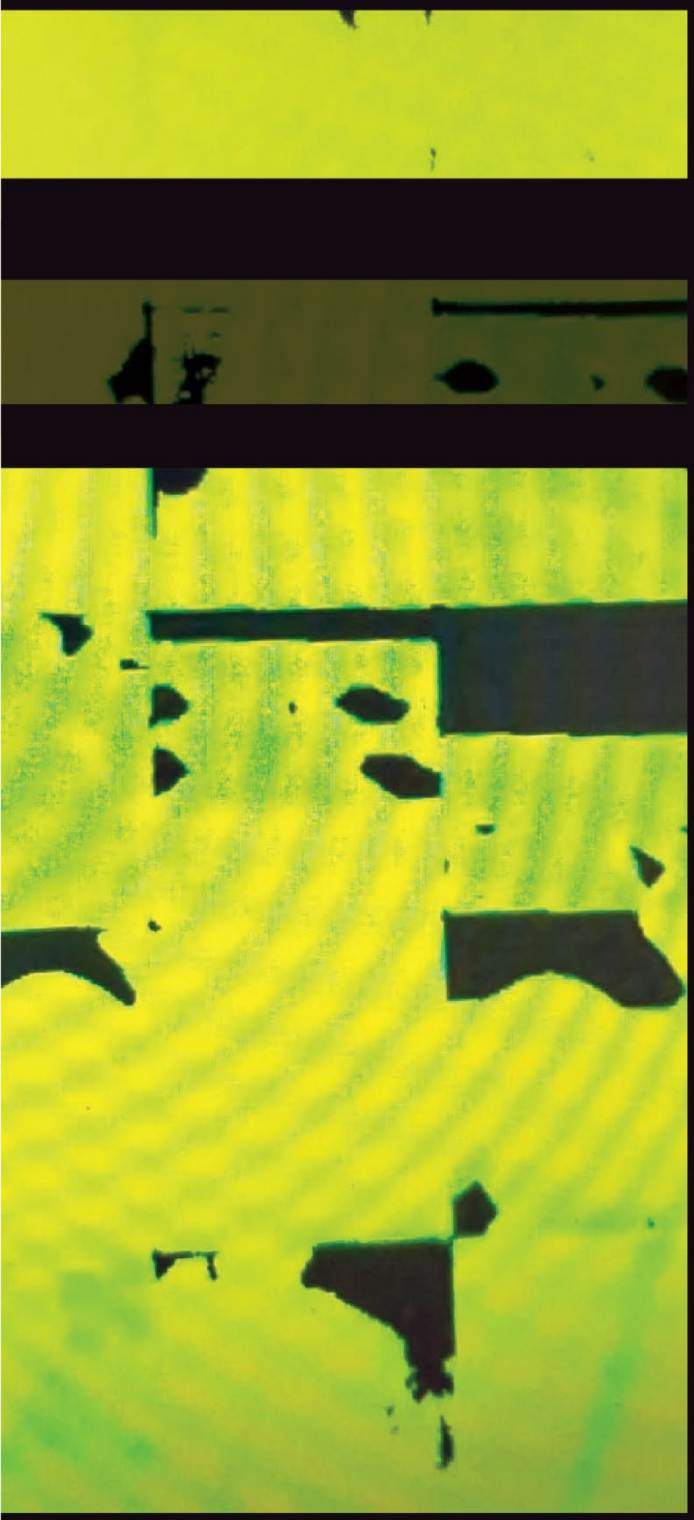

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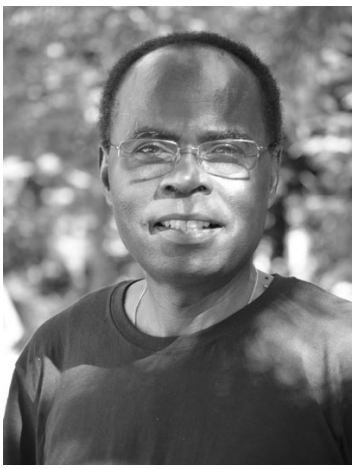

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Rosário Santana studied Musical Composition at the Escola Superior de Música e Artes do Espectáculo do Porto. In 1998, she obtains her doctoral degree from the University of Paris-Sorbonne (Paris IV) with the thesis *Elliott Carter: le rapport avec la musique européenne dans les domaines du rythme et du temps*. Since 1999, she has been a professor at Polytechnic University of Guarda (UPG), teaching several curricular units on its courses. She belongs to the TECHN&ART research unit, conducting diverse research in the field of the analysis and theory of contemporary music, and music and education. In this sense, Rosário Santana is co-author of the following books: *(semi) – BREVES*, *20th Century Music Notes published* by the University of Aveiro; *Música Contemporânea Portuguesa: Jorge Peixinho*, *Cândido Lima João Pedro Oliveira*, published by Macau Institute; *Práticas Rituais com Máscara: Exteriorizações e Formas de um Imaginário Real*, published by Cordel de Prata; *Cantos, (Re)cantos e (En)cantos da Terra e do Mar* and *Apontamentos de Música Portuguesa: António de Sousa Dias, Constança Capdeville, António Chagas Rosa, Clotilde Rosa, João Pedro Oliveira, and Isabel Soveral*, published by Arteology; among other's scientific articles. **Portugal**

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Silvia Maria Cintra da Silva is a psychologist at PUC Campinas. She holds a master's degree and a PhD in Education from Unicamp, with a post-doctorate at the University of São Paulo (USP) at PUC – SP. She is a full professor at the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU), a former president of the Associação Brasileira de Psicologia Escolar e Educacional (Brazilian Association of School and Education Psychology) – ABRAPEE (from 2014 to 2016; she currently serves as the second secretary, term 2024–2026), and the chief editor of the academic journal *Psicologia Escolar e Educacional* (*School and Education Psychology*) – ABRAPEE. Her themes of interest are school psychology, art, formation and practice of school psychologists, public education policies, and the medicalization of education. **Brazil**

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Susana Barreto is a design educator (associate professor in Design) and researcher at the University of Porto, Faculty of Fine Arts (FBAUP). She is also the executive director of the European Academy of Design, a member of the International Advisory Board of the International Academic Forum (IAFOR), and the coordinator of Media Labs ID+. She obtained her PhD from Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London (CSM-UAL). In recent years, she has been involved in several research projects focused on preserving specialised knowledge at risk of disappearing, embedded in the experiences of retired professors, artists, researchers, and practitioners in the fields of arts, crafts, and design. Her research interests centre on the role of ethics in visual communication, intersections between design and crime, design culture, visual methodologies, and visual and historical collections. **Portugal**

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Susanne Römer, PhD, works at the University of Leipzig in Germany. She is affiliated with the Institute for Teacher Education and School Research and is connected to European universities through the ARQUS university alliance. For over 20 years, she has been working with teachers in initial and continuing teacher education in the fields of special education and inclusion. She served as an adjunct professor in the Special Education/Inclusion Studies Programme at the University of Applied Sciences Zittau/Görlitz for 7 years (2010–2017). Her research focuses on topics related to the professional development of teachers in the transition to an inclusive education system. As a trained teacher in special education for the hearing impaired and speech-language pathology, she worked for 8 years in elementary schools and special education centres. She volunteers with various organizations that address the challenges of implementing an inclusive education system in Germany. **Germany**

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Wolfgang Weinlich, a professor of Art and Design at the Vienna University of Teacher Education, devotes his research in particular to the areas of diversity, sustainability and service-learning and their connection to artistic and art education practice. His focus is on the question of how aesthetic education can contribute to addressing social challenges, promoting creative ways of thinking and developing an awareness of ecological and social responsibility. **Austria**

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Yinan Li is a professor at the School of Art, Southeast University, holding a Ph.D. in Art, and serving as a doctoral advisor and collaborating supervisor at the Postdoctoral Research Station. She concurrently serves as a member of the 3rd and 4th Teaching Committee of Industrial Design under the China Mechanical Engineering Education Association, a member of the Graduate Education Steering Committee for Arts in Jiangsu Province and the vice chair of its Design Expert Committee, a member of the China Literary and Art Critics Association, an executive council member of the Jiangsu Young Artists Association, and the director of the Provincial First-Class Undergraduate Programme in Jiangsu. **China**

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Editorial Board



Angélica Lima Cruz is a PhD researcher from the University of Minho (UMinho) and is a retired academic. She holds a degree in Painting from the University of Porto, Faculty of Fine Arts (FBAUP), a master's degree in Portuguese Literature and Culture (with a focus on popular culture) from the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at the Nova University of Lisbon, with a thesis on the Figurado de Barcelos (1990). She completed her PhD dissertation in 2002 at the University of Surrey-Roehampton, titled *Clay Figurines of Galegos: An Anthropology of Artistic Production by Women in Northern Portugal*. After several years working in primary and secondary education, she taught at the University of Minho (UMinho). She was a visiting professor at the Shandong University of Art and Design in Jinan, China. She has published articles in various national and international journals and has participated in research projects, such as *Images & Identity*, coordinated by Rachel Mason (Roehampton University, London), to which she was invited by the Arts Department of the Polytechnic University of Viana do Castelo, School of Education (UNIPVC-ESE), a partner in that project. Her research focuses on issues related to the arts, class, and gender. **Portugal**

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Assunção Pestana is an independent researcher specialising in Art Education. She was formerly a member of the teaching staff at Instituto Piaget, where she taught Art Education, and at ESAP – Escola Superior Artística do Porto, where she taught Video Art and Art History. She is currently retired. She holds a bachelor's degree in Film and Video and a D.E.S.E. in Archaeology and Art History (1990). She also holds an Advanced General Diploma in Spanish, obtained in Spain (1987), and a master's degree in Ibero-American History (1996), with a dissertation entitled *The Iconography of the Black Figure in the Work of Jean-Baptiste Debret (19th-Century Art History)*. She further completed the taught component of a doctoral programme in Education and Human Development: Theoretical and Social Perspectives in Spain (2000–2002). In 2011, she was awarded a PhD in Didactics and Educational Organisation by the University of Santiago de Compostela, Faculty of Education Sciences, Department of Didactics and School Organisation, Spain. Her doctoral thesis, entitled *Art Education – From Artistic Practice to Teaching Practice at the Escola Superior de Artes do Porto (1986–2015)*, examines the relationship between artistic practice and pedagogical practice within the context of higher arts education. She has held academic positions at several universities. As a visual and multimedia artist, her work is represented in the collections of national and international museums, as well as in private collections and archives. Her work was represented at the most recent Art Biennial in Alfândega da Fé (2026). Since 2015, she has maintained a regular collaboration with the Polytechnic University of Viana do Castelo, School of Education (UNIPVC-ESE). **Portugal.**

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Ava Serjouie-Scholz is an artist, art educator and researcher whose work focuses on intercultural and transcultural art education, socially engaged art, community-based artistic practices and the role of art in contemporary society. She has taught art and art education from primary school to higher education and has lectured at the University of Erfurt and Soureh Art University in Iran. She currently teaches Art and Crafts at the Fachakademie für Sozialpädagogik Maria Stern in Augsburg, where she also heads the department. She holds a PhD in Intercultural Art Education from the University of Erfurt (magna cum laude), an MFA in Painting from Alzahra University, Iran (summa cum laude), and a BFA in Painting and Art Education. Her research has focused particularly on children's drawings, emotional expression, intercultural understanding and inclusive art education. Her publications address intercultural and transcultural art education, community art, visual sensitivity,

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Célia Maria de Castro Almeida holds a bachelor's degree in Music Education and Art Education, a master's degree and a PhD degree in Education from the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), Brazil, where she worked as a professor and researcher in the College of Education until her retirement. Throughout her academic career, she conducted researche in education, art, and culture, particularly on the following topics: teacher training and professional development, pedagogical concepts and practices, daily life, culture, and school curriculum. At Unicamp, she created the Laboratory for Studies on Body, Art, and Education (Laborarte). She led the Study Group on History, Politics, and Culture in Teacher Training and was a member of the Study and Research Group on Art, Education, and Culture, both registered in the Lattes Directory of Research Groups in Brazil. She coordinated research funded in partnership with other national and European institutions. She is the author of the book "Being an Artist, Being a Teacher: reasons and passions of the craft," as well as chapters in several books, and articles published in national and international journals. **Brazil**

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Irineu José Barsanti de Camargo is a retired professor from the Institute of Biology at Unicamp, where he earned his Doctorate in Biology (Microbiology) in 1973 and obtained his Livre Docência (associate professorship) degree in Immunology in 1994. His research focused on the field of Microbiology and later on Immunology. He also carried out work in Education, specifically in supervision within distance learning (EAD) courses. **Brazil**

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Patrícia Vieira, associate professor at the Polytechnic University of Viana do Castelo (UNIPVC) since 1998, where she teaches in areas such as Communication, Multimedia, and Product Design. Holding a PhD in Art and Design from FBAUP (2018), an MA in Digital Arts from the Catholic University (2001), and a BA in Equipment Design from ESAD Matosinhos (1995), her teaching activity intersects with a career in research and professional practice. A collaborating member at Research Centre in Architecture, Urbanism, and Design (CIAUD, Faculty of Architecture, Universidade de Lisboa) and a researcher in the European project PAS GRAS (Horizon Europe), her work focus on communication design, UX/UI, strategic design, product design, sustainability, and health literacy. Her career is marked by international design awards (Japan, Portugal, and the USA) and extensive experience in institutional communication design

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Rachel Mason is emeritus professor of Art Education at the University of Roehampton, London. She has taught art and art education in England, Australia and the USA and is well known for her research and publications on multicultural, cross-cultural and international art education. She is a former president and vice president of the *National Society for Education in Art and Design* (NSEAD) and founded and edited the *International Journal of Education through Art*. Her books include *Art Education and Multiculturalism* (a second edition of which was published in 1996); *International Dialogues in Visual Culture, Education and Art* (co-edited with Teresa Torres de Eça and published in 2010), *Beyond Multicultural Art Education: International Perspectives* (co-edited with Doug Boughton and published in 1999); *Issues in Arts Education in Latin America* (co-edited with Larry O'Farrell and published in 2004); and *Por Uma Arte/Educação Multicultural* (published in Brazil in 2002). She has directed numerous national and international research projects. Her most recent project in Cape Verde was funded by the Leverhulme Foundation. **United Kingdom**

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Suparna Banerjee is an independent dance teacher, a researcher and visiting artist-scholar at Iowa State University (ISU), United States. She also taught dance at FLAME University in India. She holds a PhD from the University of Roehampton, United Kingdom, an MA in Performing Arts from the University of Pune, and an MA in English, along with a Bachelor of Teaching from the University of Kalyani, India. She is trained in Bharatanatyam and Tagore dances. For over two decades, she has collaborated with dancers to create stage performances in India and abroad. Banerjee's research interests include dance pedagogy, dance and technology, identity politics, urban performance and psychoanalysis. Her publications include a book chapter in a Palgrave Macmillan anthology titled *Digital Echoes: Spaces for Intangible and Performance-Based Cultural Heritage (2018)* and a (forthcoming) chapter in the *Routledge Companion on Performance and Technology*, in addition to several papers in peer-reviewed journals. She has presented her research at international conferences and also led workshops for the elderly and individuals with special needs. She has received numerous awards, including the *Selma Jeanne Cohen Award*, the *Alvin Edgar Grant* from ISU, the *Hawaii State Legislature's Artist Grant* and other visiting artist grants from Pennsylvania State University, United States. Currently, she is working on a documentary film titled *The Body as an Archive* in collaboration with Shrimoyee Chattopadhyay. **India**

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Susan Ogier is a senior lecturer in Primary Education, specialising in Art and Design at the University of Roehampton, London, having spent many years teaching Early Years and Primary Art in schools. She has a master's degree in Fine Art, and is a fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She is a member of the Chartered College of Teachers and holds a Certificate of Evidence Informed Practice. She is the author of *Teaching Primary Art and Design* (2017), published by Sage, as well as a series of books for children, professional and peer-reviewed journal articles, and several book chapters. She is known for her strong connection with the *National Society for Education in Art and Design* (NSEAD), and for leading CPD events for trainee teachers, class teachers, mentors, and senior leaders through consultancy work. She is also the associate consultant for NASBTT in Primary Art and Design. She has been involved in several EU/funded education research projects focusing on art as a vehicle for learning and is currently undertaking project work to support the charity Art UK's roll-out of the Superpower of Looking Programme for Primary Schools. Susan Ogier's most recently published books in the Sage's

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Power Relations, Inclusive Pedagogies, and Participation in the Arts, Culture, and Education