This book is a testimony of the Bridge 47 Transformative Learning Journeys – an experiment to expand our concepts and practices of Global Citizenship Education. It is a never-complete mosaic of experiences and personal reflections about transformation, decolonization and learning as an invitation to relate to and play with.

This book is dedicated to all the curious people out there who are passionate about education in caring for our world and each other - the dreamers, the healers, the lovers, the teachers for a different future to emerge. It goes to the fighters who are desperate and overwhelmed in face of complex challenges and are worn out by their struggle for justice and change – to find inspiration, energy and courage to treat ourselves gently, to let go and to make space for new things to emerge.

This book is a companion in the continuous journey of learning that life is in this entangled multiverse that we will never come to fully grasp – but that we can meet halfway.

Transformative Learning Journeys
Venturing into the wilds of Global Citizenship Education

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BRIDGE 47

Map of contents

Welcome to a journey with many paths – foggy, twisted, secret trails into the beautiful wilderness that lies beyond our fences.

Dear Reader,

Bridge 47 endeavoured to create a deep experimental learning space with the hope of challenging and expanding our concepts of global citizenship education. This was done with two cycles of the year-long training course *Transformative Learning Journey – Tackling the root causes of global crises through education (TLJ)* in 2018–2020 when we hosted a community of practitioners, researchers and activists of transformative education from around the world. Together with 44 people, with almost 2,000 years of combined life experience, we embarked on a bumpy yet joyful journey of decolonizing our minds, hearts and bodies. We danced with the many-headed monster of transformation of a modern system that is broken beyond fixing and dared to re-imagine ourselves and our educational practice so that we might be generative for more profound changes.

The participants shared that the TLJ created a frame, trigger and community for truly transformative learning and has left profound traces in the lives of many of them. Many encounters, stories and actions throughout the journeys have touched our hearts and made us hopeful that we can co-create a wiser future. After the course was completed, the groups continued their learning journeys in diverse ways and new things keep emerging. This positive resonance motivated us to share some of those stories with others through this little book.

This book is not a cohesive prescription of how to facilitate transformative learning – as we believe there is none. It is a never complete mosaic of perspectives, experiences and personal reflections and an invitation to relate and play with.

Our gratitude goes to the trainers of the journey who have co-designed and facilitated the TLJ with so much creativity and dedication, and it goes to all the participants for being present with the full monstrosity that we are, for holding space for everyone around the fire and for indeed becoming co-facilitators of the journey and, many of them, co-authors of this book. We are also grateful to the team and lands of Villa Fohrde in Brandenburg, Germany, for hosting us in such a beautiful learning space – a story told by the pictures in this book. And to the designers of the book who have sprinkled their fairy dust all over.

This book is a gift for you from the travellers of the TLJ. It is dedicated to all the curious people out there - the dreamers, the healers, the lovers, the teachers wanting a different future to emerge. And especially to the fighters who are desperate and overwhelmed in face of those complex challenges and are worn out by their struggle for justice and change – may you find inspiration, energy and courage to treat yourself gently, to let go and to make space for new things to emerge. And above all, to embrace the continuous journey of learning that life is in this entangled multiverse that we will never come to fully grasp – but that we can meet halfway.

With every act of reading, you change the meaning of the words in this book and co-create something new.

With love,
the editing team on behalf of Bridge 47 and all the travellers in the journey.

Transformative Learning Journey: Disclosures of a Learning Experiment

This chapter invites you to an overview of the course design of the TLJ. It gives insights into some of the pedagogical experiments by which we tried to create a nurturing ground for transformative and decolonial encounters, experiences and learnings.

TIMO HOLTHOFF

The Bridge 47 Transformative Learning Journey

The why, the what, the how and the yet unknown

Between 2018 and 2020 Bridge 47 has hosted two year-long training courses of the *Transformative Learning Journey (TLJ),* an experimental learning space with 22 educational practitioners, researchers and activists from Europe, in the first cycle, and from around the world in the second cycle. The course was an invitation to challenge our notions of Global Citizenship Education and venture towards more transformative, emancipatory, decolonial and pluriversal practices through a process of collective exploration, reflection and support.

This article shares the course design and some of the underlying assumptions and approaches by which we tried – and succeeded or failed – to create a learning space that is conducive for potentially transformative experiences. While I often talk of "we" based on the intense reflections and often night-long dialogues among trainers and participants which informed the TLJ as a collaborative product, these insights are based on my personal views which might not fully encompass the perspectives of all involved.

THE WHY: A need to re-imagine activism and education for addressing the root causes of global crises

Our baseline is simple and yet overwhelmingly complicated. Growing inequality, social conflicts, violence and the destruction of nature are inherent to the global system of expansive capitalism and the modern nation-state as its guardian. If we want to avert a *fatal* collapse of the system due to the looming climate crisis and honestly wish for a world in which all humans and other creatures can thrive, we need a profound change of the modus operandi of modern civilization, more often referred to as an 'ecosocial transition'. Yet, we individually and collectively struggle to embark on real systemic changes beyond small reform. We struggle to even begin with grasping the complexity and severity of the mess we have created. And we struggle to imagine a truly different world without fear of letting go of the things we learnt to hold dear.

According to the diagnosis of Nigerian philosopher Bayo Akomolafe the *problem is not the system but the culture that built the system*[1]. He refers to a monoculture of modernity that limits human existence to linear, technology driven, material progress based on anthropocentrism, separatism and rational thinking that in the last 500 years has colonized the multitude of different ways of knowing and co-existing on earth and disconnected us from many things in, around and among us. This monoculture has programmed the modern subject to sense, think, act, feel and interrelate in certain and limited ways that mirror the inherent logic of the harmful systems we have built. As a consequence, our solutions to the problems of our world are prone to reproduce the same paradigms that created the problems in the first place. Hence, underneath our economic, political and ecological crises lies a cultural crisis – or in other words, a crisis of being. When we think about a change of the system, we need to understand, that we

> **When we think about a change of the system, we need to understand, that we all are the system, even if we are complicit in different ways.**

all *are* the system, even if we are complicit in different ways. Change starts with each of us. Both our inside and the outside worlds have to transform and there is no sharp distinction and linear direction between the two – once we acknowledge that everything alive is part of one gigantic entangled system rather than separated into labelled boxes as modernity wants us to believe.

It is a long-standing critique of critical educators that institutionalized education is in many ways instrumental in safeguarding our modern system, as it is built for learners to become productive objects in our economy rather than helping us to fully evolve and emancipate as subjects and critical co-creators of a wiser society. While the *lack* of education commonly is discussed as a problem, education itself is less commonly seen as the problem. But even critical educational approaches, like Global Citizenship Education, and civil society organisations and activists that explicitly struggle for radical changes, often merely address symptoms of more deeply rooted problems and in large parts operate with the same kind of cultural software that runs the systems they seek to transform. Those of us who like to think of themselves as part of the solution and the progressive forefront for change might have a hard time accepting that we are as much part of the problem and a stabilizing factor of the system. We breathe it in and we breathe it out. While this might be more true for people like me, who live largely unchallenged in the dominant normality of male European whiteness, than for others, the "we" indeed suggests that the monoculture of modernity is a globalized phenomenon of the whole human civilization – or that nobody is outside of the system.

But with this disillusionment might come a sober sense of humbleness that we do not have all the answers, that there are no quick fixes and that there is no master plan for the future. This, despite all urgency, invites us to take a step back – individually and collectively – and ask new and troubling questions. Personal and social transformation in this sense is nothing we can plan or control at the drawing board. Whatever the direction, both inner and outer transformation is an interlinked process of learning and unlearning that we must live rather than think through. It invites us for a dance with the impossible, for taking risks, for daring to fail, for embracing what lies in the unknown wilderness beyond our fences, both literally and figuratively. It invites us to come together and listen to unheard voices within and among us.

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1 While this quote stems from my memory of a personal encounter, you can explore the rich work of Nigerian philosopher Bayo Akomolafe on https://bayoakomolafe.net/

For civil society organisations like those forming Bridge 47, it requires imagining and experimenting with different forms of activism and Global Citizenship Education or even re-visiting the very basic assumptions we operate from.

We do strongly believe in the transformative potential of education and social movements. With the TLJ we wanted to create a space in which we could tackle some of those troubling big questions, take care of each other in the process and potentially evolve that potential.

The TLJ invited people who had doubts about their concepts and practices of education and activism and would not be satisfied with easy answers nor expect ready-to-use tools but were yearning to explore new and different questions and embark on experimental actions in a collaborative learning journey. We hoped that their personal experiences and growth in the journey would strengthen them as co-leaders of systemic change in their own organisations, networks and social contexts. These are some of the initial questions we put forth:

- **What are the (cultural) root causes of global crises? What do we want to transform?**
- **What are the systems that we form part of and what do we mean by systemic change?**
- **How can we become aware of our hidden paradigms and how we are complicit in harm?**
- **How can we relate to different knowledge systems, narratives of change and practices to broaden our imagination of what is knowable, tangible and doable?**
- **How can education go beyond rational thinking, awaken our numbed senses and invite the wisdom of our hearts and bodies?**
- **How can education help us to reconnect with what and whom we are separated from?**
- **How can education create space for experimenting with different possibilities of co-existing with each other and natural systems?**
- **How can education support us to decolonize our minds, hearts and doings?**
- **How can education be transformative without becoming overwhelming or indoctrinating?**
- **How can we acknowledge that there is no master plan for a better future but despite this uncertainty still work actively towards possible futures?**

THE WHAT: Course design of the Transformative Learning Journey

The almost year-long TLJ course was based on experiential learning through reflected action – a dance between theory and practice – or experience and reflection, inspired among others by Paolo Freire's approach of dialectical learning. The idea was that learning does not only happen in the sessions but more importantly outside of the sessions. Different formats provided inputs, invitations and support to accompany learners through the time between the meetings, their real life being the actual learning journey. The meetings allowed for reflecting and sharing the experiences with peers.

The journey comprised of three physical workshops of 3-4 days, a webinar, online mentoring, individual exploration and inquiry, an action experiment conducted by the participants in their working context and active participation in a global Bridge 47 conference (see Fig. 1 for the overview and Fig. 2 for the course program). The first cycle of the TLJ also featured

Fig. 1: Overview of the TLJ learning cycle.

Steps of the Journey …		… and what they provided for
Launch of Online Platform		Uploading profiles to our online learning platform (Trello)
Workshop 1		**The Analytical Framework** *Root causes of the Multicrisis and Theories of Change* • Why am I (really) here? Identifying individual aspirations • Getting to know each other through storytelling • Setting a common compass for the journey • Deepening the understanding of the root causes of the modern crises and systemic change – from symptoms to systems to paradigms and ontologies • Pedagogical experiments to sense the world and relate differently
Exploration Phase		Individually exploring our own life, work, organisation and social context, guided by reflection questions, based on the analytical framework of Workshop 1. Collecting emergent questions online.
Webinar		Discussing our most troubling questions with Prof. Vanessa Andreotti
Workshop 2		**The Exploration of a Different Practice** *Transformative Learning and Education* • Sharing and reflecting on discoveries from the explorative phase • Exploring the role of education to facilitate or impede systemic change • Drawing from our own transformative learning experiences: Deducing a `living' approach together • More pedagogical experiments to sense the world and relate differently • Open Space • Intro to and individual design of Action Experiments (first concept for feedback)
Action Experiment	**Individual mentoring** by facilitators	All participants design, conduct and reflect an action experiment in their own working context, aiming to apply the learnings to a *different* practice and involving more actors.
Uploading Reports to Online Platform		Learning from others and peer feedback
Workshop 3 / Bridge 47 Global Conference		**The Harvest** *Lessons Learnt and re-adjusting our compass for the path ahead* • Sharing and reflecting *Action Experiments* and individual learning processes • Identifying steps ahead: ideas for future collaboration, mutual support, continuation and dissemination of shared learnings • Celebrating the end and continuation of the journey • Preparing a an input for the Global Conference: what matters to us that we want to share? • Participation in the Global Conference, becoming a part of the Bridge 47 Network
Follow-Up (Meeting)		Survey to assess the impact of the journey on ourselves, our work, our organisations and our social context. Self-organized follow-up meeting.

a follow-up meeting a year after finishing the course, self-organized by the participants. The second cycle was strongly informed by the COVID-19 pandemic which affected participants in very different ways. Instead of the final workshop, a series of online spaces was organised to support each other in the crisis and to explore what the crisis teaches us.

THE HOW: Applied Practices – or rather experiments – of Transformative Learning

All facilitators of the journey agreed that none of us has the recipe for transformative learning and more importantly that there is not one recipe for it – and that attempting to agree on a universal and prescriptive definition would reproduce many of the problematic patterns around education and hegemonic knowledge production which we actually try to be conscious of. This stems both from the understanding that there are so many different needs, visions and pathways of learning and personal change as there are people in this world – and that education must fully embrace this diversity. And it also links to the belief that transforming education cannot mean replacing an existing monoculture of education with a *better* one but rather making space for a plurality of educations – and diverse ways of creating knowledge and co-existing in this world. Yet, while appreciating the history, context and gifts of any (non-violent) educational approach, this gentle attempt does not imply a random *anything goes* logic. For us, venturing towards more transformative (meaning also emancipatory and de-

Transforming education cannot mean replacing an existing monoculture of education with a better one but rather making space for a plurality of educations – and diverse ways of creating knowledge and co-existing in this world.

Fig. 2: The course program: our initial map which constantly changed over the course of the TLJ. It did not turn out to be as linear as the program suggests.

colonial) education starts with critically assessing the narratives, logics and values that explicitly and implicitly are inherent in any educational concept and methodology and to develop a greater consciousness about how they are complicit with or informed by harmful structures that we seek to transform. Education is never neutral but always instrumental to a certain worldview or political agenda, as Paolo Freire reiterated. From there, we feel the call to experiment with different practices that tentatively push the boundaries of what is commonly understood and practiced as transformative education and see what emerges for different people – and learn from it. This is not a linear process of first this and second that but a continuous cycle of action and reflection or trial and error. We certainly failed as much as we succeeded and even in learning from our failures, we are still blessed with much ignorance, for sure.

By all means, we aspired for the TLJ to be not about transformative learning as a topic but that it offers participants some kind of transformative learning experience. This made the *how* much more important than the *what*. We tried to create a learning setting based on holistic, multi-sensual, disruptive and interactive methodologies and immersions into different ways of knowing, relating and being. This practice we might call a decolonial effort.

Some of these educational assumptions and practices are shared below:

- **Crosscutting the boundaries between the personal and the professional/political realm** – Making linkages between the outside world and how it manifests within us. Understanding personal transformation as a political, not a self-centred process.
- **Process orientation** – Working with what emerges, no fixation on plans and schedules.
- **Radical participation and self-determined learning processes** – All participants are also facilitators and own the way they engage with what is being offered – or not.
- **Holistic pedagogy (embodied, affective, relational exercises)** – Allow for learning on all levels and beyond the rational which means to focus more on being in than knowing the world.

- Being at the same time **irritating and disruptive** (of the way we think) **AND unconditionally loving and appreciating** (of who we are).
- Creating an intimate **village feeling and fireplace atmosphere** (metaphorically and literally). Taking a lot of time to build different and deeper connections with each other and become a community of trust.
- **Personal Storytelling** – Learning to acknowledge the multifaceted and paradoxical creatures that we are and all the things that make us, us – beyond the things we (want to or are ascribed to) represent. Gradually opening up to each other – collectively disarming.
- Inviting for a **brave space** where we dare to have difficult conversations with mindfully taking care of each other rather than a safe space were we avoid them.
- **Using nature and lands around as a learning and teaching space** and natural cycles that we are part of - like the seasons or life, death, composting and rebirth – as frames of reference for transformation.
- **Relating wider** – Extending the boundaries of the self into the larger metabolism.
- Giving exercises the shape of a **ritual rather than a method** – Irritating the usual ways of engaging with each other and a topic; creating meaning together.
- Making space for **undogmatic spirituality and the sacred** without defining it.
- Using the format of **council in a circle** more than discussion. Learning to listen and talk from our hearts.
- Using **theatre as an embodied way** to collectively digest and relate.
- Working more with **invitations and metaphors than models and definitions.**
- **Working with the gifts of different knowledge systems and practices from indigenous communities** – Without idealizing them, to amplify our assumptions of the world and broaden our perspectives on change.
- Holding **questions over answers. Sitting with complexity** and things we cannot understand instead of trying to analyse, rationalize and solve them quickly.
- **Practicing mindfulness and support for each other** – strengthening every one's ability to take ownership and responsibility of the group.
- **Holding space for pain.** Seeing the modern crisis as a collective trauma and **education as a process of healing**, as we can only heal a collective trauma together.

- Having space for **art, song, dance, fun, taking care of our bodily needs** – Not as a distraction/energizer/break from the course but as essential part of the course.
- **Taking time to celebrate** – Despite the difficulty of the work, remembering Marta Benavides famous saying that *the revolution is fun*.
- **Hug a lot and then again.**

With different facilitators and different approaches, we sometimes felt a lack of cohesion. However, different things resonated with different participants and ultimately this diversity seemed to have created the openness for different journeys to co-exist in the group. Indeed, having plural, experimental and messy, rather than prescriptive, learning spaces is one of our most eminent learnings. Despite all openness and flexibility, the modern paradigm of wanting to control things and avoid uncertainty also manifested in the way we meticulously pre-planned the chronology of sessions. The self-organized follow-up meeting of the first TLJ group who decided to work with the principle of emergence and renounce both facilitators and a schedule proved how such a radical process orientation and shared responsibility can allow for very unexpected things to emerge. It reminds me of the need to let go of and step back in order to make space for something new and someone else. For me, the most inspiring metaphor for transformative learning is seeing it as a process of both hospicing and midwifing. Giving palliative care for a dying system we need to let go of and at the same time helping something new to come to life, without defining it.[2]

About Timo
As Bridge 47 staff member, Timo Holthoff was co-initiator and one of the facilitators of the Transformative Learning Journey. He leads the team for innovation and capacity building of the Bridge 47 project. For 10 years he has been curiously searching for approaches of transformative learning and is constantly trying and failing to decolonize his notion of knowing, sensing and being.

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2   This metaphor is taken from the Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures Collective that inspired the TLJ in many ways.

"We no longer build fireplaces for physical warmth. We build them for the warmth of the soul. We build them to dream by, to hope by, to home by."

– EDNA FERBER

TEREZA ČAJKOVÁ AND THE GESTURING TOWARDS DECOLONIAL FUTURES COLLECTIVE

The bus within us – holding space for complexities inside to deal with complexities outside

A methodology used in the TLJ for collective inquiry supporting difficult, honest and sober conversations where the integrity of relationships is prioritized above the emotional charge of the content being discussed.

The work of the Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures (GTDF) collective invites educators and learners to "dig deeper and relate wider". The pedagogical intention within this proposition is to allow the growth of our capacities to face and address the unprecedented global challenges of these times. We experiment with methodologies locating the learning process in a space that contradicts some of the assumptions education in western societies habitually makes. There is a wealth of observations pointing out that learning about pressing global issues can be an overwhelming experience. It can activate what we consider our needs for safety, control and empowerment, among others. The educational process generally tends to take care of these risks by focusing on adequate information, skills and competencies to tackle the wicked problems and to introduce existing solutions and empower learners to look for new, innovative fixes.

As GTDF collective, we suggest that there is a value in an approach that invites us to do seemingly the opposite: to learn how to engage with the sense of difficulty and complexity that world issues contain, in the first place. We allow ourselves to relieve the urgent pressure to troubleshoot and instead direct our curiosity to what we have so far been intentionally or unintentionally avoiding in our analysis. And start asking why it has been so for so long?

As a primary starting point for such a reflection, we created a list of denials that were surfacing most often in work with various groups in the Global Citizenship Education (GCE) setting over the years. There are indeed myriad of patterns that can compromise chances for our engagement with global issues to be deeply socially and ecologically accountable, but engaging with these can be a good start:

- **the denial of systemic violence and complicity in harm: the fact that our comforts, securities and enjoyments are subsidised by expropriation and exploitation somewhere else**
- **the denial of the limits of the planet: the fact that a finite planet cannot sustain infinite exponential growth and consumption**
- **the denial of entanglement: our insistence on seeing ourselves as separate from each other and the land, rather than "entangled" within a living socio-ecological metabolism**
- **the denial of the magnitude and complexity of the problem: the difficulties we will need to face together**

Let us imagine for a while... How would our educational process change if what mattered was to learn how to have difficult, honest and sober conversations about these issues while we were learning how to prioritise the integrity of relationships above the emotional charge of the content being discussed?

One of the insights coming out of the research and pedagogical experiments conducted by the GTDF collective indicates that our capacity to hold space for the complexities and paradoxes of the world around us is closely related to our ability to hold space for complexities and paradoxes within us.

When we notice a perturbing stimulus, we are flooded by multiple thoughts, feelings and affective reactions. These can be highly contradic-

tory and are present in our bodies, minds and hearts all at the same time. In the following part of this text, I suggest that the possibility that we have many stories and voices within ourselves is also what can allow us to connect with others and support our capacity to face and address global issues without the compulsion to deny or simplify their nature.

However, this may require us to open ourselves to what can sound counterintuitive at first, especially to those of us who have been socialised in modern western societies that highly value coherence. This investment in coherence, grounded in a Cartesian and objective view of reality, severely limits our capacity to face and address plurality, uncertainty, ambiguity and indefinability both within ourselves and in the world at large. We implicitly learn that when it comes to ourselves, coherence is validated and promoted. In contrast, everything that is incoherent is perceived as immature.

One side effect of this is that we lack the language to talk about what feels paradoxical, contradictory, ambiguous, plural and undefinable in ourselves. Another and arguably the more harmful consequence, is a well-known phenomenon of psychological projection, a defence mechanism in which our ego defends itself against unconscious impulses by denying their existence in ourselves and attributing them to others. So if our strategy is to firmly stick to the coherent parts of us that we believe will be accepted by others, it makes us automatically suppress the rest, especially if there are voices that we don't feel good about. But they tend to come back to us again in the form of a negative projection on other people. And when such dynamics mediate our relations with others, what can possibly come out of that?

To support our ability to identify and interrupt the non-generative manifestation of the desire for coherence, the GTDF collective created the metaphor of the B(US), inviting us to imagine that we have a whole "bus" of people inside of us.

In such a bus, there is always a driver in the front. There are passengers close to the driver whom we know very well. In the middle, some passen-

We lack the language to talk about what feels paradoxical, contradictory, ambiguous, plural and undefinable in ourselves.

gers tend to speak less so we may know them less well. And at the back, there are passengers whom we may not even know because we may not want to deal with them sometimes. There are parts of ourselves that are unknown even to us while in modern western societies, we are supposed to know who we are.

The driver and the passengers are embodiments of all the experiences of our body, and in the bus we can find everything that has a say in our definition of ourselves. There are events from our childhood, unprocessed traumas, our parents, our significant others. And since everything that we are repressing inside of the bus is likely coming back to us as a projection, if we think that some people should be out of our bus, we will likely find somebody who represents them outside. We may want to get them out of our bus by shutting them down, which can happen even while we are doing our pedagogical work. When somebody "pushes our buttons", that person may be on our bus. So it may not be "that" person outside, but "this" person, right here inside.

To experience this practice, we first invite you to check one of the resources that explores our denial of systemic violence and complicity in harm. Slavery Footprint application[3] gives us a glimpse into the claim that our comforts, securities and enjoyments are subsidised by expropriation and exploitation somewhere else. Based on how much forced labour or child labour is used for the items we purchase and/or consume, this online exercise reveals how we participate in modern-day slavery and offers an answer to the provocative question "How many slaves work for you?"

At this point, we learn to observe and sit with the people on our bus, without judgement. So, as you get your answer to the question "How many slaves work for you?", check your bus. Have a look at the people inside. Try to see if you can find one passenger in the front, one in the middle and one at the back. Close your eyes, and as you look at them, imagine three parts of yourself. Pay attention to what they might be saying, thinking (which may not be the same as what they are saying) and how they are feeling. And pay attention to how they are interacting

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3   http://slaveryfootprint.org/survey/#where_do_you_live.

with each other. Are they speaking from a place of trauma? What may be irritating them? Are they attached to finding one answer, or are they ok with complexity? What do they need? How could they be influencing your decisions without you even knowing?

This practice can help us to find passengers who need care. Some who are shouting inside. Some who need to be heard, to express how they feel. And by allowing them to do so, we can free the conversation and ourselves to talk about internal complexity. Suppose we start to see ourselves like that. In that case, the process can become very different from the usual conversations where we are trying to perform according to our assumptions of what is going to make us feel accepted. Or where we are trying to sort out our thinking according to a coherent way of our logic.

Let us emphasise that the idea is not to attach ourselves to anything that we observe on the bus or to what the passengers are expressing. It's rather about creating a meta-language of our observation. And about learning to ask ourselves: What am I observing now that is different from what I could understand before?

Through the methodology of the B(US), when something triggers something in us, we can pause to "check our bus" and, instead of embodying defensiveness or resistance, we can take a step back and pay attention to what this passenger is teaching us through what they are saying. The methodology can be used in work with different groups to hold difficult conversations and build stamina to engage productively with dissonance. It can reduce collective anxieties and transform conflicts into generative experiences. During the two cycles of the TLJ, we used the B(US) practice as well for group check-ins after some activities. In such setting there are generally three possible answers. "Everything is ok" is one."My bus is processing" means the bus is going, but sometimes there is a bumpy road. And the third option is "something is burning", which is an acknowledgement that there is something I need to deal with or something "burning" that needs to be said.

This practice aims to support us in developing ways of living that engage with, rather than deny, systemic violence.

THE BUS WITHIN US
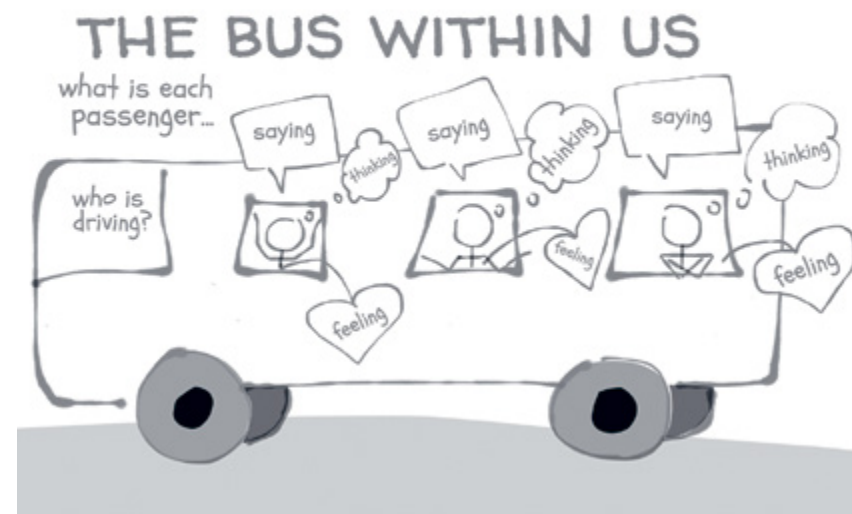
This practice aims to support us in developing ways of living that engage with, rather than deny, systemic violence, our entanglements and complicity in harm, and the limits of the planet so that we can face and address increasingly more difficult questions, such as:

How can we use the Covid-19 pandemic as an exercise to develop the capacity to face the much more severe tipping points of unsustainability, systemic violence and exploitation with sobriety and accountability?

Check your B(US).

About Tereza
Tereza Čajková was a co-facilitator of the two cycles of Bridge 47 Transformative Learning Journey. She is a doctoral student at the University of British Columbia, Canada. She is interested in exploring how to engage with complex issues, uncertainty, paradoxes, and discomfort and re-ignite our sense of responsibility towards each other and the planet. This article was co-written with other members of the Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures Collective, an international assemblage of researchers, artists, educators, students, social justice and environmental activists, and ancestral/indigenous knowledge keepers.

"Storytelling evokes imagination, memories and nostalgia. It transcends the realms of the real and instructs from inside rather than outside."

BOLANLE C. SIMEON-FAYOMI

BOBBY MCCORMACK

Change the story – change the world.

The role of storytelling in transformative education.

Introduction

As educators, moving minds and changing behaviours are professional challenges we grapple with. One powerful way of addressing this struggle is by understanding and utilising storytelling. However, to achieve deeper aspirations, such as transformative learning and systemic change, we arguably need new storytellers—crafting, shaping and telling new stories. This article explores the use of storytelling in the Transformative Learning Journey (Edition 1) and gathers some reflections from a practice perspective that may be of use in Global Citizenship Education (GCE) settings.

Background and context

We have flown the air like birds and swum the sea like fishes, but have yet to learn the simple act of walking the earth like brothers and sisters.[4]
— Martin Luther King

Sadly, this observation is still apt today.

At its core, transformative learning is about contributing to, among other things, walking the earth like brothers and sisters. However, this state has proven difficult to attain at a collective level.

My interest in and curiosity about transformative learning predates my involvement in the "Transformative Learning Journey" or its distant relative, "Explorers' Journey for Systemic Change"[5]. It goes back to 2006 and the formation of Development Perspectives [6] (DP), which I am still passionately involved in today. As the two co-founders of DP, we felt then that the name of the organisation needed to reflect the importance we placed on perspectives. Seeing, hearing and generally experiencing the world differently was and still is important to us. A plurality of perspectives can be seen as stories, informed and shaped by the world around us as it interacts with the world within us. These stories are powerful as they contribute not only to creating what we know, but also to who we are and our ways of being.

On a personal and professional level, transformative learning often begins with questioning the stories, the narratives and assumptions that have helped build outlooks and world views. On a systemic level, identifying and understanding the stories that help construct the world we live in can equip us with awareness about the stories needed to create the world(s) we want to see and move towards.

If we want to change the world then we need to change the stories that contribute to building it.

In this article, stories are much more than communications. Notwithstanding that stories can come in the shape of a shared oral tale, a poem, a movie, a song, a book, a newspaper or a documentary, stories can also be institutions, organisations, rules and regulations, laws or indeed embodied living entities, such as rivers, animals, people, experiences, traumas or memories. On a basic level, if we want

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4   King, Martin Luther, 2012. "We've flown the air like birds…" [Online] Available at: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTC3cieV_NA** [Accessed 29 July 2020]

5   "Explorers' Journey for Systemic Change" was a training course that formed part of the DEEEP project
6   www.developmentperspectives.ie

to change the world then we need to change the stories that contribute to building it.

Change the story, change the world.

Storytelling evokes imagination, memories and nostalgia. It transcends the realms of the real and instructs from inside rather than outside[7].
— Bolanle C. Simeon-Fayomi

"Make America great again"[8] or "Take back control"[9] are powerful political stories that should serve as a reminder to us of the impact and influence of stories. Why do these stories work? The word "again" is useful in that it takes us back (memory). "Great again" connects memory to nostalgia. "America great again" brings imagination into the mix and introduces thoughts of nationalism while "Make" is the public call to action. This political slogan is a potent mix of imagination, memory and nostalgia.

It is important to note that, as Joseph Campbell[10] remarked, the power of a story lies not in whether or not it is true, but whether or not it is believed. Many development-related challenges facing communities stem from myths that are widely believed. Economic growth is one such case. For too long, the positives to be derived from economic growth have been overstated and have gone unchallenged politically and empirically. Proponents of the growth mantra have created such an enticing story that populations have long been convinced that all will be well as long as growth continues. The work of Wilkinson and Pickett[11], among others,

reveals a different and alternative story. Global Citizenship Educators have long since recognised the "danger of a single story"[12] and maybe because of this capacity for critical thinking, are more individually and collectively immune to stories about a rising tide that lifts all boats.

For stories to be effective at a collective level, they need repetition and amplification. Let's not forget that awful acts of brutality have been conducted on the back of stories that are believed, repeated and amplified. The atrocities in Rwanda or the gas chambers of World War 2 were enabled by dehumanising propaganda. In short, we should never underestimate the potential of story. This is where education, technology, media and politics converge— we share a collective responsibility to take care with the stories we share and perpetuate as they will co-create our futures.

Storytelling can create an arc from the current reality we live in and occupy to a vision of the world we imagine and desire. Envisioning the future we want to see can be profound on a psychological level as it creates cognitive dissonance. This is when someone holds two contradictory beliefs, ideas or values, which in this case is the current reality (climate chaos, growing inequality, biodiversity collapse) versus a vision of the future (climate justice, equality, sustainable development). This dissonance is a fuel that can be used to energise and propel us but the key question is in which direction? Back to our current reality or our vision for the future? That depends on which image is more dominant or evocative on an emotional level. The more vivid or dominant the picture, the more powerful its gravitational pull becomes. Put simply, as humans, we create the world we think about so, arguably, educators need to spend more time on building a picture of the world(s) we want to move towards rather than problematising our current reality! Doing so will result in further emancipation and less paralysis. Caution is thereby urged when framing our efforts as

> **For stories to be effective at a collective level, they need repetition and amplification.**

7   Bolanle, C. Simeon-Fayomi, 2020. "*Education through oral storytelling*" [Online] Available at: **https://www.bridge47.org/blog/07/2020/education-through-oral-storytelling-interview-prof-simeon-fayomi** [Accessed 29 July 2020]
8   Barry, Aoife. 2016. "*What made Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan so powerful*?" [Online] **https://www.thejournal.ie/trump-slogan-make-america-great-again-3071552-Nov2016/** [Accessed 29 July 2020]
9   Humpreys, Joe. 2019. "'*Take back control': Why the Brexit slogan resonates across Europe*". [Online] **https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/take-back-control-why-the-brexit-slogan-resonates-across-europe-1.3824393** [Accessed 29 July 2020]
10   Campbell, Joseph. 1988. "*The power of myth*" [Online] **https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0296362/** [Accessed 29 July 2020]
11   Wilkinson, Richard. G and Pickett, Kate. 2009. "*The Spirit Level – why equality is better for everyone*". London: Allen Lane

12   Adichie, Chimamanda. 2009. "*The danger of a single story*". [Online] **https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en** [Accessed 29 July 2020]

"un…" or "de…" or "post…" because in these instances we are referring to an existing dominant narrative that we are trying to diminish. Why refer to an elephant if you don't want people to think about it? This is the basis of George Lakoff's book, "Don't think of an elephant: Know your values and frame the debate"[13]. It is worth noting that a thorough and multi-dimensional analysis of the structural violence and injustice that is pervasive across the world should not be ignored, skipped or trivialised; however, paralysis through analysis is a danger and risk that is omnipresent in the practice of GCE.

In 2015, UNESCO recognised that "learning to transform"[14] is a key pillar and function of learning. Although inextricably linked, transforming society and systemic change are no doubt more complex than deep personal transformative change. However, at an individual and collective level, the repeated use and triggering of mantras, myths, narratives and stories can be profound in shaping our realities.

As humans have moved through history, the oral storytelling era began to blend into a broadcast era, which in turn has more recently blended into a digitoral storytelling era. Today, these three eras co-exist. There is no doubt that the world and its communities are facing huge challenges. The climate catastrophe is worsening, inequality pervades, hunger and poverty have not abated, conflicts deepen and a global health pandemic, COVID-19, has emerged. The work of Jonah Sachs is thought-provoking here as he frames some of the problems we face as "story wars"[15]. A very recent example of a story war concerns the World Health Organisation (WHO)[16]. For some people, the WHO is an institution that is a professional and diligent entity and an ally of the people. For others, the same organisation is not acting in the public interest and is a pawn of powerful multinational companies or wealthy philanthropists. These divergent stories or this

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13   Lakoff, George. 2014. "*Don't think of an elephant – know your values and frame the debate*". London: Chelsea Green Publishing
14   Noguchi, Fumiko; Guevara, Jose Roberto; Yoruzu, Rika. 2015. "*Communities in action – lifelong learning for Sustainable Development*". Hamburg. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong learning.
15   Sachs, Jonah. 2013. "*Winning the story wars*". [Online] **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvaPF_y-fiU** [Accessed 29 July 2020]
16   Ball, Philip and Maxmen, Amy. 2020. "*The epic battle against coronavirus misinformation and conspiracy theories*". [Online] **https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01452-z** [Accessed 29 July 2020]

story war was fought out online. The importance of critical thinking in this context becomes clear. Critical thinking is a pillar of Global Citizenship Education[17] and the value of such endeavours should not be underestimated. Propaganda, misinformation, manipulation and fascism thrive when critical thinking is absent. Being aware of narrative construction is an area that can be explored and honed through storytelling. Meta-narratives and hegemonic stories steer paradigms so if our intention as educators is to influence systemic change or contribute to transformation, then our efforts need to consider the realms beyond the personal. Examining how the personal connects to the collective is crucial from a systems thinking stance and moves the conversation from one of empowerment to one of emancipation[18].

Values and stories

Exploring the craft of story creation and storytelling is enjoyable and widely regarded as time well spent in training courses. However, as mentioned earlier, powerful stories can lead to destructive impacts, hence the need for our stories to be informed by the values we espouse as a sector. For this reason, exploration of story is best done in parallel with examining the dynamics of how values operate. Values help build narratives and stories. Narratives and stories contribute to views, opinions, understanding and knowledge, which is the breeding ground for behaviour. Our individual and collective behaviour is the hub around which many of the challenges facing our communities orbit. If we can imagine the world(s) we want to see, then what values are dominant?

Narratives and stories contribute to views, opinions, understanding and knowledge, which is the breeding ground for behaviour.

What kinds of stories can contribute to creating our visions? What values are necessary in those stories? The work of Tom Crompton is instructive here as Common Cause [19] can act as a compass that accompanies a journey of story exploration and creation. The Schwartz [20] value circumplex in particular is a useful tool to use as practitioners when examining the direction our stories and narratives take us.

Often, our professional efforts, although well-intentioned, can result in triggering values that are oppositional to our espoused values. This works to minimise rather than maximise our efforts and is the equivalent of driving with the handbrake on. It goes without saying that the systems and stories that perpetuate inequality, injustice and oppression are not those that we as GCE practitioners want to cement. Our endeavour is to dissolve the shackles that tether us to structures and patterns that for too long have stopped us from "walking the earth like brothers and sisters". With this in mind, a values audit of the stories we help create and project as practitioners and organisations is time well spent.

Storytelling in and around TLJ

The use of storytelling in the first edition of TLJ came in different forms at various stages. Firstly, it was introduced as a navigational tool to help make sense of the journey we were embarking on. Charting our direction(s) and the stages involved, as well as pointing to potential obstacles and challenges, was useful from a design point of view. It was made clear though that each participant's path would be somewhat unique. Secondly, it was referred to by introducing Joseph Campbell's work that is contained in "The hero with a thousand faces"[21]. This framework was perused from an educational stance in order to explore its value in practice. This framework was revisited in each distinct phase of the training course and acted as one of many reference points. Thirdly, storytelling was used as a way of chal-

17   King, Peader. 2020. "*Training of Trainers – a toolkit for active learning in the adult and community education sector*." [Online] **https://www.developmentperspectives.ie/ResourcesPDFS/Training%20of%20Trainers%20-%20A%20 Toolkit%20for%20Active%20Learning.pdf** [Accessed 29 July 2020]
18   Inglis, Tom. 1997. "*Empowerment and Emancipation*". [Online] **https://journals.sagepub.com/ doi/10.1177/074171369704800102** [Accessed 29 July 2020]

19   Crompton, Tom. 2010. *"Common Cause – The case for working with our cultural values".* World Wildlife Fund.
20   Holmes, Tim; Blackmore, Elena; Hawkins, Richard; Wakeford, Tom. 2011. "*The Common Cause Handbook*". [Online] **https://valuesandframes.org/resources/CCF_report_common_cause_handbook.pdf** [Accessed 29 July 2020]
21   Campbell, Joseph. 2015. "*The hero with a thousand faces".* *Third edition*. California: Pantheon Books

lenging or reinforcing our own mode of practice. Key reflections in this area focused on the types of stories and narratives we emphasised through our action and practice. Lastly, the action projects that were designed and implemented were stories in and of themselves. What were the values of those stories? What narratives did they contribute to? Did they reinforce our current patterns and systems?

Those of us who use storytelling within our practice should be aware of the "dark side" of our stories. The exploration of the shadows of our practice should not be avoided. Many sacred cows reside in the dark cave that as professionals we fear to enter. This chimes with the recognition of the "danger of a single story" approach to any training course.

Critical thinking, storytelling, analysing values and frames and applying critical discourse analysis (CDA)[22] knit very well together. On reflection, the application of CDA to systems thinking is a space we as the training team could have used more as this would have moved attention and focus more towards collective emancipation rather than personal empowerment.

Conclusions

The sense of curiosity that was fostered during the first edition of TLJ was conducive to deep-level learning. Many factors contributed to this; however, in my opinion, the integration of a storytelling approach contributed positively to this environment and culture.

CDA can provide GCE practitioners with a powerful tool to utilise in our professional contexts. Used widely in media studies, this mode of analysis could accompany efforts to germinate critical thinking and lends itself fittingly when working with storytelling and values/frames construction.

Empowerment is a good starting point for individual exploration of transformative learning but emancipation is crucial if we are interested in systemic change. If we imagine a continuum connecting both areas of

interest, then moving the focus away from the individual and towards the collective earlier in the learning process makes sense.

Questions that occupied my interest at the beginning of TLJ still resonate and accompany my ongoing professional development. What is transformative learning? How can I as an educator maximise its potential? Does transformative learning lead to systemic change? The potential of systemic change emanating from transformative learning was my motivation for participating in this opportunity. The experience generated during TLJ has given me added impetus to continue my exploration. The journey goes on.

About Bobby

Bobby Mc Cormack was one of three co-facilitators in the first edition of the TLJ. He is the co-founder and director of Development Perspectives and has been directly involved in Global Citizenship Education since 2006. Bobby is the programme manager of a new strategic partnership programme called "Saolta" which will embed Development Education / Global Citizenship Education in the adult and community education sector in Ireland. Bobby also worked as senior lecturer in the Humanities Department of Dundalk Institute of Technology from 2006–2019 and in 2017 was the recipient of the Dóchas "Global Citizen of the Year".

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22   Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. 2009. 'Critical Discourse Analysis: History, Agenda, Theory, and Methodology' in Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (eds) *"Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis: Second Edition"*. London: Sage.

"Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life support system. We are all called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own – indeed to embrace the whole of creation in all ist diversity, beauty and wonder."

– WANGARI MAATHAI

Explorative Questions for Systemic Change

These reflection questions were developed as a tool for the explorative phase of the Transformative Learning Journey, to explore the transformative potential of the participants' organisations and networks. The meta-question here is: Are we asking the right questions?

The questions are an invitation for reflection and action inquiry and might stimulate more and different questions. They might help assess the theories of change and education that inform the work and culture of your organisation. They can also help to identify which are the needs, dreams and potentials for change in your organisation. Depending on your context you must choose which questions are relevant to you. It might be worthwhile to sit especially with the questions that seem difficult, however, choose the questions that speak to your heart! This can be an individual reflection or journaling exercise, a collective inquiry with colleagues or the basis for a workshop with your full team.

→ Theories of Change of our Organisation / Work

Diagnosis: What is the problem that we address, what is the change we want?

- **What is the vision of our organisation/work?**
- **Which problems does our organisation/work address and why? Are these problems root causes or symptoms of deeper-rooted problems (what do we assume has caused these problems)?**
- **Does our organisation/work consider the systemic interdependencies of these (and other) problems and address the deeper structural/systemic root causes of the problems?**
- **How far does our organisation embed its work in a greater narrative / holistic analysis of system change / radical transformation?**
- **Is there an elephant in the room?**

Propositions: How does change happen, how do we contribute to change?

- **How much is our organisation/work aiming at**
  - incremental reform within the dominant system (symptom level)
  - more radical structural changes (system level)
  - cultural / ontological shifts (paradigm level)
- **What are the short-term goals and long-term goals of our organisation/ work and (how) do we strategize them in regard of our greater vision?**
- **What measures do we believe support the change we want and why (lobby/ advocacy work, campaigning, network and community building, research, education, grassroots initiatives, social work, alternative practices etc.)?**
- **Which concrete leverage points for inducing change does our organisation/ work identify? On which level of problems do they take effect?**

→ Narratives of your Organisation/Work?

- **How far is your organisation (unconsciously?) using frames and narratives that reproduce the logic of the dominant system (e.g. development/ charity discourse, North-South dichotomies, competition, efficiency, we-against-them, egoistic interests, monetary logic, market instruments, growth and progress, separation of problems, political realism and more)?**
- **How far is our organisation (consciously?) using frames and narratives that strengthen the values of alternative futures (e.g., togetherness, tenderness, inclusiveness, solidarity, planetary boundaries, gift culture, holistic/ systemic thinking, alternatives to the single story of development – like Buen Vivir, Ubuntu, Degrowth)**

→ Impact of our Organisation/Work?

- **How do we define and measure the success of our work?**
- **Do our short-term achievements serve our long-term goals/vision and do we have awareness of how (not)?**
- **Do we have a greater vision that goes beyond measurable outcomes but serves as a compass for our doings?**
- **How do we estimate the impact of our work – is it living to its full potential?**

→ Our Organisational Culture / The Values we live

- Is our organisation living the values of the world we want to see? Consider e.g., hierarchies, work/life balance, human resource policies/treatment, fundraising, resource use, inclusion/non-discrimination etc.
- Do we fully appreciate the gifts and contributions of everyone?
- In how far is your organisation/work related in solidarity or competition with other agents/networks of change?
- Do we consider us a *learning organisation* that constantly makes space for reflecting what we do and for asking the big questions (Why, What, Where to, How), involving everyone?

→ Our Educational Concepts and Practice

- What is the assumption of our organisation about the role of education for change (e.g., in relation to campaigning, advocacy work, charity and social work, research)?
- Does our organisation/work challenge conventional educational notions and practices?
- What is the assumption of our organisation of how transformative learning happens?
- How do we conceptualize and practice learning spaces that support transformative learning?
- What do power, empowerment and inclusion mean to us in our educational work?
- On which knowledge systems is our educational work based? What is its awareness of Eurocentric/colonial concepts of relating with the world and how much does it try to open ways into other/decolonial knowledge systems and perspectives?

→ Myself in my organisation/work

- Which role(s) do I have in the change processes of my organisation (decider, leader, implementer, creator, fulfiller, inspirator, trouble maker, teacher, role model, change agent, critical thinker, fighter, complainer,

connector, mediator, healer)? What are the gifts of that role, what are its limits?
- How far do I identify with my organization/work? Is it important for me to identify with it and why? From what can I disinvest without leaving?
- Am I happy in my organisation/work/activism? Why (not)? Am I aware how my attempts to change my organisation/networks will support my happiness or can risk it? Am I aware of how I could get hurt or hurt others?

→ Potentials and Challenges for Change in our Organisation

- How satisfied or frustrated are people with the status quo of the work of our organisation and why?
- What are your wildest dreams for your organisation, how would it look and operate in 5 years if you could freely re-invent it? (do not let your imagination be limited by what you think is possible!). If you go back from that future, what would be the first steps taking place now and in the next years for it to become true?
- Which resources do you have / would you need for inducing changes in your organisation/work?
- What are the changes for which you find allies? What are the changes for which you see resistance? What are the reasons for resistance? Is the leadership on board, if any?

The End of the World as we Know it? Reflections on Corona

This chapter invites you to reflect on the teachings of the COVID-19 pandemic which disrupted the second TLJ course – as much as it stimulated collective support and deep learning about how we and our systems are prepared to deal with uncertainty and change that is happening beyond our control.

RENE SUŠA

Icebergs, warning shots and swimming in corona-waters

Preparing for the end of the world as we know it

Interrupting and reconstructing normalities

The shifting realities during the pandemic, especially in the first few months, when many countries entered into a state of strict lockdown, were felt very differently by different groups of people. For some, the impact was marginal, perhaps even a welcome relief from the hectic tempo of every-day routine. For others, the pandemic was a cause of major personal, existential, and sometimes political distress. For those of us working in global citizenship education (GCE), it offered an opportunity to re-assess what our pedagogical efforts are supposed to do. GCE, in its different forms, is arguably supposed to be about global change, the creation of a better, more just and more sustainable world. Although this may be considered a fairly noble goal, it seems that often this change is portrayed and imagined as something that will happen without any particular cost.

  The underlying assumption beneath this proposition is that our current ways of living and being, as well as our current social structures, can somehow be re-made and improved in a way that would work for every-one, including the planet. No major interruptions would be required, merely smaller or larger adjustments. In the work of our collective, we

refer to these as soft and radical reform approaches (Andreotti et al., 2015). But what if that is not the case? What if, to have a different future, one that is not merely a patched-up and touched-up version of our extractivist, destructive, violent, unjust and unsustainable present, some major disruptions would be needed? How would we respond then? What kind of education would we engage in, and would we still be doing it the same way we often do it now?

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic might offer us some insight into how we, as educators, and we, as societies, would respond to such potential interruptions. In this regard, the crucial question to be asked now, five months after the beginning of the outbreak, may not be how has the pandemic changed the GCE landscape, or how can educators best adapt their activities for new (online) learning environments. These are all important questions, but what is equally or perhaps even more important is to examine what kind of hopes, desires and attachments we, as educators, are projecting on to the COVID-laden future? This is important because our imaginaries of the future are shaped by how we understand our present and these two analyses combined significantly determine what we believe global education should be all about.

The privilege and comfort of choosing what and whom to care about

Arguably, our reading of the present situation and our desires for the future significantly depend on how comfortable we were with the pre-pandemic "normality" of our lives. Comfort in this sense does not necessarily mean just a sense of felt personal comfort, well-being and safety. It means also a belief and an expectation that, in the long run, our currently existing social systems and structures will take care of our basic needs and wants (and those of our loved ones), and that the lives of those whose needs are not being met will either improve, or, at the very least, that their problems will be kept comfortably away from our daily concerns. Comfort, in this sense, is having the luxury and privilege of being able to decide when to care and what and whom to care about. Something similar can be said not

just about the way we approach questions of social, racial and other forms of injustice, but also about our relationship with the unfolding climate catastrophe and the potential collapse of the kind of (modern) societies that we have been brought up in. We may (or may not) feel that our ways of living and being are unsustainable and are causing major disruptions in natural cycles (such as global warming), but as long as we can keep believing or pretending to believe that we have (or will have) a solution to this predicament, we might consider ourselves to be in a comfortable position. And, if we are comfortable—if we are still able to push such concerns out of our minds—why would we want to disrupt the normality of our comfort and our entitlement to it? Would it not make more sense to simply advocate and argue for solutions and approaches that will maintain our comfort— that is, the privilege of choosing what and whom to care about—rather than try to delve into pedagogical and existential experiments (if there are any) that would take those comforts away?

And, just to make it clear, care, as understood here, is not meant as something that is a consequence of an imposed moral imperative. However virtuous, or seemingly virtuous, such imperatives may be, adherence to any imposed moral code is still, at the end of the day, subject to choice and, consequently, resistance. Instead of being something that can be commanded or desired when convenient, care, in this text, is understood as akin to what Gayatri Spivak (2004) calls: "responsibility towards the Other, before will". If this sounds like a huge piece to swallow, that is because it is. Especially if we consider that "Other" may mean not just other people, but *all* other beings, human and more-than-human. Unconditional responsibility for *everything* must in many ways sound like complete nonsense. How could we possibly be responsible for the things we do not even know about or that we cannot influence directly? That kind of responsibility will continue to sound like nonsense for as long as we continue to experience ourselves as autonomous individuals that are physically, and otherwise, separate from the rest of existence, human and more-than-human. If, however, we could somehow manage to re-activate our sense of entanglement with everything, if we could expand our notion of the self as a thread that is being interwoven in the world, rather than

standing in opposition to it, then this kind of responsibility may not seem as far-fetched as it must seem now. But, is that even possible? And if it is, who would want to experience that?

The mess of being more than just your bodily self

In the Global North, especially in various neo-spiritual movements, the sense of entanglement is often related to the ideas of "expansion of consciousness" and finding your "true, (divine) self". These, in turn, are portrayed as different forms of blissful, Nirvana-like spiritual enlightening and self-realisation, where the self is finally liberated from this-worldly concerns. But, what if re-igniting our sense of entanglement with everything else turned out to feel nothing like that? What if sensing ourselves as one with the Universe—or the Earth to begin with—were nothing akin to the "oceanic, cosmic bliss" of non-duality but instead felt mostly painful, nauseating and terrifying? Something like dying from cancer, but with ourselves being both the pathogen and the organism being consumed? Most people would probably enjoy feeling themselves entangled with the whales, trees and flowers, but what about with wars, pollution and genocide? Would this sound like an experience that people would like to engage in, or would we prefer to return to the comforts of what is more manageable, appealing and easier to digest? Would we be able to face and embody everything that we inflict on each other and the planet that sustains us or would we prefer to continue to see and sense ourselves as we did before—in a comfortably numb way? And if not, then what?

It seems fair to say that the shift required to even begin to imagine what a re-activation of our sense of entanglement might entail is perhaps beyond what we are willing to do, or even capable of doing. At the end of the day though, what are our other options? To continue to invest in comforting stories about ourselves and in the false hopes and effectiveness of solutions that we already know are not working? The questions above and the ones that follow in the section below are not meant to belittle the efforts that we, as global educators, put into our work, nor are they here to crush anyone's hopes. All efforts are appreciated, and we are very much aware that many educational contexts, especially in formal education, are horrendously restrictive. That being said though, perhaps we should investigate if our pedagogical efforts and commitments are being used in the most generative ways. Generative here means, very figuratively speaking, developing the capacity to face all kinds of imaginable and unimaginable shit without freaking out. Thus, we are putting forward a set of provocative questions that might make you cringe, feel offended or even personally attacked. But rest assured, while this may be their side effect that is not their purpose.

However, in the case that the questions below do upset you, please consider that they are merely a mental exercise that is nothing but a faint reflection of the real problems and paradoxes that our global societies, and much of the practice in global citizenship education, absolutely refuse to take seriously. So please, do not take them as some sort of virtue-signalling critique, but as inspiration to go and explore what else we could do that would be different from what we are already doing. We cannot claim that we know how to do better, but we do know that what we are doing is not working, and that we are very quickly running out of time. By saying that we are running out of time, we do not mean that we are running out of time to save our modern societies from collapsing. That time has probably already run out years or decades ago and we should not spend too much time mourning it. We are, however, running out of time to develop the capacity to witness, survive and learn from the collapse (without killing each other) before things unravel completely. If any of what was said until now is already making you feel upset and triggered, or if you feel that all this collapse talk is nonsense, then maybe you should stop reading, at least for a while. On the other hand, if any of this resonates with something that is already bothering you, no matter how faint it may be, then take a deep breath and dive a little deeper!

We cannot claim that we know how to do better, but we do know that what we are doing is not working, and that we are very quickly running out of time.

Uncomfortable, but necessary questions

So, what is it that we—educators, activists, concerned citizens—believe in? Do we really believe that racism can be cured with anti-racist workshops and more inclusive, "multicultural" policies and—when that fails—lawsuits and monetary compensations? That patriarchy and other forms of gender-based violence will be undone through teaching proper pronouns, developing minutely precise articulations of multiple identities and—when that fails—restraining orders? That social justice can be achieved through fairer trade, debt relief, universal basic income and—when that fails—charity? That we will somehow magically manage not to destroy the long-term living conditions for humans and many other beings by voluntarily cutting our collective carbon emissions to zero, stopping the plastification of the planet, reversing soil depletion and ending species extinction while continuing to enjoy the benefits of our existing economies? That we can have development *and* sustainability? Make iPads, cars, cheap clothes for 8 billion people *and* keep the Amazon forest? Have comfortable middle-class houses, jobs and global (social) mobility for 8 billion people *and* preserve the Arctic ice? That we get to end poverty and keep our latte macchiatos? Do we really believe all that?

All of this should sound ridiculous, because at the end of the day—and this is a deliberately totalising statement—at some deep level, *everybody already knows* that this is impossible. If that is the case though, then why is our automatic reaction still to keep pretending that it is not? And why does our educational practice so often shy away from such questions and why do we so easily brush them aside as irrelevant, depressing, insulting or simply too much? Why are these kinds of dismissals such effective silencers of conversations? What if the reality of our current predicament is really depressing and de-motivating and we simply have to find ways and stamina to work through that? Working through it might mean very different things in different contexts, but it most definitely does not mean brushing difficult or uncomfortable questions aside and pretending that they don't exist.

If that is the case, then why do we keep investing in imaginaries of futures that we already know are not going to happen? Why do we keep choosing fantasy over sobriety? What does it give us and how can we

stop wanting it? How can we outgrow the need for comfort and coddling illusions? And what would it take for us to begin to accept our role as (highly problematic and irresponsible) co-creators of this world? In all honesty, these questions are merely scratching the surface of all the paradoxes and conundrums that we have surrounded ourselves with. There is so much more that cannot even be voiced yet. And how about COVID-19?

The corona lessons, or teachings from the virus

If nothing else, the intensity of responses to the disruptions of our normalised realities brought about by the pandemic can show us that we are, in general, seriously ill-prepared, psychologically, politically, organisationally, relationally, practically and otherwise to deal with any major interruptions of how we imagine things to be, how our societies should function and what should be our normalised expectations, entitlements and privileges—especially in the Global North. And if we think that the changes to our societies brought about by the COVID-19 lockdowns are serious and profoundly disruptive, let us wait until the climate begins to really unravel. By then it should be clear why some people, like the Inuit artist, Taqralik Partridge, call COVID-19 a mere "warning shot". Existential and other kinds of threats are a double-edged sword, though. They may be strong motivating forces for change (of various kinds), but they can also act as strong forces that prevent sensible behaviour. Remember, when the Titanic hit the iceberg, there was a considerable number of people who absolutely refused to leave the comforts of the sinking ship until it was too late. And of course, depending on which deck they were on, they may have felt the urgency of the situation sooner or later.

If we think that the changes to our societies brought about by the COVID-19 lockdowns are serious and profoundly disruptive, let us wait until the climate begins to really unravel.

The very fact that COVID-19 was almost universally perceived as a threat to our normalised ways of living and doing things that needed to be either quickly removed or ignored altogether should be telling us that, ultimately, most of us would like some (or most) of that normality back. No matter how unjust, violent and unsustainable it is. In this case, though, it somehow does not seem to matter that much whether we found our pre-COVID lives oppressive or enjoyable, most of us would like them back. Of course, the pandemic did not deal a mortal or even a serious blow to our modern societies and modes of existence. It merely scratched them. Still, this "warning shot" can be used to make us think about what would happen if the next blow, such as a potential climate catastrophe, were more serious? How would we respond then? Would we still want our old lives back? And what if that were no longer an option? What would we do then and what can we learn from our responses now, in case more serious disruptions follow?

During the peak of the first wave of the lockdowns, we had the opportunity to share impressions about the changes brought by the pandemic with educators, activists, students, artists and researchers from very different backgrounds from both the Global North and Global South. Inevitably, our work and our conversations were shaped by the onset of the pandemic and through these conversations, three patterns of response to the pandemic seemed to emerge. Many of the people from the North, especially those from non-marginalised communities, reported experiencing a sort of an existential crisis, manifested through a sense of loss of orientation, purpose and meaning in their professional, but even more so in their personal, lives. The general atmosphere seemed to be one of resignation and disorientation, of people not really knowing what to do now. The educators and activists from the South, on the other hand—especially those who were engaged in community-based work though NGOs and other organisations— often reported experiencing a sense of a political crisis, seeing how governments and other official structures failed to respond properly to take care of the basic needs of people. Rather than manifesting resignation, most of them seemed very eager to take frontline action to fight against the pandemic and help their communities, but were frustrated at not being

able to do so. Mixed among these two groups were responses where people simply emphasised the direct threats to their own social safety and well-being, such as (potential) loss of their loved ones, loss of work, limited access to healthcare and other services, and other difficult circumstances. Of course, this brief description does not capture the full complexity of different conversations, especially those in which we have not participated, but hopefully it offers a generative illustration of differences in responses that can, at least partially, be traced to different global (political, and socio-economic) contexts.

A very different perspective emerged from the conversations with indigenous communities in Brazil and Peru whose members are also part of our collective and who hosted one of our research partnership meetings right before the outbreak became known to the public in early March 2020. Although the onset of the pandemic immediately cut off almost all of their sources of income and caused very serious health problems in several places (including fatalities), the serious difficulties and challenges brought about by the virus and the state's counterproductive measures were seemingly met by relative personal calmness and lively community action based on reciprocity and shared responsibilities. Seeing the failure of the state to protect them and, perhaps more importantly, not counting on it, many communities went into self-imposed lockdowns, additional crops were planted to compensate for the loss of access to markets, and people widely shared resources (material and non-material). When asked how they are doing, the most common (and surprising) response was: "Everything is ok". Again, there are many possible reasons why such responses were given—including simply politeness—and we certainly do not wish to generalise them beyond the context of the communities or even individuals that we work with. However, it does seem possible to argue that those communities, especially the indigenous ones, that have had to fight an endless battle over many centuries to keep their ways of living and protect them from being subsumed by colonial modernity have developed the stamina and resilience necessary to enable them to weather very difficult circumstances under conditions that would seem likely impossible to many outsiders. Some of the key things that seemed to have made their survival possible

are the care and attention dedicated to the constant re-membering and re-weaving of the complex web of relationships not just between the members of the communities, but also between the people and the more-than-human world. Knowing and sensing oneself as always inevitably part of others creates a very different disposition towards the world and opens up possibilities for very different kinds of agency.

Discussing different responses to what we perceive as crisis situations, Potawatomi scholar, Kyle Whyte (forthcoming), writes of indigenous epistemologies[23] of coordination that emphasise "the importance of kinship relationships for generating the (responsible) capacity to respond to constant change". For Whyte, these epistemologies of coordination are fundamentally different from what he calls Western epistemologies of crisis. Two important differences set these two approaches apart. Due to the long legacy of colonial violence against many indigenous people, crises are not seen as particularly unusual nor are their responses to them necessarily imbued with a sense of urgency for restoration of "normality". Having a very different relationship to the perceived stability and predictability of modern societies, Whyte argues that indigenous epistemologies offer viable responses to crises without embodying a crisis epistemology (mindset). Perhaps the most important consequence of such a different relationship to crisis and "normality" is that epistemologies of coordination do not sanction violence as a legitimate (transitional) means to return to a pre-crisis state, but instead operate from the understanding that respect for all relations (human and more-than-human) needs to be upheld at all times. In other words, relationality trumps normality, rather than the other way around. This is relevant in all situations, and especially when desires to uphold, or return to, "normality" mobilise violence to return to a pre-crisis state that was violent to begin with. Communities that have, due to ongoing historic violence, learned the importance of not being

> **It is only when the water reaches people's hips that it becomes possible for them to swim.**

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23   Ways of knowing and doing things.

bound to a singular imaginary of normality, and that have not forgotten the importance of maintaining healthy relations, especially in adverse circumstances, have a lot to teach us about how to deal with situations where constant unpredictability and uncertainty are an everyday reality. This is especially relevant for those of us in the Global North (and the North of the Global South)[24] whose lives have been shaped by very different conditions, that outsourced many crises elsewhere, often precisely to the communities mentioned above. Considering this fact, we should be very grateful if they decide to share any of their teachings with us.

There is a popular saying in Brazil that illustrates this insight. It states that in a flood situation, it is only when the water reaches people's hips that it becomes possible for them to swim. Before that, with the water at our ankles or knees, it is only possible to walk, or to wade. In other words, we might only be able to learn to swim—that is, to exist and respond differently—once we have no other choice. In the meantime, we can prepare by learning to open ourselves up to the teachings of the rising water (the changes that are happening), as well as the teachings of those who have been swimming for their lives against multiple currents of colonial violence for a very long time. We should not forget that the COVID-19 pandemic is just a "warning shot", a small iceberg that is melting in the rising sea. We cannot know for certain what else lies ahead, but we do know already that there is no more turning back. And it would be most useful for us to learn to be ok with that.

About Rene

Rene Suša was one of the co-facilitators of the Bridge 47 Transformative Learning Journey. He is a post-doctoral fellow at the University of British Columbia, Canada. His work explores the hidden ideas, ideals and desires that drive modern global imaginaries. He is interested in exploring educational pathways that might help us re-orient some of these desires and create openings for different (unimaginable) futures.

This article was co-written with other members of the Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures collective, an international assemblage of researchers, artists, educators, students, social justice and environmental activists and ancestral/indigenous knowledge keepers. The work of the collective is multifaceted, but one of its key commitments lies in exploring the many conscious and unconscious layers of attachments, investments, perceived entitlements, privileges and securities that condition and frame our existence as members of modern societies and limit our ability to imagine otherwise.

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24   The phrase North of the South refers to those who, although located in the Global South, enjoy similar privileges and access to social mobility as do other members of the global middle-class. For more see the "House modernity built" at: **https://decolonialfutures.net/portfolio/mini-zine-house-mycelium/**.

"We see ourselves working at the edge of two important moments: we are assisting with the death of a world that has been harmful, but that has given us important gifts, at the same time that we assist with the birth of something new, still undefined and potentially (but not necessarily) wiser."

– VANESSA ANDREOTTI, GESTURING TOWARDS DECOLONIAL FUTURES COLLECTIVE

DR MOIRA ZUAZO OBLITAS

An Epochal Panorama: Coronavirus and Transformative Change. When, but now, who but us?

This essay establishes that the present global reality is based on the threat to planetary boundaries as a result of a relationship of disrespect between human beings and nature, and that COVID-19 is part and symptom of this picture. While the development of the North plus China is responsible for the planetary situation, southern societies are the ones that recurrently pay the bill. COVID-19, due to the emptiness it opens, is the opportunity for transformative change, which places at the centre a new relationship between human beings and nature, global, South, North and generational justice.

The epochal panorama of *unlimited development* as a root cause for the current situation

What era do we live in? More than a decade ago, the natural sciences, in a monumental work, systematised and established nine processes, which represent the planetary boundaries that regulate the stability and resilience of the earth system. In defining natural limits to development, the alarm sounded that humans are already exceeding the limits for safe life on the planet. (Rockström et al. 2009, Steffen et al. 2015).

In two processes, *climate change* and *land system change* (land converted to human use), we have crossed the safe limit and find ourselves in a space of increasing uncertainty and risk. In two processes, *integrity of the biosphere* and the process of *biogeochemical cycles of nitrogen and phosphorus*, we are in a high-risk area beyond uncertainty. In three processes, *use of fresh water, loss of stratospheric ozone* and *acidification of the oceans,* although we are still below the border, we are dangerously close to the limit. Finally, in two of these processes, *emission of aerosols into the atmosphere* and *novel entities,* we do not have enough data to quantify the damage caused (Rockström et al. 2009, Steffen et al. 2015).

Thanks to "development" and unlimited growth as its "mantra" in the last 75 years, humanity is threatening the conditions for a safe life for humans and other species on the planet. Given this scenario, the question we must ask ourselves is: *How does the crisis of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) fit into this epochal panorama?*

Pandemics of viral diseases that are transmitted from an animal species to humans are not new; they have wreaked havoc throughout the history of humanity (Harari 2011) and therefore have been recorded in a kind of global collective memory.

It is believed that the precursor to the so-called Spanish flu (1918–1920) was an avian virus that mutated and migrated to pigs and from there jumped to humans. This pandemic was intertwined with the First World War and with a significant movement of people between continents. Then came what is known as the Asian flu (1957–1958), which started in ducks and reached humans through pigs. Then there was AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) (1970s) that apparently passed from apes to humans, followed by Ebola (discovered in 1976) whose origin was bats (WHO 2020), SARS (2002–2003) produced by the SARS-Cov coronavirus, which passed from cats to humans with the bat as host. After that, there was the well-known swine flu (2009) influenza A H1N1, which is a variant of the influenza virus (H1N1 / 19), and finally MERS (2012) produced by the MERS-Cov virus, which is suspected to have passed from dromedaries to humans. With humans' advance into natural habitats of animals, the points of transmission for viruses increase. This historical relationship

reflects, on the one hand, our long journey of lack of respect for animals and the environment, and on the other hand, the current reality of the destruction of nature as the engine of pandemics (Osieyo 2020; WWF 2020; Goodall 2020).

The second decade of the 21st century, when COVID-19 appeared, is the meeting time between an unprecedented extinction of species on the planet (United Nations 2020) that is part of the damage to the boundary "integrity of the biosphere" (Rockström et al. 2009, Steffen et al. 2015) and globalisation.

Globalisation enables simultaneous life in several worlds—like living in Europe, the USA or China and visiting other continents in the same year, even several times. Given this panorama, it is obvious that a pandemic could not be something unexpected but something that would come; the question was not if, but when.

The place of the South and the social as a global question

From the horizon of visibility of the South the question emerges: Does humanity as a whole share the same responsibility for these challenges? When we look at the close relationship between "development" and climate change and look at the difference in "development" coupled with growth in the economy of the northern countries plus China and the southern countries, formerly called "underdeveloped", it is clear that the responsibilities are not equal. The North plus China, with the degree of growth of its economies, the use of natural resources that this has implied, the colonial history of primary accumulation based on dispossession in Latin America and Africa and finally the development that all these factors have enabled, is responsible for the current situation.

On the other hand, looking at climate change—the related damages of recent decades—we see that those who pay the most expensive bill are southern societies. Although the COVID-19 disease does not distinguish between borders, wealth or status, it is clear that those who have the best chance of survival are the citizens of those countries that have created and have benefited from the abysses of inequality on the planet.

The 2020 (COVID-19) crisis: cathedrals sink and new realities emerge

Given the epochal panorama of threatened planetary boundaries and unequal responsibilities, COVID-19 means an earthquake. In the global public debate[25], the idea of the need to undertake the ecological transition begins to take shape. Given the global nature of the challenge, the transition will only be sustainable if it is a transition with global justice. The COVID-19 crisis allows us to read that undertaking this change is possible. What we are experiencing today is that we humans are capable of moving when we experience that the floor is moving, and this seems to be what has happened.

The mantra of indefinite growth suddenly fades from politics and the domestic screen and consumption as the unquestionable way of life disappears from everyday life. From one day to the next, it is revealed that both unlimited growth and consumerism are based on narrative foam, which disappears in the face of the reality of COVID-19. From one day to the next, the fatuous world of infinite propaganda, the glamour of fashion, glitter and artificial colours no longer mean anything and sad cities appear through their empty streets and parks that seem to be repopulated with animals.

In the crisis, states appear without disguises and without rites and we can compare them for how much they are actually capable of doing. We observe comparable states in their inequalities, between a state like Germany with 33 intensive care beds for every 100,000 inhabitants or the USA with 30, compared to Peru with 1, or India with 2 or Ecuador with 7 (Merino 2020). We observe a world that, on the one hand, has become a village because we face the same pandemic at the same time, and on the other hand, a world so unequal, in which it would seem that people from different countries inhabit different planets.

The states appear as "sorcerer's apprentices" trying to contain with walls a global pandemic that demands global responses and not local patches that at the end of the day are just that. The virus circulates globally and will accompany us in the coming months, if not years.

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25   By incipient global public debate, I mean the articulation of ideas that circulate in the different spheres of national and continental public debate, although the articulation to this debate is asymmetric

In states that move by groping with one hand and brandishing the sabre of power with the other (even in the largest, strongest, fastest state—the USA), we observe the biological human being remembering his/her vulnerability through his/her sick body. With COVID-19 we see for a moment a global democratisation in the face of death, which does not distinguish between borders, wealth, or privileges ossified over time—despite unequal capacities of mitigating the pandemic as mentioned above.

The 2020 crisis (COVID-19) as an opportunity for transformative change

The present is surreal. On the one hand, it seems calm as if stopped in time; on the other hand, in all corners of the planet old certainties disappear, the oil age seems to have come to an end, large and small companies go bankrupt, jobs disappear and the feeling grows that the world as we knew it is disappearing in front of our eyes. In each conversation, the phantom of fear emerges, fear of death for many, fear of hunger for many others, fear of economic recession for others, fear of a planet that appears as an unknown land for almost everyone. This state of collective uncertainty is an opportunity for conversation.

Slowly the conclusion of the need for transformative change emerges in several heads.

Slowly the conclusion of the need for transformative change emerges in several heads. Of the seven billion humans that inhabit the planet, most of us have never heard anything about these topics. Others have heard a lot, but in reality we do not want to take notice, perhaps not as an act of will but as an act of naive protection against not being able to meet the size of the challenge.

Transformative change involves establishing the existence of global assets and responsibilities, the first element of which is the value of life and human dignity, which today is clearly only meaningful if it is guaranteed globally.

What we have witnessed in the COVID-19 crisis is that human life and dignity as subject to borders do not mean citizenship, but rather an imperial way of being in the world, which writes in stone what humanity's long history of colonial looting, depredation of nature and exercise of privileges by a few has ossified in a few states.

It seems that the time has come for this generation. Either we are capable of undertaking the transformative change that begins by reaffirming the dignity of human life through global institutions or, as a generation, we will have failed in the face of the challenge of our time.

The challenges of the present show us that we need a transformative change that re-establishes a relationship of respect between human beings and nature and a just relationship between societies that recognise in the first place that the world is one unit and that we must act accordingly. Just as the way against COVID-19 is to do tests, tests, tests, the way to face global challenges is justice: ecological, between societies and generational, beginning with recognising that the path of "development" equals infinite growth at the cost of southern societies, of nature and of our children. It is the wrong way.

When, but now, who but us?

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Moira Zuazo is an expert on democracy and sustainability in the Andean region. In her most well-known publications, she has discussed the reconfiguration of the Bolivian state (2017) and the ruralisation of Bolivian politics (2008). She is currently located in Berlin, where she is an associate researcher at the F-U Berlin and a visiting professor at different universities.

TLJ Testimonies – Stories of Transformation

This chapter invites you to personal stories and reflections of the learning experiences in the TLJ and beyond. They are a mosaic of steps for transformative change – big and small, firm and stumbling, expected and surprising, joyful and painful - together reflecting the multiversity of pathways that the world holds for different people and for each of us.

MADZA EDNIR

Embrace the Shadow, Let Go of Control, Act as If You Already Were in the Future You Want

Some Gifts of My Transformative Learning Journey

When I signed up to participate in the TLJ 2019–2020 and was asked what I was willing to accomplish with it, I remember writing that I felt like an old tree that needed to transfer through its roots all its knowledge and experience to the younger trees. What I did not know was how much I would learn with them.

In my experience, the project was biomimetic in the sense that it was designed in such way that it allowed me to understand that the Transformative Learning Journey was part of a greater journey, the journey of life. And in fact, it prepared me to face two tragic events—one collective, the other personal—that, combined, made 2020 the most challenging of my 71 years' travel on Earth. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic claimed its first victim in Brazil, interrupting the TLJ *Action Experiment* I was implementing in my neighbourhood (Liberdade, in São Paulo City) and inaugurating a time in which I could not leave my home nor hug anyone anymore. In April, I lost a beloved, young, talented niece to a sudden mental breakdown triggered by the quarantine.

Some gifts of the TLJ were decisive for me being able to survive these blows.

First, I've learned with Bayo Akomolafe, a Nigerian philosopher who was introduced to me by our facilitators, that we should embrace the shadow, since it is in the dark that life grows. Therefore, when I received the news that my niece had died, I allowed myself to stay in the dark place of the loss, in silence, without moving, without distracting myself from the pain with music or news or talks. And in this dark place, mysterious things happened. I could feel love reaching me from my friends in Brazil and all over the world. Ideas to comfort my niece's daughter, her brother and sister emerged—to ask them to write about her and collect memories of family and friends. Also, I felt that as "The Grandma" (the archetype I've chosen to identify myself with), I was *teaching* others with my behaviour, I was modelling how to deal with similar catastrophes in their lives, so I formulated the intention to return to the "regular world" as soon as I could, bringing to it the learnings from the Valley of Shadows. At this point, I experimented once more the power of our visions to lend intention and direction to our transformation, an idea that I learned from another author and that was introduced to me by the facilitator, Johannes Krause. The intention that is born from the deep of our heart is different from trying rationally to control the process, for instance by establishing a deadline for the mourning time.

Another operative concept that lifted me up from the forlorn place where I was left was the "Metabolic Intelligence of Life", a part of the proposition "Moving Horizons of Hope" of the In Earth's CARE Framework[26], presented to us in our first workshop in Fohrde (October 2019). For a while, I resisted the idea that we must abandon the illusion of control and question our power to manage or control transformation processes with our rational minds. But it eventually conquered me, and I think the fact that I am in this last stage of life's journey was decisive in the process. Because, when an old person looks behind, it becomes clear

We should embrace the shadow, since it is in the dark that life grows.

that the greater transformations in our life were not planned. They were unpredictable and each one of them was necessary to build the person we became. The pieces of the puzzle fit together, and everything makes sense. To trust the "Metabolic Intelligence of Life" is to surrender to something that is bigger than your individual reason. It is to acknowledge that you are part of a whole that includes past, present and future. And some events (either global, such as climate change or the pandemic, or individual, such as the death of a loved one) that hurt us deeply must be sensed and accepted as they are. From this acceptance of the loss and from the desire to move ahead the transformation is born.

In which sense has the Transformative Learning Journey transformed me?

I am more capable of navigating complexity and observing how individual and collective processes are connected. I feel that, as humanity, we are now at the same place in which I was during the first weeks after my niece's death. And as a collective we may be able to raise ourselves from the Valley of Shadows if we really stop doing what we used to do, if we embrace the darkness, the uncertainty and learn with them, while dreaming and envisioning the future we want—this will give us an intention to guide our decisions.

I really understood in my gut that "The House Modernity Built" (Vanessa Andreotti et al.)[27] cannot be destroyed with the same tools that built it. It is useless to struggle and to fight against predatory capitalism, fascist nationalist governments—they are being killed by their own contradictions. *To fight* is the old; the new is *to demonstrate the alternative to injustice* by cultivating cognitive, affective and relational justice. The House is already falling apart, like in the drawings of this cartography our facilitator Tereza showed us in one of the workshops. Mother Nature is assisting the process by teaching human beings with droughts, floods, tornados, viruses, that the illusion of separateness cannot be sustained. What we

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26 https://decolonialfutures.net/house-of-modernity-zine/

27 ibidem

need is just to cultivate and make grow the new that will take over when the old paradigm's agony eventually ends.

My political activism was transformed. I am inviting my colleagues and partners to join me in re-thinking our language when we refer to our political opponents as evil, as the "Other", as if we are completely pure, innocent and not capable of causing any harm. (Acknowledging that the opponents also perceive themselves the same way, as the Good Guys while we are the Villains.)

My anxiety to "see results" has diminished. My "Action Experiment" could not be finished (as my projects will be left uncompleted when I die). Yet so many things were accomplished. The seven organisations I was willing to connect in the community have heard of each other since I have talked with representatives of all of them. I could collect the story of these individuals and organisations and in due time I will share those stories with all involved. A university professor, who is also a poet and a musician, was attracted by the experiment and has disseminated the Transformative Learning Journey "lessons" to his students. I could compare Paulo Freire's teachings with Vanessa Andreotti's approach to societal change and discuss my findings with Finnish colleagues. I gave my heart to new grandchildren from Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Asia and now my heart beats stronger when I hear news from their countries. And I feel they think of me with love each time they hear about Brazil.

Twenty-one complete strangers from different cultures, genders, speaking different languages with ages varying from late twenties to early seventies became a team of people who care about each other and are willing to find motives to be together. If micro-realities behave as fractals, this group, which had people from all continents on Earth, demonstrates that humanity can also overcome the illusion of separateness.

> **Mother Nature is assisting the process by teaching human beings with droughts, floods, tornados, viruses, that the illusion of separateness cannot be sustained.**

How were our facilitators, Tereza, Marie, René and Timo, able to foster such strong bonds among people who met face-to-face only for four days in October and three days in December 2019 while producing learnings as powerful as those I've described here? This is a theme for another article I shall produce in the future, if the "Metabolic Intelligence of Life" agrees.

São Paulo, June 30, 2020

About Madza

Madza Ednir is a senior Brazilian educator and communicator working in the field of Education for Global Citizenship. As a member of CECIP Brazil www.cecip.org.br, she has been involved in projects and movements to strengthen Democracy, Culture of Peace and Restorative Justice in school systems. She is the author, organiser, and co-author of several publications on these themes, and a representative of CECIP in the international Campaign for a Global Curriculum of Social Solidarity Economy. https://curriculumglobaleconomiasolidaria.com/english/letter-of-principles/

"This is a dark time, filled with suffering and uncertainty. Like living cells in a larger body, it is natual that we feel the trauma of our world. So don't be afraid of the anguish you feel, or the anger or fear, because these responses arise from the depth of your caring and the truth of your interconnectedness with all beings."

— JOANNA MACY

IVAN KIRCHGÄSSER

The mystery of transformation: on journeying into the unknown

I want to share with you my favourite mystery. It is the mystery of transformation, of moving from the known into the unknown, of changing and being changed. In a time where the world is facing unprecedented social and ecological challenges, the question of how to intervene in the status quo and come up with alternatives is pressing. Part of this question is of an educational nature. If, as Einstein said, we cannot solve problems with the same mindset that created them, then how can we induce a movement from an old to a new mindset? How can we feel our way towards ways of being that are different from the ones that are known to us? Though extremely relevant today, this question has been around for a long time. It was formulated in a dialogue between Socrates and Meno—ostensibly as a paradox:

How would you go about finding that thing the nature of which is still unknown to you?

Unlike Socrates, I don't think we are dealing with a paradox here. What I see is a call to go on a journey. A journey with no clear outcome—unlike how most funders would have it—because if you already know where you are going, there wouldn't be much of a chance of finding something new on the way. The metaphor of the journey suggests that it is a learning process, which in itself can be transformative. It is also a practice: you have

to actually go out and do something. You have to leave the places and the ways that are familiar to you. This will lead you into unknown territories. All of this can be scary, unsettling, and uncomfortable. But also, it might be manageable and rewarding. No risk, no fun.

During the first Bridge47 Transformative Learning Journey, 22 educational activists from across Europe came together to explore how they could make their work more transformative, empowering, and emancipatory. The aim: to find novel ways of tackling the root causes of global crises through education. As part of the programme, we were introduced to *The House Modernity Built*, a social cartography developed by the Decolonial Futures collective. Designed to act as a starting point for conversations, it analyses the root causes of the contemporary global crises and points towards alternative modes of being, thinking, and doing. What at first sight looks like a range of fairly simple pictures condenses within it an incredible amount of information drawn from a wide range of sources (see https://decolonialfutures.net/portfolio/mini-zine-house-mycelium/). In short, I would say: the house modernity built is not a beautiful house, but a faulty construction that serves as a metaphor for the exploitative, alienating, and destructive paradigm that has shaped much of humanity's recent global, social, and psychological history.

When I was introduced to this model, I was particularly fascinated by the image in the bottom left corner. It shows a box-headed creature which is stuck in ways of thinking characteristic of the Western modern era:

I think, therefore I am!
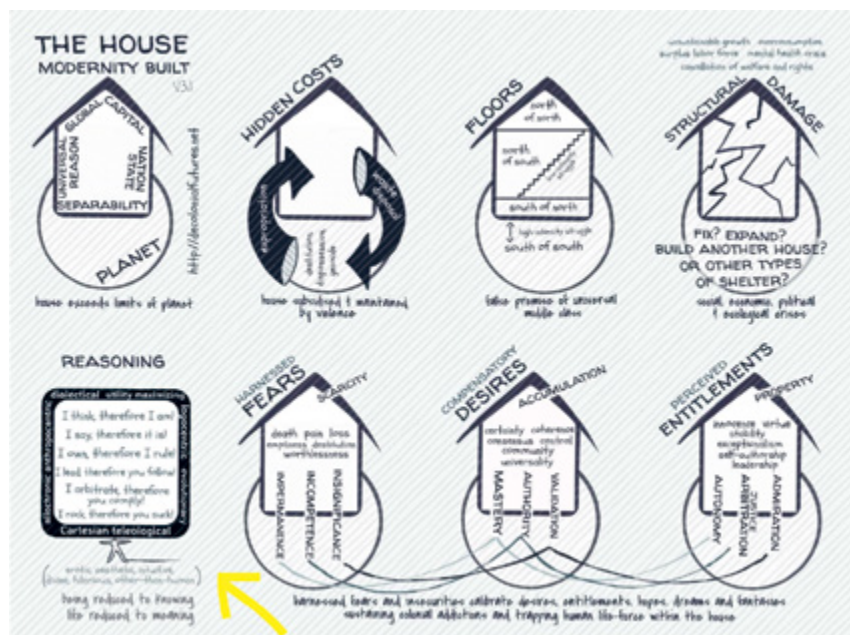*I say, therefore it is!*
I own, therefore I rule!
I lead, therefore you follow!
I arbitrate, therefore you comply!
I rock, therefore you suck!

Underneath the box—outside the box—is another list in brackets. It says:

(erotic, aesthetic, intuitive, divine, hilarious, other-than-human)

The House Modernity Built / mini-zine / yellow arrow added by me

Right away, this second list captured my imagination. Longing to move on from the stage of diagnosis, I wanted to free these words from their brackets and allow them to unfold. I found myself wondering: what might happen if I take up the invitation to expand on this model, picking up on these words that gesture towards more connective, embodied, and playful ways of being? The story that follows is an attempt to make that move into the unknown and imaginatively venture beyond the house of modernity into the dark forest, with these words as guiding starting points.

Beyond the house of modernity

Narrator

Imagine you stand in front of a house. It's a funny house, you can look right through it. It has no door, you could walk straight in. And, even stranger, it rests on a floating sphere. You have never seen such a building before.

Along the roof, the walls, and the floor are words. They are suspended in mid-air. Sometimes they change position and rearrange themselves. When you take a closer look, you notice that they are BIG WORDS. Also, there is a small sign, which says:

> *To those who enter the house of modernity – you shall be enlightened.*
> *To those who choose to stay outside – prepare to get into trouble.*

All of this seems totally weird and oddly familiar at the same time. Since it is early in the morning and you are still a bit sleepy, you decide to deal with it later and go for a little walk instead. As it happens, the house is surrounded by a beautiful garden. Birds sit on the branches of giant ash trees and sing a greeting to the sun. Daisies and dandelions open their petals to enjoy the first rays of light and warmth. You can smell the soil in the damp air, and something else … the scent of roses. Your nose leads you around some rhododendrons, and there you are, right in front of a bush with the most tender, pink flowers. An old lady steps up from behind and greets you with a smile.

Old lady:

I see that you managed to withstand the temptation of entering the haunted house! Didn't you want to be enlightened? Many who go in get lost and never find their way out again. But you are here. And out here is a completely different story! There is a lot to explore. It is by far more exciting than anything the house could ever offer. You do need to realise, though, that if you choose to venture out from here, you don't know where you will end up. You might in fact get into trouble, since you can't foresee what you will find on the way or what will happen to you. The rewards may be great, or not, depending on how well you manage to navigate. And you might not get a second chance to enter the house if you decide to turn around. So, what do you think? Are you curious?

You: [hesitant]

Well, it's still a bit early for adventures... But hey, since I'm here I might as well explore the place. It's a nice day!

Old lady:

Fine. If you're up for it, I'll take you to my hut. It's a good place to start. From there, you could go for a trip into the dark forest.

You:

The dark forest? That sounds scary!

Old lady:

It can be, but again, it will depend on your navigation skills. I've got a little book that you can take with you. It's a compilation of accounts by travellers who went out there before. They described signs you can look out for and other things that will help you find your way. Not physical signs, more like signals that come from you that you can learn to pick up. You will need to trust that you know more than you think you do.

You:

That sounds fascinating, but also a bit … unreliable. Isn't there a map of the dark forest?

Old lady:

You want a map? Hang on. I should have one left.

Narrator:

The old lady searches in the pockets of her skirt. Each time you catch a glimpse, it seems like they are way too big and there are far too many of them to actually fit into a normal piece of clothing. It almost seems as if each pocket contains a universe of its own. Finally, she pulls out what looks like a gigantic scroll of paper. It looks like she can hardly bear the weight of it.

Old lady:

Here you go. But it won't show you where you're going, only where you're coming from!

Narrator:

The old lady drops the scroll on the ground. You untie the band that holds it together, and as you open it, you see a detailed drawing emerge on the blank paper. You shriek with amazement, because when you take a closer look, you begin to see images of your life. From when you were little, a bit older, in different places, meeting people, and it goes all the way up to the present moment. The last picture is of yourself, standing next to a rose bush with an old lady. The haunted house is hovering in the distance. Puzzled, you look up.

You:

How do I use this? It's utterly fascinating, but how will I know where to go if I can only see the past? And also, it seems quite big to take!

Old lady:

You need to learn to read it properly. You shouldn't just look for what happened on the outside. You can also look into how it felt to be in those different situations, what questions they evoked, and what longings they awakened in you. That is what contains the energy that will help you move forward on your journey. And your own motivations will give you a sense of direction.

You:

But can't I see all those things without this heavy scroll? Because they are in my memory, right?

Old lady:

Of course! So you won't take this with you. Maybe for the better. [Takes the gigantic scroll and tries to fit it back into one of her pockets.] Well, I might have something else for you, then. It's a little booklet—not a detailed map, but rather an invitation for exploring your own dark forest. Do you want to take that instead?

You:

I might as well, if it's not that big. Do you also carry it in one of your plentiful pockets?
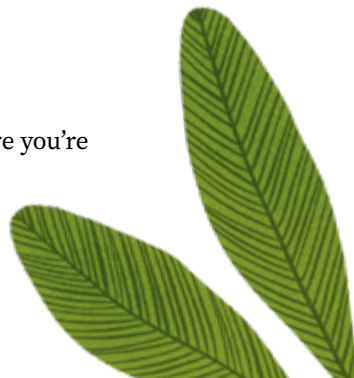
Old lady:

You're not making fun of my skirt, are you? It's a great repository for all matters practical. It contains about everything a lady my age requires.

You:

I'm sure it does!

Old lady:

All right then. As it happens, I haven't got the booklet with me, but we will pick it up at my place.

Narrator:

You follow the old lady down a path. In the distance, you see glimpses of shimmering water between the trees. They open up as you approach a little hut. It is built next to the pond, clearly by someone who knows their trade. She tells you to wait outside, so you sit down on a log by a fireplace. The sun shines on your face, it's warm already. Little waves lap on to the shore. Dragonflies play catch just above the surface of the water. Across the pond the forest gets denser. Over there, the light hardly penetrates through the canopy. After a short while, the lady comes out of the hut. She joins you at the fireplace and hands you a tiny, scruffy booklet.

Old lady:

This is all I can give you! It might not look like much, but I'm sure you'll find a way of making good use of it. I've heard that it works well as a guidebook, be it of an unusual kind. Now it's time to go, I have more to do! I wish you all the best of luck.

Narrator:

With these words, the old lady turns around and disappears. Before you head off on the path that leads into the woods, you take a closer look at the booklet. Here is what it says:

Things to look
out for when
you venture into
THE DARK FOREST

erotic
aesthetic
intuitive
divine
hilarious
other-than-human

To the Reader

These wisdoms are gleaned
from different sources.
All stem from people
courageous enough to
set coarse into the dark
forest, which is unknown.
From everything they have
told me, this is what I
remember. I can say from
experience that it works
well, as a rough guide.

Yours sincerely, Annelinde

Erotic

Eros isn't just about sex.
It's about everything that
attracts you. What
makes you feel excited?
What do you love?
When you follow the
signs of Eros, you will
end up feeling passionate
about the things you do.
Get ready to feel heated.
Prepare for heart-felt
suffering, too.

Aesthetic

The aesthetic is about more
than beauty or taste.
One lady who travelled the
dark red - Shelley Sacks -
found that if it's the opposite
of anaesthetics - which numb
your senses - it is about all
that which makes you feel
alive. You feel energetic,
awake, and present with
what you're doing. You're
on the right way. If you feel
tired, bored, or irritated, find
out why and do something about it.

Intuitive

What comes to your mind when
you are daydreaming?
What thoughts do you have
when you've just woken up?
Intuition needs time, it won't
speak when you're in a hurry.
It draws upon everything you've
done before. When you immerse
yourself into whatever it is
that interests you, things will
keep on working in the back-
ground. The intuitive mode
occurs when you tune in, but
with a soft focus.

Divine

You will know it when you encounter the divine. The signs to look out for: a feeling of awe, wonder, and gratitude. It can be blissful and overwhelming at the same time. Nothing special needs to happen, it could just be that you're going about your normal business and are suddenly overcome with the feeling that you're part of something bigger.

Other-than-human

You are never alone in this world! You are alive thanks to all that is not you. Since all that is not you is so very different, there is a lot you can learn from it. The trees, the deer, the wind, the sun, and the swallows are all here with you. Treat them with respect, enjoy their company, and they might speak to you in a language so much richer than words alone!

Hilarious

When you get into trouble or when you try to do something in a very serious manner, you might suddenly find yourself laughing out loud about the absurdity of it all. Maybe you don't want to laugh, because you're trying to be angry or cry, but you just can't help yourself. The hilarious reminds you not to get stuck with things. Humour allows for multiple truths at once. A light heart is easier to carry than a heavy one.

About Ivan

Ivan Kirchgaesser is a queer writer and PhD researcher at Oxford Brookes University. His interests span from social sculpture and transformative learning processes to auto/biographical enquiry. The questions that motivate his work are: how can people become artists of society, and what kind of novel learning spaces could support this process?
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"Nothing is worth more than laughter. It is strength to laugh and to abandon oneself, to be light."

– FRIDA KAHLO

RHINA COLUNGE-PETERS

Awaking from Higher Education to Higher Connection

Awaking from Higher Education to Higher Connection

The following essay builds on personal reflections, quests and the wish to share them as personal learning and living experiences. These reflections began to germinate long before the Transformative Learning Journey (TLJ), but the course accelerated the fermentation process through contact and exchange with my co-travellers and their networks, and started actions. My main quest or motivation to participate in the course was the "Einklang" (integration or coherence) of my private and my professional life, not only regarding the educational field. I am on a quest for an integral, systemic concept of education as (probably) the art of trying to find harmony and connection with oneself, others and nature.

Awaking from Higher Education…

I have been working in the area of Higher Education in Germany for more than 12 years. When I began, I was motivated by the idea of knowledge and education as important tools to develop a fairer world, on the premise that it is available to everybody. Education is free in Germany, including tertiary education, so-called "higher education". I felt that such a public education system could make the situation in countries as my home country, Peru, "better"—by eradicating poverty, inequality, and other global "illnesses" of society—ultimately by becoming like more

developed countries. Diverse quantitative data shows that this happens to some extent (i.e. suggesting a correlation between access to education and health improvement[28]).

But, let's begin even before my work experience in Germany. I came to Europe for my first master's degree more than 20 years ago thanks to a grant from the Dutch government. At that time, I was also very motivated by the idea that the higher the degree I got, the best I could give of myself for my country, the society I interact with and, of course, myself. I am grateful for this grant and also the second one I got for a second master in the UK, and I am deeply thankful for all the experiences in those years in Europe. However, each time I was back in Peru—just after each master— and willing to begin being part of a change, I had the feeling that I still needed more and higher education. I could do my little bit, but this was not enough. Perhaps, I thought, a PhD degree would help me to further my own "development", and trigger that of others, too?

I had many ideas for a PhD thesis, but an exact dissertation idea never came, since they all seemed to have a very entangled and dynamic relationship, and it was difficult to focus on only one of them, like being in a silo. Meanwhile, a *craving for something bigger* grew stronger within me. It is difficult to translate this feeling: *the search for something bigger, deeper in a sense and more comprehensive.* It is more than a longing, it is a quest for what makes sense and gives sense to life for me and others. I find it interesting that in the three languages I use, *sense/Sinn/sentido* refers to the sensorial but also to a deeper metaphysical aspect that shows us the direction of our deeper values.

After more than 15 years of working at higher education institutions (including my experience in Peru and Germany), I have been feeling increasingly deceived by a kind of education that, despite the accumulation of "knowledge", a growing "internationalisation" with an apparent awareness of globalisation , it seems not to solve but rather to accelerate (and even make irreversible?) the so-called "global challenges" it is supposed to

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28   Information of webinar presentation by Prof. Dirk Van Damme of "Why education and global competence will be key for the success of the SDGs", Thursday 7 May 2020.

address: for example, by developing technology for industries to accelerate climate change, developing procedures to create a more and more economic efficiency in global logistics regardless of any social or environmental cost, furthering rankings among universities and commodifying education, creating a wider gap of inequality—to mention just a few examples.

It seems also that the formal hierarchical structure (at least in my daily working environment at the university) doesn't value or even accommodate suggestions, comments or reflections that don't come from above or anything that does not directly contribute to short-term outputs and quantitative growth (aligned with the larger economic system, non-stop quantitative growth, with little pause and reflection about how to thrive qualitatively).

…to Higher Connections…

This realisation was like an awakening process and it triggered new ideas/perceptions regarding education to germinate within me. I was pleased to understand that I was not alone with these ideas. The more I read, the more I realised that, all over the world, there were other possibilities of approaching the relationship of learning, living and becoming wiser. Attempts to thrive in an organic cycle instead of growing non-stop to end in a catastrophe—as seen in the development of the COVID-19 crisis at the moment (May 2020), or climate change, among other *glocal* crises.

It was through non-formal education trainings, some courses of non-mainstream academics at universities, as well as readings on indigenous, traditional, subaltern or activists' voices that I experienced this sense of real growth. Yes, the joyful feeling of flow when learning means more than accumulating information or knowledge: a warm pleasure in the chest, tears of joy or pain at the awakening to truths greater than those expressed in words, the experience in one's own flesh of the lights and shadows of human nature and its various ranges.

The joyful feeling of flow when learning means more than accumulating information or knowledge.

Marielle lebt! En el crear resilente de las manos jóvenes de Rio, en el contínuo ciclo creativo, which defies hate and shadow…

In some cases these moments were mirrored in texts, films, conversations or music that I felt I had met before: for example, the film "InnSæi – the sea within" (by Hrund Gunnsteinsdóttir), texts of Donella Meadows, exchanges with people engaged in living according to "El Buen Vivir"[29], or trying to develop the movement of "transition town/transformative science/education" etc. Coming from the Andes, it meant a reconnection to *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) for me. They also came back to me: the *Apus* (mountains as living beings and patrons of a village) I ran up and down as a child, the *Cochas* (living water sources: lakes, ponds, lagoons) that gave me a sense of stillness and meditation but also of connection with what was unseen in my strolling experiences… yes, the whole Pachamama! I believe this philosophy—or rather cosmology—translated in Spanish as "El Buen Vivir" has similarities also in the roots of different cultures, societies and communities. Resemblances can even be found in the deepest roots of spiritual movements and religions (e.g. in the *Canticle of the Creatures*, written by St. Francis of Assisi, or *Laudes Creaturarum* ("Praise of the Creatures") which I enjoyed as sung by Branduardis, or the concept of

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29   This is especially close to me, since my biographical background is rooted in the Andes of Peru.

Whanaungatanga from the Maoris, which is now recognised and anchored in New Zealand's education system.

These openings and encounters with other sources of knowledge and wisdom opened my senses to the wisdom of nature. First in the form of simple metaphors that brought me comfort, hope, or just mesmerism...

I realised that these learnings and experiences in contact with indigenous/elder wisdoms were deeper than the ones I experienced through plain "scientific information" or "rational knowledge" in my formal education. Although I still value this kind of cognitive education and see it as a relevant part of my biographical (educational) experience, I now understand that it is only one among many ways of knowing and learning which I had probably overrated for a long time—just like modern society in general?

In the course of this process, I felt called to take part in the Transformative Learning Journey. It didn't allow me to find answers to my quest but, more importantly, it provided me with new reflections and a dynamic sense to continue evolving as part of an entangled ecosystem. The connection and exchange with my co-travellers (participants, facilitators and organisers) happened/happens at different levels and constantly changing intensity. Moreover, these relations triggered the awareness of former connections in my biography, the limitations of my humanity, and the endless possibilities of "an entangled whole".

This short essay cannot describe the richness of each workshop and its repercussions in detail. However, my three main learnings could be:

- **"To sit with the pain" and accept my limitations**
- **There is a time for everything: to reflect, to rest, to be active, to laugh aloud, to say no, to fight, to just be there, to forgive, to let go, to just trust (as in the short film of *Abuela Grillo*)…**
- **To trust in the energy of connections and its entanglement and the power of imagination and creativity in the sense that they generate/germinate**

To everything – turn, turn, turn
There is a season – turn, turn, turn
And a time to every purpose under heaven
A time to gain, a time to lose
A time to rend, a time to sew
A time to love, a time to hate
A time for peace, I swear it's not too late!

"Después de cada noche viene un nuevo día...
here and now
the moon, la luna... light, shine,
here and now
each moment
peace...
Kraft..."

…to Trusting in the Cosmic Metabolism…

Opening my mind helped me also to open my senses, and slowly to soften my (self-) judgement (which is an ongoing and very difficult process yet). It meant sometimes a painful transformation and "to sit with the pain" of acknowledging our four denials [30]. It meant also gaining trust, stamina and peace of mind; acknowledging that time as a fluid and an important component in our learning/connecting/exchanging experiences as learning processes needed to be "negotiated" again and again, and again on our journey. More importantly, I began to be aware that I am not alone in this journey but there are many more travellers with me: the ones I met through the TJL course, but also the ones I realised were "in the room without being there" as well those who are to come.

Consequently, I learned to again appreciate my "formal education" experiences, since what I really learned in Peru and in my first two masters and my working experience in Germany was also mostly not what I read in books or heard at lectures, but the exchanges I had with people who became friends and co-travellers either on short or long paths, walking side by side with or without hierarchies, and sometimes in ambivalent positions and dynamics. These encounters have been so precious, especially when a sincere connection was established, when cognitive, emotional and experiential levels interacted, and almost unforgettable when we were embedded in contact with nature. This connection was vital when one needed to be reminded that after each night a day comes, or that the winter in our lives is only a time to prepare for germination before the spring, and rainbows are possible only if it also rains.

In trying to find words for something that is beyond words, I would call the energy feeding this entanglement of actors and connections the cosmic metabolism (picked up from a fellow participant at the course). This has

> **The winter in our lives is only a time to prepare for germination before the spring.**

been my most important mantra in moments of despair: our resilience inherited from a higher cosmic intelligence, which is wider, deeper and entangled. However, it has been also a challenge to reconnect to this entanglement or just not to offer resistance.

…and finally, inviting others to a journey of transformation.

There are many concepts of a transformative or transformational education, and I believe in my experience the closest was the transformation of my consciousness, making me perceive and experience education as a process that doesn't make me "grow" but thrive, with all that this implies: light and darkness, birth and death, and re-birth again too, creation in all its forms and also co-creation.

These first ideas and reflections, as well as sharing of my deep insecurities and moments of hesitation, may be a starting point for further conversations, an invitation to travel together along unconventional paths and a personal impulse to initiate a manifesto, which may end up being just a draft to share with some friends and fellows or the beginning of a new co-created story on education as a "Common" and an Act of Human and Natural Creativity, and as such, as in any organic process, it possesses its own pace—but we can still walk it together.

About Rhina

Rhina was born in Cerro de Pasco, a by now completely polluted mining place in the Peruvian Andes. With scholarships, she studied in Peru, the Netherlands and the UK, with the goal of learning how to "make the world a bit better". Being 47 years old and having worked at universities in Latin America and Europe, she arrived at the conclusion that the educational system needs a change of paradigm, meaning among others a better inclusion of indigenous, community and citizen knowledge, linkages with alternative pedagogics and a decolonisation of mind-sets. For about two years, she is on a personal journey, aiming to join other travellers in the quest of possible alternative learning eco-systems."

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30   Denial of the limits of the planet, denial of the immensity of the problem, denial of entanglement, denial of systemic violence and complicity in harm, Global Citizenship Education Otherwise. **https://decolonialfutures.net/gcegce/)/**

"I can no longer accept a narrative of education that sees my links to my land, to my local languages, to my seeds, to my rivers, to my trees, to my histories and herstories, to my body, to my inner voice, to the spirit world, to my community all as a barrier to modernization and development which must at best be destroyed if we are to progress, and at worst be condemned to a multicultural day festival in school."

– MANISH JAIN

SABINE VON BARGEN

Poem: Last Night

When I switched off the light
The traces of it behind my eyelid
Pulled me back into the galaxy of your eyes
And my brain rolled
Through the house modernity built
And the fire in my bus
Concerning the false promise
Of a universal middle class
Felt hot in my belly
For I wonder deeply
About the meaning of it
Sorry, folks, the bus is full
I booked at least two seats
For my luggage and me
Will that promise
Save the Northern World
From downgrading its way of life

And what would be the alternative
The correct promise of the universal lower class
And very few rich—riots included
Or will the North
Go some steps down on the stairs
They call progress
Or elsewhere development
The unsexy solution
Hard to sell
I touch the earth
With my blind feet
How dare I
Walk on that planet
A small piece of dust
In the galaxy
And at last
Darkness and sleep

About Sabine:
"Sabine works as a consultant for volunteers at Brot für die Welt, a German NGO in Berlin. She is active in the space of Global and Transformative Learning."

"Activism is not a journey to the corner store. It is a plunge into the unknown. Leave the door open for the dark. That's where most important things come from, where you yourself came from and where you will go."

– REBECCA SOLNIT

MAGDALENA FREUDENSCHUSS, NINA REICHERT, SIVE BRESNIHAN

Hospicing Modernity, Starting with Us_. A Collaborative Writing Experiment

Dear Reader, we welcome you to this text, an account of navigation in decolonial practice that began over four months ago (and that continues today). As you read the text you will encounter different voices. Indeed, you might be puzzled with the shifts that happen from one moment to the next. While we invite you to see if you can drift along with the current you might be challenged by the plurality of forms of "we" pronouns that you can find in the text.

We, *as specific collective,* practising leaving the path of discernable singular positions and weaving our ideas into each other, while at the same time we do not speak with one voice.
We (I), as a reminder that in every collective there is singularity and personal accountability hidden. We (I) invoke our vulnerability, and display the privilege in projecting the personal (the I) into the collective (the we).
**We_** *as a generalised, imagined collective that is used to linear order, receptive to apparently objective arguments, habituated in proprietary thinking.*

Through these multiple forms we hope to evoke the texture of (internalised) coloniality. We invite you to join us in embracing the confusion, experimenting with the cracks in what we assume we know "for sure"

and exploring possibilities of being and doing differently. We hope you bear with us in this, our attempt to dig deeper.

[...]

This conversation is an old one, there have been many here before us, weaving their perspectives together, trying to listen. Trying to gesture towards decolonisation. Trying to figure out what this could be like, writing from different European spaces of whiteness and colonial privilege.

[...]
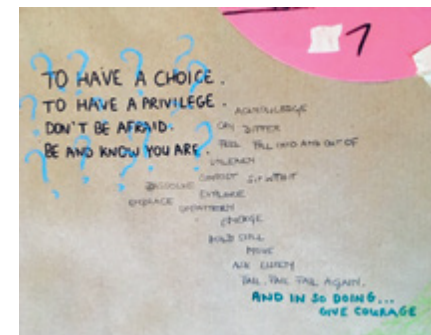
Our conversations have been ongoing for some time now, taking different shapes (in/visible, with/out/beyond words, in/audible, voice-to-voice/face-to-face). Meeting on some shared ground, meeting in the face of converging questions. Constellationship: that's where we are. Entangling. Out of

this disruptive COVID-19 time, a new fragment in our constellationship has crystallised: we've started having weekly video calls to catch up, connect and work on this writing piece.

This virtual space is a powerful one: feels like I can show up there with all that I am in this moment of encounter. We hold space together for what comes up: confusion, weirdness, anger, sometimes white fragility. We (I) try to sit with it.

A "transformative learning journey" (TLJ) – this was the facilitated process that we were invited to join two years ago by Bridge47, each probably expecting to find very different things in it. I felt a call to focus on me as subject, object and intermediary of learning. How do I hold space, help open up cracks for transformation to happen? Me as a trainer, me as a facilitator, me as a social being in a generalised way. The distinction between "the private" and "the public" becomes irrelevant. Shifting shape. Bringing up questions of what to hospice and what to midwife within myself. Opening up towards my entanglements with the world—present, past and future.

[...]

Hospicing and midwifing: terms that become one of the gravity centres of our weekly video calls, settling into our lexicon during the process of writing this text. We are building on *The Eye of the Storm*, a social cartography offered by the Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures collective.

"Imagine a 'storm'," they write, "between the ways of knowing and being that are dying, and those that are being born". On the one side, there is the work of offering palliative care to assist with a dying world ('hospicing'). On the other side, there is the work of assisting with the birth of something new, undefined and potentially, but not necessarily, wiser ('midwifery')[31]."
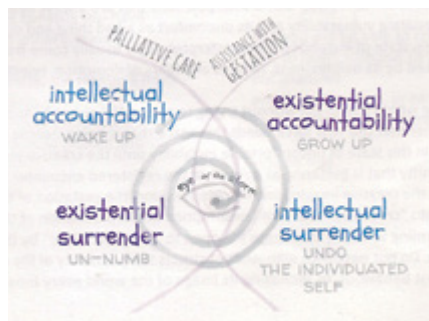
31   Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures collective (2019): Global Citizenship Education: Otherwise Study Guide, p.15. Link: **https://decolonialfutures.net/gce/**

[...]

Unexpected transformation: I assumed a butterfly would escape the cocoon—it's a bat. What shaped my expectation? So many things ready to mutate any moment, so much sampling, so many mash-ups in this fabric that connects us all... so many possibilities made invisible by western modernity.

[...]

Shapeshifting: another term that settled into our lexicon when we gathered for a small, self-organised TLJ follow-up meeting earlier this year. We returned to the lands of Fohrde to continue our TLJ in the place where it had begun. At one point we found ourselves looking out for shapes and brought some of them into the middle of our circle. We allowed for the arrangement to shift, to be shifted, intentionally or by accident. We produced things, like a collective drawing, fragments of which have found their way into this text.

We grew attached to this collective drawing—and ended up tearing it apart, discussing longingly whether to burn it, to store it, to share it, to bury it. Its shapeshifting provided us with a chance to reflect on the hardship of letting go, on the question of what we value and why we do so. It seemed to have fulfilled its purpose. By fragmenting it and putting it into a paper bin, we ended up creating new possibilities.

[...]

If this was possible, what else is possible?

[...]

Me: I am not familiar with letting things die.

    Myself: But are we_ familiar with things dying: can we_ look there? There is a difference between those two things maybe—things dying around us_ and us_ letting things die. I would like to be more familiar with letting things die too.

    I: I find myself going over our lines a few times. And this time, all of a sudden, I read something else: this speaks of denial. Denial of the fact that we_ are actually used to letting things die; we_ do let things die. We_ let people die in the Mediterranean, we_ let species go extinct. So maybe we_ can reframe this: I am not familiar enough with attending to life.

    Myself: And then I thought of this today—am I not also part of what needs to die? And understanding dying not so much as disappearing, but as changing shape. I am realising that the texts of the Decolonial Futures collective that call on us_ to "hospice" the old world and "midwife" a new one are actually calling on us_ to hospice and mid-wife our_-selves. I am being called on to both change shape *and* help shift the shape of...(?). Entangled.

[...]

It is a year now since the big group met in Belgrade for the last part of the facilitated TLJ. And it is only now that I feel like I have found resonating words for how transformative this space has possibly been for me. I would value the TLJ as a space of deep learning, a deepening of what there was before. In our video conversation today, a new reading opened up: What if the TLJ was offering a setting to hospice and midwife? Maybe it was offering a cooking pot and I didn't know what to put in or take out, what to cook at all. But looking back now, maybe I learned (and I am continuously doing so) to turn towards this world with this attitude of hospicing and midwifing. Because there was a space that was hospicing modernity in us_ as participant(s) and midwifing other paths to experiment with.

What if the TLJ was offering a setting to hospice and midwife? Maybe it was offering a cooking pot and I didn't know what to put in or take out, what to cook at all.

[...]

Does my availability for the emergent, for what is present in me, in other people—affectively, cognitively, physically—already bring me to the practice of hospicing? Of midwifing? Do I dare to take the opportunity? Do I hear the call?

    Me fully immersed in this COVID-19 situation—not being able to choose whether to get involved in it or not. *Not* having a choice to get involved: kind of an unfamiliar feeling from a perspective of white colonial privilege. I am used to being in the position to choose if I want to "be in this". Not this time. The storm hits everyone this time but in uneven ways, depending on our respective position in society. Then again, a possibility to choose opens up after all: I *can* choose to be available, daring to hear the call of/for...(?).

    And how to continually locate/return to my discomfort in all of this? I have a tendency to drift towards "we" quite quickly—this is a habit (of privilege? of fear of being vulnerable? of being exposed? of feeling shame?). How to expose this drifting from "I" towards this generalising "we" in this text? And how not to reduce this exposure to a single shape but create more possibilities for cracks to appear? So many ways to experiment with cracks in this habit of generalising my experiences... How to practise finding a way back to this kind of discomfort (over and over again, however fleeting the contact), moving towards the eye of the storm, feeling it. Feeling, too, the cracks, divergences and overlappings that each we_ is made

"Things aren't all so tangible and sayable as people would usually have us believe; most experiences happen in a space that no word has ever entered, and more unsayable than all other things are works of art, those mysterious existences."

– HERMANN HESSE

of. In this text, each we_ is a complex system, constantly moving, impossible to fixate its inner rotation. Each I, also in this text, is partial, shifting and relational.

[...]

I am wondering about the culture our group of participants formed during the TLJ. It started by disrupting common patterns of training settings; I hardly knew up till the end of the training what everyone was working at, what their specific status was. I only learned about certain boxes people would usually place themselves and/or others in much later and, about a lot of them, not at all. And yet we met as a group. We tried to see each other. (I tried). We were seen. (I felt seen). We failed to do so. (I failed to do so). There were moments where I tried to be smart. And where someone offered me an alternative reading which allowed me to step aside. To hold on to ambiguity. To let go the certainty of the professional.

[...]

Early on in the TLJ we were invited to share a wish for us as a group. I wrote "playground" on the paper I laid in the middle of the circle. What I wished for was a flow that would emanate from us experimenting together, to "dig deeper and relate wider" (a mantra of the Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures collective) while being supportive of our own learning journeys and to find curiosity and motivation through the process itself. Now, writing on paper what has emanated from this experience for me after almost two years, I find myself writing "practice ground". Practising being together, staying connected while trying to have difficult conversations around colonial addictions, privileges, decolonising—and being affected by and entangled with all that in different ways. It's one of the jewels that has crystallised for me out of the time we've spent together as a group. Sometimes we (I) had the courage to practise looking at the individual and collective shit we're (I am?) so often denying. Sometimes we (I) failed.

[...]

I feel pretty grateful to be able to continue the conversation with both of you about "things we_ did not touch upon" during the times we were together as a group in the TLJ space. We_ are continuing to examine it, to examine our_selves. There were certainly frustrations that were present in me during the time we had but was I really noticing, or was I "critiquing"?

Now when I try to reconnect to what we did not touch upon during the TLJ times together as a group, words show up—the words we've used to describe what the three of us felt was missing. How can I reach out to spaces beyond words, letting go of the addiction to have it all pinned down? How to open myself up to these beyonds of conventional certainty taking space, growing, proliferating? How not to confuse them with those beyonds that are also present but not often named: hierarchies, (global) power structures, privileges, group dynamics? How to hold myself accountable to (de)colonising interactions beyond words?

How can I reach out to spaces beyond words, letting go of the addiction to have it all pinned down?

[...]

Creating new possibilities: I wonder what made me start exploring different ways of taking notes (writing, sketching). Never had the impulse to picture notes before.

Writing is different from talking with you both, weaving a conversation out of the fragments we co-create, growing together what comes up while listening to you. Writing feels like stiffening the flow of conversation… putting things in their place and holding
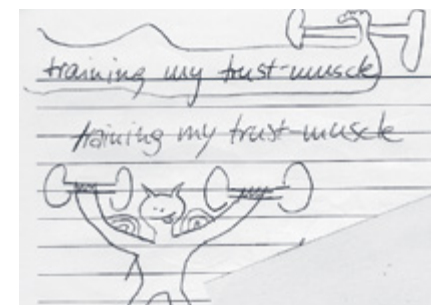
them there… all that colonial patina sticking to it. How to write in a non-sticky way?

And then, what about the words that do find their way in here? Is it important to know who of us, the three co-authors, wrote what? Why do I feel the need to contribute the same volume of words as you and you? Why do I find myself putting somebody else's name (or my own) to words that have found their way here? Unlearning proprietary thinking, un-learning attachment to something apparently mine, unlearning moves like comparison, which draws lines between us. These have been chal-lenges also, as we continue along on this ongoing journey.

[…]

Was the TLJ still about frameworks (disruptive as they were) that we_ could absorb, learn about… acting on the new knowledge…? Did this produce postures, patterns, dynamics that led back to the usual arrange-ments of power? And then, with the group follow-up meeting earlier this year, experimenting as we did with emergent learning principles, did we do this other thing—'linger in the places we are not used to'[1]? I guess we_ did take time to linger, yes.

And there was discomfort—'the place of the decolonial is the site where we sit with the trouble, engaging it, knowing that we are embod-ied by our relationships with our shadows'[32]. During these days, we (I) (un)consciously trained to attend to the unknown, to welcome uncer-tainty and the potential of failure into the room. I know that I found the week intensely difficult. It is strange to think about it now—about how it was almost a training or a preparation for what came next. Just a few days after we separated, shutdowns, lockdowns and stay-homes prolifer-ated as the COVID-19 wave moved across Europe.

Me, staying at home for weeks during the lockdown: a variation of the usual arrangement of power (being able to afford participating in social distancing) and a lingering that I am not used to, in a place that I know.

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32 Ibid.

[…]

Having difficult conversations is difficult. I remember us having a conversation after the big group meetings of the facilitated TLJ and again after we met, self-or-ganised, as a smaller group. It went like this: Now we_ have laid the ground for entering the difficult conversations, now we_ have reached this point, what keeps us_ from entering these conversations? Who is paying the cost for our_ (slow) pace of learning? Who decides on what makes a conversation dif-ficult? We_ were touching on these questions, they were there—and then they were gone again. We_ were constantly failing in facing them. It was and is a dance. One that is different for each of us_.

[…]
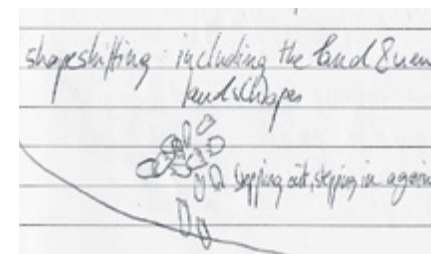
Which entanglements are we_ willing to face?
How many of the shadows did we_ allow in?

[…]

[…]
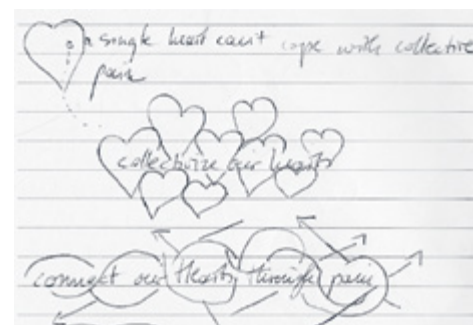
Grief (and I have felt this since that first experience of it, at least an experience that I can name) is kind of a superpower—it's a state that offers some kind of reprieve from attachment (and the fear that comes with losing things); it's swirling, possibility, vulnerability. I am also anticipatorily grieving and with this comes some shame because certain securities brought sustenance and connection and I am afraid of letting these things go, of letting these things die because what will take their place? Oh, I feel nostalgia too. Why this now?

Grief… it feels like a silent song, softly floating through me throughout the day. There are moments like the one tonight, when I was preparing dinner, enjoying the consistency of the dough while forming dumplings. There was a softness not only in the food but in the sound of grief I could hear more clearly. It's a grief accompanied by a kind of relief. A relief that uncertainty is tangible again, not just waiting. Waiting somewhere I cannot directly access. I know it's there, theoretically. In the TLJ there were glimpses in that direction offered. We created such moments ourselves, in our collective performance at the Bridge47 global Event in Belgrade in April 2019, in the setting up of the self-organised smaller group follow-up meeting in Fohrde in March of this year. We faced it sideways and in a playful way. Now it's there, everywhere, in the middle of our_ living rooms, in the headlines of the media we_ consume. It's the new COVID-19 normal without assuming any permanence and certainty.

[…]

I sit at the kitchen table this morning, the silence is only within me—around me, breakfast is happening. I am reading a newspaper article about the corona situation in a hospital in Bergamo, Italy. People dying, silently, alone, the doctors and nurses being caretakers in all possible ways in their professional life, while they sacrifice intimacy and care with their own families. I feel sadness—am I grieving the loss? I am reading a book by Yaa Gyasi, interwoven stories of enslave-

ment and the quest for freedom over centuries. Our_ grief today should learn to encompass these stories, the violence of colonialism, the trauma and the struggles for liberation and self-determination that are inscribed in this current situation. Assuming intellectual accountability for this is a way of hospicing.

[…]

The "normal" that shapes our_ ways of being in this world and the (safe-enough) parameters of the questions we_ hold. The "normal" that often goes unnoticed, taken for granted by privilege. This "normal" has been swept away by corona. Constructed as a "non-normal" called "crisis", I perceive it to be an intensification of capitalist normality. A normality that I've grown into, witnessing how toxic it is to humans and other-than-human. A normality that has invisibilised systemic violence for hundreds of years and continues to do so. A normality that is based on separation and numbs my feelings for the inter-being of everything that exists on this planet. This is the same normality that used to fill the supermarket shelves in this country. I live in it so silently and naturally every day. Now corona makes us_ sit with the vulnerability that hits us_ when we_ find some supermarket shelves empty. Interrupted supply chains—the modern western way of being reminded of the inter-being of everything.

At ease somehow with this shift towards our_ own vulnerabilities, I feel like there is a strong offering in them. An offering we_ can make to others through our_ (educational) work, our_ reaching out to others, our_ presence in the now. Sometimes I dare to do so, sometimes I back off and postpone a little longer. I still find comfort in hiding my vulnerability, my insecurities instead of being open about them. There is still something to learn for me to take this risk.

[…]

In Germany, the greatest voids in the supermarket have been on the toilet paper and flour shelves. What story can these voids tell us_ about our_ denial of inter-being? Or about how our_ modern western habits have been training us_ to disconnect and to default to competition?

I wonder what this run on toilet paper and flour can tell me about the colonial addictions of the society I've grown up in and live in—and about my own addictions. Flour and toilet paper, two traditional ingredients to sustain the dominant western lifestyle. Flour as fuel to keep us_ functioning. Toilet paper as the seemingly indispensable element of letting go—of our shit. I wonder about all the different possibilities of letting go that are waiting for us_ to be explored. Can we_ look there? Currently I feel we_ are keeping our_selves busy by holding on to our_ "normal" way of letting go (that we_ consider to be very "developed"): give it a toilet paper touch and flush it all down—to be never seen again. I wonder: what if we_ took a closer look at our_ shit instead of flushing it down? I wonder: what if we_ focused on processing this shit together? I wonder: what if we_ learned how to become skilful gardeners that would know how to deal with this individual and collective shit in a generative way? Do we_ have the visionary capacities to look there? What if we_ learned how to trans-form our_ shit into compost that could provide nutrients to nourish the anti-colonial imagination? Nutrients to grow and cultivate different ways of being in the world and relating to each other? Do we_ have the courage to look at our_ own shit?

> **I wonder what this run on toilet paper and flour can tell me about the colonial addictions of the society I've grown up in and live in.**

To some extent, the shit, our_ collective shit, is brought into the headlines of newspapers. It seems so evident that cuts in public expenditure and privatising whatever there is in public services for the sake of economising it do not work. Where are we_ now in moving in this cycle of collective (possibly, at least) spring cleaning?

[…]
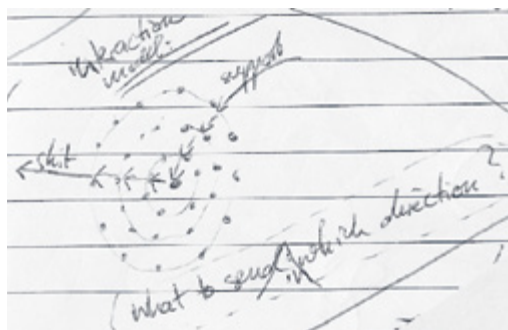
I am seeing some potential in this moment of COVID-19 spreading, but feelings of guilt (shame, if I dig a bit deeper) also accompany that thought track. Am I allowed to find something comfortable, agreeable, promising about now? Or does this stem from my "benefitting from"?

But it's not that we_ chose to be in this. So there we_ are. And we_ have the response-ability to start finding ways to midwife and to hospice.

[…]

Can we_ go further, deeper, harder into questions that we_ fear?

[…]

About Sive, Magdalena and NiNa

Sive Bresnihan is a facilitator/educator in the field of global citizenship education. Since 2016, she has been lucky enough to count herself as part of Comhlámh, an Irish membership organisation that works to mobilise for justice & equality and for a sustainable future. Sive is presently settling into a little cottage in Leitrim—a place that is known for its forests, lakes and fairies and not too far from the Atlantic ocean.

Magdalena Freudenschuss has been engaged in the field of political education on global justice issues for 20 years. Her learning journey has always been strongly tied to feminist theories, social theories, anti-racist work and lately to decolonial thinking and ways of being. She currently works for an NGO in Brandenburg, Germany, a rather rural area.

NiNa Reichert has been on an (un)learning journey for some years now. She is committed to exploring issues of social justice and decolonisation from intersectional perspectives of embodiment and self-reflection. NiNa lives in Berlin, Germany, and has worked in contexts of global justice, antidiscrimination and empowerment with different organisations and as a freelancer.

"There is no mono-we.
There are many usses.
The usses change and
interleave."

– AMAL EL-MOHTAR AND
MAX GLADSTONE

CARMINDA MAC LORIN

TLJ Song

Transformative Learning Journey[33]

How could I imagine that
I would find whispering
My past, our present and their future?
You invited us to walk
Along all those magic trees,
Learning from that secret wisdom
That Filip brought with him.

Transforming what we see
Learning from what's beneath our feet.
Dreaming how the world would be
Beyond the house of modernity.

How could I imagine that
Along that elephant parade
I would find whispering
What I need to build spaces
Open to plurality.
Now I know that with you
I rediscovered the world.

Transforming what I see
Learning from what's beneath my feet.
Dreaming how the world would be
Beyond the house of modernity.

(I will) keep going through this Transformative
Learning
Journey, we will keep building the road.
I commit to Global Citizenship Education
Building peace and hope in the world.

About Carminda

Carminda Mac Lorin is the founder-president of the international nonprofit organization "Katalizo" (www.katalizo.org), and was one of the coordinators of the World Social Forum 2016. Her main focus has been to contribute creatively to global citizenship education, by building online and in person spaces of citizen empowerment (including numerous workshops, mentoring processes, participatory events, etc.). She recently completed her Ph.D. in Applied Human Sciences in the University of Montreal.

33   Listen to the song here: **https://soundcloud.com/basstress-1/ transformative-learning-journey-carminda-mac-lorin**.

"DeGrowth stands for de-colonisation, of both lands and peoples and even our minds. It stands for the de-commodification of public goods and the de-intensification of work and life. It stands for the de-thingification of humans and nature.

DeGrowth begins the process of taking less, but in the end it opens up whole vistas of possibility. It moves us from scarcity to abundance, from extraction to regeneration from dominion to reciprocity and from loneliness and separation to connection with a world that's fizzing with life."

– JASON HICKEL

LIZZY NOONE

Time to imagine a new world through art

I'm by no means an artist but I've always been a doodler and during these days of intermittent lockdowns, I have found myself doodling and painting a lot more than I normally would. So just for fun, I am inviting you to interpret what I've painted here.

I will tell you about what it actually means to me but nothing makes me happier than when someone finds something different in what I paint!

So I will ask a few questions of you, the viewer of my little doodle:

1. Who owns the face?
2. What do the two misshaped rectangles represent?
3. What are the clouds about?

As with many global issues we explore, there are no straight answers to any of these questions.

So what was I trying to say?

The painting came from the feeling of looking at inequality and suffering without ever really experiencing it. We learned how to sit with this uncomfortable feeling throughout Bridge 47's Transformative Learning Journey 2 (TLJ2)—a course I participated in 2019–2020.

The face represents those of us who have had a low-intensity struggle in the world while at the same time living and benefitting in and from the systems and structures that cause inequality. Right behind the iris of the eye is our Mr Hyde to our Dr Jekyll and a yin yang sign representing the contradictions and hypocrisy that happens as a result. This also dou-

"Eyes Wide Open to Inequality"

bles up as a trophy reminding us that we live in a consumer society so there are shiny things there that blur our eyesight from looking at these inequalities. There are shiny things that stop us doing anything real about it as not many people want to change their secure lives to address inequality.

Bridge 47's Transformative Learning Journey worked through how to sit with all of our contradictions so the tears come but on cheeks of entitlement, fear and accumulation. The face is adorned with beautiful jewels and patterns acquired possibly from far-away places, representing cultural appropriation[34].

The eye is staring at a very unequal equal sign: the upper one showing war, debt, extraction, and destruction—the often hidden costs of an unsustainable world. The lower one represents this wealth, excess and indulgence: for example, it has a Knickerbocker glory, an ice-cream popular in the 1980s, which I put there to represent affluenza and the growth of an increasingly consumer individualistic society in the West.

The upper equal sign has a large cloud above it that will "always imagine" and features Horizons of Hope[35], another social cartography developed by the Gesturing Towards Decolonizing Futures[36]. This is one of several social cartographies used in their useful resource, Global Citizenship Education Otherwise[37]. The cloud symbolises wisdom, exploring the unknown to find a different way of doing, thinking and being—not universal reason that has always been there for those living in this rectangle.

This social cartography offers a horizon of hope beyond the modern paradigm by centring the earth and employing an organic and metabolic metaphor.

The two clouds in the lower part of the picture that have been sneezed out of the face in small Coronaviruses accompany the lower part of the

equal sign. They are still small; one is love and one is a call to "imagine a new world". Let's make these clouds bigger and venture into the unknown. Perhaps, along the way, we will find a way to a fairer world.

Art and Global Citizenship Education (GCE)

Painting and doodling my thoughts got me thinking of the crucial role art plays in how we see the world and therefore it is a powerful tool for Global Citizenship Education[38]. I truly believe we are all visual learners and that learning is stirred through creative processes —so how can it not be! There are many long and short definitions of Global Citizenship Education but let's just say it's an educational process that empowers us to transform ourselves and the world around us.

If we look at the components that make up GCE—Knowledge, Skills, Values and Attitudes, and Action and the Methodologies that underpin how it is delivered, we can easily explore the benefits of using art.

Knowledge
Art is used as a stimulus to critically question and think about the world. WorldWise Global Schools outline how to do this in the classroom in their Doing DE in Visual Art[39] but there are many resources that are available to assist educators to use art as a tool for several audiences.

On a personal level, art helps me process my learning, express my opinions and beliefs and articulate to myself (sometimes to others) complex global issues. It also helps me to reflect on my learning, it allows me into that space where your learning can be digested. To be honest, art has always got me through life and I don't think I'm alone in that!

The picture "Eyes Wide Open to Inequality" is not exactly art but a glorified doodle, a bit of a mind splurge during COVID-19 times while I was reading Jason Hickel's *The Divide*[40] and completing the amazing

34 https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/apr/29/cultural-appropriation-racial-oppression-exploitation-colonialism.
35 https://decolonialfutures.net/in-earths-care-dispositions/.
36 https://decolonialfutures.net/.
37 https://decolonialfutures.net/gce/.

38 Get examples of using Art for GCE here: https://developmenteducation.ie/feature/doing-development-education-ideas-and-resources-a-starter-guide/8-using-art/.
39 http://www.worldwiseschools.ie/resource-item/de-junior-cycle-visual-art/
40 https://www.jasonhickel.org/the-divide-a must read for anyone interested in global justice.

Bridge 47's Transformative Learning Journey 2 (TLJ2) course action experiment. There is a lot to process on this course as we looked at the unprecedented challenges we face today, not related to a lack of information or problem-solving skills, but to a habit of being and existing in the world that is jeopardising the future of our species in a finite planet. Much of the course is based on the theories of Gesturing Towards Decolonizing Futures[41], a collective of educators, artists, and activists that I referred to above.

We can explain many global issues and their root causes through **art history**. We have plenty of examples of how art has been used socially, economically, and politically through the ages. Protest art[42] has long been used to get a message across, sometimes in the subtlest ways. Art has also had a strong role in propaganda or has been secretly supported for political reasons. One of the most interesting cases being The CIA and abstract expressionism[43] explored by Irish artist, Blindboy Boatclub, in his podcasts on art and social justice.

> **We have plenty of examples of how art has been used socially, economically, and politically through the ages.**

Values and Attitudes

Whereas the facts we read in history books give us just that, art through history can show how societies were feeling and how it felt to exist at a certain time, in a certain place. Through history we can also identify who has been excluded from art e.g. Rococo art. This can help us tap into looking at values and attitudes important to GCE, such as solidarity and empathy. Art challenges and unsettles our relationship with the world and the world's relationship with us.

Art can help us to explore multiple perspectives. In one classroom or group, participants will express ideas very differently to one another. Art can also help us change our mind about issues as it provides us with a window to the soul and the heart of the artist.

Skills

For Global Citizenship Education, artistic skill is not important—in fact, I truly believe that everyone has some level of innate artistic skill. I am not an artist but I love to engage with it. We must acknowledge also that visual art takes many forms and each one is a skill in itself that can be used as tools in education about global issues e.g. The Positive Energy Quilters in Canada[44].

Art can help to build many other skills including the following:

- **Visual thinking encourages our brain to work in a different, less linear, way**
- **The skill of critically thinking and questioning, the skill of thinking outside the box**
- **The skill of seeing multiple perspectives are all skills that can happen through taking an artistic approach to your Global Citizenship Education**

Methodologies

The ways we employ to teach and learn underpin Global Citizenship Education. Our common engagement with art is more often than not passive: viewing someone else's interpretation of the world—using art as a starting point, a source of philosophical enquiry and debate, inviting people to explore, question and create is where art is most often used in education.

Art really comes into its own as a methodology for Global Citizenship Education when it is done as a process of community or collective expression bringing people together in solidarity, allowing for multiple perspectives.

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41   **https://decolonialfutures.net**
42   There is a vast amount of information on protest art–this Guardian article gives you some good examples **https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2017/sep/06/a-brief-history-of-protest-art-from-the-1940s-until-now-whitney-new-york**.
43   **https://play.acast.com/s/blindboy/abstractartandthecia**.

44   https://www.developmenteducationreview.com/issue/issue-2/fabric-crafts-and-poetry-art-development-education-canada.

Social cartographies, a participatory method of collective research—such as the House That Modernity Built[45] (my own crazy version pictured here)—used on the Transformative Learning Journey are useful for both the participants involved in the process of their development and for those experiencing them through workshops.

The House that Modernity Built, one of the social cartographies developed by the Gesturing Towards Decolonizing Futures collective offers us a way to describe our world and what is wrong with it. The House is a social cartography that presents one way of diagnosing current and past crises. The metaphor of the House that Modernity Built shows a shaky house that people inside the house continue to cling to. The house also hides all the hidden costs of keeping this house standing and it features in my doodle "Eyes wide open to inequality".

Graphic harvesting is also a much-used tool in GCE. It has been used to illustrate complexity so that everyone can understand and can be used in a participatory way with one graphic recorder gathering different perspectives.

Murals as social practice

Murals are very practical media that can be used to express an opinion or belief, send a message or make a call to action.

I think they really come into their own when they bring communities together and are used as a process and a tool of engagement and action. This is a medium I've employed over the years to do just that. This summer,
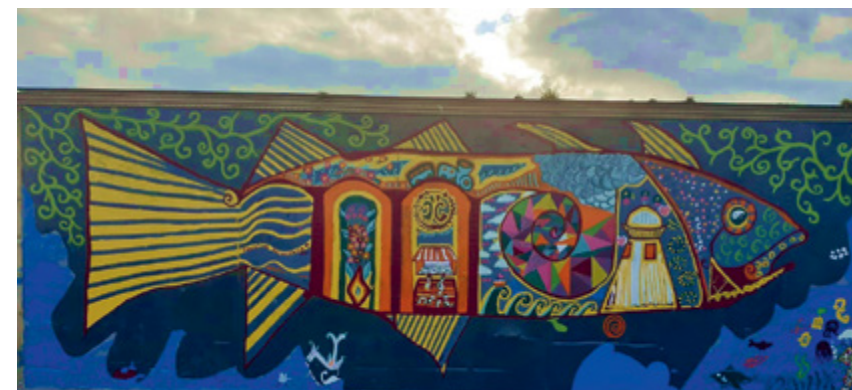

Figure 1 The Fish Mural that started the Balbriggan Mural Club messages about peace and planet that were written by over 100 members of the community on the fish's fins

I started a community mural painting group bringing diverse members of the community together—our common interest in art has truly knocked down barriers and created a space for dialogue that may not have happened without our focus on the creative process.

Action

If social justice is a way of thinking about the world and discussing its many faults and problems, then art is a way of interpreting these thoughts and bringing them to the attention of the public. In this way art is clearly a powerful political tool — *John Johnston[46], Belfast artivist*

I could give numerous examples here of how art has been used as a political tool to take meaningful action on global justice. I could also give several examples of how it has been used as a political tool for less worthy causes and indeed has shaped whole populations' way of thinking and being.

Art, since ancient Rome, has been used as a powerful propaganda tool to influence whole communities, whole nations and populations' beliefs and attitudes. However, in order not to use art as a tool for indoctrination,

45   https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15595692.2017.1291501.

46   https://www.youtharts.ie/articles/art-social-justice-and-political-activism/.

we should see art more as an open process in which learners engage with different perspectives and shape their own opinions.

Art is used as a form of protest[47] and alongside protest and will continue to be, a recent example being in response to the murder of George Floyd[48] and the Black Lives Matter movement where artists had a captive audience (given that it was during a pandemic) and an influential role to play in the campaign.

This summer I was lucky enough to get a spot on the course "Artivism" run by Creativity and Change[49], which runs a programme of transformative learning experiences that connect the head, hand and heart and nurture competencies of global citizens that are important for the sustainable future of our world. Artivism uses creativity to raise awareness, mobilise and inspire the participants and spectators to take political action. The course was adapted for online tools we can all use to take Artivism so I leave you with one simple task:

- **Decide what change you'd like to see in the world**
- **Make a piece of art digitally or otherwise with a message about this change**
- **Share it or paste it on a wall somewhere**
- **Wait and see what happens!**

Every one of us can engage with art and use it as a powerful tool for global justice—no time like now to start!

About Lizzy

Lizzy Noone works for WorldWise Global Schools—a Global Citizenship Education programme for secondary schools in Ireland and has worked in this area for 22 years, previously working on Concern's Active Citizenship programme.

She is passionate about changing the world through education, art, music and theatre and exploring the root causes of global issues and systematic change. You can reach her at lizzy.noone@worldwiseschools.ie.

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47 https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/jeremy-deller-3034/art-protest.
48 https://time.com/5846424/george-floyd-protests-art/.
49 https://www.creativityandchange.ie is a programme of CIT Crawford College of Art

"You are a fully embodied being who had never been separated from other biological beings both inside and outside your body, not for one second. You aren't outside the biosphere looking in. You are glued to it, in a way that's much more super than super glue."

– TIMOTHY MORTON

TIMO HOLTHOFF

In the dark woods, the sun: A decolonisation analogy

One day I went into a dark forest—a place I don't know, what I usually try to avoid. But I was burning from the sun and so it seemed more tempting than usual to seek the shadow of the woods. Once I stepped inside the forest, its coolness began soothing the pain of my skin. I found pleasure in these lands and started wandering a bit without a sense of time. At some point I had strayed from the path and after a while I realised that I was lost. In my attempts to find my way out again, I only got deeper and deeper into the dark forest. I started walking faster, changing direction erratically, looking for a clear path, but it just made me lose any sense of orientation. Alone in the darkness, fear rose in me, my heart beating wildly. I began to run in panic and without any direction. The shades of green and brown seemed to blur and spin around me, shadows of trees turned into monsters, the forest was closing in on me. Then all of a sudden, I stumbled over something hard and fell to the ground. My scream cut through the thick silence of the forest. It made me halt and pause. I checked what I had stumbled over. I could not see the ground as a veil of fog was covering it. With my hands I felt the stony object that had stopped my run. I blew the fog away and saw that it was a modest tombstone, covered almost entirely by vegetation. I scratched off some moss to see the inscription. It said

HUMANITY
Died (bravely) of Civilisation

I frowned in surprise. I read the inscription out loud, said these words again and again, let them flow around my tongue. I was mesmerised by their peculiarity but I could not make any sense of them and of this grave.

Curiosity got hold of my entire body and as odd as it seemed to me, I put my hands into the cold wet soil and started digging. The deeper I dug, the more it felt like I was digging into my own intestines. But I could not stop. The soil started to feel warm and worms crawled through my fingers as I got deeper. Inside the grave some shape materialised underneath my searching hands. I discovered a human skeleton. I brushed off the dirt, sat back and looked down into the hole, stunned into paralysis. I took the skull into my hands and lifted it. Gazing into its hollow eyes, it suddenly dawned on me: the skeleton was mine. I dropped the skull and jumped back. My body shivered in shock and disbelief. I felt a desperate yearning from the bottom of my heart to make this body whole again, to bring it back to life. But how to revive a skeletonised body?—it is impossible! Pain and despair gripped me and I crouched down inside the opened grave in agony for a long while, gently petting and grieving over the weathered bones, with my tears forming bubbles of mud in the soil.

Then, something touched my cheek, gently. I lifted and turned my head—it was a branch of a tree that bowed in the wind. I looked up and saw a giant tree with scarred bark; it must have been centuries old or even millennia. I recognised that its mighty roots were coming out of the grave, with thin extensions entangled with parts of the bones. The tree had grown from the soil of the composted body of which only the skeleton remained. The thought calmed me. I looked up again and saw that the tree was bearing a fruit. I had not seen this kind of tree or fruit before and did not know if it was edible or poisonous. But since I felt this emptiness in my stomach, I took the risk of plucking the fruit and ate it. It tasted bitter-sweet and made me fall into a long, hallucinogenic sleep.

I woke up with the singing of a bird. It sat high up in the crown of the tree and sang its beautiful song. Through the song, quite to my surprise, it told a story from my great-grandmother. It was not an accurate story and not fully comprehensible. But it gave me a direction. Following it, I found an unknown path that unfolded under my feet as I walked it, leading me

out of the darkness. And while I was walking towards the margins of the woods with my senses newly awakened, I saw that I had just stumbled over the edge of what appeared to be an endless cemetery. And I sensed that I was not the only human being in the forest. There were others who were digging and walking with me.

When I finally stepped out of the woods, the sun made me smile again.

About Timo

As a Bridge 47 staff member, Timo Holthoff was co-initiator and one of the facilitators of the Transformative Learning Journey. He leads the team for Innovation and Capacity Building of the Bridge 47 project. For 10 years, he has been curiously searching for approaches to transformative learning and is constantly trying and failing to decolonise his notion of knowing, sensing and being.

"Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day I can hear her breathing."

– ARUNDHATI ROY

NAOMI GICHURU

Education for positive change

Transforming the "valley of death" to a valley of life

The Suguta valley is one of the rich areas in the North Rift region of Kenya bordering three counties, namely Turkana, Samburu and Pokot. The entire area has been a hotspot for cattle theft/raids as it is well hidden between hills and valleys with numerous caves, making the terrain complicated. Security agents find it difficult to access and many lives have been lost while attempting to follow stolen livestock. The valley is home to the pastoralist communities due to its abundant resources, which are diminishing due to climatic changes and overgrazing. This has brought strife and fierce competition over scarce natural resources, necessitating each community to arm their warriors for protection resulting in vicious retaliatory cattle raids. This is largely fuelled by cultural beliefs that to be a famous warrior you have to raid and bring home large herds of cattle. Raids are done by a group of same-age warriors and when they succeed and go back home they are received as heroes and treated with respect and high esteem in the society. This makes mothers very proud and they all want their girls to get married to the famous warriors because they are seen as wealthy.

Introduction

With the world's connectivity in technology and trade also came mobile phones and harmful gadgets, such as sophisticated arms. The easy access to and proliferation of small arms and light weapons from porous borders of neighbouring countries brought arms to warriors in many pastoralist communities, increasing their capacity/strength to raid for economic gain. As a result, other communities in the region found it necessary to arm their warriors for retaliation attacks and protection and this made the once-peaceful Suguta valley a battlefield and a hiding place for stolen livestock. All peace-building approaches/efforts in the region earlier failed because of the huge number of

A transformational fire started in Fohrde continues burning in Kenya

arms in the area, causing it to become known as "The Valley of Death". A team of peacebuilders came together, prepared to work step by step with the locals to tackle the root causes of the ever more frequent conflict and look for sustainable solutions for peace and tranquillity in the region.

Negative effects of global changes

Global changes coupled with developmental evils travel fast and the impact is being felt, even in less developed areas like Suguta valley. Substance abuse and the rampant misuse of illegal arms has locked development out from the area as investors are scared to venture into the insecure region. Education in the region is given little or no consideration as little interaction takes place with the surrounding developed areas for fear of attack. The locals are therefore left to do the only thing they know—raids and counter-raids that look like a web with no end. This is

seen as being loyal to the community, observing the cultural values of fighting the enemy and bringing wealth to the community.

For peace to be achieved, social change and peace-building had to start with building relationships at an individual level to combat collective fears and anxieties, build hope, empathy and compassion and increase trust with the locals to produce any meaningful change. To progressively build such interpersonal skills and solve the root causes of conflict in the area, education is proving to be critical and needs a vigorous and consistent approach to get locals to appreciate and embrace the change and open up to learning new ways of life.

Social/natural connectedness

The transformative learning journey, knowledge and skills to find the root causes and move together to sustainable solutions are well under progress and there is hope for peace in the area being achieved through educating and training locals, including members of armed groups. They are being given alternative livelihoods by showing them how to engage in other economic activities, such as communal farming, for the youth and abandon cattle rustling while strengthening harmonious co-existence with the neighbours.

Social change and peace-building had to start with building relationships at an individual level to combat collective fears and anxieties, build hope, empathy and compassion.

In order to manage the huge number of livestock, many communities keep their children at home to herd them while grazing, and they do not value education. To change this, a recommendation for border schools, where all the children from neighbouring communities can go to school and learn to live together, is seen as one way of shifting the communities' cultural belief of always fighting each other and acquiring more wealth as the youth will start learning new ways of life which will bring change with time.

Achievements:

Through a multi-agency approach by peacebuilders and other relevant stakeholders, positive changes are being made in many areas including:

Creating social integration avenues which had been closed for years due to conflict. For example, common markets were closed for a long period, hindering interaction and peaceful co-existence in the region.

Locals are introduced to early warning/early response mechanisms to enable them to take responsibility for monitoring their own peace. They are empowered to resolve their conflicts before they flare into violence and come up with sustainable solutions in the form of agreements and enforcement procedures.

Peace activities and livelihood change is enabling the warriors to be positive role models for the younger generation to start changing their perceptions of prosperity and development.

In most of these communities women had no voice, but education and empowerment have seen them being accepted as "peace wakers" and a group called "Women Peace" was founded as women in any society are the keepers of peace with influence at home where everyday decisions are mostly made.

Most of the communities are now calling for the "peace team" to visit their area and educate them on how to achieve peace, saying: "We are tired of conflicts and losing our young people in the fights. We want peace".

Conclusion

By addressing illiteracy, which was ranked number one in a study of the impediments to peace in the North Rift Region of Kenya, positive change is emerging in the region. Many of the young people are being enrolled in school instead of herding cattle. Parents who were earlier opposed to their children going to school to take care of the family herds are now supporting education by adopting new methods of grazing and releasing their children to go school. As days go by, and more children become educated in the modern way of living, there is hope of increased peace

and security in the area as the need for cattle rustling will be eradicated, development will take shape and continuous conflicts will be eradicated.

About Naomi

Naomi Gichuru holds an MA in international conflict management and a BA in business management and administration. She is a member of CAO (Country Administrator Ombudsman, Washington DC), where she is in charge of East African region, and a member of Institute of Chartered Mediators and Conciliators (ICMC) and is also a court annexed mediator. A social research practitioner having carried out research in issues affecting cohesion and integration in Kenya for over five years. Has a long experience in peace building/conflict resolution having worked in the field for over ten years.

"The times are urgent, let's slow down!

Falling might very well be flying without the tyranny of coordinates. We have to get lost, to find our way home."

– BAYO AKOMOLAFE

SABINE VON BARGEN

Transformation

Wooden stick, shell, feather, candle
Formed a wheel of medicine
In our middle
And could not prevent that
While we had moments of peace
With ancestors and descendants
Hatred stamped, killing two humans
Attacking a synagogue on Yom Kippur
In the middle of Germany
In the middle of the day
Theories of change are such weak weapons
Against all that inhumanity, greed,
arrogance and pride
But
Pride goes before a fall
So, friends, let us go outside

Find the flax of love and
The hemp of hope
Let us wind it into ropes
And tie a strong net
Of humanity, humility and mindfulness
To strengthen and empower us
For reaching out hands,
opening hearts and bringing peace
As water erodes rocks
Let us make the world a better place
Even for those who have lost their loved ones
So that at the end of the day
We can take the guitar and sing
Songs of love
And hope
And confidence.

About Sabine:
Sabine works as a consultant for volunteers at
Brot für die Welt, a German NGO in Berlin. She is
active in the space of Global and Transformative
Learning.

One year after TLJ – Reflections

During the follow-up meeting in Fohrde, participants gathered their re-flections on the impact that the TLJ had on them. These reflections give insights into what elements of the TLJ worked well for them and why and also give suggestions as to what to do differently or explore further.

Meta-reflections on the longer-term impact of TLJ and what has supported it

Ivan: When talking to others about the TLJ, I described it as a training course for people working in the field of GCE to reflect on how their personal values and questions intersect with what they are doing in their work. It was also a call to evaluate where changes could be made to remain more true to one's personal calling and the calling of a world in trouble. Listening to people's stories about what happened in the year following our last meeting, I feel like this is the level at which the TLJ had its most profound impact. The follow-up meeting was an attempt to live up to some of the questions and challenges set out in the first meetings. How can we shape a learning space that doesn't operate according to familiar ways of doing things? How can we go into the unknown together and work more intuitively with what needs addressing? How can we work without a leader, and take this as a chance to reflect on how we each exert our power in a learning space? Our follow-up meeting was an experiment that proves that such a mode of working can indeed be more effective, because it allows us to really respond to what is living in a group. I think that this is a step forward from the previous sessions in terms of learning, and it shows that there are a commitment and capacity to change the ways of GCE to become more connective and creative and less about working from assumptions about what does and does not work and what can and cannot be done.

Sive: The longer-term impact of the TLJ as an educational course possibly lies in its foundation - which, as I understand it, was to dig deeper into why we work in GCE and what connects us to the work. This is as opposed to a more conventional approach which would have us look a bit at ourselves, but 'ultimately' be about familiarising ourselves with 'methods', 'tools' and so on that could be replicated in/applied back to our respective settings with participants. This represents quite a significant departure from other GCE educational courses – which are designed as things to consume or things that might 'activate' us – and allows, ultimately, for different impacts. When we turn inward – considering how and why we respond to things/ considering what it means to engage in space/and with others/ and with particular frameworks without expectation that the experience will have immediate 'applicability' – the engagement feels different and the outcomes are different. I think it goes some way to explain the varied and multilayered journeys that people from TLJ 1 took following the course (and this is about more than personal or professional – because TLJ did not make these distinctions).

NiNa: The longer-term impact of the TLJ as an educational course for me was to find myself in a framing that refused to work with set expectations in conventional forms, proposing cornerstones for the journey at the same time (workshops, action experiment). This felt very liberating and motivating to me since it allowed me to explore more deeply the expectations inside myself taking shape – and thus become more deeply aware of what is present in my everyday, informing my ways of being, acting and my work (often subconsciously). I found it supportive as a GCE trainer to have the space to explore these configurations together and connect it to the collective (educational) space that has been shaped by western ontology, dominant ways of being in the world and have shaped me, too. Becoming aware of this connection I find crucial for my work as a GCE trainer since I believe that I need to be aware of the socio-political framework that has shaped and continue to shape the questions we hold, the ways we relate to ourselves and each other, the ways we relate to the "private" and the "political". GCE means to me co-creating spaces for people and myself to become (more) aware of these constellations to create more possibilities together than those that we have found possible so far.

The TLJ course with its focus on relationality and trust as basics of the personal and collective experiences (this was how it felt to me) impacted my work in the sense that I could practice being in this TLJ space and through that exploring new ways of how to be together, how to have conversations beyond focussing on agreement as the basis of connection. I feel that there are very important learnings to me that will certainly impact my work and my being in this world that is yet to come.

Magdalena: The questions that I took along from the TLJ certainly impacted my professional attitude. I deepened my continuous reflections in particular concerning my role as a trainer. My action experiment during the TLJ already focused on my own role in educational settings as the one who holds and shapes the space for others to learn. I continued to experiment with this role, but also with other 'ingredients' of educational settings. In my train-the-trainer courses the moments of pushing the edges of the known plays a major role by now. I think that we learnt this about everyone's journey after the TLJ during the follow-up-workshop. Many of us were challenged by the TLJ to look and feel out for the edges, for the unknown and there was a great appreciation of expanding one's vision. I do see a major educational impact in this dynamic as it demands of us as GCE trainers not to take concepts for granted but to embrace possibilities of change in their making.

Eliana: In the beginning, I found it difficult to get involved in the journey because I found the approach irritating at first. I found myself participating in the training with my professional role and at the same time as a private person. This challenge accompanied me throughout the whole journey. I wanted to find answers that would help me in my role as an educator and that would provide answers to the fundamental problems of our world (tackling the root causes), but I realized that it is important to allow questions to which we do not find easy answers. To learn that it is not only about what we can see and understand, but also about things we do not know, has challenged me and opened up new perspectives. Especially the last meeting helped to understand and allow that.

New ideas for a different practice of similar programs in the future

Ivan: The follow-up meeting allowed us to learn from each other how life evolved after the TLJ and what changes people made in their private and professional contexts following on from the reflections and questions raised in the first meetings. Because of the emergent format, without a plan and a leader, we intuitively allowed more time to share our experiences of what it was that we were doing and to dive deeper into questions and issues as they emerged. Since we did not have a program to follow, we could be more spontaneous, and this allowed us to go deeper, where in the previous TLJ meetings we perhaps stayed more at the surface because we had to move on to the next exercise.

Whilst I think that the experimental and emergent set up of the follow-up meeting worked really well, I think it did so because a basis of mutual trust and a shared vocabulary had already been established. I am not sure how such an approach would work with a new group, especially one that is larger and perhaps more diverse than the 10 people we were in the follow-up meeting with.

Perhaps an interesting question could be how future TLJ learning spaces can be shaped in a way that embodies the emergent, creative, and connective ethos more explicitly. This would mean revisiting the format of 'exercises' as a way to structure a course and considering to allow more space to dive deeper into questions and issues as experienced by the group in the moment.

Sive: As above (Ivan's point) – how to bring more of the emergent practice into the TLJ learning spaces? The emergent way (let us say, absence of programme and facilitator) also opens up significant questions around power and dynamics within a group and so (potentially) is a way to stimulate the kinds of explorations (and capacities for...) that decolonial theories and pedagogies are interested in.

NiNa: Maybe not "new" ideas but threads that I would like to follow up on:

Creating agreements: reflecting on our experience alone and in conversations, I found it even more important than before to take time in the beginning to find forms of amorphe agreements: What are we willing to let go? What are we willing to open up to? What do we want to practice together? How? How do we want to deal with what will be missing? How to engage with "critical connections"?

Facilitation: What is more easy/difficult to touch with(out) facilitation? How does facilitation open up/close spaces? How would it be to experiment within one training with(out) facilitation – e.g. having a facilitated framing and offering one full day for the group without a fixed programme and facilitation as a day of "practicing differently" (frame this day not as a space that works with already existing formats that allows participants to fall back into already known practices, e.g. "open space", but tune the participants into a common responsibility from the beginning that informs the presence during the whole training but that is practiced in different ways with(out) facilitation).

Have a long debrief in the evening with a focus on personal and collective self-reflection: How did this experience affect our presence? Our accountability to have difficult conversations and focussing on feelings connected, that we see reflected on the personal level inside the group, especially when it comes to power structures? How do I hold myself and the group accountable for reflecting on privileges, discriminations and acting on them? How do we deal with the gap between knowing/feeling and acting according to what we feel would be important to address with(out) facilitation? Why? How do I react to unfamiliar situations? How do I adapt to them? What do my default modes feel and look like and what do I need to open up to a range of possibilies that I can chose from to react to emergence? How do I react when I feel things are missing? How do we practice transformation together? This experience is personal and collective at the same time – depending on a specific constellationship of people who where there.

"We have to create miracles. A miracle is not the intersession of an external divine agency in violation of the laws of physics. A miracle is simply something that is impossible from an old story but possible from within a new one. There is a more beautiful world our hearts know is possible."

– CHARLES EISENSTEIN