

Hans Karl Peterlini, Christiane Faymann,
Elia Rinne (eds.)

FROM GRASSROOTS TO GLOBAL

Local Practices and Planetary Perspectives
of Global Citizenship Education

[transcript] Educational Research

Hans Karl Peterlini, Christiane Faymann, Elia Rinne (eds.)
From Grassroots to Global

Hans Karl Peterlini is a professor of education at the University of Klagenfurt in Austria and founder of the Unesco Chair on Global Citizenship Education – Culture of Diversity and Peace. His main research interest is on how individuals and societies can learn to improve their living conditions, develop a culture of peace, deal better with inequalities and take care for the planet.

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Creating a Space of Scientific and Civic Engagement

Background and core elements of an adventure called “GloCo”: The Global Campus Online and its projects on Global Citizenship Education

Hans Karl Peterlini

“Global Campus Online started as just an idea—a way to break out of the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, driven by the need to step out of the comfort zone of the Global North and engage with other parts of the world. We had no funding, no concrete plan, and no idea if it would work. We just did it. And it worked!”

This volume emerges from the work of the UNESCO Chair on “Global Citizenship Education—Culture of Diversity and Peace” at the University of Klagenfurt, first established in 2020. From its inception, the Chair has not been conceived as a place of only academic discourse, but as a space of scientific and civic engagement—one that resists the temptation to observe the world from a distance and instead insists on being implicated in it. It is, jokely spoken, not a chair to ‘sit down’ and rest, but a platform from which to question, to connect, and to act.

The contributions gathered here are closely linked to one of the Chair's core initiatives, the Global Campus Online (GloCo). As a transnational, participatory learning environment, GloCo has brought together people from all continents, and also from different disciplines and life contexts—scholars, students, educators, activists, and practitioners—who share a common concern: how can we respond to the entangled crises of our time. One answer was that we would have to put Global Citizenship Education into practice as a genuine approach to change and as a North-South exchange. While the project itself will be introduced in greater detail in the following chapter, it is important to emphasize from the outset that GloCo is not merely a platform for discussing Global Citizenship Education (GCED). It is an attempt to enact it—through dialogue, through experimentation, and through the often fragile process of learning with and from one another.

This book grows out of that process. It assembles a range of grassroots initiatives that take the challenge of translating global concerns into local practices seriously. Global justice, climate change, social inequality, gender gap, migration, questions of peace and conflict—these are not abstract issues ‘out there,’ but lived realities that unfold in specific places, within particular histories and conditions. The projects presented here show how such realities can be engaged through situated, relational, and open-ended educational practices. They remind us that the ‘global’ does not precede the ‘local,’ but becomes visible, tangible, and contestable through it.

Global Citizenship Education itself is marked by a productive tension. On the one hand, it is promoted as a key educational response to global challenges, aiming to foster responsibility, solidarity, and the capacity to act in an interconnected world. On the other hand, it resists easy definition. Its promises can appear too broad, its concepts too open, and its expectations too ambitious. Rather than attempting to resolve these ambiguities, this volume approaches them as part of the very condition of Global Citizenship Education: a field that must remain unsettled if it is to remain meaningful.

In this context, the distinction between different orientations within GCED becomes particularly relevant. Vanessa Andreotti's dis-

inction between *soft* and *critical* approaches has drawn attention to how educational practices can either reproduce or challenge existing global inequalities. While “soft” approaches often emphasize empathy, awareness, and individual responsibility, critical perspectives insist on confronting the historical and structural dimensions of injustice, including colonial legacies, power asymmetries, and epistemic hierarchies. They ask not only how we can respond to global problems, but how we are already entangled in them.

Yet even this critical stance is not the final horizon. Andreotti’s proposal of a Global Citizenship Education *otherwise* suggests a further step—one that is less about refining existing frameworks than about recognizing their limits. It calls for an engagement with complexity that cannot be fully contained within familiar narratives of progress, control, or solution. To think GCED *otherwise* is to remain attentive to what exceeds our categories, to what resists translation, and to what challenges our own assumptions about knowledge, responsibility, and action. It is an invitation to approach education not only as a space of answers, but as a space where difficult questions can be held.

Many of the initiatives presented in this book resonate with such an orientation. They do not present themselves as models to be replicated, nor as solutions to be scaled up without friction. Instead, they offer situated responses—partial, provisional, and often experimental. They engage with the tensions between intention and impact, between learning and unlearning, between global aspirations and local constraints. In doing so, they make visible a form of Global Citizenship Education that is less about certainty than about attentiveness, less about mastery than about relation.

This perspective also shifts how we understand education more broadly. Global Citizenship Education, in this sense, is not an additional subject or a clearly bounded field. It is a way of approaching education that challenges familiar separations—between ‘us’ and ‘others,’ between local and global, between knowledge and responsibility. It foregrounds interdependence, vulnerability, and the need to think and act across differences. In this, it intersects with traditions of peace education, human rights education, and education for sustainable development,

while also pushing beyond them by insisting on a deeper reflection on how we come to know the world and our place within it. Global Citizenship Education means engaging in caring for humans and nature at the grassroots level and in the planetary dimension. The change has to begin at your door, with a perspective for a world that can no longer be divided.

The projects collected in this volume make these reflections tangible. They show that Global Citizenship Education takes shape not in abstract frameworks but in concrete encounters—in classrooms, communities, and collaborative spaces where people engage with one another across boundaries. At the same time, they do not conceal the difficulties of such work. Educational initiatives alone cannot resolve structural inequalities, nor can they escape the conditions in which they are embedded. What they can do, however, is to open spaces in which new forms of understanding, connection, and action become possible.

In this sense, the book can be read both as a documentation and as an invitation. It documents experiences, practices, and reflections that have emerged within and around the Global Campus Online. But it also invites readers to approach Global Citizenship Education as an ongoing, unfinished process—one that requires critical awareness, humility, and a willingness to remain engaged even in the absence of clear solutions.

Perhaps this is where the work of the Chair, and the contributions gathered here, find their common ground: in the refusal to settle for easy answers, and in the insistence that education must remain responsive to a world that is itself in motion. To take Global Citizenship Education seriously, in this sense, is not to arrive at a stable position, but to stay with the questions that connect us—across places, perspectives, and possibilities.

Finally, this volume would not have been possible without the commitment, creativity, and perseverance of many people. Our sincere thanks go to the core team of the Global Campus Online—Christiane Faymann, Elia Rinne, and Jasmin Donlic—whose dedication has been central to the project's development and realization. We also gratefully acknowledge the funding provided by the Land Kärnten (Carinthia), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), and the Federal Ministry for

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A Laboratory for Change and Exchange

Project Report about GloCo—the Global Campus Online

Elia Rinne

“It has been a lived experience of what it means to build community across borders, time zones, and perspectives—and how worthwhile that is.”

Abstract: *This report presents the Global Campus Online (GloCo), already described in the introduction of this book. Against the backdrop of accelerating societal change, the project situates Global Citizenship Education (GCED) as a transdisciplinary framework that fosters critical reflection, global awareness, and local engagement. The report traces the development of GloCo from its initial structure of dialogue groups to a more flexible model of open, thematic transnational meetings, highlighting the role of participatory methods, expert input, and grassroots project work. Particular attention is given to the emergence of locally grounded best-practice initiatives that translate GCED principles into concrete action and help address global challenges such as climate change, social inequality, migration, and peacebuilding.*

Keywords: *Global Citizenship Education (GCED); Transformative Learning; Digital Learning Networks; Grassroots Initiatives; Global-Local (Glocal) Perspectives; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*

Project Members

Hans Karl Peterlini, Italy, Austria, Lead | Christiane Faymann, Austria, Coordinator | Elia Rinne, Austria, Research assistant | Jasmin Donlic, Austria, Administrator

Introduction

The early 21st century is characterized by significant societal transformations and an accelerated pace of social change. The world is becoming increasingly complex and globally interconnected. The current political, economic, and sociocultural developments, therefore, require more than ever a global perspective and an interdisciplinary approach to make sense of them.

This interconnected reality also especially calls for a shift in educational perspectives and practices; for approaches that move beyond the mere transmission of factual knowledge. Transformative learning can only happen when learners are given the space and tools to critically engage with the topics at hand and locate themselves within them. Global Citizenship Education is an educational concept that aims to answer that call by centering tools of critical (self)reflection and equipping learners with the skills to navigate, analyze, and critically engage with these intricate global dynamics. Being embedded across all areas of learning, this transdisciplinary educational concept acknowledges the growing complexity and evolution of a globally interconnected society. It seeks to answer the question of what these changes imply for educational practices in a globalized society.

Being an institution dedicated to the advancing of interdisciplinary, global discussions and solution approaches from a transformative pedagogical perspective, the UNESCO Chair of Global Citizenship Education—Culture of Diversity and Peace, founded in 2020, has tried to establish a transnational platform and network dedicated to peer discus-

sions, actions, and peer learning and support around the mentioned topics—The Global Campus Online (GloCo). Since its foundation in 2022, GloCo has grown into a platform for exchange, learning, and collaboration for anyone concerned with addressing the pressing challenges of the 21st century. Over 3 years, a strong network of scholars, students, teachers, civic workers, and activists worldwide has been continuously built, expanded, and facilitated. Through regular network meetings, the network members discussed global crises, their implications for education, and transformative approaches to addressing them. Contributions from both the Global North and South enriched the discourse, promoting diverse perspectives and localized strategies for addressing global challenges.

The overarching goal of Global Campus Online was to promote the mutual learning and exchange among participants, who, in turn, acted as multipliers within their own communities. The GloCo project team also supported the creation of various learning opportunities and formats, with a focus on transformative learning and Global Citizenship Education. It supported the development of local initiatives and contributed to scientific publications on related themes.

For this goal, the core approach of GloCo was to encourage participants to undertake even small initiatives and projects in their communities to explore the possibilities for change at the grassroots. The online meetings served as a laboratory where participants shared their experiences to stimulate mutual learning about the potentials and challenges by trying to put Global Citizenship Education into practice.

The development of those projects was supported by the GloCo community through common discussion, feedback processes, and transnational collaborations. Over 3 years, inspiring projects were initiated and successfully implemented, tackling problems in their respective communities and directly impacting beneficiaries' lives.

By showcasing these projects in this publication, it is hoped to make those learnings available to a broader audience and to highlight the great contribution they make to advancing and concretizing a practice-oriented Global Citizenship Education. The Global Campus Online itself served as a framework and virtual home for these initiatives. In this

opening chapter, the Global Campus Online will be introduced by tracing its development through the different stages and components of its implementation, and reflecting on the achievements and challenges encountered over the 3 years of continuous project development.

Why a Global Campus Online—Background and Overall Goals

The idea for the *Global Campus Online* (GloCo) emerged from the goal to advance a critical, diverse, and practice-oriented approach to Global Citizenship Education (GCED). This educational framework seeks to empower individuals to become critical, compassionate, and responsible members of the global community. It addresses crucial issues such as environmental sustainability, climate change, social justice, power dynamics, racism, and gender inequality. By integrating participatory and transformative learning methods, GCED encourages critical reflection and concrete action. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks such as post-colonial theory, global justice, human rights, and intersectionality, it fosters a deeper understanding of global challenges while promoting a commitment to social change.

From the outset, GloCo aimed to foster cross-cultural exchanges and explore educational approaches adaptable to various local contexts. By providing a platform for diverse perspectives, the initiative actively sought to counterbalance dominant Western, neo-colonial narratives and promote a truly global educational dialogue. Over the past three years, GloCo has evolved into a thriving digital hub for teaching, learning, and collaborative action on topics including Global Citizenship Education, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the climate crisis, migration, peace and conflict, and other urgent issues of the 21st century.

At the heart of GloCo is an international network of NGO staff, activists, artists, students, and scholars from both the Global North and Global South. Through dialogue groups and network meetings, participants engage in regular and in-depth discussions, reflecting on their personal and professional experiences. What began as a single dialogue

group of 15 members in 2022 has grown into an active community of over 100 participants. This network fosters continuous exchange, encourages collaborative project work, and serves as a source of inspiration and motivation through shared experiences, expertise, and engagement.

The project was designed to cultivate a collaborative learning environment where participants could engage in regular exchanges, attend thought-provoking lectures, and present ideas and projects from multiple perspectives. This exchange enhances mutual learning and promotes creative, practice-based approaches to global challenges. Among the participatory methods employed, PhotoVoice was particularly effective, offering participants a hands-on, reflective way to explore complex topics.

Beyond fostering dialogue, GloCo aimed to support concrete action and transformative practices. Network members were encouraged to initiate local projects aligned with the initiative's goals. These projects received support through educational resources, networking opportunities, and assistance with planning and implementation. Outstanding initiatives were further recognized through the *Global Education Project Award* (GEPARD), which provided financial backing for projects that demonstrated innovation and local impact. The funding was possible through another initiative of the UNESCO Chair at the University of Klagenfurt, namely the University Course on Global Citizenship Education, which in 2021 was awarded the *Global Education Network Europe Award* (GENE). The Chair reinvested the prize in GEPARD to support, even on a small scale, the initiatives developed in the Global Campus Online.

To ensure the sustainability of these efforts, GloCo also prioritized documenting and disseminating learning outcomes. A best-practice handbook was developed to capture the insights and methodologies generated within the dialogue groups. This resource not only serves as a guide for future initiatives but also broadens the reach of Global Citizenship Education by providing accessible, actionable knowledge.

Another key objective was to elevate the importance of Global Citizenship Education on a global scale. The initiative encouraged dialogue across different approaches and worldviews, deliberately challenging

and mitigating the dominance of Western perspectives. By fostering this exchange, GloCo contributed to a more equitable and inclusive understanding of education in the 21st century.

The Project Structure and Activities

The Global Campus Online featured a range of activities that were designed to foster collaboration between the network participants and to support the development of global initiatives. Regular virtual network meetings provided a platform for discussing current global issues from a general, personal, and contextual perspective; for setting common goals; and for exploring strategies and local action aligned with these objectives. These meetings also featured impromptu lectures from experts, broadening participants' knowledge and perspectives on related topics. A main portion of each network meeting was reserved for a project presentation by a network member or local group, bringing the awareness of the network to a specific and locally contextualized issue and then refining their project idea through critical peer feedback—a two-way learning opportunity for everyone involved. Once a project met the necessary criteria, it was recognized as a best-practice initiative and awarded the *GEPARD*.

In addition to regular project activities, annual transnational conferences were held, offering the entire GloCo network, along with interested guests, an opportunity to come together. These events included presentations by international guest speakers, panel discussions, and workshops, with a general atmosphere of lively and critical exchange. They also provided a platform for network members to present their best-practice initiatives to a broad international audience, drawing attention to local issues that are globally relevant.

In the following section, the respective project phases and activities will be explained in closer detail.

Phase 1: The Dialogue Groups

The initial objective of the Global Campus Online was to establish a network of 5 dialogue groups, each with 12 to 15 members from different professional backgrounds and locations, who would meet regularly in their respective groups. The groups would be in contact with each other via a speaker and by connecting through shared resources, protocols, and cross-group meetings. Still, they would mainly stay within the group they were initially “assigned” to. The benefit of this structure was the opportunity to establish a peer group in which participants became familiar with one another and could work on topics together in a progressive manner.

With these goals in mind, the Global Campus Online officially started in May 2022 with its very first dialogue group meeting, connecting students, scholars, and activists from Austria, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Bosnia. An intense phase of outreach and networking on part of the GloCo project team made it possible to initiate the next two dialogue groups soon after: Dialogue group 2 with members from Austria, Italy/South Tyrol, Vietnam, Bosnia and Hungary was founded a couple of months later in October 2022 and group 3 kicked off around the same time, connecting participants from Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Bosnia, Italy and Austria. Group 4 was founded a little later, at the beginning of 2023, bringing together people from the Netherlands, Uganda, Ethiopia, Austria, and the USA.

While the first meetings in each group were dedicated to getting to know each other and the project team, exploring the theoretical background and framework of the project, and establishing wishes and expectations for working together, the participants were also encouraged from the get-go to use the platform and community for discussing topics of their concern, and developing projects that would target those concerns, specifically. In the first few meetings, significant input was still provided by the GloCo project team. For example, the participatory photo-voice method was introduced to the participants, who then practiced it by photographically documenting their own lifeworlds through the lens of a specific question. However, as the initiative progressed, the

emphasis shifted increasingly towards participant-led discussions. A driving force for those discussions was the best-practice project presentations by respective members or local groups, which provided a basis for critical discourse on the topic and offered critical feedback to the implementing members of the local initiative.

Fig. 1: Screenshot of the first group meeting



The initial framework of the Global Campus proved successful, with the groups meeting regularly, engaging, establishing fruitful peer support and learning communities, and fostering connections between people from different continents and professional backgrounds who are concerned with similar topics. Furthermore, over the first 2,5 years, 6 local initiatives were presented during the dialogue group meetings, with some already moving into the implementation phase.

Nonetheless, the structure of the Global Campus also proved challenging for consistent participation, mainly due to participants' different time zones and prior engagements and responsibilities. Due to these circumstances, a decrease in participation over time was observed. To address those circumstances, the GloCo team conducted an evaluation of the project to date among network participants. In the questionnaire, participants expressed a need for additional expert input to enhance

their knowledge base and facilitate informed discussions, as well as a desire to regularly connect with the broader network rather than just their specific dialogue group. This feedback led to a restructuring of the network meetings and to the second phase of the Global Campus Online project.

Phase 2: Open and Thematic Transnational Meetings

Phase two of the GloCo project started at the beginning of 2024. Following the feedback and expressed desires of the network participants, the fixed dialogue groups were dissolved in favor of a more flexible structure. Instead of separate dialogue group meetings, the Global Campus Online now hosts monthly network meetings open to all network members and interested colleagues, guests, and stakeholders. This also made it easier to continuously invite and include new members, leading to the network expanding to over 90 active participants, with new members joining from Bolivia, Zambia, Turkey, Sierra Leone, and Japan, to name a few. Each network meeting was now held under a thematic focus by inviting scholars from outside the network to give a lecture on a topic of their expertise and facilitate a discussion. Topics and speakers were selected based on participant interests, ensuring a balanced representation of voices from the Global North and South.

The restructuring of the Global Campus was overall very well received, as evidenced by the high level of engagement. The first thematic meeting, which focused on *Migration and Climate Change*, attracted 16 participants.

While the lectures were a definite highlight of the network meetings, the project presentations by network members remained an equally important part, providing interesting input for the audience and an opportunity for the implementing team to receive support. During each meeting, one hour was reserved for a project presentation, leading to eight best practise projects being developed and presented during project phase two. These best-practice projects were a key component of the Global Campus from the beginning and remained so throughout the second project phase. Not only did they provide input and context for

interesting discussions among network members, but they also helped advance the principles of GCED and, most importantly, strengthened local communities.

Several best-practice projects emerged, focusing on themes such as environmental sustainability and climate action initiatives, community-led educational workshops on gender and social justice, intercultural storytelling projects fostering dialogue between displaced communities, or peace education and conflict resolution programs. These projects have had a significant impact on local communities, strengthening the foundations of GCED at the grassroots level.

The Transnational Conferences

#1 Creating Glocal Perspectives—Global Citizenship Education for a Transformed Future (2023)

Held on November 17–18, 2023, this conference featured two panel discussions and eight workshops. Renowned international experts in GCED shared their perspectives, discussing topics such as gender, migration, climate change, and artificial intelligence. A project partner from Ethiopia presented a peace education initiative, while the AAU team introduced GloCo's digital learning platform. A highlight of the event was the presentation of local best-practice initiatives through video showcases. The conference attracted over 60 participants.

Fig. 2: Conference poster

Join us for

CREATING GLOCAL PERSPECTIVES

Global Citizenship Education for a Transformed Future

unesco University Chair

UNIVERSITÄT KLAGENFURT

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17 & 18

HOSTED ON ZOOM

With funding from:
Austrian Development Cooperation

An Online Conference and Network Event by the
UNESCO Chair for Global Citizenship Education,
University of Klagenfurt

Registrations:
<https://forms.gle/FWDSVaJVtobA8dz19>

CREATING GLOCAL PERSPECTIVES 2023 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

FRIDAY afternoon November 17, 14:00 - 18:00 (UTC +1)

- Opening Remarks, Program Presentation**
Hans Karl Peterlin and GloCo Project Team
- Panel Discussion on different Perspectives of Global Citizenship Education #1**
Yvonne Andreotti, Carlos Cardoso, Darla Deardorff, Gina Theodor
- 15 min break**
- The GloCo Initiative - Achievements, Insights, Best Practices**
GloCo Team and Members of 4 Project Groups
- Presentation of the Digital Platform for Gamified Global Education & Collaboration**
Felix Schma and Tom Tulek from the Programme for Game Studies and Engineering at the AUK
- 15 min break**
- Workshops on different Aspects of Global Citizenship Education - Details see Page 3**
Corinna Mimbach, Florian Olschowski, Miriam Wack

SATURDAY Morning November 18, 08:00 - 12:30 (UTC +1)

- Opening Remarks, Program Presentation**
Hans Karl Peterlin and GloCo Project Team
- The GloCo Initiative - Achievements, Insights, Best Practices**
GloCo Team and Members of 4 Project Groups
- 15 min break**
- Panel Discussion on different Perspectives of Global Citizenship Education #2**
Jana Elst, Alessandro Torrici, Ural Chung, Werner Wintersteiner
- Dialogues for Peace-building and -education in Ethiopia**
A GloCo Project
Katherine Cragg
- 15 min break**
- Workshops on different Aspects of Global Citizenship Education - Details see Page 4**
Corinna Mimbach, Florian Olschowski, Miriam Wack
- Output Session and Closing of the Conference**

#2 Young Voices of Global Citizenship Education—Ideas for Globally Connected and Solidaric Societies (2024)

With over 90 attendees, this event included:

- A panel discussion featuring emerging researchers and practitioners shaping the field of GCED.
- Thematic talks on the future of GCED and the role of intercultural competence in peacebuilding.
- A live test run of the GloCo digital platform.
- Presentations of successful best-practice projects by participating groups.

Highlights:

- A two-hour panel discussion with promising up-and-coming researchers and practitioners who are dedicated to shaping, sharpening, and advancing the theoretical and practical field of GCED
- Two thematic talks on the topics of the future of Global Citizenship Education and the mobilization of intercultural competences for peace-building efforts
- A live test run of the digital platform,
- Presentations of the successful best practise projects by the project groups

Fig. 3: Conference poster

Join us for

YOUNG VOICES OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Ideas for Globally Connected and Solidaric Societies

unesco
University Chair

UNIVERSITÄT KLAGENFURT

FRIDAY, 15. NOV. '24
13:00 - 20:00 (CET)
HOSTED ON ZOOM

YOUNG VOICES OF GCED 2024 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

FRIDAY November 15, 13:00 - 20:00 (UTC +1)

- 13:00 - 13:15** **Opening Remarks, Program Presentation**
Hans Karl Peterlini and GloCo Project Team
- 13:15 - 15:30** **Panel Discussion - Young Voices of Global Citizenship Education**
Alexis Legault, Kgadi Mathabathe, Stefania Maser, Aaryan Salman, Danbee Song
- 15:30 - 16:00** **Beyond Borders: Leveraging Intercultural Competence for Sustainable Peace**
Talk by Didem Ekici
- 16:00 - 17:00** **Presenting the GloCo Best-Practice Projects**
Project teams give direct insights into the achievements, challenges and joy of the GloCo projects via videos and Q&A
- 17:00 - 18:15** **Futures of Global Citizenship**
Talk by Roland Benedikter
- 18:15 - 20:00** **Summary and Reflections; Visions**
Plenary session

With funding from:

Austrian Development Cooperation

An Online Conference and Network Event by the
UNESCO Chair for Global Citizenship Education,
University of Klagenfurt

Registrations:
<https://forms.gle/tZ86e7dSeZKGZfb17>

PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS:

With funding from:

Austrian Development Cooperation

GENE

IEB Universität Klagenfurt
Diversität & Bildung

#3 Initiatives for Change (2025)

With the expiry of project funding and the official conclusion of the project, the Global Campus Online was not shut down—quite the contrary. In collaboration with students from the university course on Global Citizenship Education, a transnational conference was held in 2025, at which initiatives from the Global South and North were presented that contribute to Global Citizenship Education in their own ways.

In parallel, the GloCo lecture format was developed, to which new initiatives continue to sign up spontaneously to present their specialized approaches and projects. In this way, the GloCo network is, surprisingly, continuing to expand and to evolve.

Reflections and Lessons learned

The Global Campus Online (GloCo) has demonstrated the transformative potential of digital platforms in fostering global learning, collaboration, and local action. A key achievement has been the successful implementation of best-practice projects that address pressing local challenges while serving as models for Global Citizenship Education. The project also successfully reached its target audience, encompassing educators, researchers, students, artists, activists, and civil society actors. The network's diverse composition enriched discussions and fostered a multi-perspective approach to global and educational challenges.

The transition to open, thematic transnational meetings marked a pivotal evolution for the project, enhancing inclusivity, flexibility, and participant-driven knowledge creation. Incorporating external expert input enriched discussions among the participants and contributed to a more robust understanding of complex global issues.

Key lessons include the value of adaptability, the importance of participant-led processes, and the need for sustained support for local initiatives. Moving forward, the experiences and outcomes of GloCo pro-

vide a solid foundation for advancing Global Citizenship Education and fostering a reflective, interconnected global community.

GloCo was designed to align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the areas of quality education, reduced inequalities, and strong global partnerships. The initiative was also integrated into the broader UNESCO Chair Network, further solidifying its academic and institutional connections.

For further reading

Grobbaauer, Heidi, & Werner Wintersteiner (Eds.) (2019). *Global Citizenship Education. Concepts, Efforts, Perspectives—an Austrian experience*. KommEnt: Salzburg. https://www.komment.at/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/GlobalCitizenshipEdu_Dokumentation-2019-engl_online.pdf

Peterlini, Hans Karl (2024). *Divided Humanity, Divided World—Questions and Perspectives for a Peace-oriented Diversity Education as Global Citizenship*. In: Claudia Lohrenscheit, Andrea Schmelz, Caroline Schmitt, and Ute Straub (Eds.): *International Social Work and Social Movements* (pp.187–204). Nomos: Baden-Baden. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/379845490_119_Divided_Humanity_Divided_World_-_Questions_and_Perspectives_for_a_Peace-oriented_Diversity_Education_as_Global_Citizenship

Towards a Virtual Learning Space

The (unfinished) Global Campus Online Platform: Project Report

Felix Schniz, Tom Tuček

“With this project, we tried to respond to a lack of universally inclusive digital spaces for creative exchange, and the potential to utilize playfulness, rules, and mechanics for positive educational impact.”

Abstract: *This report details the development of a virtual learning platform designed as a supplement for the project Global Campus Online (GloCo). Initiated as a research partnership between the Game Studies and Engineering master’s program (GSE) and the UNESCO Chair at the University of Klagenfurt, the platform aims to provide a low-barrier, accessible space for peer groups worldwide. Developed in Unity and accessible on PC and mobile devices, the platform incorporates features that promote inclusivity and address multiple UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly focusing on Quality Education, Sustainable Communities, and Partnership for the Goals. The project report highlights its benefits as a playful, game-like learning and community platform, how its development fostered local internship opportunities for students, and future ambitions, while also addressing challenges related to project management, legal considerations, and long-term sustainability.*

Keywords: *Global Citizenship Education; Virtual Learning Environment; SDGs; Video Games; Inclusivity*

Project Members

Felix Schniz, Germany | Tom Tuček, Austria | Stefan Hohnwald, Germany | Utku Dagli, Turkey | Ruxandra Donescu, Romania | Nikolay Markozov, Russia | Christoph Painsipp, Austria | Afshin Gholami, Iran | Bodo Thausing, Austria | Fabian Schaffenrath, Austria

Introduction & Motivation

The master's program Game Studies and Engineering (GSE) is unique in Europe. It combines technical game development skills with humanities-based game studies, offering a holistic understanding of games and their cultural role. As an interdisciplinary and heterogeneous program, it has been involved with the project GloCo from the get-go to reflect on shared ambitions and ideas for collaborations. From informal discussions, a shared interest emerged between GSE and GloCo in the need for an online platform enabling playful, creative learning environments for global peer groups. Students of GSE would benefit from this, as it would enable them to participate in research internships, and the development of the platform also offered them a practical project to apply their skills and understanding of how games and play can be ingrained into everyday virtual platforms to improve their quality of experience. GloCo would benefit from it, as it would gain a globally accessible online platform tailored to its specific needs. Thus, this project was launched to create a sustainable online platform for GloCo, support GSE students in completing their studies and developing their skills, and foster international collaboration.

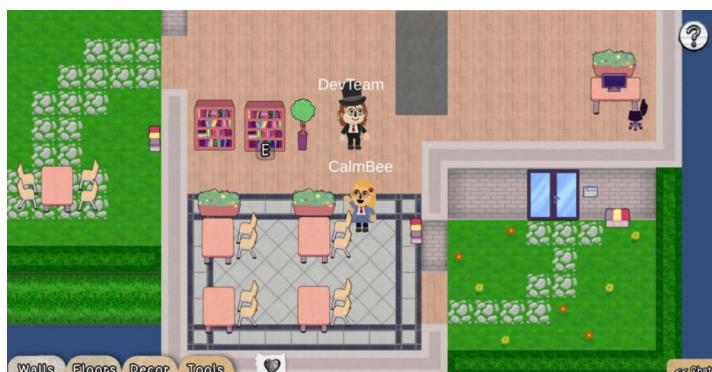
A key motivation was the recognized need for platforms supporting exchange and learning, particularly those accessible to diverse users in both global and local contexts. The project responded to a lack of universally inclusive digital spaces for creative exchange and to the potential to leverage playfulness, rules, and mechanics, as long-established in video games, for positive educational impact.

Project Description: A Virtual Learning Space

The Global Campus Online Platform is currently hosted in Klagenfurt, Austria, and developed in Unity, offering PC and mobile access. The platform allows users to create personalized avatars and design learning environments, fostering agency and self-representation. It supports both synchronous and asynchronous communication, enabling users to share thoughts, documents, and images.

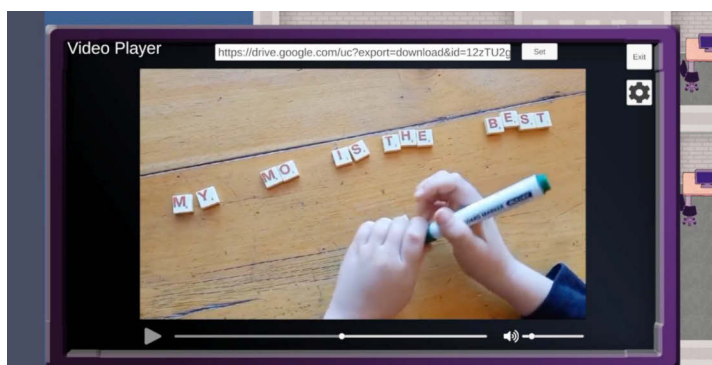
The platform's most captivating and unique feature, however, is its emphasis on creativity and user-based design: In contrast to other platforms, the level structure in which users can meet and interact is not predefined. While templates exist, every user is equipped with powerful customization tools, allowing them to create their own virtual world for shared meeting, learning, and community activities. Current assets allow for the virtual world to resemble actual real-world architectures or natural environments, and users are explicitly encouraged to design them, just as their avatar, to their liking. Users can create unique learning spaces mirroring real locations, imaginative constructs, or a combination of both. These spaces can then be used to communicate, meet, and exchange with other users around the world (see Fig. 4).

Fig. 4: Two user-designed avatars in a user-created level environment.



©Tom Tuček

Fig. 5: The virtual learning platform is also capable of playing and sharing videos.



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The platform's design directly addresses UNESCO's SDGs. It's built to run on low-spec hardware, such as smartphones, supporting *No Poverty* through universal access. The platform promotes *Quality Edu-*

cation by fostering cyber citizenship, agency-awareness, and creative knowledge exchange. The avatar creator, designed for inclusivity, supports *Gender Equality* by allowing free, non-binary player representation. Its innovative, non-corporate development approach aligns with *Industry, Innovation, Technology, and Infrastructure*, and its low barrier to entry contributes to *Sustainable Cities and Communities* through global connectivity. The project intends to foster **Partnership for the Goals** through collaboration with UNESCO-aware groups. As a part of GloCo, the virtual learning platform thus inherently connects to Global Citizenship Education through its emphasis on fostering intercultural understanding, global awareness, and responsible citizenship. By creating a space for diverse users to connect and exchange ideas, the platform encourages empathy, respect, and collaboration.

Lessons learned

As a part of the project GloCo, several important takeaways were deduced from the conception to the implementation of the virtual learning platform:

Firstly, the project's initial steps quickly highlighted the critical need for a dedicated project head or manager to oversee coordination and maintain momentum. In future iterations, this can, for example, be achieved by offering specific project lead internships, which present a welcome opportunity for students eager to improve their managerial skill sets. Secondly, internship durations required careful planning to ensure continuity, and clear communication between involved parties was essential. Especially because many students do not have the time capabilities to remain in a project overtime due to other commitments, such as their master thesis, students accompanying the virtual learning platform via GloCo as a part of their academic education ought to be sought and prepared for this specific type of internship long in advance to avoid gaps in-between internship generations, which may cause a loss of knowledge or provide challenges in documentation. Thirdly, project-internal sustainability proved to be an issue; as the platform requires

constant maintenance, a dedicated curator would be beneficial to ensure its long-term health. Finally, legal considerations also emerged, especially regarding global accessibility and user-generated content. While access to the virtual learning platform is currently restricted, it should ideally be accessible worldwide at some point, which would require upholding legal standards that have thus far not been considered. This includes, but is not limited to, data privacy and potential misuse of the platform. To anticipate these challenges and address them before they arise, we are exploring leveraging AI tools for moderation and content filtering, while also increasing accessibility and adding more features.

The project demonstrated the value of providing students with internships for the practical application of theoretical knowledge and highlighted the importance of long-term planning. From its first steps as a prototype to the functional platform it is now, it was a long journey, but seeing the first users join and share their thoughts, images, and knowledge made it all worth it.

Conclusion

The Global Campus Online Platform serves as a successful proof of concept for a low-barrier, inclusive virtual learning space. A running prototype exists, and the project has demonstrated the benefits of gamification, user-based design, and international collaboration. Future steps include addressing sustainability concerns, bug fixing, and exploring opportunities for larger-scale release. Furthermore, a possible collaboration with the Department of Educational Sciences at the University of Oldenburg is currently being discussed. But generally, anyone interested in this project is welcome to join or try it out. We invite collaboration with educational institutions and partners interested in contributing to the platform's development and expansion. We encourage you to reach out if you are interested in collaborating with us.

For further reading

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Celebrating for Inclusion

The Udvar Festival in Hungary—an Initiative for empowering Roma inhabitants

Rahel Peterlini

“Gloco is an incredible opportunity to share our community engagement project with other like-minded people, to connect, to be inspired, and to join forces. Just like the SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals) intends us to do.”

Abstract: *Udvar Festival is a culture, arts, and music festival that takes place annually in Arló, a small village in Hungary. The festival's focus lies on sharing Romani culture and music, and on empowering the Roma inhabitants of the village, especially the children. The social aim behind this festival is inspired by the SDGs that focus on building a more inclusive, peaceful, and resilient community (10, 11, and 16). Udvar Festival aspires to do so, reducing the marginalization of Hungarian Roma communities. — <https://youtu.be/4JJz3Cx6oBY>*

Keywords: *Social Recognition; Reconciliation;; Community Engagement; Empowerment; Intercultural Sharing*

Team members

Dananai Rodriguez Anguiano (Mexico)—project founder/organizing team | Franciska Toth (Hungary)—organizing team | Lili Frech (Hungary)—organizing team | Panka Ringwald (Hungary)—organizing team | Peter Ujvari (Hungary)—project founder/organizing team | Rahel Peterlini (Italy)—project founder/organizing team | Robert Velkey (Hungary)—member of partner organization Jelenlet House, Arló | Subham Manandhar (Nepal)—project founder/organizing team | Tina Horvath (Hungary)—organizing team | Vera Riesz (Hungary)—organizing team | And many volunteers from the community

Fig. 6: Dancing kids and teens at the Udvar festival.



©Lili Kátai

Introduction and Motivation

Udvar Festival was created by four students as part of their Civic Engagement Project at the Central European University in 2022. After attending a class about Nationalism and Discrimination that focused on the Roma Community in Hungary as a case study, the students realized that there is a complete lack of positive recognition of Romani culture in the media. Even well-meaning reports discussed in class focused on poverty, marginalization, and other issues, whilst leaving out the colorful Romani culture full of dance, folklore, and music. The north-eastern region of Hungary, in which Arló is situated, has unfortunately become famous for anti-Roma discrimination and prejudice against the “Borsodi Gypsy”. The aggressive assimilation efforts of recent centuries have resulted in the fading of Roma culture and traditions; “Roma” or “Gypsy” has become almost synonymous with “poor.”

Due to this lack of positive representation and due to the forced assimilation (or perceived necessity to assimilate), Romani communities in Hungary are losing the connection to their own cultural identities. Poverty goes hand in hand with marginalization, as jobs and housing are especially scarce for members of the Roma community. As a result, many live without electricity. The students, who founded Udvar Festival, realized that they would not be able to solve problems connected to poverty due to insufficient funding, but that they could do something about the negative portrayal of Romani culture in Hungary, which is an essential part of the pervasive social discrimination, and thereby foster a more resilient community.

Udvar Festival sheds light on the beautiful elements of Romani communities, in order to fight prejudice and to foster healthy pride in the Roma inhabitants of the village. It aims to attract as many international visitors as possible, not only to share the beautiful culture, full of music and dance, but also to raise international awareness of Roma discrimination. In addition, the festival engages local Hungarians and Hungarian visitors directly, as spectators, participants, and co-creators, to enrich their understanding of Romani culture in ways they may not experience elsewhere. We aim to build a safe and welcoming space where people

who would not otherwise meet can engage in dialogue and find what connects rather than divides them. Due to the marginalization of the Roma community, many stereotypes and prejudices exist between the Roma and other Hungarian communities. By bringing together people from antagonistic groups, the Udvar Festival creates opportunities for reconciliation and the reduction of those very stereotypes.

Lastly, Udvar Festival has a special focus on the local youth. As the Udvar Festival team, we hope to instill hope and excitement for the future in the minds of Arló's children and a sense of pride in their cultural identities. The general lack of belief in or hope for escaping poverty is likely one of the biggest problems in the area. If young people don't see the opportunity to escape poverty, they are unlikely to make the attempt. We hope to inspire them to try.

Project Description—The festival itself

Udvar translates to courtyard or backyard, a space typically shared by several households. It can be forgotten about, and rundown, or it can be taken care of, have flowers, and be a meet-up place for family, friends, neighbors, and strangers. With Udvar festival, we want to recreate a familial and comfortable “picnic” energy in the garden that holds space for Udvar festival: the backyard of Jelenlét house. Jelenlét Pont is Udvar Festival's partner organization. It provides, among many other services, family mentoring and music classes for the Roma children in Arló. Jelenlét was the first point of connection to Arló, when the founding group approached the organization with the idea of a festival, they immediately jumped on board.

The festival grew year by year. Already in the first year, the Udvar Festival team organized a stage on which Romani artists performed, but also kids from the Jelenlét music school performing music and dance, showing off their colorful traditional skirts. For the international guests, a Romani dance workshop was organized so that everyone could dance together. Since the first year, the Udvar Festival ends with a big campfire, and everyone sits around and jams together. Coming together to jam and

sing is an essential piece of the local Romani community making. In addition, the initial students hoped to bring a little bit of their own cultures in, for example, by creating a South American piñata for the kids. Over time, Udvar Festival offered more and more cultural workshops, such as the Roma Hero theatre workshop and interactive improvisation theatre, in which participating children can relate to heroes in the Roma community, or storytelling about old Romani myths that are slowly being forgotten.

Udvar Festival could not run without its volunteers who help with ticketing (entry is free for locals), food stalls, and workshops. A large part of the volunteers comes from outside Hungary. This gives local children the opportunity to practice their English and volunteers the chance to really get to know the individuals they are dealing with.

It is hard for us to measure the outcomes or effects of Udvar Festival. We see the many smiles during the festival, the hugs, and the love that is shared. But can we really make a difference? Are Arló's Romani children growing up with a little bit more aspiration for their future? Are non-Roma Hungarians slowly warming up to their Romani neighbors? It is hard to put scientific numbers on such questions, but little things show us that our work in Arló is important and useful.

For instance, Jelenlét, the partner organization, noticed a significant increase in enrolment in their music school after the festival, as well as greater motivation of the already enrolled students. This does not only connect to the hopes and aspirations of Roma youth but also the pride in their music and culture. Since the first festival, two bands were formed: The Armi Trio, a talented local jazz/Gypsy guitarist (age 15), who is now receiving many performance invitations within Hungary. And the Roma Big Band—a band of local teenagers who are all part of the Jelenlét music school. Now, they are a key performing act of the festival. Similarly, teachers at the local school reported to us that motivation to learn English increased noticeably. This effect was already observable through the mere number of words many children learned just by speaking with international guests, organizers, and volunteers.

Each year, the mayor (non-Roma Hungarian) visits the festival, joins the crowd, and talks to Romani locals in a space they feel safe in, which

is theirs. Romani individuals rarely get their voices heard in local politics. Therefore, such eye-to-eye meetings are an important first step in the right direction. With every year, we also observed a growing crowd of non-Romani Hungarian visitors, who got attracted by the music, the colors, the food. This creates an opportunity for the antagonized neighbors to meet.

Connection to the framework of Global Citizenship Education and the Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs are a great marker of orientation when building the foundations of the festival. Many of them go hand in hand, but the festival's strongest focus lies on the following:

Number 4: Quality Education: A considerable amount of informal education happens outside the school. When kids can share their culture and “teach” it to international outsiders, they learn how to present themselves. At the same time, they learn about the places that international visitors come from, and their interest in these places grows. What often follows is agency and a renewed sense of motivation to do better in school and to pursue higher education. Similarly, sharing and performing music can be a great source of knowledge. Following the past events, Jelenlét Pont's music program reported increased interest and higher attendance among local children. This way, Udvar Festival strengthened motivation for music education.

Number 10: Reduced Inequalities: Again, Udvar Festival aids in empowering the Roma community and advocates for the beauty of its culture in an international context. In other words, Udvar Festival empowers citizens. This has a two-fold effect: Strengthened pride and agency within the Roma community, as well as raised awareness of the unfair Roma discrimination throughout Europe (and the rest of the world). These sentiments will strengthen mobilization and resistance to discrimination.

This relates to Number 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. As previously mentioned, Udvar Festival is a meeting place for locals and

creates an inclusive space for community events. More resilience and understanding of community ties will automatically lead to more inclusive living conditions.

Number 16: Peace, justice, and strong institutions: The festival's emphasis on cultural exchange, understanding, and empowerment aligns with SDG 16. By fostering dialogue, empathy, and community engagement, the festival contributes to building more cohesive and resilient societies, where individuals are empowered to advocate for their rights and address social injustices.

Number 17: Sustainable Development: The long-term goal of the Udvar Festival is to strengthen communal ties within Arló and with neighboring villages. By empowering the inhabitants, especially children, the project fosters the region's long-term sustainable development. Udvar Festival itself aims to network with Romani organizations throughout Europe and thereby facilitate social renovation.

Lessons learned

The first festival took place in May 2022. Four hundred people participated over the two days; most were locals, but a group of around 30 international guests also attended, whom we reached mainly through our university network. The first edition of the festival was quite small, and it was apparent that the spontaneity with which we organized the project, although necessary, was a problem. Many artists interested in the initiative had to decline our offer because they were already booked. We faced the same problem with food stalls. We only managed to organize one small food stall because the notice was too short for all the others. However, we managed to pull up a stage, fill it with live music, and attract many guests to the festival, creating an atmosphere none of us imagined possible. Our strength, on the other hand, was our continuous presence in the village. During the two months of organization, we lived in Arló and got to know its inhabitants on a personal level. The children were the first to invite us into their lives; the adults followed after some hesitation. Soon, we were invited into private homes and spoke with the people in

the village about their needs and wants, the meaning of music, and their hopes and expectations for the festival. We earned mutual trust and created a festival truly tailored to the village. Thereby, Udvar festival became part of Arlo and Arlo became part of us. This ensured that the Udvar festival would turn into a long-term project.

We had much more time to plan the second edition of the festival, so we decided to make it a little bigger. We decided to organize a three-day camp for the children preceding the festival and to diversify the attractions a bit, for example, by including various workshops and a theatre performance. However, to grow, we needed additional funding beyond university resources. Finding enough funding remains one of our main struggles. This year, we got involved with GLOCO and achieved the GEPARD award, but most other options for funding failed. Growing in size also meant we had to better organize our structure. In the first year, the four of us did it all together; in the following year, we divided our work into clearly defined roles and involved additional volunteers with specific responsibilities. This turned the once spontaneously created Udvar festival into a real social initiative. As a result, many more people joined our cause, and the team grew and changed.

In 2024, the Udvar festival took place for a third time, with a much larger team involved. It was clearly visible that we entered some sort of routine in the organization of the festival, and that many things are working because we learned how to solve them. For example, we tackled the problem of the food stalls by asking local women to cook for us. In addition, we focused on inviting lesser-known Roma performers so that their art can be shared with a wider audience, refocusing on our initial goal to promote Romani culture. Over the next year, we aim to involve even more locals in organizing the festival to make it as community-managed as possible and as little dependent on us as possible.

Fig. 7: Udvar festival teampic



©Vera Riesz

The lessons learned in the past years are many. I think the main one is to really be present in the place where we built the social initiative, to do it with the locals, not for the locals, without even knowing them. For example, in the first year, the village's mayor suddenly forbade us from selling alcohol at the festival, claiming it would lead to uncontrollable crowds. We complied because this rule was tied to the festival's license. When we got to know the village better, we understood that alcoholism is a considerable problem in the village, and we found our own reason to keep alcohol away from the festival: to hold a positive example of how we can come together and enjoy this festival without alcohol consumption. It is not banned on the festival grounds, but it is not sold, and the organizing team does not drink. By this, we manage to turn the focus slightly away from alcohol. Another important lesson for us was to trust the locals beyond our stereotypes. Before we got to the village, we were told to be careful because theft would be a big problem. So far, the only thing

that was ever stolen at Udvar Festival was a pack of sweets from a tent. The children who stole the sweets were later turned into guardians, with the responsibility to ensure no one would steal or destroy what was not theirs. We learned to trust the people we encountered, to empower them instead of misjudging them.

For further reading

'Emerging Settlements' (2022). "Steps for Catching up". Belüginizterium, Hungary. https://fete.hu/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Emerging-settlements_BM.pdf

For more context, regard this policy recommendation for social action aimed at improving the situation in Roma settlements in Hungary. Out of this recommendation/political action, state-funded social organizations were brought into villages with Roma settlements. Jelenlét, the partner organization of Udvar Festival, is one of them.

Újvári, Péter Ádám (2023). "Human to Human": The Politics of Recognition in the Rural Local Contexts of Hungarian Roma Exclusion/Inclusion. Vienna: Central European University. Print. https://libsearch.ceu.edu/permalink/43CEU_INST/p8o3t6/alma991003607767708861

Peter Ujvari, one of Udvar's team members, wrote his bachelor's thesis on the politics of (non)recognition of the Roma communities in Hungary using Arló, the village in which the festival takes place, as his main case study. This source can be useful to get more information about and insight into the realities of the village and its Roma community.

Meskimmon, Marsha (2011). 'Making Worlds, Making Subjects: Contemporary Art and the Affective Dimension of Global Ethics'. *World Art* 1 (2): 189–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21500894.2011.602716>. 26. 2017. 'From the Cosmos to the Polis: On Denizens, Art and Postmigration Worldmaking'. *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, August. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/20004214.2017.1343082>.

To better understand Udvar's philosophy, I suggest readings from Mar-

sha Meskimmon, who underlines the importance of art in moving beyond prejudice and to a postmigrant community.

Peterlini, Rahel (2024): The Art of Reimagination South Tyrol. How Artist's Engagement with Migration Creates new Understandings of Belonging, Home, and Community. Vienna: CEU. https://www.etd.ceu.edu/2024/peterlini_rahel.pdf

Bayala, Eric (2017). *Widerklang der Seele*. Verein Sahel Tirol. <https://minorities.at/widerklang-der-seele-ein-film-von-eric-bayala/>. 2021. *Zeitdreher*innen*. Verein Sahel Tirol. <http://www.saheltirol.at/events/film-screening-zeitdreherinnen.html>.

Lastly, I suggest that, if able, you take a look at these two documentary movies about inclusion and intercultural togetherness through art. Unfortunately, the movies are not open source. The main language used is German.

Facing Mistrust and Suspicion—for a Cohesive Community

Support for the Inclusion of Foreign Minors in the Schools of Portomaggiore in Italy

Maria Benedetta Cabitza

“Global education is our gateway to understanding diverse worlds, fostering empathy, and building bridges across cultures to create a more connected and compassionate future.”

Abstract: *This project is an initiative in a small Italian town grappling with community mistrust, economic decline, natural disasters, and immigration challenges. In collaboration with the non-profit Mondo Donna Onlus, this project targets foreign minors, providing language support and social integration through educational and extracurricular activities. The initiative emphasizes the importance of integrating foreign children into the local schools to enhance their academic experience and promote mutual understanding within the community. The project's alignment with Global Citizenship Education (GCED) values showcases its commitment to fostering inclusion, understanding, and intercultural dialogue, which are essential for building a cohesive community. The effort underscores a broader attempt to address social and cultural rifts through targeted educational strategies, ensuring equal opportunities and promoting a sense of global citizenship among all students.*

Keywords: *Inclusion; GCED; Intercultural Dialogue; Education; Community Trust*

Fig. 8: The logo of MondoDonna



©Mondo Donna

Members of the project

Giorgia Marzi—Head of Educational Department in MondoDonna Onlus | Maria Benedetta Cabitza—Coordination and Implementation Supervisor | Patrizia Morgione—Pedagogic and Transcultural Training Coordinator | Aurora Valente and Adriana Capasso—Educators
Habiba Shabaz—Pakistani Cultural and Linguistic Mediator | Lina Al-Kuzbari—Moroccan Cultural and Linguistic Mediator | Benedetta Balboni—Mindfulness Expert | Fulvia Quisisana—Psychologist, focusing on family dynamics and adolescents | Irene Fegnani—Psychologist, focusing on migration

The reasons behind the project

This project is a response to the complex social and cultural challenges, including economic decline, a devastating earthquake in 2012, political scandals, and ongoing struggles with cultural integration and immigration. This mistrust and suspicion have pervaded interactions between lo-

cal residents and immigrants, further exacerbated by the lack of effective integration policies and existing prejudices.

The project addresses these issues by focusing on the younger segment of the migrant population—foreign minors attending local schools. The need for this initiative emerged from the observation that while adults in the immigrant community often find themselves isolated due to cultural and language barriers, children have the potential to bridge these gaps more naturally through the school environment. Schools are pivotal arenas for integration, where children can learn the language, customs, and social norms of their new home while maintaining their cultural identities. By improving the school experience for these minors, the project aims to lay a foundation for better integration and social cohesion in the broader community.

Portomaggiore has experienced a significant shift in demographics with new residents from diverse cultural backgrounds, which has introduced a series of integration challenges. The suspension of the Immigration Consultation Board, deemed obsolete by the local administration, has complicated these efforts, highlighting the need for renewed strategies to manage cultural diversity effectively. The arrival of immigrants has often led to isolated communities, misunderstandings, and occasional conflicts, indicating a critical need for structured integration initiatives. Thus, the project responds to the urgent need for linguistic and cultural mediation in schools, supporting not only children but also their families as they navigate the complexities of a new educational system and community life.

Furthermore, the decision to prioritize foreign minors and their inclusion in local schools is a response to the growing phenomenon of Italian families abandoning public schools in favor of private institutions, attributing this trend to the challenges posed by integrating foreign children without adequate support. This project strategically addresses these issues by enhancing the educational environment through mediation, tailored educational support, and extracurricular activities that foster interaction and mutual understanding among all students.

Recognizing the difficulty of including adults, the Municipality decided to collaborate with the *Mondo Donna Onlus* association to focus on for-

eign minors attending local schools. The goal is threefold: to actively involve families in their children's school life; to provide students with the tools needed to prevent school dropout; to improve learning; and to promote inclusion and mutual understanding.

Project description—When a Municipality teams up with a non-profit organization

This initiative comprised *four primary actions* aimed at *facilitating the integration and support of migrant communities* within the municipality.

Central to the project are *linguistic and cultural mediation efforts*, including linguistic mediators assisting parents with school procedures and electronic registers, supporting school enrolment phases, and providing in-class mediation to support the inclusion of foreign children. Mediation also played a pivotal role in socio-educational activities provided through gaming activities designed to bridge educational gaps and facilitate interaction with Italian peers. Such action is essential for enhancing communication and linguistic comprehension for both students in the classroom and their parents. Mediation activities were conducted during school hours to assist students from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Morocco in learning Italian and actively participating in the learning process. Additionally, mediation facilitated school meetings, disciplinary discussions, and access to school services by translating educational materials, circulars, and requests in various languages. The second action, *educational support*, was designed to assist students with behavioral difficulties in the classroom and hallways. Educators worked closely with teachers to render the curriculum more comprehensible for foreign minors and to facilitate cultural interactions. This often involved employing cultural mediators to address teachers' questions and manage conflicts and emotions. The socio-educational support activities include bridging activities in which social operators collaborate with teachers, social workers, and families to integrate each child into the class.

Such educational mediation in the classroom involves small group activities that promote integration and cooperation. Extracurricular activities for minors aged 5–10 and 11–13 foster socialization, play, and autonomy, with additional leisure and summer activities promoting overall well-being. Peer discussion groups focus on socio-affective and sexual education, gender differences, and raising awareness of respect and non-discrimination. Educational support includes afternoon school support for homework and study methods, integration activities to combat demotivation, and language reinforcement through Italian L2 laboratories.

Fig. 9: Activity with children



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The socio-educational activities over the school year 2023–2024 comprised a total of 620 hours, including 380 hours of linguistic and cultural mediation.

The third action, *psychological support*, was divided into two components:

- support for migrant families identified by social services,
- psychological support for groups of migrant women.

An expert psychologist, accompanied by a cultural mediator, worked with families to address parental dynamics and issues related to parenting, navigating requests from social services and the Court's decisions, as well as cultural backgrounds. Another psychologist, specializing in ethnopsychology, collaborated with groups of migrant women, particularly those from Ukraine, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, utilizing Dixit cards to facilitate the expression of complex emotions.

The use of Dixit cards, dreamlike, imaginative pictorial cards, allows for the expression of very complex emotions without the need for words. In this context, the cards were employed as a medium of perception, enabling women from diverse social and economic backgrounds to find common ground. Through these cards, the women were able to first identify their unique characteristics as women, find commonalities, and, most importantly, define their pre- and post-migration experiences—that is, their lives in their countries of origin and in their new host countries.

This work with the cards culminated in a series of meetings and the creation of a collective identity collage. Each woman contributed a piece representing her perception of the definition of a “migrant woman.” Additionally, they developed individual artworks, adding descriptive words to illustrate their condition of “double absence” (A. Sayad), referencing both their identity and their status as migrants. Additionally, group meetings for vulnerable parental figures, especially women, served as a protected space for expressing emotions, sharing experiences, and collectively reconciling their migratory traumas.

These meetings foster a sense of belonging, reduce loneliness, and promote positive social relationships. Facilitators create an empowering atmosphere, encourage assertiveness and empathy, and guide participants through planned activities and shared sessions, fostering mutual

trust and cohesion within the group. The groups were intended mostly for women, also to intervene and act on the gender exclusion (and sometimes violence) faced by women in the Bengali and Pakistani cultures. The psychological support provided 100 hours of group and family support.

The fourth action involved *information, dissemination, training, and awareness*. Psychologists and staff from the MondoDonna Onlus Association provided training with a transcultural and trauma-oriented focus for teaching staff and social services. The objective was to bridge the cultural gap and foster genuine mutual understanding, which is critical in a town like Portomaggiore, where a significant migrant population has faced challenges in integrating into the social and economic fabric. Episodes of exploitation and cultural incompatibility have caused tensions, and the project sought to address these issues.

The effort was enhancing for all involved professionals the understanding of migratory paths and the ethno-cultural characteristics of foreign students, while reducing the communication gap through linguistic mediation, promoting multicultural socialization among minors with educational support, closing the emotional and empathetic gap with psychological support, and training stakeholders involved in managing migration to facilitate integration into the social fabric. 56 % of the Municipality's employees and health personnel in such a district were involved in the workshops.

New initiatives include the creation of a mobile school help desk to facilitate access to school services and understanding of school dynamics for migrant parents. Multilingual video tutorials will also be produced to explain how to use school services. Furthermore, activities promoting support and dialogue between Italian and migrant women (e.g., Mindfulness workshops on parenting and stress) and library activities on universal themes such as Peace, Equality, Empowerment, and Gender will be promoted.

Children, supported by linguistic facilitation, will become the focal point around common and universal ideals, enabling the overcoming of differences and cultural barriers.

Fig. 10: Creative approaches to working with migrants.



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The Portomaggiore Project and its Alignment with GCED Values and SDGs

The project for socio-educational support for foreign minors in Portomaggiore exemplifies the core values of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) through its comprehensive approach to promoting inclusion, understanding, and intercultural dialogue. This initiative not only addresses the immediate educational and social needs of migrant chil-

dren but also fosters a broader sense of global citizenship among all participants.

Promotion of Human Rights and Social Justice and SDG4: By providing linguistic and cultural mediation, the project supports the rights to quality education and to participate in cultural life, which are fundamental human rights. Additionally, the focus on reducing language barriers and promoting understanding of school services helps to ensure that migrant families can fully engage with and benefit from the education system, thereby promoting social justice.

Encouragement of Diversity and Intercultural Awareness and SDG16: By integrating diverse groups and fostering active participation in community governance, it enhances institutional integrity and ensures that all community members, particularly the vulnerable and marginalized, have access to justice and equal opportunities.

Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10): The educational support provided helps to level the playing field for migrant children, ensuring that they have the same opportunities for educational success as their native peers.

Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11): The project contributes to making Portomaggiore more inclusive and sustainable by promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue-

Lesson Learned: What challenges and difficulties did the project face; what experiences were gained?

Cultural and Language Barriers

One of the primary challenges faced by the project team was the significant cultural and language barriers between the migrant families and the local community. This challenge was particularly pronounced in schools, where the language barrier impacted the academic performance and social integration of migrant children. The deployment of linguistic and cultural mediators proved crucial, not only for assisting communication but also for helping school staff and local community members understand the cultural nuances that shape migrant families'

interactions and behaviors. The experience highlighted the importance of ongoing cultural competence training for all stakeholders involved in educational and community integration projects.

Resistance from the Local Community

Another challenge was the initial resistance from parts of the local community, including some educators and parents of non-migrant children, who were concerned about the impacts of integration on educational standards and resource allocation. The project team learned the importance of community engagement and dialogue in addressing these concerns. Hosting inclusive community meetings and open dialogues, where community members could express concerns and receive direct responses, helped mitigate some of the resistance and fostered a more inclusive atmosphere.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Effectively measuring the impact of integration initiatives posed significant challenges due to the complexity of social dynamics and the long-term nature of integration outcomes. The project team realized the importance of establishing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks from the outset. By collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data, the team could adjust strategies in real time and provide evidence-based reports to stakeholders, which were crucial for securing continuous funding and support.

Sustaining Engagement and Outcomes

Finally, maintaining sustained engagement from both migrant and local populations was challenging. The initial enthusiasm sometimes waned due to the slow pace of visible change. The project learned the importance of creating short-term, visible wins alongside long-term goals to keep the community engaged. Organizing regular community events and vis-

ible improvements in school environments helped maintain momentum and demonstrated the tangible benefits of the project to all participants.

From these challenges and experiences, the project team gained a deeper understanding of the multifaceted approach needed to successfully integrate migrant children into local schools and communities. These lessons underscore the necessity of adaptability, continuous community involvement, and the importance of addressing both immediate needs and long-term integration goals.

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Our Strength, our Identity

Working with Young People of a repressed,
marginalized, and discriminated Indigenous
Group—the Guraní in Sucre (Bolivia)

Willma Durán Benavides, Hermann Stoffel

“Loneliness, poverty, and discrimination of young people— this reality motivated us.”

Abstract: *Between 20 and 25 young Guaraní undergraduate students in Sucre, Bolivia, live in precarious conditions, with low self-esteem and at risk of denying their cultural identity due to discrimination. They became involved in the project called “Our identity, our strength— Ñandereko jaeko mirata”, carried out in coordination with their local authorities, namely the Council of Captains of Chuquisaca.*

The project strengthened the cultural identity of young Guaraní by consolidating a community of students who got to know each other, identified their needs, spoke Guaraní within the group, and identified common goals.

This group of young people sought to become visible in the city by sharing public spaces through their art, dance, music, customs, and cuisine. They promoted their activities with intense communication efforts led by the youth themselves, which in turn strengthened their cultural roots.

The young people developed communication skills that enabled them to produce

communication materials to share their knowledge, values, and cultural practices on social media.

Keywords: *Identity; Youth; Strength; Guaraní; Art*

The Motivation for Implementing the Project

The publication of the book on the liberation of the Guaraní people in the department of Chuquisaca fostered strong connections with families from different communities. In their testimonies, they recount the difficulties their children face while studying in Sucre: loneliness, poverty, and discrimination, which often lead them to abandon their studies.

This reality motivated us to invite young Guaraní women and men to form a community in Sucre and together create an initiative that would allow them to live their culture and strengthen a brotherhood that renews the bonds experienced in community life.

We began by working on a process of empowerment and reinforcement of their cultural identity, to confront a society with limited intercultural openness—one that pressures these young people, who are an absolute minority, to deny and hide their identity and to forget their customs and language.

The Guaraní

The Guaraní people live in the Bolivian departments of Tarija, Chuquisaca, and Santa Cruz, forming the country's third-largest Indigenous nation. For centuries, they resisted Spanish colonization. It was only during the Republican era that they began to lose their ancestral territories. Guaraní families and communities were forced to work on large estates under conditions that often amounted to semi-slavery. A major shift began in the 1990s, when Guaraní families—supported by the Catholic Church and human rights organizations—initiated a process of liberation. Today, many communities have regained their freedom and now

have access to schooling up to the secondary level. Yet agriculture, their main livelihood, still lacks support, particularly in bringing products to market. Many families also lack the means to support their children's studies beyond high school.

Guaraní elders have long taught that life flourishes only through harmonious and respectful relationships—between humans, nature, ancestors, and the sacred. All beings share a living territory: people, *iyas* (spirits), animals, plants, birds, and ancestral presences. This interconnected world must be cared for, inhabited with respect, and allowed to regenerate. From this living landscape, life continually emerges and renews itself.

The Arete Guasu: A Celebration of Life

Fig. 11: The dance of the Arete Guazu, a traditional festival of the Guaraní.



©Lenny Rivera

The most important Guaraní festival is the Arete Guasu, the “Great Festival.” This ancient ritual celebrates the corn harvest, affirms cultural

identity, and honors the encounter between the living and their ancestors through dance, music, and traditional ceremonies.

Project Description and Activities

To promote an intra- and intercultural process with a group of young Guaraní, to revitalize their cultural roots and foster their recognition and dialogue with the urban world of Sucre, the project implemented training in performing arts, photography, and cultural identity strengthening.

Workshops on the knowledge and practice of communal life

Fig. 12: Workshop with the Guaraní youth about the historical aspects of the liberation process.



©Isabel Ajata

As part of the current project, two workshops were held with Guaraní youth to document and reflect on the knowledge and practices that shape communal life. During workshops on Guaraní history, participants discussed the community's liberation process and the achievements that

followed. A collective systematization titled “Our Way of Being Guaraní: Knowledge, Practices, Feelings... That We Nurture and Cultivate” was created and shared digitally with both leaders and young people.

Framework agreement to support the Guaraní culture

To ensure long-term support for cultural initiatives, a framework agreement was signed between the Council of Captains of Chuquisaca (CCCH) and the Ministry of Cultures, Decolonization, and Depatriarchalization. This agreement aims to strengthen Guaraní cultural life, with youth playing a central role.

Theatre activities

Fig. 13: Theatre performance



©Hermann Stoffel/Willma Durán
Benavides

Further Activities consisted of Theatre activities, during which a theatre instructor was hired to lead a training process in performing

arts in February. This led to the first staging of a play titled “Where I Come From”, which explores the theme of migration experienced by young people who leave their communities.

The play was presented in its first version at the Sombrerería Theatre to students from the Teacher Training School of Chuquisaca. It was a complete success!

Photography course

Additionally, a photography course was conducted in the communities of Huirasay, Villaflora, and San Jorge de Ipaty, involving direct practice with youth who were spending their holidays in their communities during January.

Fig. 14: Photography workshop in the community of Huirasay.



©Isabel Ajata

As part of their practical training, the participants applied what they had learned, capturing beautiful photographs that reflect the Guaraní worldview in three dimensions:

- Reflecting the Carnival Festivities in San Jorge de Ipaty

Fig. 15: Dance of the Arete Guazu, performed by kids and youth in the community of San Jorge de Ipaty.



©Pedro Miranda

- Reflecting Cattle Branding in the community of Villafora

Fig. 16: Festival of the cattle branding during carnival, that every member of the community.



©Aylin Flores

- Reflecting daily life in the community of Huirasay

Fig. 17: A typical Guaraní family talking at the camp-fire in the community of Huirasay.



©Pedro Miranda

Connection to the framework of Global Citizenship Education and the Sustainable Development Goals

The project “Our identity, our strength— Ñandereko jaeko mirata” contributes to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by addressing the intersection of cultural identity, education, and social inclusion. It strongly aligns with *SDG 4 (Quality Education)* by creating informal learning spaces where young Guaraní develop skills in communication, arts, and critical reflection, while strengthening their cultural knowledge. The initiative also advances *SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)* by empowering an Indigenous minority group facing discrimination and marginalization in urban contexts, fostering visibility and equal participation in public life. Through revitalizing language, traditions, and cosmovision, the project contributes to *SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)* by promoting inclusive, culturally diverse urban spaces where Indigenous identities are recognized and valued. Furthermore, the focus on youth

empowerment, especially the participation of young women, aligns with *SDG 5 (Gender Equality)*, as it creates opportunities for self-confidence, leadership, and resistance to gender-based discrimination. The project's emphasis on cultural heritage and intergenerational knowledge sharing also supports *SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)* by strengthening community cohesion, fostering dialogue, and recognizing Indigenous rights. Finally, through collaboration with local authorities and institutions, it contributes to *SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)*, demonstrating how alliances between communities, government bodies, and cultural actors can sustainably support Indigenous youth and their futures.

Project results and Lessons learned:

- The consolidation of a community of young Guaraní in Sucre, created through spaces generated in workshops on cosmovision as well as in theatrical and photographic training.
- The strengthening and revitalization of their cultural roots through the recovery of their identities and the appreciation of their way of being (Ñandereko), which reflects their worldview.
- The general population of Sucre now recognizes the presence of young Guaraní students in the city. This was made possible through the visibility achieved with the theater production, intercultural dialogues, and the dissemination of the project on social networks.
- The work carried out in the artistic fields led to political impact, culminating in the signing of an agreement with the Council of Captains of Chuquisaca (CCCH) and the Ministry of Cultures, Decolonization, and Depatriarchalization to promote initiatives that strengthen the culture of the Guaraní nation, with the active participation of the youth.
- Thanks to the work and commitment of the young people, the authorities (mburuvichas and captains) expressed their support and attention to the young students living in Sucre.

The project created a community of young people who support each other and participate as a Guaraní community in the city's cultural spaces, proudly affirming their cultural roots. The Guaraní cosmovision workshops highlighted important elements of the richness of Guaraní culture, shared in daily life, and generated an atmosphere of shared responsibility and commitment to the project.

Instead of a conclusion: Two beautiful testimonies

Fig. 18: Group of young Guaraní at the presentation of the book by Yaikoavei Iyambae, “Somos libres, siempre seremos libres” (we are free, we always will be free).



©Isabel Ajata

“I find the project process very beautiful. I gained knowledge and experience alongside my peers. I am very happy to have participated in these activities, such as theater and photography. For example, in photography, I learned to use the camera and took pictures. I am also very proud to have been able to represent and showcase my Guaraní culture—how it is, how we live, how we celebrate our festivals, our food, and our traditions.”

Pedro Miranda Pino, 18 years old, Community of Huirasay

“As a Guaraní woman, I experience discrimination against women. Seeing young women in this group has motivated me, because it is very sad to see how young women back home become pregnant and the men leave them, since they are the ones who migrate the most. Here, we have seen women in university and teacher training who feel strengthened to move forward with confidence. The most beautiful thing this project has done is give us the space to proudly carry our culture high. We all speak Guaraní, and it is a source of pride for us.”
Ángela Flores, mburuvicha of the Council of Captains of Chuquisaca, community of Totorenda

Games Intersectional Roundtable¹

Building a Community for Inclusivity and Diversity around Games and Academia

Tan Schütz, Rachel Gorden, Kseniia Harshina

Abstract: *Games Intersectional is a community-building initiative designed to support marginalized individuals in the video game industry and academia, including women, LGBTQ+ people, people of color, immigrants and displaced people, and people with disabilities. Our monthly roundtables, workshops, and other events create a safe space for knowledge exchange, mentorship, and collaboration among game researchers, developers, and students. The project aligns with the SDGs on Gender Equality, Reduced Inequalities, and Quality Education by promoting inclusivity, accessibility, and personal and professional growth.*

Keywords: *Inclusivity; Video Games; Intersectionality; Community; Diversity*

Members of the Project

Kseniia Harshina, Ukraine: “Working with GloCo means feeling connected to a global community of people who share a goal of wanting to make positive change in the world, starting with their local communities.”

¹ Edited by Tom Tuček

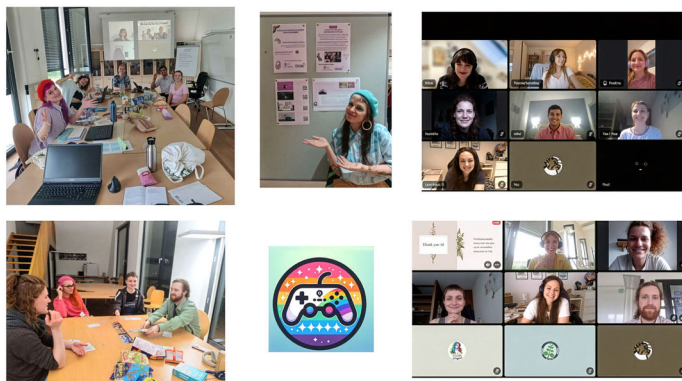
Tom Tuček, Austria: *"It means making a change, and not only focusing on what can be done around the world but also locally."*

Rachel Gorden, Germany: *"It means building a platform for and with like-minded people that addresses important challenges."*

Tan Schuetz, Germany: *"It means learning with and from people all over the world—not only about certain issues but also how to start tackling them."*

Marie Biedermann, Austria: *"Working with GloCo means to me to make a difference in building and nourishing communities that otherwise would not have formed! It means helping each other up while not looking down on any other group of people! It means community instead of competition! It means diversity instead of majority."*

Fig. 19: Games Intersectional



©Kseniia Harshina/Tom Tuček

Motivation for the Project / Problems Tackled

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework developed by scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe how different social identities—such as race, gender, sexuality, and disability—intersect and overlap, creating unique experiences of discrimination and privilege (Crenshaw, 1991). Rather than viewing identities in isolation, intersectionality emphasizes that people's experiences are shaped by the combination of their identities and the interconnected systems of oppression they face. This approach is especially relevant in inclusive spaces, as it underscores the importance of understanding and addressing the diverse, layered experiences of marginalized individuals.

The video game industry, as well as academia and research surrounding games, urgently need diverse voices—not only to enhance creativity and innovation but also to reflect the vast diversity of experiences in our world. However, welcoming these voices into games and game studies is only the first step. True inclusivity requires spaces where individuals from marginalized groups can feel safe, supported, and genuinely empowered to share and develop their ideas.

Games Intersectional was founded on the principle of promoting not only equality in video game spaces but also equity. While equality ensures that diverse voices are present, equity ensures that these voices can thrive and grow. Equity goes beyond simply inviting underrepresented individuals to the table; it creates the conditions for them to succeed, be heard, and shape the future of video games and game studies. The primary goals of *Games Intersectional* are to foster a supportive community, establish mentorship opportunities, and encourage international collaboration. We recognize that many people in video games—especially those from marginalized groups such as women, LGBTQ+ people, BI-POC people, immigrants, and people with disabilities—face significant barriers in both the industry and academia. Our community provides a space where these individuals can connect with like-minded peers, access resources, and find guidance from those who have navigated similar paths.

The organizers of *Games Intersectional* are alumni of the Game Studies and Engineering Master's program at the University of Klagenfurt, Austria. Over the course of their studies, they found a sense of strength, belonging, and motivation in their interactions with one another. This sense of community provided not only emotional support but also professional guidance and inspiration for game- and research-related projects. Realizing the value of this network, they wanted to extend this community to others who might benefit from a similar environment. They envisioned *Games Intersectional* as a welcoming space where diverse voices could gather, share their experiences, and build each other up—whether they're students, researchers, or professionals.

Project Description

Games Intersectional is a community initiative that brings together game researchers, developers, and students from marginalized backgrounds, providing a safe space for networking, mentorship, and collaborative learning. Our community focuses on creating inclusive and accessible spaces within the video game industry and academia, where members can share their experiences, discuss challenges, and celebrate successes.

Our activities include monthly roundtables, where members gather to discuss current projects, industry trends, and topics of shared interest. These roundtables are a core component of *Games Intersectional*, as they create an open platform for participants to voice their ideas, challenges, and aspirations. In addition, we organize workshops that cover a range of topics, from creative writing to coding basics, offering members practical skills that can benefit their careers. These workshops mostly emerge from the community itself as a sort of skill-sharing, where members can teach others their own skills. Recently, we have also introduced a 'book club' to our monthly roundtable, where we select and discuss games that resonate with our community's focus on inclusivity, accessibility, and representation.

Since the foundation of *Games Intersectional* in December 2023, more than 10 community events have taken place, including monthly round-

tables, workshops, and social gatherings. Our community now consists of over 30 members (both local and global), with each event typically drawing more than 10 participants.

Fig. 20: Games Intersectional Roundtable meeting, Summer 2024.



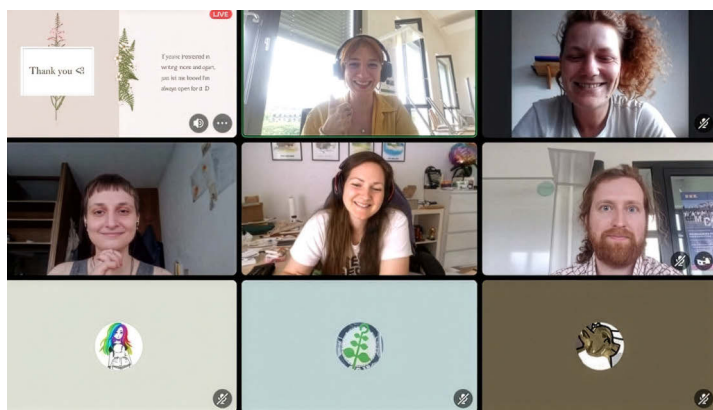
© Tom Tuček

Another essential part of our mission is to bridge local and global communities. While we're based in Austria, our Discord server allows members from around the world to participate, making *Games Intersectional* accessible to individuals regardless of location. This digital platform has enabled us to host hybrid events, like online Q&As with industry experts and collaborative game jams, bringing together participants with diverse cultural and professional perspectives. Discord also allows asynchronous communication and community activity between the monthly roundtables.

In addition to fostering inclusivity, *Games Intersectional* emphasizes intersectionality. We explore how overlapping identities impact experi-

ences within the video game sector, and our discussions focus on understanding and addressing these unique challenges. Topics covered in our events include career development, intersectionality in game design, accessibility, and the future of diverse individuals in video games.

Fig. 21: Creative Writing Workshop, organized by Tan Schuetz (30.05.2024).



© Kseniia Harshina

Connection to the framework Global Citizenship Education and the Sustainable Development Goals

At its core, GCED encourages individuals to become responsible global citizens, promoting understanding, respect, and a sense of shared humanity. *Games Intersectional* embodies these principles by providing a space where people from diverse backgrounds can come together, support one another, and engage in meaningful discussions about inclusivity in video games. By fostering dialogue around the challenges faced by marginalized individuals in games, our community encourages

members to embrace empathy and global-mindedness, key tenets of GCED.

The community's monthly roundtables and workshops serve as platforms for members to learn from one another and from invited experts, broadening their perspectives and deepening their understanding of global issues in video game contexts. This peer-to-peer learning model aligns with GCED's focus on participatory, experiential learning, empowering participants to actively address issues of equity and representation.

Games Intersectional directly supports several SDGs, including:

Goal 5: Gender Equality

Our community is committed to promoting gender equality in video games by providing safe spaces for women, non-binary, trans, and gender-queer individuals to express themselves, connect with mentors, and access career resources. By actively including women and gender minorities in all our activities, *Games Intersectional* works to address the gender disparities often seen in the video game industry and academia.

Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities

Games Intersectional focuses on building an inclusive community that addresses and reduces inequalities based on race, gender, disability, and cultural background. We work to ensure that members feel supported regardless of their identity, offering resources, workshops, and networking opportunities to help them succeed. Our focus on intersectionality also encourages conversations about the ways different forms of discrimination overlap, raising awareness and promoting inclusivity.

Goal 4: Quality Education

By offering workshops, reading clubs, and mentoring opportunities, *Games Intersectional* contributes to quality education outside traditional academic settings. These activities allow members to learn valuable skills in game design, inclusivity, and professional development, contributing to their growth as well-rounded, socially conscious game developers and researchers. Our focus on accessibility in video games further aligns with this goal, advocating for more inclusive and accessible educational content within the field.

Lessons learned

Building this community hasn't been without challenges. One of the initial hurdles has been helping people understand that the existence of a community like *Games Intersectional* is a valuable goal in itself. Often, people expect concrete, immediate outcomes, such as research projects or technical training. While those can certainly be part of the experience, *Games Intersectional* emphasizes that creating a safe, inclusive space for marginalized voices is a critical accomplishment in its own right. This understanding of community as both a support network and a catalyst for personal and professional growth is essential to the project's mission.

Throughout the development of *Games Intersectional*, we encountered various challenges and learned valuable lessons about building a supportive, inclusive community:

One of our initial challenges was defining and targeting our community in a way that was both inclusive and clear to people from different backgrounds. Initially, the group was called "FLINTA in Games," an acronym common in German-speaking countries that stands for "Frauen, Lesben, Intergeschlechtliche, Nichtbinäre, Trans und Agender" (Women, Lesbians, Intersex, Nonbinary, Trans, and Agender people). However, we quickly realized that this title was not easily understood internationally or by people from different educational contexts. Additionally, we wanted the community to be open to anyone who feels

marginalized or who wants to learn how to support marginalized individuals in video games, without limiting membership strictly to FLINTA identities. We believe that inclusivity also means avoiding gatekeeping; if someone doesn't visibly belong to a minority group, it doesn't necessarily mean they're not facing struggles. They could be dealing with invisible illnesses, be closeted, or have other personal reasons for wanting a safe community. Our role isn't to profile or interrogate members but to create a welcoming, respectful environment for everyone.

An issue concerning our initial title ('FLINTA in Games') that is still present in our current title ('Games Intersectional Roundtable') is its accessibility to people from different educational contexts; while the term intersectionality is by now widely used in many academic and academia-adjacent contexts, we still cannot expect every person who may want to join our community to be familiar with it, as this would require a relatively high level of education. To make our community more accessible and keep the threshold for joining as low as possible, we will further explore ways to communicate our mission and purpose to potential members in more inclusive and accessible ways.

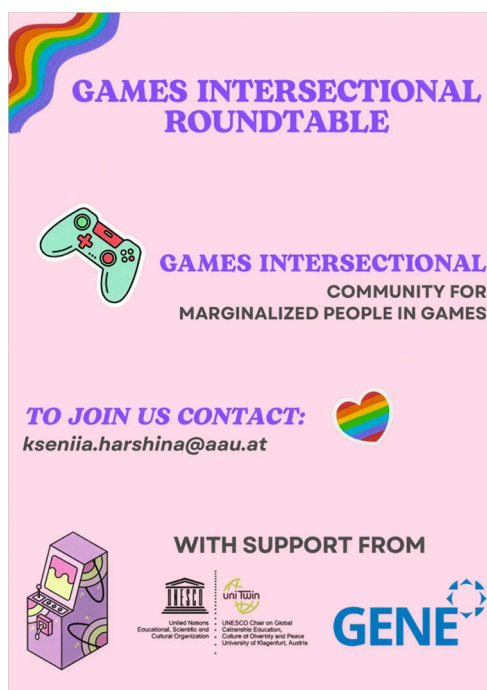
To maintain a safe space, we also introduced a simple barrier to entry: people must first reach out to one of our members before receiving an invitation to join our Discord server. This system has worked well, helping us maintain a respectful, supportive community. It has also been rewarding to see that the people who join are genuinely in need of a space like *Games Intersectional*—a place where they feel valued and heard.

We have also found that a non-hierarchical approach has contributed to a more supportive and open environment. Our community includes a range of people—Bachelor's students, graduates, Master's students, PhD candidates, and even instructors. By valuing each voice equally, we create an atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable sharing their ideas, experiences, and challenges, regardless of their level of experience. This structure fosters a culture of mutual support and empathy, breaking down traditional hierarchies that can sometimes stifle open communication.

Another key aspect of our community is the emphasis on member-led initiatives. We encourage members to host workshops on topics

they're passionate about, such as creative writing or coding. Not only does this empower individuals to contribute in meaningful ways, but the funding we receive also ensures they are compensated for their work, further valuing their contributions. These community-led workshops have proven highly engaging and effective, drawing on the unique skills and interests of our members.

Fig. 22: Promotional material



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One ongoing challenge has been involving the international community in our monthly meetings. Although we offer an online option for ev-

ery meeting, attendance remains primarily local. To address this, we are considering organizing a specific event aimed at international participation, such as a symposium. By hosting an event with a global focus, we aim to engage more participants from outside Austria and further strengthen our international connections.

Moving forward, we aim to continue creating a safe, inclusive, and empowering space for marginalized voices in video games, refining our approach as we learn from each experience.

For further reading

POC in Play, <https://www.pocplay.org/>

POC in Play is an organization dedicated to increasing racial diversity in the video game industry. They provide resources, articles, and community initiatives to support people of color in video games, including mentorship programs, events, and networking opportunities. This platform is ideal for those interested in how race intersects with game development and culture.

Gayming Magazine—LGBTQ+ Representation and Inclusion in Gaming, <https://gaymingmag.com/>

Gayming Magazine is the first and only global magazine dedicated to LGBTQ+ video game culture. It covers news, reviews, and features focused on queer representation and inclusion in video games. This resource is ideal for those interested in learning more about LGBTQ+ issues in video games and how the industry is evolving to be more inclusive.

Access-Ability—Accessibility in Gaming, <https://access-ability.uk>

Access-Ability is a platform dedicated to promoting accessibility in video games, covering topics like game design for disability inclusion and industry best practices. With guides, reviews, and articles, this website is a fantastic resource for understanding the importance of accessibility in video games and for implementing it effectively.

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Biographical Queer and Fem*path

Exploring Feminist and Queer Issues in an Austrian City

Rosalia Kopeinig, Mitch Münzer

“Working in GloCo offers a great opportunity to learn about fascinating projects and engage in meaningful, intensive exchanges.”

Abstract: *Drawing on Foucault's concept of heterotopia, schau.Räume, an interdisciplinary performance format, locates the absence of topics in the discourse within the empty sales rooms or public spaces. A temporary sense of abundance arises from these realizations. The events are developed in collaboration with artists, researchers, NGOs, and community members, aligning closely with the themes they aim to address. Essential for every schau.Räume event is a biographical workshop. The production “Biographical Queer and Fem*path” centered on biographical narratives exploring feminist and queer issues in Klagenfurt/Celovec and was performed in public spaces. This report also includes personal reflections from a participating performer and feedback from an audience member.*

Keywords: *Biography; Storytelling; Performance; Diversity; Participation*

Members of the project

Katrin Ackerl Konstantin, artistic director and researcher, cultural psychologist | Rosalia Kopeinig, psychologist | Mitch Noah Münzer, performer of his path as a diversity expert*

Project description: What is schau.Räume?

schau.Räume (show. Rooms) is an interdisciplinary performance format that addresses marginalized social issues in vacant business and public spaces through participatory engagement. schau.Räume uses participatory practices to give space to alternative forms of narration and expression and thus, creates impulses for cultural diversity and change.

Diversity in art and culture pertains to issues of representation and the availability of opportunities for participation. In each realization, schau.Räume pursues an interventionist and participatory approach: the themes are (re)presented temporarily through performances in empty sales rooms and public space. Artists, scientists, NGOs, and private individuals participate in each intervention—they are all currently working on the chosen theme or have a personal connection to it. schau.Räume has been active for over 10 years, with its primary base in Carinthia, Austria, while the events have been realized on a global scale. The performances aim to bring marginalized topics into temporary focus, transforming empty spaces, and highlighting the absence of content. Additionally, they foster encounters that, following Bourriaud's concept of relational aesthetics, become performances in their own right. schau.Räume has embraced artistic research as a core method since its inception.

The show.Rooms_local

Artistic research builds on the concept of embodied knowledge (cf. Peters, 2013). It questions social and cultural discourse, creating utopian and alternative perspectives grounded in historical or scientific contexts. This approach ventures into uncharted territories of knowledge transfer and creation, paving the way for new dialogues and insights. Over the years, schau.Räume has developed three event formats: show.Rooms_local, show.Rooms_regional, and show.Rooms_global. In the context of the glocal approach of GloCo, we will focus in this report on the show.Rooms_local.

This format is a one-time performance as an intervention in public space. Based on biographical narratives and historical omissions, guided performances are organized within the show.Rooms_local performances. They include people's personal experiences as stations in public space. The people involved in each individual "Biographical Path" become narrators of their personal life story. The biographies of these people are told and linked to historical parallels, which are also marginalized. The connection with the respective city's history leads to the visualization of an alternative historiography. Providing space for biographies and excerpts from life stories fosters a space for sharing and reconstructing. By recounting our experiences, we learn more about ourselves. By focusing on omissions, alternative perspectives on our own history can be adopted and uncovered. In addition, connections can also be drawn in relation to a shared—yet untold—story. Through a series of preparatory biographical and performative rehearsals, participants develop which part of their life stories they want to perform.

QUERGEHEN/ PREČNA STEZA

The *Biographical Queer and Fem*path 5* was held between January 2024 and April 2024 and took place in Klagenfurt/Celovec. This project was dedicated to making biographies related to queer and feminist social issues visible. To achieve this, biographical stories of people living in Klagenfurt/Celovec were prepared in advance in biographical work-

shops focused on feminist* and queer topics. Afterward, these queer and feminist* stories are implemented as paths and stations in public space. In each guided performance, the audience experienced an alternative history of the city. The preparatory phase began in January with biographical workshops led by Rosalia Kopeinig. In ten such workshops, participants developed biographical stories. More than 60 people participated, ten of whom agreed to share their stories as performers. Their stories were dramaturgically shaped with the artistic director, Katrin Acker! Konstantin, ensuring that a performance could be realized. She developed a dramaturgical path from elevated personal stories; places were selected that were spatially accessible, allowing one to walk a path in 60 to 90 minutes.

Fig. 23: Biographical workshop



©schau.Räume

One lecture and the performances

After the preparation phase, a lecture was held in March. The lecture was held by the historian Natascha Bobrowsky and was dedicated to the taboo topic of female homosexuality in Carinthia/Koroška: 1938–1945. The lecture began with a contextualization, giving an overview of the historical persecution of homosexuality. Three biographies followed, shedding light on the individual experiences and challenges of these people.

In April, the performances in public space took place on five evenings in the center of Klagenfurt/Celovec and at the University. On Domplatz and in front of the University, artist Barbara Ambrusch-Rapp installed two doors as part of her concept, inviting viewers to immerse themselves in another city's history by entering a performance room set in public space.

*Fig. 24: Biographical Queer*fempath*



© Niki Meixner

Each guided performance presented a biographical story that led the audience through public space. They were performed by participants of the biographical workshops, as experts on their own life stories. In this way, the audience experienced alternative city history by focusing on a city's communicative memory and on historical omissions in its representation. The small audience groups for each "path" were limited to no more than ten people. Attendees could choose to participate in multiple guided performances or just one, each focusing on a unique biography. They were announced as follows:

- "A Germanist (un)rolls her stories."
- "A radio producer whispers resistant stories into your ear."
- "A diversity expert connects you with challenges and places around trans(ition) issues."
- "An innovation manager with Carinthian-Slovenian roots sits under the table with you."
- "A mountain hiking guide and civil courage trainer cycles TOGETHER with you."
- "A drag queen asks how queer Klagenfurt/Celovec is."
- "An actress tries to escape machismo with you."
- "An activist takes you on the Trans-Siberian Railway."
- "A peace educator plants gardens with you."
- "A student takes to the streets with you."

Connection to Global Citizenship Education and the Sustainable Development Goals

This project embodies key principles of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) by fostering critical reflection, empathy, and the recognition of diverse perspectives through participatory artistic practices. By bringing marginalized narratives—particularly those related to gender, sexuality, and alternative histories—into public space, *schau.Räume* encourages learners and audiences to question dominant discourses and engage with issues of representation, identity, and social justice.

In doing so, it contributes to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4 (Quality Education) through transformative and experiential learning, SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by highlighting feminist and queer perspectives, SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by amplifying marginalized voices, and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) by fostering inclusive dialogue and mutual understanding. The project exemplifies how arts-based approaches can create meaningful connections between local experiences and global challenges, thereby strengthening the foundations of active and reflective global citizenship.

Lessons learned

Testimonial about the biographical workshops

“The biographical workshops turned out to be much more than a simple preparation exercise; they created a space where people could truly connect, and personal stories could emerge. Each session took place in a different setting, and these locations shaped the topics we discussed. For instance, one workshop was held in a cozy living room, where we began by discussing questions like “Where do we feel at home?” and “What places bring people together?” This warm environment made it easier for everyone to share their stories and open up. For me, there was always a central question: How do we create a safe space where people feel comfortable sharing deeply personal experiences? Deciding which parts of my own story to share was an ongoing inner conversation. With a calm, respectful atmosphere, we could really listen to each other, which often brought up my own memories and reflections that had been tucked away in the background. After attending a couple of these workshops, I received a document that divided my story into three parts. Together with the dramaturgical director, we mapped a route through the city with three meaningful stops, each with its own significance. Preparing for the tour and doing our first rehearsal helped me connect with each part of my story and gradually build up the confidence to present it publicly. Listening

to others and reflecting on my own story helped me to find a deeper sense of pride and belonging. These workshops felt like a bridge, connecting each person's experiences with a shared story."

Testimonial about the challenges of performers

"Being part of the performance was much more than leading people through the city; it was about transforming familiar places into spaces of connection and reflection. Each stop along the route carried personal meaning, not only for me but for the participants, who added their own perspectives and reactions. Sharing vulnerable parts of my life helped us see these spaces in new ways, turning city streets into stages for shared experiences.

What struck me most was how storytelling could change how we connect with these places and each other. We were not just walking from one spot to another; each story encouraged us to look deeper, seeing beyond the surface of everyday life. In many ways, this experience felt like "lifelong learning," connecting with SDG Goal 4's focus on inclusive education. It allowed us all to step into perspectives we might rarely encounter, offering an informal yet impactful way of learning about one another. The performance reminded me of the power of personal narratives to foster empathy and understanding. This journey through the city was more than a performance—it was a way to build common ground and expand how we see the world together. It is a reminder that storytelling is about creating connections and broadening our view of what we share. One of the toughest parts of the play was finding a balance between openness and personal boundaries. Sharing parts of my life so openly in a public setting brought a lot of vulnerability. Sometimes, participants' questions went deeper than I was comfortable with, and I had to figure out how to respond without losing the safe space we had built. It taught me a lot about the importance of protecting my own limits while still connecting with others in a real way. Another challenge came from navigating the group dynamics. Each group had its own vibe, and people brought different expectations and sometimes very personal questions. It took patience and empathy to keep these interactions respectful, especially when we touched on sensitive topics. Helping people understand the

need for boundaries and respect became a subtle but essential part of the experience. Keeping a steady rhythm throughout the tour was also something I had to manage. Moving between telling my story and physically guiding people through the city took focus and flexibility. Each stop was a chance to reconnect with my story, but it also meant adapting to the group and the setting. Through all of this, I learned a lot about setting boundaries, staying grounded in my story, and creating a welcoming space where people felt respected and included.”

*Fig. 25: Biographical Queer*fempath*



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After the performances, schau.Räume provided a safe space for both the audience and performers to reflect on their impressions. This opportunity was warmly welcomed and actively embraced.

Conclusion by testimony

We want to conclude this report with the voice of a participant of the guided path:

“I would like to thank you for the guided path that took place a few weeks ago. I was very impressed, and the feeling has not changed in retrospect. The level of openness, closeness, vulnerability, and intimacy that the guides conveyed was unpredictable, but all the more haunting when it came to us. I do not walk these paths again as the same person because I am offered stories I would not normally have access to, or a closeness I would not normally have. Now I feel like they are inscribed in the places we have visited, so that when I walk through them, they evoke the experiences the people I have met have lived. Not only the closeness to the stories of others, but also to my own, was evoked by the recognition of commonalities that resulted from these encounters. A rich experience, embodied and localized. Thank you very much! Hvala puno!”

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Game Jamming for Diversity & Awareness¹

Raising Awareness about the Impact on Gender and Identity in Video Games

Tan Schütz, Rachel Gorden, Kseniia Harshina

Abstract: *This report details the organization and conduct of the GSE² Identity Jam, a short game-creation event held in May 2023 for students at the University of Klagenfurt. The goal was to raise awareness among video game students and aspiring video game developers about issues of identity and gender. The event, which included workshops by university lecturers on gender representation in video games, spanned two days and tasked students with creating small video game prototypes that reflect and creatively address (personal) issues of (gender) identity. The overarching goal in creating this event was to promote the Sustainable Development Goal of Gender Equality by sensitizing students to both the impact of (gender) representations in video games, as well as letting them explore this topic for themselves on a practical level, thus defining this project as a participatory and solution-oriented approach.*

The website of the game jam, which includes the playable game prototypes that were made during the event, can be found at <https://itch.io/jam/gse-identity-jam>

Keywords: *Gender Identity; Representation; Gender Equality; Video Game Development; Education; Diversity*

1 Edited by Tom Tuček

2 GSE = Game Studies and Engineering, a master's programme at the University of Klagenfurt

Members of the Project

Kseniia (Ukraine): *"To me, GloCo means raising awareness by organizing projects within a like-minded international community."*

Rachel (Germany): *"Working at GloCo means I can make an impact on my community while sharing my experiences with people from all over the world."*

Tan (Germany): *"Sharing information and personal impressions over intersectional connected topics in an academic, global framework."*

Motivation for the project and problems tackled

The video game industry is today's dominant entertainment industry. Over the last few decades, video games have become an integral part of everyday life, with a considerable impact. At the same time, there is a prominent lack of representation of diverse identities in games, as well as among the people working in the industry. Target audiences and representations overwhelmingly focus on white, young, hetero, cis-male, and able-bodied identities, with differing identities being excluded.

However, independent small-scale video game developers (colloquially known as "indies") and hobby developers tend to exhibit much more diverse representations (see Kilzer 2022, 82; Ho, Escobar, and Tran 2022). So-called game jams—short game development events that are accessible and typically revolve around given themes—have also started to be employed by people seeking to foster such representations, and some organizations have started to arrange game jams specifically for the purposes of diversity and inclusion (see Kerr, Savage, and Twomey-Lee 2020). Game jams are relatively easy to organize and often result in engaging, collaborative experiences for participants.

As the project team is part of the GSE master's program at Klagenfurt University, Austria, we decided to organize such a game jam for our

fellow students, as many of them aspire to become game developers and leave their mark in the game industry. Partly, the motivation was also personal, as participating as a non-binary person in an English-speaking study program proved more challenging than expected. Many students were new to ideas and concepts of gender being seen as more than biology or a rigid binary. How could we change that? How can we interest students in not only realizing their preconceptions but also engaging with them critically? How can we package that goal without making the activity seem too dry or too ‘political’ to the potentially critical student’s eye?

A game jam seemed to be the perfect opportunity for that, especially in connection with a class that already prepared students to tackle identity-related topics. The class “Selected Topics in Game Engineering, focusing on Issues in Gender Studies: Mechanics of Identity” was offered in the summer term of 2023, and participants were invited to our game jam. To ensure the importance of queerness’s representation specifically within video games was understood, we worked with two experts (Elisabeth Millonig and Nic Kilzer) during our project, who each led an interactive workshop at the beginning of the game jam.

In organizing this event, we hoped to let people express themselves in a safe space while addressing serious issues in a low-threshold way, facilitated by the playful environment of game jams. We wanted to let students create games that are personal and can start conversations around their own and others’ identities. Lastly, as this was our first time organizing a game jam for such a serious topic, we hoped to create a replicable formula for people who wish to organize similar events.

Project description

Partly due to the mentioned initial personal motivation, we focused on gender identity in our planning. However, not every student would feel inspired, comfortable, or willing to engage with gender identity on a personal and creative level. Therefore, the intersectionality of different identity aspects was examined within the prior class sessions. Additionally,

students were encouraged to work either in small groups or on their own during the jam, so that everyone would be closely connected to the design process.

The game jam spanned over the course of two days. On the first day, the two experts we invited to join held their respective workshops on gender diversity and representation in video games. This was followed by a brief introductory workshop on the game engine *Ren'Py*³, which students were encouraged to use to create their projects. Afterward, so-called diversifiers were announced, decided on within the team beforehand, to offer students additional inspiration and help them think creatively about how to engage with the topic of identity in their game projects. These diversifiers were:

- Telling my story
- Telling the story of a loved one
- What I struggle with
- Walking in someone else's shoes / Switching roles
- Where I come from, ...
- A diverse cast of characters
- Choices matter
- Gameplay / Story changing depending on the character you play as
- Celebrating difference

After receiving input from our two guest speakers and us, students worked on their projects from the afternoon of the first day of the jam until the afternoon of the second day. We reinforced breaks by closing our jam room in the evening and reopening it in the morning. We provided the students with food, snacks, and beverages throughout the entire event. After the project deadline on the second day of the jam, students presented their prototypes to each other.

3 *Ren'Py* is a free-to-use and very accessible game engine specifically created to encourage the development of visual novels (text-based games with limited interactivity). See <https://www.renpy.org/>

Fig. 26: Group picture of all participants, workshop holders, and organizers.



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With more than 25 participants across both days, a total of 13 game projects were created, finished, and uploaded during the jam. Around half of the projects were created by people working alone, the rest by people working in teams of two. The games ranged from a pen-and-paper role-playing game for multiple players to several visual novels and more mechanics-based games. For example, the game *I Just Want to Find the Bus, FFS!*⁴ allows players to explore challenges faced by people with different identities as they look for the bus stop at night, thereby offering an intersectional exploration of identity. The game *Meant to Be?*⁵ is a visual novel about a dating application for seniors, while *Fitting In*⁶ deals with identity more abstractly, playing with different geometrical shapes.

4 <https://vulvarine.itch.io/i-just-want-to-find-the-bus-ffs>

5 <https://dzezabel.itch.io/meant-to-be>

6 <https://bubblewrapfox.itch.io/fittingin>

Following the jam, students discussed their projects in greater depth in the Mechanics of Identity class, which took place the day after. Here, students overwhelmingly reported that they enjoyed the task of developing a game prototype within roughly 24 hours. The food, support, and care they received from the organizing team, as well as the generally relaxed work environment, were highlighted especially in comparison to other game jams.

Fig. 27: Jammers presenting the games they created once the jam had finished.



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Connection to Global Citizenship Education and the Sustainable Development Goals

Global Education is “education that enables people to reflect critically on the world and their place in it” (UNESCO 2022, 2). The game jam we or-

ganized does exactly this by prompting students to reflect on the (gender) identities they inhabit and those of others, and how these are represented and explored in video games.

The students who participated in our project come from diverse backgrounds, both in their studies and in their countries of origin. Being part of an international study program, they are also likely to seek employment in other countries later. Educating and sensitizing students to matters of (gender) identity can have a long-lasting impact, as the students take what they have learned back to their respective communities and future workplaces, disseminating their newly gained knowledge further. This diverse pool of participants in our project combines the local and global aspects of Global Citizenship Education by fostering students' awareness at the local level, which can later be extended to the global level.

This is also important, as the awareness of diverse gender identities and their representations that our project promotes ultimately supports the *Sustainable Development Goal* of Gender Equality. Many of the students who participated in our jam seek to be employed in the video game industry later on and can utilize what they have learned during our project there, for instance, by creating more diverse representations of gender identities that can reach players worldwide or facilitating more diverse teams in development, and thereby making big changes.

Letting students explore the topic of the game jam and develop a game project by themselves also lets them take on an active role in their own learning and creating an experience, which stands in line with the goal of GCED to “empower” people to “understand, imagine, hope and act” (UNESCO 2022, 2). Game jamming can therefore also be seen as a participatory method to promote the goals of GCED and in working towards the *Sustainable Development Goals*.

Lastly, the students' game projects can reach many people worldwide, as they are stored and presented online. Through this, many people can play the games created during the jam and take inspiration from them. Creating digital games that are globally accessible, therefore, also corresponds to the aspect of global solidarity promoted by the *GloCo* project.

Lessons learned

In this section, we will quickly examine the challenges and difficulties the project team faced and the experiences gained in the process. Generally speaking, we underestimated the amount of work required to organize the program, the room, and the food, and how exhausting it would be for our team. Moderation and being available to students with any questions about the jam or problems with their prototypes also took up considerable time and effort. Especially so, as even when all students were quietly working on their projects, we still had to be present at all times, as university law prohibits students from being left unsupervised for any period of time. For a project of this size, having three team members is the absolute minimum, especially during the jamming time. Regarding the time frame, we found that 2 days strikes a good balance, giving participants enough time to work and design without exhausting them or the project team.

Although we were worried that some students might not respond well to the topics, all projects showed that students approached the themes of identity, diversity, and representation in video games earnestly. Some were more personal, others were very abstract, and some included potentially questionable or even problematic ideas. The post-event discussion about the prototypes helped dissect not only students' intentions, but also provided space for discussion and for expressing impressions. Even if students are thoroughly prepared for a topic, there will be situations that need unpacking and critical reflection, and it is important to create a space and establish tools beforehand that allow for constructive criticism and collective critical thinking.

After the game jam, participants occasionally approached us to compare their experiences in the Identity Game Jam with those in other, larger game jam events. They described it as healthier (food-wise and mental-health-wise), calmer, and more focused. It was also repeatedly mentioned that they enjoyed the absence of pressure to finish and publish a polished game. This was the case firstly because we underlined this sentiment several times, and secondly because we did not include ratings or rankings of the created games, unlike other game jams. As

we wanted the students to focus on their design ideas and concepts, it was a relief to see that they understood our intentions and were able to acclimate themselves.

Students were also given a short questionnaire about the game jam more than a month after the event. They were asked to rate their agreement on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 indicating full agreement and 1 indicating complete disagreement.

Some important data show that students had mixed feelings about the workshops, but generally agreed that they would be able to use what they learned in the future. As considerable time had already passed when the data were gathered, this can be considered evidence of a sustainable, long-lasting effect on participants. It was also mentioned that students would have appreciated the workshops held right before the start of the jam if they had been held at an earlier date. The reason is that they had already formed the ideas they wanted to work on when the game jam started, but the workshops provided new insights they could not easily implement on short notice. Giving more time between the input and the start of prototype design, therefore, seems like a solid consideration.

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Playing for Hope

Dialogues on Play-Based Education—a South-African project

Wietske Boon

“It is uplifting to work in a global network, to address universal issues using resources that are available in my local and global my community.”

Abstract: *Play is fundamental to child development. Play foregoes language development and the achievement of fine and gross motor skills. Play is a medium through which we learn, regardless of age. The integral role of play-based activities on cognitive, language, emotional, social, and physical development is often underestimated. When age-appropriate play-based education is integrated into the curriculum, learners are more willing and able to participate in learning activities, which enhances understanding of new concepts and promotes inclusion and quality education.*

The South African project 'Dialogues on play-based education' aimed to raise awareness and broaden the knowledge of different role-players about play-based education. The project also provided attendees with the opportunity to discuss and share their experiences on various topics related to play-based education and to find practical solutions to the challenges they face. An online event was arranged, and although it had a low attendance rate, the feedback received on the presentations and dialogues indicated that the insights gained were invaluable

and influenced how attendees understand and integrate play-based education into activities, lessons, and future decision-making processes.

Keywords: *Development; Inclusion; Learning; Play-based Education; Quality Education*

Members of the project

Wietske Boon, South Africa | Erich Cloete, South Africa | Karen Smit, South Africa | Jessica Winter, South Africa | Edward Tiffin-Malinowski, South Africa

Motivation for the project

Worldwide, considerable emphasis is placed on the outputs of educational systems, e.g., reading, writing, and mathematics skills. Different countries' educational performances are assessed, putting pressure on systems to improve the educational output (Archer, 2017), which can lead to additional pressure on teachers and learners to present satisfactory results. In a quest to raise performance, there is a drive towards earlier formal education ("schoolification") to prepare preschool children for primary school learning (Bipath & Theron, 2020, p.227). A concern about early years "schoolification" is that children's brains are not ready for formal, logical reading and writing activities until age 7 (Piaget & Webb, 2008). Instead of driving early formal learning, if we implement play-based education effectively, even after learners turn 7 years old, we can lay an even stronger foundation for later learning (Annandale, 2019; Parker et al., 2022) by stimulating creativity and sensory learning. When the foundation of learning is solid, and learners have achieved the necessary early learning outcomes, skills such as reading, writing, and mathematics will improve in the higher grades.

Fig. 28: Sensory learning

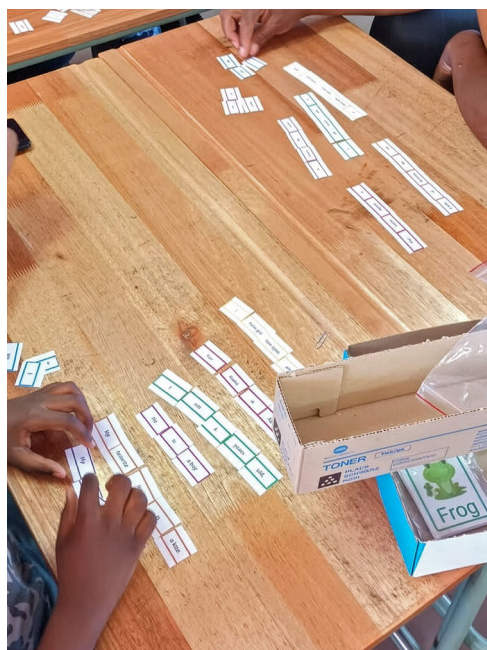


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Furthermore, factors such as neurodiversity, which affects 15 % to 20 % of the population (Brodey, 2022; Doyle, 2020), and differentiated learning styles, such as visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learning, can pose challenges for quality education, well-being, and inclusion. When teaching learners from diverse backgrounds and with different learning needs, teachers often feel overwhelmed, and learners may feel excluded

from the curriculum. Play-based education can lift this burden by providing teachers with alternative teaching methods and tools, and learners with the opportunity to manipulate the learning apparatus and toys to suit their learning styles and the requirements of their sensory systems.

Fig. 29: Building sentences



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However, in many countries, the infrastructure of communities and learning environments does not allow for suitable teacher education, appropriate apparatus, games, and toys, or safe outdoor spaces for free or rough-and-tumble play (Aina & Bipath, 2022). This leads to lower-qual-

ity education, reduced well-being, and exclusion from the country's curriculum framework.

Through this project, we aimed to raise awareness and share knowledge about play-based education and to strengthen its implementation in learning environments. A curriculum and learning environment that caters to learners' needs and abilities promotes the quality of education. Lastly, if more learners can participate in the formal and informal learning activities through play, more learners can be included in the execution of the daily program, leading to a greater sense of well-being.

Dialogues on play-based education

As stated, this project aimed to raise awareness, provide knowledge, and identify opportunities for play-based education across different role-players and learning environments. The shared knowledge has the potential to make a significant impact if attendees transfer it to their family members, colleagues, students, learners, and communities.

Targeting individual schools would have made a significant impact on those identified schools and communities. By creating opportunities for more interested parties to participate, the event brought valuable knowledge to various learning environments, though it was less focused on specific community-based challenges. We opted for an event where knowledge could be shared, and challenges and ideas around play-based education could be discussed with as many people as possible, who were interested and able to attend. It was also considered that, through an online event, role-players without internet access would not be able to participate.

An online event saves attendees time and money and is much more accessible than a venue-bound event. Therefore, the event was presented via the Zoom platform, but we had limited space for up to one hundred guests. Invitations were circulated through the organizers' networks via e-mail and WhatsApp, and advertised on social media platforms, and were free to attend. Attendees were mostly South Africans, but registrations were also received from Namibia and European countries. The

duration of the event was four hours (9:00 to 13:00 SAST). The presenters are experts in their fields of education, and their topics were relevant to the event's theme. Through the presentations, the project organizers sought to include information applicable to all age groups in the educational system. Presentations included an introductory session on neurodiversity, different learning styles, sensory needs, socio-emotional development, and the role of play-based education in these developmental areas. A more in-depth presentation on learning and teaching styles guided attendees to their own teaching styles and to how learners in front of them gain information. This session was followed by a presentation on school readiness, age-appropriate teaching methods, and play-based education. *Care for Education* shared how teaching using the *LEGO Six Bricks* promotes quality education and wellness. Play-based education is not limited to children in a specific age group and can be applied in higher grades, higher education, and the workplace. Therefore, when children reach higher grades (from Grade 4, approximately 10 years of age), they can still enjoy the benefits of play-based education through robotics and technology offered by *Hands-on-Technologies*. The last was a dialogue session, in which attendees had the opportunity to share their thoughts, ideas, and challenges related to play-based education through breakout sessions aligned with the previously mentioned presentations. The highlights of those dialogues were shared during a feedback session in the main room. A summary of the key points from those dialogues, accompanied by articles from the presentations, was compiled into a booklet and shared via e-mail to attendees and registered interested parties who could not attend the event. The booklet was also made available on platforms such as LinkedIn and Slack.

Connection to the framework of GCED and SDGs

Play is universal. The benefits of play are immense. Although much research has been done on the connection between play and cognitive and developmental growth, play and play-based education have enjoyed renewed attention over the last few years. On 25 March 2024, the United

Nations adopted an “International Day of Play” to be held on June 11, 2024 (United Nations, 2024).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, play is essential for learning (SDG 4) and social and emotional well-being (SDG 3). Play can be regarded as a language in which children communicate and share their life experiences and emotions to make sense of the world around them. Through play, they can share their stories, learn to deal with different situations, establish new friendships, and foster old ones. Play lets in children, regardless of their gender or background, who may otherwise be left out (Brodey, 2022). When family members or teachers take part in these activities, they become a part of the child’s world, which communicates a sense of loving and belonging. When we communicate with children on their level through play, information becomes understandable in a “language” they have mastered. They can explore it, learn through trial and error in a safe environment, build on it, and improve their skills and understanding. With the proposed targets of the United Nations (n.d.) for Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) in mind, the following are noted in terms of play-based education:

Play and tools for play-based education does not necessarily have to be costly. Games and toys can be made from natural sources or recyclable materials. Organizations such as Care for Education and Cotlands in South Africa provide training and materials to promote play-based education. Play-based education promotes literacy and numeracy skills by allowing children to name, count, add, group, build, and manipulate objects. They can expand their vocabulary and take part in conversations and role-play. All of these forego formal learning in the higher grades. Play-based education creates an inclusive learning environment in which children can participate in age-appropriate activities. Play-based activities can also be adjusted to meet the needs of learners with different abilities.

When a solid foundation is laid in the early years, lifelong learning can continue to be built on it. To achieve the above-mentioned play-based education, but not limited to, in early learning centers, teacher training is fundamental. Knowledge, insights, and challenges should be shared, discussed, and revisited to enable role-players, organizations,

and stakeholders to build on the groundwork that has already been done.

Lessons learned

Firstly, a team had to be put together: people willing to give their time and expertise to the project. It is evident through this project that some individuals and organizations are prepared to partner and take part in activities that promote local and global education.

The execution of the project was preceded by many brainstorming sessions before the final decision was made to host an online event. Online meetings made these sessions possible; otherwise, they would have been a challenge, as team members, including the GloCo team, are located far apart. Working within an online community brought knowledge and expertise together to execute this project.

Attendees from different countries participated in the event, thus reaching teachers from various learning environments. The project faced attendance challenges. Attendees had to register to receive the link to the online event. Although there was a high volume of registrations, attendance was low at approximately 36 %. The following reasons for the high number of registrations and low attendance were considered:

The event was free to attend. Thus, creating the possibility to register to secure a seat, but with no loss if they could not attend due to other responsibilities. If attendees had to pay a small fee to attend, they might have prioritized participation.

It is also understandable that other work or personal responsibilities, as well as crises, can take priority and lead to attendees withdrawing from the event at the last minute.

Incorrect email addresses on the registration form or spam filters can delay communication between organizers and attendees.

The platform could accommodate one hundred guests. At 100 registrations, the Google Form was closed to responses. If an unlimited number of guests could attend, more people may have registered. This might not have impacted the low attendance rate, but the number of attendees

might have been higher. In the future, frequent follow-up correspondence with attendees before an event will be implemented, providing a link for them to un-register if needed. Alternative contact details can be used, in conjunction with the primary e-mail addresses, to ensure on-time correspondence. The possibility of asking a small fee to secure their space might promote commitment to the event.

The dialogue sessions allowed attendees to share their knowledge, ideas, and challenges, as discussed in the breakaway sessions. It was evident that there is a need for affordable training opportunities, networking, reflecting, and the sharing of ideas. Furthermore, parents need to become more involved in their children's education and development. Parents should thus be included in the sharing of information and training opportunities. This will strengthen communities to share in the responsibility of educating the youth.

For further reading

To read more on play-based education and the Six-Bricks program, visit Care for Education: <https://www.carefored.co.za/>

Read more on learning through play by UNICEF and the Lego foundation: <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/UNICEF-Lego-Foundation-Learning-through-Play.pdf>

Read more in different LEGO Education products for different age groups: <https://www.handsontech.co.za/>

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Erich Cloete:
From Theory to Practice
Parent-Child Centered Play-Based Education in South Africa

In response to the evolving dialogue surrounding play-based education and its potential benefits for learners facing significant academic and language barriers, Laerskool Westerlig, based in Pretoria, South Africa, has launched a pioneering trial. This trial aims to explore the effects of play-based education on a Grade 2 class, specifically focusing on learners who encounter substantial challenges in their academic and language development. By embracing this approach, Laerskool Westerlig seeks to uncover new insights into how play can be leveraged as a powerful tool to enhance learning outcomes and overcome barriers to education.

The decision to implement this trial underscores Laerskool Westerlig's commitment to providing an inclusive and effective educational environment for all students, regardless of their backgrounds or learning challenges. By adopting a play-based approach, the school hopes to tap into its students' inherent curiosity, creativity, and resilience, empowering them to engage with learning in a more meaningful and impactful way. This trial not only represents a bold step forward in educational methodology but also reflects Laerskool Westerlig's dedication to fostering holistic development and academic success among its learners.

The Departmental head and class teacher, Ms. Pienaar, initiated the program and invited 16 learners and their parents to the start of the program on Saturday, 9 March 2024. We wanted to involve the parents, as their involvement enhances academic performance, improves behavior, and fosters positive attitudes towards learning. It also strengthens the parent-child bond and creates a supportive environment for the child's overall development and well-being. It was further important for the school to coach parents during these sessions to assist their children at home with their homework cor-

rectly. The attendance recorded for this session was 81 %. This session was followed by two-hour sessions on 16 March 2024 and 6 April 2024, respectively. Although attendance declined largely due to parents' work obligations, the lower attendance rate provided an opportunity for more personalized feedback to parents on their child's progress during formal teaching.

The sessions included a variety of indoor and outdoor play activities to support gross motor skills, mathematics, critical thinking, phonics, and reading. Ropes, bean bags, clay boards, buckets, various board games with rules, and reading games where learners had to match words to pictures were used.

The school found that the biggest improvement, after these sessions, was in spatial awareness. We observed notable improvement in the learner's bookwork and handwriting. Some learners showed signs of improved concentration and better work completion, and we can conclude that we observed an approximate 50 % improvement among those who attended all three sessions. The learners who showed little or no improvement have either serious learning barriers or did not attend all the support classes.

The Precious Fragility of the Youngest

Teacher Training to Cultivate a Playful Pedagogy in Early Learning Settings in South Africa

Jessica van der Walt

“Engaging in GloCo has enabled us to cultivate a sense of interconnect-
edness, not only with the teachers
we work with but also within the
expansive network of people dedi-
cated to enhancing the well-being of
all children.”

Abstract: *Despite the crucial role of early childhood education, many practitioners in South Africa lack training, and numerous children lag in cognitive and physical development. This project investigated play and learning in South African early learning centers before and after providing training and resources for learning through play. Using the photovoice method and a qualitative design, we explored play and learning across five early learning centers, each with distinct settings, resources, and approaches to play. This initiative aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4, which aims to promote inclusive and equitable access to high-quality education. We found that training practitioners and providing them with resources improved classroom engagement and inclusivity. Our findings underscore the importance of quality training and ongoing support in promoting lifelong learning opportunities for both learners and practitioners.*

Keywords: *Early Childhood Education; Learning through Play; Sustainable Development Goals; Equitable Education; Equality Training*

Project members

Jessica van der Walt, South Africa | Teboho Makhetha, South Africa
| Fikile Mathaba, South Africa

Project motivation

In South Africa, 1.6 million children under the age of 6 are enrolled in an Early Learning Programme (GROW Educare Centres, 2022). Early childhood education aims to deliver high-quality learning experiences that foster long-term development and benefits for both children and society. However, a recent Thrive by Five report (Giese et al., 2022:4) found that 57 % of South African children lag in cognitive and physical domains of learning. Their report assesses various areas, including gross and fine motor skills, numeracy, literacy, and cognition. Children's performance across these domains forms the basis for success in formal schooling and lifelong learning, with those who fall behind being less likely to reach their full potential (Giese et al., 2022:4).

Early childhood development practitioners play a crucial role in nurturing these learning experiences. They cultivate foundational skills and values necessary for addressing 21st-century challenges and promoting peace and sustainable growth (UNESCO, 2017:7). UNESCO's educational goals for sustainable development (2017:10) emphasize collaboration, critical thinking, self-awareness, and problem-solving as essential competencies for the 21st century. Research consistently demonstrates that play is the most effective way for children to develop these competencies and learning domains (UNICEF, 2021). Learning

through Play (LtP) stimulates cognitive, physical, social, and emotional skills, fostering collaborative, creative, and curious thinkers.

However, South Africa faces significant gaps in professional skills development and teacher training. The latest ECD Census (2021), conducted by the Department of Education in partnership with the LEGO® Foundation, revealed that 22% of early learning practitioners lack training or qualifications. Additionally, 26 % have attended skills training programs, while the remaining practitioners have qualifications ranging from school level to university. Many early learning centers also struggle with limited access to age-appropriate educational materials and resources.

To address these gaps, Care for Education (CFE), a nonprofit educational training organization, partnered with the LEGO Foundation to provide training in learning through play (LTP) to children, schools, and organizations in need. Our training programmes aim to equip practitioners with the skills and resources necessary for effective early childhood education.

In early learning contexts, CFE trains practitioners to use the Play Box. The Play Box is a hands-on educational resource that engages children in playful learning, filled with a variety of new LEGO DUPLO bricks. These Play Box activities promote quality education through movement and active engagement, fostering holistic development in young learners. This training helps teachers create environments conducive to playful learning, offering children a diverse range of activities necessary for lifelong learning.

In 2023, Care for Education became a member of the Global Campus Online Project (GLOCO) network, participating in dialogue groups facilitating discussions among professionals from various global spaces. Collaborating with GLOCO and GEPARD (the Global Education Project Award) and supported by funding from GENE, Care for Education initiated this project to examine the impact of play and learning in South African early learning centers before and after practitioners receive LtP training using the Play Box. The study used the photovoice method and qualitative discussions to explore the implementation of play and learning across 4–6 early learning centers in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The research sought to gain insight into practitioners' attitudes, knowledge, and skills regarding LtP before and after undergoing skills development training. Ultimately, the project aimed to underscore the importance of implementing and investing in LtP and quality professional development within early learning settings.

Fig. 30: Learners playing and learning with the Play Box.



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Global Citizenship Education and Sustainable Development Goals

At Care for Education (CFE), our focus lies on SDG 4, which emphasizes quality education. The goal aims to ensure inclusive and equitable access to high-quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all individuals, especially children. Its key objectives include eliminating gender disparities in education, enhancing the quality of education through improvements in learning environments and teaching methods, and fostering an inclusive educational environment that embraces diversity and promotes lifelong learning for children of all backgrounds.

Inclusivity is inherently intertwined with quality education as it seeks to cultivate a culture of respect, understanding, tolerance, diversity, and acceptance among all members of society. The SDGs and learning objectives were closely aligned with our research initiatives.

Care for Education advocates for experiential learning using concrete manipulatives to empower educators and children alike. Through promoting playful learning, we aim to inspire lifelong learning and equip learners with essential 21st-century skills.

Fig. 31: Golden Circle



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By providing Learning through Play (LtP) training, educational resources, and follow-up support for practitioners, Care For Education (CFE) aims to reach all children regardless of their context or circumstances. Through exploring play and learning before and after LT P training using the Play Box, our research aimed to underscore the important role of teacher training in promoting quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for both learners and practitioners.

CFE not only imparts knowledge on LtP implementation during training but also offers ongoing support to encourage practitioners to apply their newfound knowledge and sustain LtP practices. The research hoped to shed light on the application of this knowledge and the sustainability of LtP following teacher training.

The nature of our project also actively promotes Global Citizenship Education by empowering practitioners to enhance their teaching and learning practices and situating them within an interconnected network focused on quality education.

Project description

In this project, our objectives were to:

- Identify the current landscape of play and learning in early learning centers.
- Examine the impact of training in the LtP using Play Box on play and learning within these centers.
- Assess practitioners' attitudes, knowledge, and skills regarding LtP before and after training.

Through achieving these objectives, we hoped to:

- Emphasize the role of LtP in improving learner outcomes in the 21st century.
- Highlight LtP's contribution to lifelong learning for children, practitioners, and other stakeholders.

- Advocate for the pivotal role of teacher training and skills development in LEP for early learning practitioners.

Care for Education selected five diverse early learning centers, based on factors such as credibility and proximity to our offices in Olivedale, Johannesburg. These centers varied in terms of location (urban and rural), resources (under-resourced and well-resourced), and approach to play.

Fig. 32: Eighteen-month-old learner writing the number 2.



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After inviting these centers to participate in the research project, consent forms were obtained from both practitioners and parents. Care for Education visited the centers in June 2023 to explain the research

process thoroughly and conduct initial observations. Observation forms with indicators of playful learning were completed, and pictures of lessons were taken. Although some centers incorporated playful learning elements, many still used traditional methods, with young learners (some as young as 18 months old) sitting at desks and engaging in writing activities.

Fig. 33: Learners sitting on the carpet listening to their teacher read a story.



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Practitioners were then invited to Care for Education offices for training, and each practitioner received Play Boxes to implement in

their classrooms. Practitioners returned to their classrooms and soon began sharing images of their playful practices, revealing more laughter, movement, and engagement during lessons.

The project employed the photovoice method, which emphasizes active participation from community members in understanding and addressing challenges (Strack, Magill, and McDonagh, 2004:50). Early learning practitioners were central to the research process, providing insights into their evolving attitudes, knowledge, and skills regarding play-based learning. Their voices were recognized and valued, underscoring the significance of their contributions to the field of early childhood education.

Three months later, the research team revisited four of the centers. Sadly, one center in Thembisa had closed due to financial difficulties. Observation forms were completed during lesson observations, and practitioners engaged in individual conversations with the team, reflecting on their experiences before and after training. Looking at their pictures from before and after training, they shared how the training facilitated a shift towards a more playful approach, leading to improved engagement, learner-centered lessons, and greater inclusivity for learners with diverse learning styles.

“Normally, what we used to do was we would take whatever we had and just throw it there and say, ‘kids, you can play.’ But now, we engage. We do everything with them, and they like it. They say, ‘Teacher, look at my tower, it has balance ... look at the colors...’ We used to say they must do and you do another thing while you are looking at them, but now, whatever they do, it needs us to be there.”—Teacher from Fhulufhelo ECD, Soweto.

Fig. 34: Learners working together to build.



©Care For Education

Fig. 35: Learners engaged in free play on the carpet with their teacher.



©Care For Education

Lessons learned

Over the course of the project, we encountered some challenges but also gained valuable insights.

Challenges included

Difficulty arose in locating some early learning centers, particularly those in rural areas without physical addresses. At times, we had to park our car outside settlements and rely on locals to provide walking directions.

We encountered a *vetted location that turned out not to exist*, realizing this only upon arriving at a dilapidated building. Subsequently, we faced challenges in reaching the initial contact person.

We navigated around learners whose parents were *hesitant to give consent for their children to be photographed*. These learners had to be moved around to exclude them from appearing in the shots.

Encouraging practitioners to *consistently share high-quality pictures* and updates proved challenging.

Dealing with a *center unexpectedly dropping out* of the project posed a setback. Sadly, the center had to close due to financial struggles, which was a loss for the project because the center was enthusiastic, passionate, and playful.

A *research team member departing* from Care for Education necessitated restructuring our team to accommodate new responsibilities.

Instances arose in which principals attempted to present a curated image rather than allowing natural observations to occur.

However, through these challenges, we gained important learnings:

Practitioners demonstrate a *high level of receptiveness* to training and eagerly welcome resources and support visits. They take pleasure in showcasing their passion and work, eagerly highlighting the progress made with the provided training and resources.

Despite their dedication to their work, *practitioners often lack the training and resources needed to implement play-based learning*. While they aspire to deliver quality teaching and learning at their centers, they may not al-

ways possess the resources or knowledge to incorporate playful methods effectively.

Establishing trusting relationships is essential, as it helps create a supportive rather than judgmental environment to encourage practitioners to provide feedback and share their findings.

Some centers, situated in urban areas with more affluent learners and parents, may be better equipped with infrastructure and materials. In contrast, others in disadvantaged areas may struggle with lower fees and limited resources. However, *the setting and resources did not determine the playfulness of the centers or the practitioners*. Some centers, despite having fewer resources, exhibit a more playful approach than others.

Investing in quality training, resource provision, and follow-up support significantly affects teaching and learning outcomes and practitioners' attitudes toward playful learning.

For further reading

Homepage Care for Education: <https://www.carefored.co.za/>

Giese, Sonja et al. (2022). *Thrive by Five Index Report*, s.l.: s.n.

The Thrive by Five Index is South Africa's most extensive survey of early childhood development, aiming to determine whether learners attending Early Learning Programs (ELPs) are meeting developmental milestones. The 2021 index, the first in a series, serves as a baseline to monitor trends over time. Initiated by First National Bank and Innovation Edge, in collaboration with the Department of Basic Education, and supported by USAID and ECD Measure, the index provides crucial data on the developmental progress of preschool children aged 50–59 months across key areas of early learning, physical growth, and social-emotional functioning.

Heckman, James J. (2012). *Invest in Early Childhood Development: Reduce Deficits, Strengthen the Economy*. Heckman: The Economics of Human Potential, p.1–2.

In his summary, Professor Heckman argues that prioritizing investment in quality early childhood development for underprivileged children offers a good strategy for addressing societal deficits. He maintains that such investment yields major outcomes across the education, health, social, and economic domains, leading to increased revenue generation and reduced reliance on costly social expenditures.

Visser, Marieta et al. (2021). The Challenges Experienced by Practitioners from Under-Resourced Early Childhood Development Centres in South Africa: A Single Site Case Study. *South African Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 51(3), pp. 14–24.

Education is crucial for children's development, yet access to quality early childhood education remains a challenge in marginalized South African communities. This study aimed to identify the challenges faced by ECD practitioners and coordinators related to program quality. Six participants from an ECD organization were interviewed, and themes were identified through content analysis. Four main themes emerged, including the need for improved qualifications and resources.

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Transforming Learning Experiences

A Project in Liberian High Schools with Computer-based Simulations (CBS)

Josiane Ndjock

“GloCo offers an opportunity for meaningful dialogues and cross-cultural knowledge sharing, inspiring a sense of responsibility in each of us to contribute to the betterment of our communities.”

Abstract: *Access to quality education (SDG 4) remains a major challenge in Liberian schools due to outdated curricula, teacher shortages, and limited instructional time. The computer-based simulations (CBS) project introduced a novel learning approach by using technology to make education more interactive and engaging. Over 16 weeks, 35 high school students from diverse backgrounds worked together to create a virtual village, using digital tools.*

As a strategy for integrating technology into secondary education, the CBS project helped bridge learning gaps by promoting hands-on and student-centered activities. Through group tasks, remote support, and classroom presentations, students developed cognitive, linguistic, and digital skills, as well as creativity, problem-solving abilities, and confidence. Feedback showed that simulations can increase student autonomy, performance, and cross-cultural skills. They provide teachers with new ways to make learning visible, making them a promising solution for under-resourced schools.

Keywords: *Computer-Based Simulations; Student Autonomy; Quality Education*

Team Members

Josiane Ndjock | Mazen Halabi

Motivation

Significant progress has been made in expanding access to primary education worldwide, with enrolment rates in developing regions reaching 91 % by 2015 (GPE, 2015). However, in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, education systems remain fragile, particularly in conflict-affected and economically disadvantaged areas. Liberia, one of the poorest nations in the world, faces substantial educational challenges due to a prolonged civil war, the Ebola epidemic, and the impact of COVID-19. Despite government efforts, such as the 2005 Free and Compulsory Education Act and the 2016 privatization of public basic education, progress remains limited. Alarming, Liberian students consistently rank among the lowest in regional assessments, as demonstrated in the 2013 and 2016 WAEC university entrance exams, where failure rates reached nearly 100 % (Oduor, 2016).

As an educational consultant in Liberia, direct observations in schools reveal deep-rooted structural weaknesses, including:

- Incoherent curricula that fail to align with standard educational frameworks.
- A severe shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate learning materials, and high dropout rates. Students often express boredom and disengagement, struggling with outdated textbooks and traditional teaching methods.

- Limited instructional hours due to student absenteeism, as many learners must support their families financially. This reality highlights the need for flexible learning solutions that allow students to engage with lessons beyond the classroom.
- Logistical barriers and cultural resistance (Uwagaba, 2023) continue to hinder technology integration in Liberian schools, despite growing recognition of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a crucial learning tool.

The motivation for this project stems from ongoing discussions about the significance of ICT in schools. Koç(2005) argues that ICT enables students to communicate, collaborate, and share their work anytime and from any location, without the constraints of time, space, or resources. Similarly, Brush et al. (2008) highlight ICT as a tool that allows students to explore learning topics, address problems, and develop solutions within the learning process. Fenner and Newby (2000) add that each constructs their own world uniquely, thereby generating rules and mental models to make sense of their experiences. Learning is a process of seeking meaning. The success of learning lies in each learner's ability to construct their own meaning rather than memorize and repeat the teacher's meaning. From this perspective, the computer-based simulations (CBS) project was introduced as a targeted ICT intervention, offering an innovative, student-centered approach to overcoming curriculum limitations, time constraints, student disengagement, and low performance. By leveraging simulations, the project provides students with immersive, real-world learning experiences that foster engagement, collaboration, and critical thinking. Designed specifically for high school students approaching national exams and higher education pathways, the project integrates interactive learning tools, role-based scenarios, and digital resources to enhance accessibility, practicality, and alignment with 21st-century skills.

The CBS Project: Living Together in an African Village

Simulations in Education: A Hands-On Approach

Simulations offer a fresh, interactive way to learn by combining digital tools, role-playing, and real-world problem-solving. They engage students in ways traditional teaching methods often can't, especially in schools with limited resources. Our project was inspired by the French adaptation of computer-based simulations, known as *simulations globales assistées par ordinateur* (SGAO). This method is based on the idea that students learn best by simulating reality and actively creating knowledge (Caré, 1997). The CBS project applied this approach to create a dynamic, student-centered learning experience.

Implementing the CBS Project in Monrovia, Liberia

We piloted the CBS project following an alleviated teaching and learning scenario to integrate technology into learning (Vetter, 2015). The theme, “*Living Together in an African Village*,” provided students with a space to build a global village by blending diverse worldviews. Despite their differences, they found common ground and a shared sense of belonging by imagining and bringing to life a village where they could all live.

All the work had to be created online using open sources, so the project was designed with a step-by-step approach to keep students engaged and ensure meaningful participation:

- **Weeks 1–4:** Setting the foundation—Naming the village, designing the environment, and setting up administration.

Fig. 36: Building a village

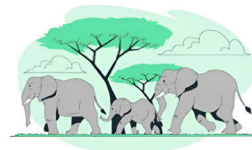
Timbramain panoramic view



The village is generally green due to its forests and mountains. There are trees everywhere and a river running along the village. The houses are made of red clay and powered by solar or wind energy.



At the village roundabout, there is a shopping center where you can buy everything, and a clinic. The animals are not far: mainly lions and elephants. However, Timbramain is the only village in Liberia to have a strange animal that looks like a large mouse but barks like a dog, eats meat, and lives with the Timbramain people: the souchi (mouse-dog).



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- **Weeks 5–8: Building identities—**Creating characters, assigning professions, and shaping village life.

Fig. 37: *The professions in the village.*

Professions of the village



Daily life

History teaches that the Timbramain people engaged in various professions to sustain their families and community, with agriculture being their primary source of income. They practiced hunting, gathering, fishing, and livestock farming, raising cattle and poultry. Hunting was a family activity, often carried out using *souchis* (mouse-dogs) with bells and large nets, as well as traps such as lassos, snares, and spike-filled pits. Fishing was conducted in diverse ways, including poisoning the water, using cast nets, fishing lines, and traps. The products from these activities were used for food and medicinal purposes, showcasing the resourcefulness of the Timbramain people in utilizing their environment.



Today, the village has modernized, and so have its inhabitants. There are increasingly more artisans and small trades, such as tailors, hairdressers, pastry chefs, and others.



The *Toc-Toc* has hired a secretary from the capital to record the village's disputes. A general practitioner has also been brought in, and although the villagers still suffer from simple headaches, the entire village takes pride in having a doctor. Additionally, the Liberian administration has opened a police station in Timbramain because the *Toc-Toc* can no longer handle the numerous complaints from the people.



- **Weeks 9–12:** Adding depth—Exploring gastronomy, urbanization, and resolving conflicts.

Fig. 38: The village gets more complex.

Urbanization Issues in the Village

The Timbramaiese, with the help of the Toc-Toc, have made significant progress in improving living conditions. However, more efforts are needed to implement a greater number of development projects in this village, which is often distracted by unnecessary quarrels.



Highways



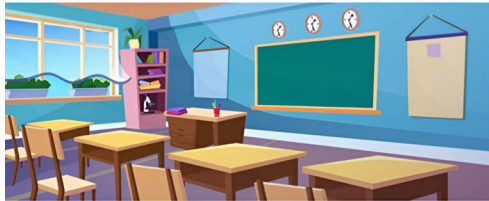
Electricity for all



Cooking gas for all



Drinking water



Quality schools and Education

At the moment, 70% of families in Timbramain live without these benefits. More and more young people are leaving the village to pursue studies in the city or to find respectable jobs and a better life. Unfortunately, this migration has reduced the population of Timbramain, and the village now has more elderly people than young people.

- **Weeks 13–16:** Bringing it all together—final presentations and reflections.

For 16 weeks, students spent about 48 hours on the project, working remotely for two hours each week and one hour in class under the consultant's supervision. In-class sessions provided opportunities for feedback, while communication was maintained through the *Remind.com* application.

Apart from enhancing language skills, the project wove together multiple subjects, with related teachers guiding students in different areas:

- **Geography:** Mapping landscapes and planning urban spaces.
- **Moral Education:** Learning governance, decision-making, and conflict resolution.
- **Economics:** Managing resources and trade.
- **History & Cultural Studies:** Exploring traditions and customs.
- **ICT:** Using online tools, collaborating on *Remind.com*, and creating presentations.
- **Social Sciences:** Understanding human interactions and societal roles.
- **Creative Arts:** Designing village maps, character profiles, and event planning.

Connection to the Framework of GCED and SDGs

Computer-based simulations (CBS) offer significant potential in education, particularly in under-resourced contexts. By combining role-playing with digital tools, simulations create engaging, interactive learning experiences that foster cognitive autonomy, intercultural communication, and social cohesion, while promoting the quality of education (SDG 4) and peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16). By involving students from diverse cultural and skill backgrounds, the project demonstrates the power of collaboration. It underscores the importance of collective

efforts in overcoming educational and societal challenges (SDG 17). As mentioned earlier in this paper, through the CBS project, students created a global village where, despite their differences, they could find a sense of belonging and connection, support one another, and develop global citizenship skills.

Simulations allow students to experiment, make decisions, and experience the consequences in a created environment. This hands-on approach helps build critical thinking, teamwork, and empathy; skills necessary for addressing global challenges. Through collaborative activities, students learn to engage with different perspectives, build relationships, and appreciate diversity. In doing so, they develop the confidence to participate actively in their communities.

With the targets of SDGs in mind, the following points highlight the contribution of computer-based simulations to education:

- **Inclusive learning:** Digital simulations do not require expensive resources. By using readily available ICT tools (such as smartphones), they offer students from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to participate fully, regardless of socioeconomic status. The pilot model demonstrates that CBS projects can be scaled nationally.
- **Development of 21st-century skills:** Through role-playing and interactive scenarios, students enhance their problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication skills. These skills prepare them not only for academic success but also for real-life situations.
- **Safe space for learning:** In simulations, students can explore ideas, learn from mistakes, and improve their understanding without the fear of judgment. This encourages shy or hesitant learners to participate more actively.
- **Promoting global citizenship:** By simulating real-world contexts such as villages or enterprises, students learn about interconnectedness and global issues. They understand how their actions can impact others, fostering a sense of responsibility and empathy.
- **Learning through play:** The element of play embedded in CBS makes learning more enjoyable and memorable, allowing students to con-

nect emotionally with what they learn, and fostering lifelong learning.

Lessons learned

The results were visible. Students became more engaged, even in subjects they had little interest in before, to the point that some began considering them for future university studies. The classroom environment improved too; students were more cooperative, making teaching easier. Teachers found the project refreshing, as it encouraged research in a fun way and provided them with a new approach to tackling complex topics. One of the biggest takeaways was how independent the students became. They were having fun in the learning process, without even realizing they were building knowledge. As a final touch, their completed work was printed and displayed on the school billboard for the rest of the year, a recognition of their creativity and hard work. They celebrated their achievements and reinforced the impact of interdisciplinary learning within the community.

The implementation of the CBS project at a high school in Liberia revealed several limitations that affected its deployment.

Lack of parental understanding and support:

One of the most significant challenges was the minimal support from parents, mainly due to a lack of understanding of the project's objectives and educational value. Some parents were reluctant to allow their children to use personal devices for the simulations, limiting students' participation and output. Therefore, organizing a parent-teacher meeting before the project launch is necessary to help explain the objectives, the benefits, and the essential role of parental support. Regular updates through newsletters, group chats, or school events could sustain parental engagement throughout the project. When parents understand

the educational value, they are more likely to support their children's participation.

Maintaining the momentum

The CBS project covered 16 weeks of school but lasted six months due to interruptions such as vacations, holidays, and exam periods. The breaks disrupted the project's momentum, making it challenging for students to refocus when sessions resumed. Considerable effort was needed to regain engagement after each interruption. Integrating online discussions and reflective activities over holidays could bridge the gap during breaks and help maintain momentum.

Limited access to the ICT lab and scheduling conflicts:

The project relied on the school's ICT lab, but as a language project primarily, it clashed with regular computer science classes. Despite the ICT teacher's cooperation, the lab was unavailable on some days, causing delays and missed sessions.

If the project is presented to the Head of Studies early, they can ensure it is formally incorporated into the ICT lab schedule and involve all relevant teachers. This has the potential to foster collaboration and increase support.

Many of the challenges encountered during the project stemmed from its innovative nature in Liberia, where technology is often seen as entertainment. Overcoming these limitations by actively involving and sensitizing parents, teachers, and the community can create a more cohesive and impactful implementation of CBS projects in the future (Luna & Del Valle, 2023).

For further reading: Open and Online Sources to implement the village CBS project

The following online resources were used to support the implementation of the Village CBS project and could help others implement it:

Village Concept

<https://bop.fipf.org/wpcontent/images/stories/dossiers/village.pdf>: Read more on executing a village CBS project. It is in French, but easily translatable.

Collaborative tool for idea sharing

<https://www.remind.com/>: This is a platform for real-time communication and collaboration; ideal for school settings, with inclusive access and privacy.

Free access tools

<https://www.freepik.com/>: A website offering free images and graphics for visual content.

<https://www.postermywall.com/>: A free tool for designing professional posters.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gbarnga>: Outlines the key elements in presenting a region.

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Changing Education by Participation

The Project Transform4School of the UNESCO Chair in Klagenfurt (Austria)

Anita Esterl, Elsa Palaver, Isabella Sandner

“An intensive project—working together with pupils, students, teachers, and school directors for changing the paradigm of school was very exciting! It was rewarding to discuss the project in the wonderful GloCo Community.”

Abstract: *The Transform4School project, carried out by the University of Klagenfurt in cooperation with the University College of Teacher Education Carinthia, aims to foster democratic understanding and peace education in partner schools through participatory approaches, such as class councils and student parliaments. By involving students in school decision-making processes, they gain hands-on experience in democratic participation and become familiar with the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The project is anchored in UNESCO Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and promotes experiential learning, enabling students to challenge themselves, take on responsibility, implement their own project ideas, and reflect on their role within a global society. Experiences from the last two years indicate both the potential to stimulate school development processes through students' participatory involvement in collaboration with teachers and school administrators, and the challenges involved,*

especially in overcoming resistance and adapting to existing school structures (Sparkling Science, n.d.-a).

Keywords: *Participation; Democracy; Peace Education; SDGs; Education*

Project Team “Transform4School”

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Motivation for the Project

The Transform4School project was initiated in response to the growing gap between the goals of a sustainable, peaceful global society and current educational practice. The central concern of the project is to promote democratic learning and peace education through participatory methods in partner schools. This initiative addresses the “[...] dilemma that educational goals cannot be achieved through mere transmission; they also require the self-initiative of learners and are thus inherently open-ended. Transform4School therefore builds on an understanding of learning as experience.” (Universität Klagenfurt, n.d.-a)

One of the main reasons for the need for “Transformation through Participation: Model Schools for Democratic Learning and Peace Education” (Transform4School, n.d.-a)—in short, Transform4School—is the realization that traditional educational approaches often fail to

meet the high demands of democracy promotion and peace education. Educational systems worldwide have long sought to impart values such as democracy, environmental awareness, and peacefulness. Nevertheless, the actual implementation of these values in many students' everyday school lives often falls far short of expectations. A key criticism is that education is frequently viewed as a one-sided process in which knowledge is merely conveyed rather than actively acquired through participation and personal experience (Zentrum für Citizen Science, 2023).

Which Challenges Does the Project Address?

Key challenges that have become visible through the project include:

Passivity and Lack of Participation Opportunities in Everyday School Life

Traditionally, there is little room for participation and individual initiative. Students learn about class councils and student parliaments and how they are implemented. Mutual appreciation is fostered. Together, participants create a “place of well-being.”

Different Understandings of Democracy

Various forms of democratic understanding exist. The project addresses these differences (for example, by engaging in conversations, making compromises, recognizing and nurturing potential). Democracy must be learned: “The path from a subjectively shaped ‘I’ to a socially empathetic and democratically shaped ‘self’ does not develop on its own.” (Himmelfmann 2016: 61). Convey, model, and maintain fundamental democratic values. Practical testing within the school (e.g., class council, student parliament, projects).

Overcoming Structural Barriers

Structures: school regulations and legal requirements. These are difficult to change. Positive learning experiences still occur. There are limits, which is why compromises are important. The goal is to jointly find a path toward greater student participation and involvement, make it sustainable, and continue developing it in collaboration with all stakeholders.

Project Description

The Transform4School project is an educational initiative carried out by the University of Klagenfurt in cooperation with the University College of Teacher Education Carinthia, working with three partner schools in Carinthia and one partner school in Tulln (Lower Austria). It aims to promote the principles of democracy and peace education through participatory approaches in schools. The project is embedded in UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education (GCED) strategy and contributes to the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, particularly Goals 4 (Quality Education) and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

The resulting “[...] learning processes, resistances, moments of failure and success [are] documented, reflected on, and evaluated by the participants themselves as co-researchers—so-called citizen scientists—together with the research team. The insights gained from the experiences in the project, understood as experiential learning, are made public and are particularly made available for school development and teacher education.” (Universität Klagenfurt, n.d.-a; Str. und Einf. E.P.)

Transform4School seeks to enable students, through participatory educational approaches, to experience and actively shape democratic processes. Central to this are the establishment of class councils and student parliaments, which allow students to voice their opinions on school matters and help shape their school environment. These bodies

are organized on a grassroots-democratic basis and offer students a platform to represent their interests.

The project team and dedicated teachers support this process. The core idea is to stimulate learning about global contexts within one's own school through engagement with the SDGs. Close collaboration among students, the project team, and teaching staff allows for deepening existing projects at the schools or developing entirely new ones.

Fig. 39: Participation for togetherness



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Project Workflow at the Schools

Fig. 40: Participation needs spaces for exchange and encounter.



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Opinion-forming process workshop: This workshop introduces students to the concept of democracy and creates an open space for them to share their personal experiences. Within this context, the roles of class representatives and the student parliament are explained and discussed.

Class Representatives Workshop: Students engage more deeply with the responsibilities of this role. They collect ideas and wishes from their class, design creative posters, and prepare and practice their election speeches.

Election Commission Workshop: The election commission workshop focuses on preparing for election day. One or two students per class take on the responsibility as members of the election commission and organize themselves into different teams. While one group prepares materials such as voter registries and ballots, another designs creative elements, such as the ballot box and signage, and a third ensures overall coordination and communication with the school administration.

Election Day: Each class elects a class representative and a deputy. The process is largely organized by students, with support from teachers and the project team. Voter registries are checked, ballots are distributed and cast in voting booths, and the votes are counted. If necessary, runoff elections are held, and the final results are announced.

School representative election: Following this, the school representative election takes place. Class representatives and their deputies can stand as candidates for student body president, present short speeches, and are elected together with two deputies. The results are then formally communicated to the school administration.

Fig. 41: School ballot box



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Student Parliament: The student parliament meets once a month and serves as a platform where class representatives bring forward the concerns and ideas of their peers. Discussions are held, decisions are made through voting, and implementation processes are carried out in cooperation with teachers, school leadership, and the project team. Not all ideas are realized, which is also part of the learning process.

Class Council: In parallel, the class council takes place within individual classes during designated periods. These sessions are led by students, with teacher support, allowing class-specific issues to be discussed and decisions to be made democratically, taking into account both majority and minority perspectives.

Projects: Various projects emerge from these processes, ranging from a yearbook and SDG-related activities to initiatives that improve everyday school life, such as break organization and school events. Students develop and implement these ideas in coordination with teachers, the project team, and the school administration.

Events: In addition, different events complement the project, including visits to institutions, networking meetings, or participatory formats such as forum theatre. These are organized collaboratively and supported by teachers, school leadership, and parents or guardians.

SDG-Workshop: The SDG workshop introduces students to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and encourages them to identify their relevance within the school context. Students reflect on existing practices, develop new project ideas, implement selected initiatives, and present and evaluate their outcomes.

Citizen Scientists: As citizen scientists, students, teachers, and directors actively engage in research processes using methods such as research diaries, photovoice, forum theatre, and creative formats like memes. The project team guides these activities and include joint reflection as well as the presentation of results in diverse formats.

In-School Professional Development: Finally, in-school professional development is offered for teachers and school administrators. It focuses on topics such as class councils, student participation structures, the SDGs, and research methods, to ensure the long-term, sustainable integration of these practices into school life.

Challenges and Adaptations

Below is a brief excerpt of experiences collected by the project staff throughout the project.

Time

- Workshop phases are time-consuming.
- Teachers and school administrators called for shorter sessions.
- Elementary school (grades 1–4) and lower secondary school (grades 5–6) require more time.
- Age and comprehension play a significant role.

One key observation was that students involved in decision-making processes not only developed a deeper understanding of democratic principles but also showed increased motivation to become more involved in their school community. Student parliaments provide a platform for students to express their opinions and ideas, leading to greater identification with the school and an improved school climate.

It also became apparent that involving students in democratic processes leads to heightened awareness of global issues and the SDGs. The students develop an understanding of how their actions affect global challenges such as environmental protection, nutrition, and poverty, and they are motivated to contribute ideas for related projects.

Additional Burden on Teachers

- Due to new projects and responsibilities.

- Teachers are supported throughout the process.
- The project primarily provides this support.
- It requires dedicated teachers and school social workers.

This raises the question of how schools can continue participatory processes independently after the project concludes. At one school, a social worker tried to oversee the student parliament, which worked very well initially. However, the social worker's hours have since been reduced, so supervision of the student parliament is no longer guaranteed. Teachers themselves would need more flexibility to guide participatory projects, which is possible only with strong support from school leadership.

Drawing on these experiences, a follow-up project to Transform4School, called transform2gether, was developed. The follow-up project aims to empower school administrators, teachers, and social workers to become active participants in fostering participation. To achieve this, new training modules will be developed to expand their skills so they can independently establish student parliaments and class councils. The project team will continue to provide support during practical phases. However, the main idea is that democratizing the school will become embedded in the school's culture and become an accepted norm. Additionally, transform2gether involves geographical expansion, as the collaboration with the University College of Teacher Education Carinthia has been extended to the provinces of Vienna and Tyrol.

Connection to the GCED Framework and the SDGs

The Transform4School project is closely linked to the vision of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). GCED aims to raise awareness of the planetary dimension within educational processes, thereby contributing to a global sense of responsibility among citizens. People who recognize the link between local actions and global consequences are more motivated and capable of actively and responsibly participating in shaping a sustainable and peaceful world. For UNESCO, Global Citizenship Education is thus

the key pathway toward a more just and peaceful world community. The SDGs, especially Goal 4 (Quality Education, with the integration of GCED in 4.7) and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), provide valuable reference points for this educational endeavor.

As an educational approach designed to equip learners with the skills, values, and knowledge necessary to address these challenges, GCED is particularly relevant to the transformative vision underlying the concept described here. GCED can raise awareness of global challenges such as climate change, inequality, and conflict. It emphasizes the importance of human rights, social justice, and sustainable development. GCED's goal is to empower learners to think critically, develop intercultural competencies, and contribute ideas for solutions to global problems (UNESCO, 2024).

Transform4School draws on these principles by allowing students to experience and shape democratic processes as elected class representatives and student delegates. Through student parliaments, students are given a space to assume responsibility and make decisions that directly affect their school community. These experiences not only foster a deeper understanding of democratic principles but also raise awareness of their own role as citizens who can contribute to improving their community and global society.

Transform4School has the potential to have an impact beyond the participating schools, as evidenced by other schools' growing interest in it. The methods and approaches developed and tested in the project can serve as a model for other schools and educational institutions pursuing similar goals. By integrating GCED principles and the SDGs into everyday school life, the project lays a sustainable foundation for a more open school culture. In addition, the follow-up project aims to create a competence network and a digital expertise platform for school-based democracy and participation.

Lessons learned, experiences, and Insights.

The experiences gained during the various phases of Transform4School have prompted the project team to continuously refine methods and structures. The challenges that arose during implementation were treated as learning opportunities, allowing the approaches to be further developed and better adapted to the needs of schools and students. These experiences have also yielded valuable insights that could be relevant for future educational initiatives.

In the future, the findings from Transform4School will be compiled into a handbook offering guidance on conducting workshops on democracy, class representatives, and election commissions, as well as on organizing class councils and student parliaments. This handbook aims to contribute to a more open and democratic school culture. In addition, an online platform is under development to provide information about the Transform4School and transform2gether projects and invite people to engage in exchange. In this way, the project makes a lasting contribution to democracy and peace education. Through the follow-up project transform2gether, there is an effort to evolve from a “university project for schools” to a “school project with the university.”

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Bridging Voices for Climate Justice

The CAW!—Climate Action Works!—A Project linking South Tyrol in Italy with Ecuador and Senegal

Fabian Kostner

Abstract: *The “Climate Action Works!” project seeks to illuminate the climate policy and socio-ecological challenges facing South Tyrol and the globe. By highlighting actionable pathways toward a socially and environmentally just world, we advocate for a socio-ecological transformation accessible to all. The initiative will feature three virtual teach-ins with experts from the Global South, focusing on climate change education related to both mitigation and adaptation strategies. Our primary audience includes activists and interested individuals from the Global North.*

Insights from these sessions will be synthesized by journalists from the South Tyrolean street newspaper “Zebra”, who will collaborate with young participants aged 18 to 30 in editorial workshops. The culmination will be a special issue of “Zebra” dedicated to climate justice, bridging perspectives between the Global North and South.

Keywords: *Climate Justice; Education; Global South; Socio-Ecological Transformation; Virtual Teach-Ins; Writing Workshops*

Members of the project:

Fabian Kostner—Coordinator, Italy | Viola Ducati—Co-coordinator and workshop leader, Italy | Alessio Giordano—Workshop leader, Italy | David Hofmann—Volunteer, Italy

Motivation for the project and problems tackled:

The “Climate Action Works!” (CAW!) project arises in response to the pressing global challenges of climate change and social inequality, particularly highlighting the intricate relationships between the Global North and Global South. As climate crises intensify, it becomes crucial to address not only the environmental dimensions but also the

socio-economic disparities that exacerbate vulnerabilities among marginalized communities. Our project seeks to foster a deeper understanding of climate justice by providing a platform for diverse voices, especially those from the Global South, who are often sidelined in discussions predominantly led by the Global North.

In South Tyrol, as in many regions, the impacts of climate change are evident. Yet, responses often lack an intersectional approach that considers race, class, and historical context. By organizing three virtual teach-ins, we aim to bridge this knowledge gap and empower activists and interested parties in the Global North to engage meaningfully with climate justice issues. These sessions will feature speakers from the Global South who bring firsthand experience and knowledge about climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Their insights are invaluable for challenging prevailing narratives and ensuring that our understanding of climate action is inclusive and equitable.

The project’s focus on global citizenship education highlights the importance of a postcolonial perspective that recognizes historical injustices and current power dynamics. Addressing diversity and discrimi-

nation is not merely an academic exercise; it is a necessary step towards creating a more just society. By fostering dialogues that include multiple viewpoints, we can dismantle stereotypes and biases that persist within climate activism, ultimately paving the way for more collaborative and effective solutions.

Our collaboration with the South Tyrolean street newspaper “Zebra” exemplifies this spirit of partnership, as it not only allows us to disseminate knowledge but also engages young people in critical discussions about climate justice.

Fig. 42: The street magazine “Zebra”



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The editorial workshops with youth are designed to empower the next generation of climate activists, equipping them with the tools to analyze and challenge systems of injustice. By synthesizing content from the teach-ins, these young journalists will gain practical experi-

ence in storytelling and advocacy, essential for driving change in their communities.

Ultimately, the “Climate Action Works!” project responds to the urgent need for transformative education that encompasses themes of (in)justice, intersectionality, and the complexities of migration and neoliberalism. By fostering a holistic understanding of these interconnected issues, we can inspire a more engaged and informed citizenry ready to advocate for a just and sustainable future. Through dialogue, education, and collaboration, we believe that meaningful change is not only possible but imperative for achieving climate justice for all.

Project description

At the heart of CAW! lies the belief that climate action must be inclusive and just. The project will consist of three engaging virtual teach-ins, each focusing on critical aspects of climate change education, including mitigation and adaptation strategies. Our target audience—predominantly activists and interested parties in the Global North—will benefit from the unique perspectives of our speakers, who are deeply rooted in the realities of climate change. These sessions will not only provide essential insights but will also encourage participants to reflect on their roles in the climate movement and the importance of allyship in fostering justice.

Fig. 43: From the local to the global: a hybrid working session.



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International Partner No. 1: Alberto Acosta—Ecuador

Alberto Acosta is an Ecuadorian economist, politician, and intellectual known for his contribution to the concept of “Buen Vivir” (or “Sumak Kawsay” in Quechua), which promotes sustainable development and a harmonious balance between society and nature. He was Ecuador’s Minister of Energy and Mines and President of the Constituent Assembly in 2008, where he played a crucial role in the drafting of the new Ecuadorian Constitution. Acosta is also a critic of the extractivist economic

model and has written several books and articles on development, sustainability, and human rights.

International Partner No. 2: Mensa Kwami Tsedze—Senegal

Mensa Kwami Tsedze is the Program Director of Earth Guardians for Africa. Earth Guardians is an international non-profit environmental organization that provides youth with the resources and training they need to develop anti-racist, anti-colonialist, environmental, and climate-focused projects and campaigns.

We got to know Mensa through the network of academics set up by Hans-Karl Peterlini, the UNESCO Chair at the University of Klagenfurt. In his presentation, Mensa will highlight specific projects implemented on the African continent by his organization, emphasizing aspects of climate justice. He will also provide us with materials that the group of young people we involve through the AfZack youth association can use to delve deeper into the topic.

International Partner No. 3: Daryl LEYESA—Philippines

Daryl Leyesa is an activist of the farmers' organization PARAGOS and the National Coalition of Rural Women of the Philippines (PKKK). These organizations campaign against land grabbing and defend the collective rights of women and rural, indigenous, and fishing communities. They are also fighting for agrarian reform with the aim of a fair redistribution of land and the implementation of agro-ecological agricultural models.

In conjunction with the teach-ins, we will collaborate with the South Tyrolean street newspaper "Zebra" to document and summarize the key takeaways. Through editorial workshops with young people, we will create a special issue dedicated to climate justice that examines the dynamics between the Global North and the South. This issue will serve as both an educational resource and a platform for amplifying marginalized voices, encouraging readers to engage critically with the topics discussed.

Fig. 44: Insight in a workshop



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The materials developed during the workshops, including the recorded videos of the virtual teach-ins, will be used by one of our speakers, Mensa Kwami Tsedze, for their own educational programs.

The CAW! project also emphasizes the importance of global citizenship education from a postcolonial perspective. By addressing themes of diversity, discrimination, and historical context, we aim to challenge existing narratives within climate activism and promote an inclusive approach that acknowledges the contributions of all communities. This focus aligns with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 13 (Climate Ac-

tion), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Through our efforts, we aspire to cultivate a new generation of climate activists equipped to analyze and challenge systemic injustices. The knowledge gained from the teach-ins and the editorial workshops will empower participants to advocate for change within their communities and beyond

Connection to the Framework of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

The “Climate Action Works!” (CAW!) project is intrinsically linked to the principles of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At its core, GCED aims to empower learners to engage with global challenges, promote social justice, and foster a sense of responsibility towards others, particularly in the context of climate change and its socio-ecological implications.

CAW! aligns with GCED by emphasizing critical thinking, inclusivity, and empathy as foundational elements of education. By featuring voices from the Global South, the project actively challenges dominant narratives in climate discourse, encouraging participants from the Global North to confront their privileges and assumptions. This approach not only enriches their understanding of global issues but also cultivates a sense of solidarity and shared responsibility for addressing climate injustices.

In relation to the SDGs, CAW! directly contributes to several goals, particularly:

- SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities—By promoting diverse perspectives and advocating for marginalized communities affected by climate change, CAW! seeks to highlight and address systemic inequalities that persist in climate action efforts.
- SDG 13: Climate Action—The project emphasizes the urgent need for comprehensive climate education that includes both mitigation and

adaptation strategies. By empowering activists with knowledge and practical tools, we aim to inspire action that addresses the climate crisis effectively.

- **SDG 4: Quality Education**—Through the virtual teach-ins and editorial workshops, CAW! promotes inclusive and equitable quality education. The initiative not only provides participants with valuable insights but also encourages them to become agents of change within their communities.
- **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities**—By fostering discussions on sustainable practices and community resilience, the project helps create urban environments that are inclusive, safe, and sustainable for all residents.
- **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals**—Collaboration is a central tenet of CAW! The partnership with the South Tyrolean street newspaper “Zebra” exemplifies how diverse stakeholders can come together to share knowledge and amplify voices in the climate justice movement.

By integrating these frameworks, CAW! positions itself as a catalyst for transformative education that encourages participants to critically engage with the complexities of climate justice. The project aims to inspire a collective commitment to sustainability and social equity, equipping individuals with the skills and awareness needed to navigate and address the pressing challenges of our time.

Lessons learned

In launching the “Climate Action Works!” In the (CAW!) project, the team encountered several significant challenges common to initiatives focused on climate justice and global engagement.

Diverse Perspectives and Representation: Engaging speakers from the Global South posed logistical challenges, including time zone differences and varying access to technology. Ensuring authentic representa-

tion while balancing the perspectives of the Global North and South required careful planning and sensitivity.

Communication Barriers: Language differences and varying levels of familiarity with climate concepts created obstacles in effective communication. The team implemented translation services and simplified content to bridge these gaps, which ultimately enriched the discussions.

Planning and implementation: Managing timetables for virtual teach-ins and workshops across different time zones required careful coordination, and last-minute changes often led to confusion. Creating a good workshop environment was crucial, but maintaining engagement was challenging, as overlapping commitments caused attendance to fluctuate. Ensuring clear communication regarding schedules and expectations proved complex across diverse groups. Additionally, fostering an inclusive atmosphere where participants felt comfortable sharing their thoughts was essential and worked very well. These logistical issues highlighted the need for good organizational tools and communication strategies to enhance both the learning experience and participant involvement in future projects.

Overall, these challenges provided the team with crucial insights into the importance of flexibility, collaboration, and empathy in addressing complex issues. The experiences underscore the necessity of inclusive approaches and the value of learning from diverse voices to create meaningful, impactful climate justice initiatives.

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Travel for Change

A School Project between Austria and Gambia

Eva Gunsch-Abendstein

“In reference to Albert Einstein's famous quote, 'Fantasy is way more important than knowledge because knowledge is limited, I say for global citizenship education, knowledge is important, but experience is way more important because it makes knowledge real.

The Global Campus brings people together, opens new perspectives, and shows how similar mankind everywhere on the planet is.”

Abstract: *The NGO RESPECT from Nature Friends International hosted a webinar for students of the Zillertaler Tourism School in Austria and the Institute for Tourism and Travel of The Gambia (ITTOG) in West Africa. The basic aim was to foster intercultural exchange among students and to provide insight into each other's school life and sustainable tourism efforts of both countries. Students in The Gambia and Austria prepared contributions on the subject and shared them during the webinar. The highlight was the small-group exchange, where they discussed similarities, motives for attending a tourism school, and future perspectives.*

Keywords: *Sustainability; Tourism; Education; Cultural Exchange; Gambia*

Members of the project:

Anna Kodek from Naturefriends International, who hosted and organized the webinar, Austria. | Adama Bah, founder of the Institute of Travel and Tourism of The Gambia (ITTOG), Lamin Bojang, a teacher at ITTOG, and students, The Gambia. | 19 students of Zillertaler Tourismsschulen and their teacher, Eva Gunsch-Abendstein, Austria.

Fig. 45: Students with their teacher, Eva Gunsch-Abendstein.



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Reasons and motives for the project

RESPECT is the name of the working area of Nature Friends International, which promotes ecologically sustainable tourism. It was they who sent an email to schools seeking someone interested in a project on sustainable tourism in Vietnam. Not knowing what it would all be about, I got in contact with this organization, but unfortunately, it was too late since they had already found another school. But I signaled interest in next year's project with a tourism school in Africa. What originally should have been a school in Uganda turned out to be the ITTOG in The Gambia.

Since tourism with all its facets is a core issue in a school like ours, dealing with sustainable strategies and the ecological, economic, and social changes that go hand in hand with it is part of the curriculum. Also on the agenda are popular tourism destinations worldwide, and when it comes to Africa, why not work on lesser-known regions rather than always the classic safari hotspots in Eastern or Southern Africa?

The language of communication in The Gambia is English. Therefore, the project was also an ideal opportunity to implement it not only in tourism geography lessons but also in English lessons, which made time management easier and enhanced language skills through the preparation of contributions in advance and the natural setting during the webinar.

Tourism connects people and provides great opportunities to get to know other countries and cultures. For tourism professionals, it is essential to be open-minded and curious about other parts of the world. Therefore, schools should not miss out on any opportunity to foster intercultural exchange, as it helps foster thinking outside the box and broaden horizons. It is one of the school's overriding educational goals to contribute to responsible, open-minded citizens fulfilling their part in a peaceful and democratic society.

As a great geographer once said, "the most dangerous of all world views is the world view of people who have not looked at the world." (Alexander von Humboldt)

Project description

First things first, before we started preparing for our webinar, we had to familiarize ourselves with The Gambia and our project partners. To be honest, hardly anybody knew about this tiny country in western Africa with its long navigable river and sandy beaches for European winter sun seekers. But thanks to Google Earth, the country has taken shape quite quickly, and the ITTOG homepage allowed us to browse photos to get a rough idea of the school we were working with.

We were given the tasks in advance. The students had to present their schools, give an insight into tourism in the country, and report on the implementation of selected SDGs in tourism. Apart from the meaning of the SDGs, which had to be discussed beforehand, the assignments were no big challenge for tourism students, but it still took us quite a while to agree on how to implement and distribute them. Teamwork and creativity were key.

One group began with a PowerPoint presentation on tourism in Austria, covering highlights from natural landscapes to traditions and regional cuisine. Another group was responsible for presenting our school. First, a drone video was produced, for which a full script was needed. Then the video was embedded in a presentation about various measures at our school to reduce our ecological footprint, conserve resources, and avoid waste. When it came to the question of how SDGs get implemented in domestic tourism, one student filmed herself on a tour through her family-run hotel and demonstrated how they use renewable energy through solar installations and a small waterpower plant, how sustainable consumption is promoted by the sale of local products, and how water and plastic are saved by means of a conscious housekeeping program. This issue was supported by best-practice examples related to mobility and education.

To avoid technical issues with the webinar transmission, we filmed all our contributions and created three 4-minute videos. So, our part of the preparation was done. We were all satisfied and proud with the outcome, and wondered how students in The Gambia solved their tasks.

Fig. 46: Students from Austria and Gambia in a live chat.



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We should find out soon. For four hours, we were connected via the internet with the students of the ITTOG and learned a lot about the tourist development in each other's countries. For us, it was particularly interesting to see how tourism contributes to the economic, ecological, and social transformation of a country so different from ours and to the implementation of the SDGs in line with Agenda 2030.

The highlight of the webinar was the exchange in the breakout rooms. They searched for similarities, shared their reasons for attending a tourism school, discussed trips they had already taken or would like to take, and extended their first invitations. When the time was up, the students on both sides were almost disappointed, as they felt the conversation could have gone on longer. However, thanks to technical possibilities, a group was set up on a social media platform within a few minutes, and a lively exchange has been taking place ever since.

Fig. 47: Students from Austria presenting a traditional dish.



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Fig. 48: Students from Gambia presenting tourist attractions.



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Anchoring SDGs and GCED

The SDGs are essential for tackling global challenges and creating a better, more inclusive world for all. Can tourism help to implement them? Yes, it can. A teacher of the ITTOG provided information on how far the hospitality industry in The Gambia and the school itself are contributing to achieving various goals. They complement national strategies to eradicate poverty by improving access to quality education for all. Young people, and women in particular, are empowered with entrepreneurial and tourism-related skills to find decent jobs in the tourism industry, which accounts for about 20 % of the country's GDP (Gambia Investment and Export Promotion, n.d., <http://www.giepa.gm/invest-in-gambia/country-profile>). Like Austria, The Gambia also promotes sustainable, eco-friendly tourism, which conserves resources, protects the environment, and benefits locals. With these measures, both countries support the efforts for responsible consumption and production and climate action.

The Austrian students also addressed sustainable mobility and the country's initiatives for electric vehicles and public transport. Many communities invest in bike lanes, while hotels offer bike rentals and charging infrastructure, which should help reduce CO₂ emissions and promote eco-friendly travel. All these efforts could be seen as a reference to sustainable cities and communities, and since goals are strongly interlinked, also to climate action.

Regarding the benefits of GCED, the webinar facilitated an intercultural exchange between students from the Global North and the Global South. This took place at eye level since students at both schools were sitting in their classrooms connected by a laptop or a smartphone. In the familiar setting of a tourism school and tourism itself, they had the opportunity to gain new perspectives while, at the same time, experiencing similarities they had not been aware of before.

The webinar allowed personal contact and communication in a real setting. It had become an individual experience for our students, fostering closeness and evoking positive emotions. These emotions impact the learner and are essential to any pedagogical work, as they set in motion

an educational process that, in this case, paves the way for global citizenship education in the classroom and in students' mindsets.

Which lessons did we learn?

Apart from the awareness for GSDs and mutual understanding, we learned a lot about tourism in The Gambia. It was interesting to see that the presentations by the Gambian students covered similar aspects to ours, since they also featured great landscapes, traditions, and food. And there was another parallel to Austrian tourism. They try to get away from their image as a winter-sun destination and promote their culture and national heritage to attract tourists traveling inland year-round. With the Ninki Nanka Trail, which takes tourists to different villages along the river Gambia and invites them to interact with local communities, they have created a flagship for a responsible tourism approach in the country.

What one must be aware of for online projects like this is the importance of technical equipment. We were glad we had all our contributions recorded in advance because what was originally meant to be just a backup soon turned out to be more than that. During the technical check, it became apparent that for doing live presentations on the smartboard being filmed and transmitted, our normal laptop cameras and microphones were simply not good enough.

Another aspect which should not be underestimated is time management—and this applies not just to the preparation but also to the webinar itself. Even though the tasks for the students sounded quite simple at the beginning, they took us much longer than expected. Collaborative work, the video shoot, embedding the videos in the presentations, and then filming the whole thing was very time-consuming.

During the webinar, a relaxed approach to time is helpful, too. When we met for the technology check, the Gambian students had not been ready yet because they had scheduled the meeting later. They were able to make up for the time quickly, but that circumstance showed that whenever different time zones are involved, misunderstandings can

easily arise. Basically, it is crucial to plan enough time so that delays, technical interruptions, or other time constraints do not cause stress.

But when it comes to what will remain most, it is best to ask our students. With their consent, I share two statements with the readers:

“I learned a lot, especially how different and yet so similar our everyday lives can be. A student from The Gambia asked me on Snapchat and got in touch with me. Now we share impressions of our lives. For example, the way to school: when she told me she gets to school in 3 different vehicles over about 3 hours, I replied, “Oh, I drive 10 minutes in my car,” and we both laughed. Now I am grateful for this connection and the new perspectives on everyday life.” (Anna, 5HLta)

“It was a great experience, just something completely different. It wasn't just that we grew as a class and did this project together. No, the exchange with the students from The Gambia was also very nice, and we may be in contact with some of them for a long time to come. I learned that we are different in many ways, but then again, we are not. We attend a tourism school, like to hang out on Instagram, Snapchat, and so on.... I'm still happy to be in contact.” (Romana, 5HLta)

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Removing Barriers, Unlocking Routes and Cities

The “TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA)”—an Italian Project

Arjun Pfaffstaller

Abstract: *This report describes the project “TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA)”. TBfA is a small project in the field of accessible and inclusive tourism. The project was launched during the Global Campus online (GloCo) project, introduced by the UNESCO Chair of Global Citizenship Education (Culture of Diversity and Peace) at the University of Klagenfurt. Currently, this project is in its pilot phase. Its central objective is to develop and write accessible and inclusive travel guides. Through this, TBfA aligns with the SDGs and the GCED framework. At the end, a part of the inclusive travel guide is shown. The normal layout structure of a text in easy/plain English was not used.*

Keywords: *Inclusion; Accessibility; Tourism; Global Citizenship Education; Sustainable Development Goals*

Project Members

Arjun Pfaffstaller, Italy: *“For me, working at Global Campus Online (GloCo) was the chance to bring my effort, skills, and competencies into a diverse and global setting.”*

Christian Franchetto, Italy: *"The Global Campus Online excited me since I saw social impact and learning were embedded in an international and connected framework."*

Introduction and Motivation

Traveling is the opportunity to change one's daily routine by visiting new places, acquiring new knowledge, and getting in touch with new cultures and people. However, traveling is not a freedom for everyone. It is not only a privilege reserved for those who have enough money, but also for those who do not have a disability. This means that people with disabilities face significant disparities when it comes to mobility, to cultural programs, and to other aspects of traveling. And this, consequently, causes people with physical disabilities, cognitive disabilities, learning disabilities, learning differences, chronic illness, etc., to face barriers and exclusion. And not to forget, also elderly people, who might not be generally recognized as people with disabilities, face exclusion when it comes to traveling.

One member of the project personally knows what barriers are and how they exclude people with disabilities from travel activities. Arjun Pfaffstaller, head of the project and main responsible, has a strong vision impairment, and during all his travels—alone or with others—he personally suffered from the lack of accessibility and how this negatively impacts the travel experience. A concrete example for this was Pfaffstaller's trip to Ostuni, a city in the region of Puglia. Pfaffstaller observed that most buses linking the train station with the old town are not accessible. Some buses have stairs, some do not. Furthermore, the information systems on the buses and at the bus stops are not accessible. For Arjun Pfaffstaller, a person with vision impairment, using public transport was cumbersome due to the described barriers. In his opinion, a clear audio-visual information system would be desirable. Another barrier that Pfaffstaller faced was that reaching specific points in the old town is not

very easy. The (most) buses in Ostuni do not enter the old town. Furthermore, the wonderful old town in Ostuni, in terms of accessibility, is characterized by many construction barriers (Figure 49).

Fig. 49: A street of Ostuni at night. The photo does not show the bad illumination.



© Arjun Pfaffstaller

And in the evening hours, the streets in the old town are not adequately illuminated. Therefore, people with disabilities, who may also transport their luggage, have severe problems reaching their accommodations or other points in the old town. Obviously, one can take accommodation in the newer parts of the cities, which are easily reached by

bus. Nonetheless, some accessibility measures must be implemented so that people with disabilities can reach the old town. Undoubtedly, this requires a differentiated mobility concept, as normal buses cannot reach many places in the old town. Of course, these are only two concrete real-life examples. To mention all would require a few hundred pages, leaving out what other people with disabilities have experienced in their lives.

Since Ostuni is a wonderful city with numerous barriers for people with disabilities, the project team decided to write TfA's first accessible and inclusive travel guide on the famous "white city".

The motivation for the project "TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA)" stemmed from the need for greater accessibility in the travel industry. Both members, Arjun Pfaffstaller and Christian Franchetto (the project's financial head), jointly perceived this need and that traveling must become more accessible and more inclusive.

TBfA: A Pilot Project to Explore How an Inclusive Travel Guide Could Look

It is true that "TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA)" is a small project that has not even gotten off the ground yet. Nonetheless, its vision is one we all have a stake in: an accessible and inclusive world, where everyone can live, travel, and learn for their well-being. Therefore, TBfA's current mission is to provide a meaningful contribution to the creation of an accessible and inclusive tourism, thereby enhancing the travel experiences of individuals with disabilities. Undoubtedly, there are many ways to contribute to this type of tourism. For instance, one could focus on accessible mobility, whereas another could aim to increase awareness by organizing expert panel discussions. However, the "TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA)" project team decided to focus on developing accessible and inclusive travel guides.

Such travel guides should contain historical and current facts about the city or region of interest. Furthermore, information on mobility and urban structure should not be neglected, as it is central to tourism and to people with disabilities. Therefore, the project's objective is to provide

travel guides that not only inform people but also boost their travel experience, and this in an accessible and inclusive manner.

In the current project phase, the main drivers and aspects for the project team's work are accessibility, inclusivity, and sustainability. In fact, the travel guide puts attention on the sustainable public transport system, which consists of the walkability, trains, buses, and other people-moving systems.

Currently, "TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA)" is a pilot project. That is, TBfA in the context of the Global Campus online (UNESCO Chair of Global Citizenship Education—Culture of Diversity and Peace) was carried out as a pilot project, which could be scaled up and diversified in the future.

An inclusive Travel Guide

As already written, the pilot accessible travel guide was prepared for the city of Ostuni (Region of Puglia, Southern Italy). It is worth noting that only one part (Piazza della Libertà) of the elaborated travel guide is presented in this section.

Introduction

- Ostuni is a city in Puglia. Puglia is a region in southern Italy.
- Ostuni is on a hill. Ostuni is near the sea. From the city you can look at the sea.
- The old town of Ostuni has a lot of white houses. The houses have flat roofs. Ostuni is also called the "White City".
- Ostuni has many small alleys. Ostuni has many small stairs. Some Bars and Restaurants are directly on the stairs. Many stairs have a lighter color.
- Ostuni also has an old defensive wall. A defensive wall was used to protect the city. The many parts of the defensive wall are also white.
- The city is not very accessible. Some people might have problems walking. There are many stairs. The streets have many potholes.

Fig. 50: Train station of Ostuni. The photo shows the guiding system (guiding lines and stop signals).



© Arjun Pfaffstaller.

Mobility

- You can reach Ostuni by train. You must take a bus from the train station to the city. There are no buses in Ostuni's old town.
- The train station of Ostuni is quite accessible. There are elevators. There is a guiding system for people with vision impairment. The platforms are elevated. When you arrive with one of the new local trains, getting off the train is easier.

- The buses from the train station are not very accessible. There is no clear information system. The buses do not enter the old town. You may call a taxi to reach your hotel.
- There are some services for people with disabilities. There are also some accessible beaches near Ostuni. You can also book some accessible excursions. You can also book some special vehicles. You may need them.
- Not all streets have good lights. At night, you may have problems.

Piazza della Libertà

- "Piazza della Libertà" is the main square of Ostuni. This square is between the old town and the newer parts of the city. The main square is different from the old town. The main square is large. "Piazza della Libertà" means "Square of Freedom". "Piazza" means "Square". "Libertà" means "Freedom".
- The town hall of Ostuni is on the main square. In the past, it was a monastery. The town hall is not white. The houses in the old town are white or light-colored. In the middle, there are three big doors. These doors have the shape of an arch. Also, the windows have the shape of an arch. The town hall of Ostuni has a ground floor and a first floor. The town hall also has a second floor. The windows of the second floor are bigger than the windows of the first floor. The roof of the town hall is flat. There is a small clock in front of the roof. This clock is centered.
- On the main square of Ostuni, there is also the statue of Sant'Oronzo. The statue has a darker color. The statue is higher than most houses on the main square. The statue is about 20 meters high. There are about 4 levels. The levels are different figures of holy people. On the tip of the statue, Sant'Oronzo is the bishop Sant'Oronzo.

Fig. 51: Town Hall of Ostuni (Piazza della Libertà)



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Fig. 52: Statue of Sant'Oronzo (Piazza della Libertà)



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The challenge of Accessibility

The project team is aware that accessibility is a broad and complex field. Therefore, the recommendations provided are not intended to fully meet the theoretical definition of inclusiveness and universal accessibility. Nonetheless, these recommendations represent a good practice standard for the pilot phase, as they are used for the accessible travel guide.

First, it is worth noting that the required complexity of the information determines how accurate the travel guide must be. For instance, an accessible (travel) guide for a museum is of higher complexity, as the structure of the museum and the details of the exhibits must be considered. Thus, in such a case, the accessible and inclusive (travel) guide must be written with high accuracy. Since TBfA is in its pilot phase and the accessible travel guide is meant to be less detailed, the level of accuracy of

the presented travel guide is low. Of course, it provides interesting information about the city of Ostuni.

The second accessibility measure is the use of simple language for the entire travel guide. One sentence should include only one piece of information, and the length of a sentence should be as short as possible (max. 14 words). Furthermore, subordinate clauses and other forms of nested sentences must be avoided. Complex terminology should not be used. When such terminology cannot be avoided—since information must not be lost—they must be described.

Noise description can be part of an accessible and inclusive travel guide, but it must be implemented with a high degree of caution. Here, it is important to provide information without “playing the ears” for a person. For sure, it is not easy to decide whether to write a noise description. An aid for this could be the following questions: *Who benefits from the noise description? Will you benefit from the noise description, because you are striving for completeness? Or will a possible reader benefit from a noise description, since this measure could provide real insights and knowledge?* When you will benefit, then do not write a noise description. When a possible reader could benefit from a noise description, then you might choose to implement this measure. It is always important to note that a noise description should not be very detailed—You are not permitted to “play the ears” of another person, and *the less you write, the better it might be*.

The same rules can also be applied to visual descriptions of rooms, exhibits, places, and other locations. However, here the degree of caution could be argued to be lower. That is, writing a visual description is useful in many cases, or maybe most cases. Nonetheless, unnecessary details should be neglected.

TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA) in the Context of GCED and SDGs

Without a doubt, the project “TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA)” is strongly aligned with the SDGs and the GCED. The project’s mission, which consists of providing a real contribution to fostering accessible

and inclusive tourism, is firmly linked to the Sustainable Development Goal of reducing inequalities (SDG 10). This stems from the fact that such travel guides are meant to provide information about culture, history, current facts, etc. Therefore, the SDG on reducing inequalities, as well as the values of equality and sustainability, which is one GCED dimension, are aligned with the development of accessible and inclusive travel guides. The analysis of the sustainable public transport system aligns directly with GCED's knowledge dimension, as it shows how people with disabilities cannot use climate-friendly transportation systems. In other words, the sustainable public transport analysis places the problems of reduced accessibility and climate change in the same context.

Lesson Learned

The project team learned numerous lessons from the project “Travelers-Book for Accessibility (TBfA)”, which is currently a pilot project. One of the most important lessons was that developing an accessible and inclusive travel guide is a continuous self-education process, where making mistakes cannot be avoided. For Arjun Pfaffstaller, the field of inclusion, ableism, and accessibility is not new. However, he observed that during the writing process, the complexity of traveling, mobility, urban structure, education, culture, accessibility, and inclusion is not easy to handle. For instance, describing a city's architecture, culture, and history is easy. But making this in an accessible and inclusive manner creates issues that, in many cases, are visible during the development process, and not before. Therefore, the complexity of a city and the complexity of accessibility cannot be easily controlled during the planning process. Obviously, in later phases of “TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA)”, the complexity issues will be reduced as experience and learning effects increase.

Afterword—and a Glance Ahead

Christiane Faymann

So, this is it, the journey of the first three years of the Global Campus Online. As somebody who witnessed all the meetings, I'm quite proud of what we achieved. In the beginning, there was just a vision to provide a room where like-minded people from all over the world could meet and discuss topics of global relevance and their implications for local communities. Starting in the middle of the coronavirus crisis, we benefited from technological advances in online meetings and from quick learnings from users worldwide to enable international exchange. Like everybody else, we were keen to develop a constructive and creative environment to support fruitful exchanges and foster inspiring, personal encounters across national boundaries. Our goal was and still is that people get a sense of belonging as global citizens since we all live on this one planet called Earth. Guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and their interconnectedness with every aspect of human life, the range of topics for discussion was limitless, always guided by our participants' interests. As we were and still are open to everybody, our network includes people of different ages, genders, professions, and nationalities.

From my perspective, I gained a lot of insight into communities worldwide. It was, and still is, truly inspiring to see people being active in their communities, working to achieve a better life for everyone in their surroundings.

I was skeptical about the possibility of really building human connections in an online setting, but the situation gave me the mindset to really try. After the restrictions were lifted, there were requests from the

network to connect in person as well, but due to limited resources, that remains a silent wish. However, the experience from the Global Campus Online meetings shows a different picture. I can recount small meetings with just a handful of participants where a real sense of understanding and of relating to each other was perceptible, where people from different sides of the world and completely different professional contexts found common ground in their everyday lives and personal perceptions of the topics at hand. Where people who didn't know each other before and probably would never have met decided to work together and cooperate. Those moments are the dearest to me and drive my continuous work for this Global Campus Online.

This is what we continuously want to work on. To provide a safe space online, easy to access, easy to be a part of, easy to connect with people, and discuss topics of relevance to people's lives. We want to facilitate experiences of connection and relation among people of all kinds to foster the sense that we are all global citizens and are responsible for the planet we all live on. And to send the message that, together, we can really achieve a better future for all.

Please do let yourself get inspired by those projects assembled in this book, and feel free to start something in your community, no matter how small. Because it is possible to change the big picture by changing a small piece, and we have already collected many pieces, maybe you and your initiative will be part of the Global Campus Online in the future. We are looking forward to hearing from you! It is as simple as writing an email to: gloco@aau.at. A visit to our website would also be appreciated: <https://www.aau.at/en/unesco-chair-global-citizenship-education/gloco/>.

On the Authors

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