INTRACOMP

Report from the Horizon Europe project INTRACOMP:
Intercultural and Transcultural Competence Through Collaborative Cultural Expression

Transensus, Transculturalism, and Participatory Embodied Performing Arts

A Manifesto for Cultural Democracy Amidst Climate Mobility

Nicholas Rowe, Hamish McIntosh, Andrew Madjar, Alesha Mehta, Emanuela Piccolo, Martina Guerinoni, Tiina Lämsä, Sara Salmi, Jane Awi, Naomi Faik-Simet, Lea Frauenknecht, Nasser Giacaman, Julie Lysberg, Katja Makinen, Marta Milani, Sophie Naime, Tove Ness, Terhi Nokkala, Teresa Ó Brádaigh Bean, Eirik Julius Risberg, Wenche Rønning, & Burkhard Wuensche.

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Author Affiliations
1. Nord University, Norway
2. University of Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand
3. University of Verona, Italy
4. University of Jyväskylä, Finland
5. Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, Papua New Guinea
6. University of Hildesheim, Germany
7. In Place of War, United Kingdom

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D1.1 Literature Review

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WP Leader: University of Jyväskylä, Finland (Lead) & Nord University, Norway (Co-Lead)

Authors: Nicholas Rowe[1 & 2], Hamish McIntosh[1], Andrew Madjar[2], Alesha Mehta[2], Emanuela Piccolo[3], Martina Guerinoni[3], Tiina Lämsä[4], Sara Salmi[3], Jane Awi[5], Naomi Faik-Simet[5], Lea Frauenknecht[6], Nasser Giacaman[2], Julie Lysberg[1], Katja Makinen[4], Marta Milani[3], Sophie Naime[5], Tove Ness[1], Terhi Nokkala[4], Teresa Ó Brádaigh Bean[7], Eirik Julius Risberg[1], Wenche Rønning[1], & Burkhard Wuensche[2].

1. Nord University, Norway; 2. University of Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand; 3. University of Verona, Italy; 4. University of Jyväskylä, Finland; 5. Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, Papua New Guinea; 6. University of Hildesheim, Germany; 7. In Place of War, United Kingdom

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Lead Organisation	University of Jyväskylä, Finland (Lead) & Nord University, Norway (Co-Lead)
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Reviewers	Michael Ahlers, Martyn Barrett, & Tommi Laitio

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Abstract

Climate change and associated environmental, political, and economic impacts currently threaten democratic attitudes associated with equality, inclusion and diversity, across Europe and the world. Over the next 25 years, the anticipated scale of climate mobility will prompt an unprecedented growth in acculturation across Europe, which presents both opportunities and challenges for sociocultural cohesion. Anticipatory governance approaches therefore urgently seek co-designed policy solutions and strategies that can enable Europe to navigate the polycrises of this era; strategies and solutions that promote preparedness and support the transilience of communities across the continent. To advance such preparedness and transilience, lifelong learning in cultural awareness and expression becomes a highly significant educational endeavour, given the scale of acculturation during this period. Participatory arts are particularly relevant for engaging all children and young people in active, democratic processes of cultural deliberation and collaborative regeneration. Guided by the New European Bauhaus and the *Porto Santo Charter* for cultural democracy, participatory arts may advance critical and ethical approaches to superdiversity, through processes of collaborative worldbuilding.

To explore this opportunity, the INTRACOMP (Intercultural and Transcultural Competence for Collaborative Cultural Expression) project has responded to the Horizon Europe call CL2-2024-Transformations-01-08-Arts and Cultural Awareness and Expression in Education and Training. The INTRACOMP Consortium brings together more than 50 scholars, educators, arts practitioners and administrators from 13 organisations in 12 countries across Europe and the world, in a transdisciplinary, cross-sectoral, multi-institutional, international examination that investigates: How can intercultural and transcultural expression be evidenced and assessed within arts education?

As the outcome of the foundational theoretical task in the INTRACOMP project, this document critically examines contemporary academic literature associated with this research question, generating a manifesto for cultural democracy amidst climate mobility. Our manifesto presents several key ideological innovations that can guide INTRACOMP and like-minded initiatives as we address the climate crisis. The first is the conceptualisation of transensus, as a key outcome of deliberative democracy that transcends the determinist binaries of consensus and dissensus. Aligned with the Indigenous philosophy of *tā-vā*, transensus valorises the collaborative vibration experienced within liminal, imaginative states of possibility-thinking during democratic deliberation, thus enabling cultural democracy. We argue that transensus requires a strong transcultural competence; a disposition that extends beyond intercultural competence and purposefully values temporary and complex manifestations of culture. We further argue that participatory arts can contribute to the development of a transcultural competence, but such arts activities require a clearly rationalised participatory purpose, so as to avoid hegemonic and counter-hegemonic cultural encounters. This leads to our development of Participatory Embodied Performing Arts (PEPA) as a conceptual framework, purposefully designed to enable transcultural competence and experiences of transensus. Access to these encounters and experiences may be further broadened through engagement in virtual worldbuilding and posthuman approaches to collaboration. While these concepts present a speculative proposition, the INTRACOMP project seeks measures that can evidence the development of transcultural competence through PEPA. This requires the development of a complex and nested competence framework that foregrounds group competence amongst individual and ecological competences focused on human flourishing.

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INTRACOMP is a consortium comprised of 13 organisations from 12 countries. We are fortunate to enjoy the expertise and experience of a number of artists, researchers, and cultural workers, and recognise the significant body of work that precedes us in delivering this manifesto—both within our consortium and beyond.

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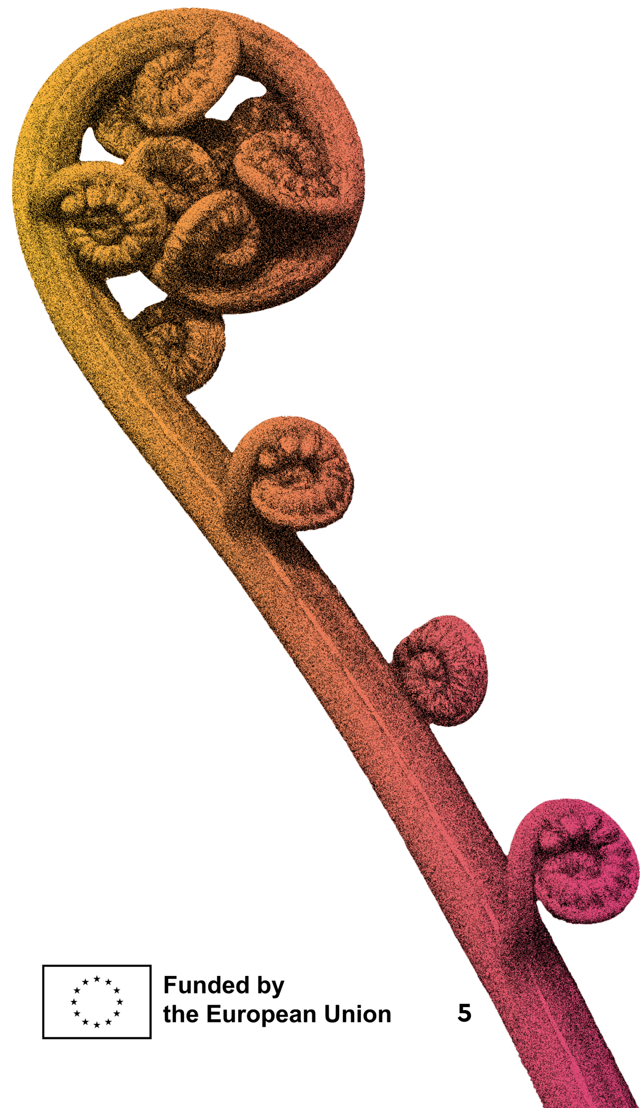

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1

Introduction

“**The world to me was a secret**, which I desired to discover; to her it was a vacancy, which she sought to people with imaginations of her own.”

—Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

1. Introduction

Narrative: Crossings, Part 1

Air shimmers above the concrete in an invisible dance. Dandelions—thick-stalked and vinegar yellow—break through cracks in the pavement, wilting in the sun.

"Next."

Sweat beads on the woman's eyelids. Her dark hair is tied low at the nape of her neck. The curls mat against her bare skin in wet spirals of irritation and fatigue. The heat from the ground reaches up through her sneakers; blood pooling and boiling and stinging as she waits in line.

"Next."

The border crossing is understaffed today. Five coaches are lined up, each with some 30 passengers. Everyone is having their passports checked by one disgruntled guard. Sitting in his narrow cubicle by a pale green desk fan—barely spinning, more of a paper weight at this point—the guard can only grunt and frown. The woman thumbs through the pages of her passport nervously. She shifts her weight to her left foot and, with one arm crossed over her chest, steps forward. Sliding her passport under the glass partition, her ears prick up at the sound of a radio.

1.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

This did not start out as a manifesto.

As we began our collaborative task of examining academic literature, we sought to provide some theoretical clarity to guide the practical activity of our transdisciplinary, cross-institutional, inter-sectoral and multi-national project. As a consortium of around 50 scholars, artists, educators, and arts administrators, spread across 12 countries and 13 organisations, we share a common purpose. Herein, we are responding not only to present issues, but the forthcoming global challenges associated with climate change; asking how participatory arts may support populations undergoing climate displacement and mobility.

Our starting point was the recognition that, for a child born today, the first word that they utter will likely be in a different language than the last word that they hear and comprehend. In their lifetime, they will experience ongoing migration and unprecedented acculturation. This gives rise to some very challenging questions:

- What **skills, knowledge and dispositions** will children born today and their communities need to navigate these uncertain times?
- How might **educational experiences in the arts** enable (or complicate) their life's journey?
- Why should they choose to **participate in democracy**, across the Europe Union (EU) and the world, throughout their life?

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Within our project, Intercultural and Transcultural Competence Through Collaborative Cultural Expression (INTRACOMP), we seek answers to these questions. We also seek to place steppingstones into a pathway that might guide us as we enter an uncertain future.

While engaging in this task—our first research deliverable for Horizon Europe—it soon became apparent that we could not simply tell an intellectual story of what *has been* through a review of scientific literature. Faced with significant uncertainties and multi-factorial contexts and concepts like climate change, democracy, and the status of art in a fracturing society, we recognised a need to create visions of what *might be*.

We are living in an era increasingly shaped by anticipatory governance. If we do not contribute imaginative possibilities to help shape these anticipations, we may find ourselves governed by processes bearing little understanding or concern for our collective aspirations towards an inclusive, diverse, and equitable society. As we look to our uncertain future, we can see how dominant historic theories and practices in arts education will contribute to an increasingly dysfunctional globe. If we simply re-iterate that status quo in this review—even if we critique it—we may be doomed to repeat it.

For the majority of people in the world, who are experiencing unprecedented levels of inequality, fragility and exclusion, intellectual endeavours have greater value when they place a steppingstone on a path to a more secure and inclusive future. This has prompted our mandate for worldbuilding: a shared desire to mobilise artists, educators, researchers, administrators, and policymakers towards social transformation. Inspired by the ideal of cultural democracy and equitable cultural exchange, this document therefore carries the worldbuilding 'vibe' of a manifesto, rather than a perfunctory snapshot of contemporary and historic academic thought.

1.2 The Pivot to Transilience

To emphasise the urgency of this manifesto, it is worth taking a moment to reflect on the prevailing mandate for resilience. Resilience is emphasised explicitly within the United Nations (UN) *Sustainable Development Goals* and the innumerable policies that flow from it, and in governance spaces it has become *the* buzz word of the early 21st century. While we recognise the preparedness that global governance seeks to achieve by instilling resilience within individuals, communities, and systems around the world (Paton & Johnston, 2001), we question the ongoing value and viability of the so-called resilience mandate.

The value of resilience has been narrowed through its use as "a broader 'turn to character' within contemporary neoliberalism" (Bull & Allen, 2018, p. 392)—rationalising austerity and the reduction of government services to vulnerable populations (Joseph, 2013). Through this instrumentalisation, resilience has become "an individualizing and blaming strategy in which people are made responsible for their own wellbeing…at risk of being recast as 'failing' or 'non-resilient'" (Gill & Orgad, 2018, p. 482). Through resilience, individuals, communities, and systems are expected to display their strength of resolve by persisting-through and surviving adversity. In doing so, they indicate their tacit support for the continuity of wider cultural and governance systems.

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While the resilience mandate has fostered a nostalgia for ancient stoicism (see, for example, Sherman, 2021) its emphasis on *acceptance* deflects collective discourses from the potential for wider systemic change, towards a more just and equitable world (Webster & Rivers, 2019).

The viability of resilience has also been called into question by the expectation of resilient individuals, communities, and systems to 'bounce back' from hardship (Nasi et al., 2023). What exactly are people 'bouncing back' into, though? In a world of polycrises, in which we are enduring ongoing environmental, political, economic, and technological upheavals, it is not enough for people and organisations to simply "rebound to their pre-adversity state" (Hoque et al., 2025, p. 1).

Particularly within the context of climate change (and the near permanent environmental transformations it will bring) there is a distinct need for more responsive and adaptive approaches, which may enable the sustainability of diverse individuals, communities, and social systems. While the term resilience may carry additional meanings for some people, its use and abuse has undermined its value and viability in the very communities it has expected the most from: those expected to return from the edge of disaster (Hoque et al., 2025).

INTRACOMP therefore examines the term *transilience* as a more valuable and viable mandate for the mid-21st century. Connected to resilience through the same Latin root *salire* (to leap, bound), the prefix *trans*- suggests to 'leap across,' unlike *re* which implies some unconditional return. Like the concept of resilience, the term transilience has entered the social sciences from evolutionary biology (e.g. Templeton, 1980) and considers how organisms may survive and continue in the face of adversity. Wherein resilience describes how a species might grow hardy to withstand a hostile environment; transilience contrastingly describes how a species might adapt to thrive in these new conditions. Transilience can thus be understood as "the ability to continuously adapt and transform in the face of changing and complex contexts" (Rosati et al., 2024).

Within the social sciences, transilience emphasises the potential for ongoing societal transformation by "linking domains of difference" (Coyne, 2009, p. 8). Through transilience, "rather than only 'bouncing back' and recovering [...] people also see opportunities for positive change" (Nasi et al, 2023, p. 13). In this way, transilience enables individuals and groups to experience agency; people can make choices that allow them to adapt who they are, how they are, and what they do in response to a reconfigured world. It has been theorised that this transilient process involves three key qualities, which include "people's perceived capacity to persist (persistence), adapt flexibly (adaptability), and positively transform (transformability)" (Nasi et al, 2023, p.2). This positions transilience as a necessary capability for navigating the polycrises of the 21st century—in turn making it a central concern for education.

Within this manifesto, we argue that participatory arts education has a key role in the transilience mandate. However, and as with many paradigm shifts, there is often a semantic lag. Although the term transilience has only tentatively been explored in arts education (see Hazou, 2023), a review of the literature on participatory arts reveals an underlying thread that resembles the transilience mandate.

Indeed, many individuals and organisations around Europe and the world may have already conceptualised what we describe here as transilience, and may exclaim, "But that's what *we are doing* and what *we* mean by resilience!" We hear those voices, and extend upon them by arguing that the

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development of language is critical in any process of societal transformation. The development of language—naming, renaming, and growing in shared understanding—enables us to clarify our intentions and expectations together. As a starting point for this manifesto, we therefore identify the pivot to transilience as a distinct break from dominant policy narratives, and a driving motivation.

1.3 Our Manifesto

This review presents an in-deep and wide-ranging analysis of contemporary academic literature. We nevertheless present it as a manifesto, as it also underscores several key theoretical innovations, aligned with a sustained argument that offers a vision of an alternate future. This overall argument and vision can be summarised as follows:

1. **Changes in the climate** around the world over the next 25 years will have a significant impact on society, particularly through climate displacement and mobility.
2. Current responses to mass forced migration in Europe indicate problematic trends, including an increase in policies and systems that promote **exclusion, conformity, and inequality**, with this challenging the continuity of democracy.
3. In this light, within contexts of large-scale acculturation, **cultural democracy** presents a valuable mandate for superdiversity and the sustenance of democracy.
4. Cultural democracy requires citizens to **actively participate** in shared deliberation with cultural differences.
5. Current conceptualisations of deliberative democracy **emphasise determinism**, which can polarise and provoke conformity and exclusion through the binarised processes and outcomes of consensus and dissensus.
6. A new conceptualisation of ***transensus*** may enable liminal encounters with difference, and promote possibility thinking which may advance cultural democracy through deliberative democracy.
7. Within multi-cultural contexts, achieving such experiences of transensus will require **transcultural competence**.
8. Transcultural competence and transensus can in turn be advanced through **participatory, embodied performing arts** activities.
9. Participation in participatory, embodied performing arts requires a clear sense of **participatory purpose**, associated with a desire for subjectification.
10. The development of transensus and transcultural capabilities can be evidenced at an **individual, collective, and systemic level**—thus enabling the measuring and scaffolding of individual, collective, and systemic transcultural competences through participatory, embodied performing arts.
11. Developments in **Generative Artificial Intelligence** present new opportunities and challenges for the growth of transcultural competence and experiences of transensus.

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The following review presents multiple original insights and theoretical associations across diverse disciplinary areas associated with the argument summarised above. As a manifesto, we would like to draw attention to four key elements, however, that we argue present a significant paradigm shift within current discourses. These include our articulation of transensus, transcultural competence, Participatory Embodied Performing Arts (PEPA), and individual, collective and systemic competences. Drawing directly from our manifesto, we offer brief insights into these key contributions here:

Transensus—We introduce the term transensus as an emancipatory and transformative concept that reflects the ways that democratic interactions can take place amongst participants in a creative endeavour. Transensus presents a significant contrast to the dichotomous, ideological constructs of consensus and dissensus, as both an activity and a mandate within a deliberative encounter. By focusing on possibility (rather than resolution or prediction), transensus allows for experiences of *feeling-across* in ways that de-privilege 'determination' as the expected outcome of deliberation. Through transensual experiences, we can encounter and engage with strangeness in ways that allow new, unexpected relational ideals to emerge. By acknowledging the significance of transensus, we can better understand the distinctive ways that participatory, embodied performing arts can support the development of transcultural competence, and therein powerfully grow democratic attitudes. While the term transensus may be new, we argue that it is a phenomenon so common within collaborative practices that it has perhaps evaded definition up until this point.

Transcultural Competence—Alongside the renewed focus on cultural democracy, contemporary discourse on cultural diversity has increasingly embraced the concept and framework of transculturalism. The latter has been hailed as a promising framework for responding to the theoretical and political impasses of intercultural and multicultural approaches. While other frameworks have been criticised for reinforcing the notion of cultures as distinct and self-contained entities, a transcultural perspective is said to be firmly premised on an understanding of culture as 'in a condition of being made and remade.' As such, it does not take historical units and boundaries as given, but rather constitutes them as subjects of investigation. Furthermore, rather than focusing solely on effective communication, as in traditional intercultural competence models, a transcultural perspective seeks to open up a more dynamic and transformative orientation—one that seeks to develop temporary, situational commonalities in contexts of cultural complexity. This urges scholars and practitioners to rethink assumptions and shift toward an interactive, co-creative model of engagement.

Participatory Embodied Performing Arts—INTRACOMP is guided by the premise that Participatory Embodied Performing Arts (PEPA) must be understood not merely as pedagogical tools, but as foundational epistemic and ontological practices. In this view, the arts constitute vital ways of knowing (epistemic) and ways of being and relating (ontological) that shape how individuals and groups imagine and interpret the world, engage with others, and develop

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intercultural and transcultural competence (ITC). Accordingly, INTRACOMP seeks to integrate the arts within its ITC framework not solely as means of content delivery, but as essential modalities through which learning is constituted and cultural relationships are formed, negotiated, and continually reimagined. As inherently iterative and affective, PEPA provide spaces in which intercultural understanding can deepen through aesthetic exploration, critical reflexivity, and dialogical engagement. In doing so, PEPA offers concrete enactments of the plural, evolving knowledge systems that INTRACOMP seeks to promote. Through group-based practices, purposeful participation can enable the collaborative negotiation of cultural meaning, challenging essentialist notions of identity while simultaneously cultivating empathy, reciprocity, and shared agency. These practices operationalise INTRACOMP's multimodal approach to learning, supporting fluid and emergent forms of knowledge construction that respond dynamically to both personal experiences and broader sociocultural systems.

Competence—Finally, there is a growing scholarly and practice-based call to move beyond dominant neoliberal and technocratic models of competence, and towards relational, critical, and contextually embedded alternatives. Rather than viewing competence as a fixed personal trait or a transferable skill applicable across contexts, this perspective conceptualises it as a dynamic, co-constructed series of experiences that emerge through situated interactions within specific socio-cultural ecologies. Such a reconceptualisation, in turn, can inform the development of more inclusive and responsive educational frameworks that are better equipped to engage with the complexities of intercultural and transcultural contexts. That is, competence as a process of becoming: one that is shaped by relational, collective, and critically situated perspectives. Rather than treating competence as a static possession of autonomous individuals, this approach understands it as an evolving capacity, co-produced through social relationships, communal practices, and institutional contexts. It calls for a critical reorientation: from personal dispositions to *collaborative agency*, from individual achievement to *collective enactment*, and from internalised traits to *systemic transformation*. This shift foregrounds inclusive and dynamic practices that empower diverse communities to engage meaningfully across cultural differences.

The writing and academic evidence-gathering in the pages that follow are therefore designed to illuminate and substantiate these key dimensions of our vision for the future. Through this process, we acknowledge the depth of intellectual effort that precedes us. By bringing multiple voices together, we hope to reveal possible new synergies across diverse theoretical standpoints.

1.4 Our Threads: Chapter Overview

INTRACOMP is guided by the following key research question: What are the necessary conditions that enable Intercultural and Transcultural Competence to flourish, in early childhood centres, schools, universities, cultural organisations, community centres, and wider educational and cultural ecosystems?

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This is an arguably mammoth question—one that offers many possible avenues for exploration. It is also a critically important question given the scale and urgency of the global environmental changes that we are anticipating, and the political, economic and social changes that climate change will prompt. We recognise the timing of this question within the emerging transilience mandate; our manifesto therefore responds to this complexity, offering a fresh vision for the future.

The following chapters are arranged thematically to bring attention to the diverse facets of this vision. Through this structure we have sought to avoid repetition and enable complex arguments and deep theorisation within our aforementioned key zones. We have arranged these chapters in a chronology that may stagger the reader into the relevance of these theories, and allow these theories to overlap as the argument develops.

This begins in Chapter 2, with an explanation of our anticipatory approach to this writing task. This methodological chapter reveals our internal organisation towards the construction of this document as a transdisciplinary, multinational, cross-institutional team of scholars. It further explains our worldbuilding mandate: a desire to thread the imagined with the factual to elicit a visceral, tentative experience of the future we are exploring. This chapter recognises the wonderous monstrosity of our endeavour, and so introduces Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1888) as a rhythmic leitmotif throughout.

Chapter 3 then provides a research-based vision of the future that INTRACOMP is seeking to prepare us for. This includes a clear articulation of the impacts of climate change on populations, and the phenomena of climate mobility. This reveals the unpredictability of the scale of forthcoming challenges presented by climate displacement, beyond the certainty that they will be massive and unprecedented, requiring anticipatory research, policy development and governance based on a preparedness (rather than planning) mindset.

Chapter 4 then considers how this migratory uncertainty may be understood as a biopolitical issue, identifying the problematic outcomes of current European governance approaches to mass migration. This raises concerns over the implications of climate change for democracy amidst large scale acculturation, and the significance of cultural democracy and superdiversity. We explore current challenges for education for democracy in Europe, noting the urgent need to enhance active, participatory citizenship and democratic deliberation. This identifies the value (but also limitations) of consensus and dissensus within deliberative democracy.

From this standpoint, in Chapter 5 we introduce the concept of *transensus* as a significant outcome of democratic deliberation that resists deliberative mandates for determination. We explore the sociocultural bases for transensus, as an affective state of *feeling-across* that avoids determining the *feeling-together* of consensus or *feeling-apart* of dissensus. This allows for relational conceptualisations of collaboration from beyond utilitarian and neoliberal paradigms, drawing on Indigenous theories, particularly *tā-vā*.

Chapter 6 brings a focus to transcultural competence as a necessary competence that might enable experiences of transensus, and thus support cultural democracy through deliberative democracy. We identify how transcultural competence extends from theories of intercultural competence that challenge the notion of culture as a fixed entity. By valuing the possibility of culture as a phenomenon that is always in a state of being made and remade, we explore transculturalism's

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emphasis on an 'in-between space' for cultural negotiation, and the construction of new shared meanings and actions.

Chapter 7 then considers how such cultural negotiation may be enabled through participatory arts practices. This recognises the significance of the participatory purposes, modes, processes and relationships on participatory arts, and how they may contribute to experiences of transensus and cultural democracy. Through an articulation of Participatory Embodied Performing Arts (PEPA) as a framework for transcultural competence and cultural democracy, we emphasise the importance of subjectification as a rationalisation that guides arts participation.

In Chapter 8, we then consider the implications of this mandate for competence frameworks, acknowledging that successfully pivoting arts education will require evidence-based approaches that can reveal the impact of educational initiatives on transcultural competence. This chapter identifies the need to reconfigure our understandings of competence (and competence frameworks) if we are to effectively grow transcultural competence through participatory arts activities. This involves acknowledging the intersecting aspects of individual, group, and systemic competence.

Finally, Chapter 9 acknowledges the rapid technological transformations that our research is situated with, particularly the growth of generative artificial intelligence. We consider both the opportunities and the challenges that this technological development can present to cultural democracy, transensus, transculturalism and participatory embodied performing arts. Chapter 10 then concludes this manifesto, returning to the transilience mandate and summarising our key themes while providing a clear departure point for the subsequent actions of the INTRACOMP project.

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2

Methodology

"The form of the monster on whom I had **bestowed existenc**e was for ever before my eyes..."

—Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

2. Methodology

Narrative: On a Bullet Train

Tokyo and Osaka are 515 km apart. Aboard the Nozomi super-express, this distance flies by in a mere 2 hours and 21 minutes; continue your journey a little further to Okayama and you have just enough time to finish Mozart's *Idomeneo.*

The woman in the lilac dress taps her earbuds. Pausing her music momentarily, she notices a hangnail on her right thumb. The tear of lifted skin is peach-white, and a small bead of blood has started to seep over her cuticle.

Something selfish about being somewhere else, about leaving.

Having departed Tokyo at 6:00 am that morning, until now she had lacked the waking clarity necessary to absorb what her sister had said the night before. Despite being in her early 40s, the woman was still living with her sister and mother in Nakano in Tokyo's inner west. Her father—an ecologist—had passed away six summers earlier. Her mother, now in her 70s, needed more care than the family could afford. With assisted living out of the question, the woman had slowly grown resentful of her home life and responsibilities. Her college friends had already moved out of town.

Feeling her shoulders tighten, she shifts nervously in her seat. Furrowing her thin brows and drawing her still-bleeding thumb into her sleeve, she grimaces at her phone. A flickering red icon—a wildfire warning—pulses under rolling headlines. Another beneath it, and then another. Small flames, bouncing between exclamation points. She exhales slowly through her nose.

It's normal. You leave home, you grow up, you move on.

The woman presses play and the opera continues. To her right, ochre fields fly past. Yellow grass, yellow sky. In the distance, black smoke hangs like a ghost on the horizon.

2.1 Introduction

Our methodology chapter is divided into several sub-sections. The first of these engages with the theoretical rationale guiding our review. Outlining the need for creative anticipatory research—research that meaningfully engages with the creative arts as a mode of generative 'worldbuilding' to prepare for an uncertain future—we refer to the study of anticipatory governance and the possibilities granted by art to frame the significance of our task. We then narrow our focus to describe the critical-integrative methodology selected for our literature review, and explain why we utilised this method over an archetypical 'systematic' review (Jesson & Lacey, 2006; Snyder, 2019). Here we refer again to the postpositivist philosophy of our review and expand on the relationship between academic authorship and notions of critique *qua* knowledge. The next sub-section deepens our engagement with this critical-integrative approach, and lends step-by-step insight into how the contributing authors worked together in this chapter. Using the allegory of Frankenstein's monster, we discuss how disparate areas of literature, expertise, and disciplinary knowledges were 'sewn' together in a process of collective suturing. Finally, after noting the limitations of our study design, we end this chapter with a summary of

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our methodology—reiterating the postpositivist epistemology that shapes our review and our focus on uncertainty as a catalyst for cultural possibility throughout INTRACOMP.

2.2 Creative Anticipatory Research

We begin our methodology with a question: how certain can we be in uncertain times?

As we describe throughout this literature review, the path before us is not only complex but also difficult to conceive of in full (see 3.1.1). We find ourselves navigating multifactorial contexts, like climate change and climate-driven migration, burgeoning xenophobia, and the rise of artificial intelligence, while also juggling theoretical concepts as diverse as interculturalism and transculturalism, democracy, citizenship, and the role of art in a fractured society.

In his writing on the subject, Wittgenstein warns us that empirical certainty is rare, claiming that "at the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded" (1969, sect. 253). This maxim destabilises the idea that all 'objective' phenomena should be accepted as fact. Wittgenstein instead highlights the value in interrogating claims to validity and legitimacy—he highlights the value of being uncertain even in pursuing truth. As Wittgenstein proposes later in the same volume (1969, sect. 404), "I want to say: it's not that on some points men know the truth with perfect certainty. No: perfect certainty is only a matter of their attitude."

2.2.1 Uncertain Attitudes and Postpositivist Inquiry

The topic of uncertainty matters to our literature review because we have neither designed nor undertaken it with certainty in mind. As noted in Chapter 1, our project asks how intercultural and transcultural competence might be evidenced and assessed within performing arts education and wider society. To explore this question, and utilise the findings that arise in turn, our project aims to develop a framework for evidencing the educational value of these competences across the arts; a framework that would identify, assess, and promote diverse and embodied connections across cultural lines.

As should be clear, neither the project's research question nor aim are based on attitudes of certainty; these are not positivist lines of inquiry. Instead, our literature review is guided by postpositivism. Postpositivism is a research paradigm that extends upon and critiques positivism (Maksimović & Evtimov, 2023). Positivism—sometimes treated as synonymous to the scientific method—suggests that a universal, objective truth exists in an accessible and fully understandable way, and that a method of hypothesising and testing can reveal said truth (Young & Ryan, 2020; see Figure 1).

Now over 400 years old, positivism remains the central paradigm of inquiry across the natural and social sciences (Maksimović & Evtimov, 2023). However, it is not without shortcomings. For instance, and in line with Wittgenstein's theorising above, we cannot control for human attitudes and their variability within the scientific method. As Mikhaylova et al. (2024) note, even if we embrace the idea of a 'real' reality, wherein an objective truth exists, the *performance* of knowing this reality complicates our relationship to it.

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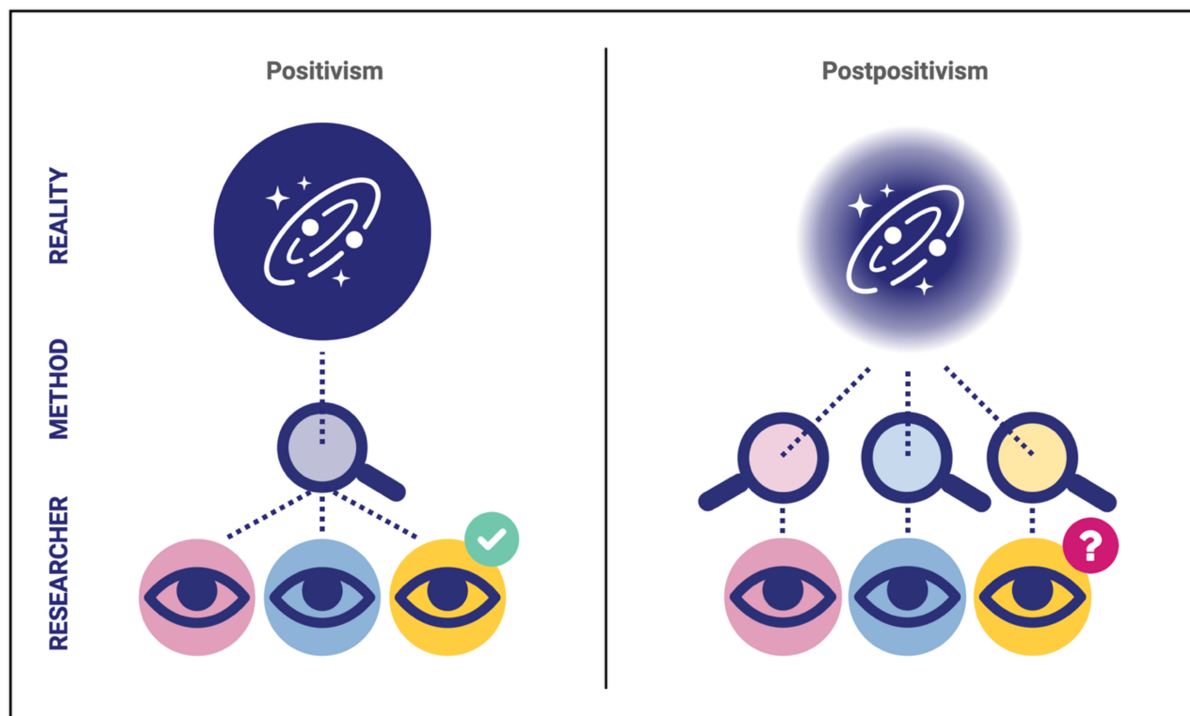
Figure 1

Positivism and Postpositivism



Note. Positivism posits that an objective, knowable reality exists, and that we can develop definite knowledge of this reality if we research it in a codified way. Postpositivism agrees that an objective reality exists but that its knowability is less obvious. Moreover, postpositivism implicates the researcher's subjectivity in the process of knowing. This means that knowledge of itself is never total or objective, merely current (Young & Ryan, 2020). Figure by H. McIntosh.

Postpositivism, by contrast, embraces this particular shortcoming. Scholars who employ a postpositivist paradigm "accept that [they] cannot observe the world in complete objective reality," and instead "present reality as best possible" (Maksimović & Evtimov, 2023, p. 213). Postpositivism is more so an orientation than a formalised school of thought (Young & Ryan, 2020), but its principles in this light are clear:

> Since postpositivism is based on a different ontology that does not adhere to a belief that reality or truth is found, but rather at least partially constructed, and an epistemology that suggests it may be impossible to detach the researcher from the study completely, ideas such as the ability to take out the human component, are not appropriate for such studies. Postpositivist research calls for a validity that does not generalize data because the researcher is studying a particular context, and because of the interest in constructing the meaning of the study. (Green, 2015, pp. 68-69)

In this excerpt, three defining conventions of postpositivism are apparent. First, although truth (as the subject of certainty) is said to exist in some form under postpositivism, it is partly constructed by the viewer and therefore not accessible in an objective or "mind independent" format (Green, 2015, p. 68).

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Second, the viewer (or researcher) is implicated in the creation of the truth rather than detached from it, ergo the truth is not discovered but produced or gradually tested (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013). Third, the value of postpositivist research is grounded in the *humanness* of its methodology, or the inability to fully excise subjectivity from its process of inquiry (cf. Mikhaylova et al., 2024; see also D'Eon, 2020). Postpositivism allows for uncertainty as a methodological strength. It facilitates a more critical approach to understanding phenomena, wherein incompleteness is not viewed as a failure of research but indeed a necessary characteristic of any study (Young & Ryan, 2020).

Therefore, and as part of a postpositivist inquiry, this review is not intended as total or definitive. Instead, it is designed as a roadmap for understanding the complex phenomena of intercultural and transcultural competence, cultural democracy, and climate mobility in a way that is embedded in both the authors' experiences and the project's goals. It addresses a partial understanding of a partial truth; it aims to learn more, not know everything.

2.2.2 Unfolding the World: Art as Anticipatory Method

Within this postpositivist paradigm, our literature review is guided by several concentric theoretical frames. We are guided by theories of cultural democracy, and the need to empower people to deliberatively engage with their citizenship and place in the world. We are guided by the urgency of the climate crisis and the mobilities spurred by this, as well as the looming threats and opportunities presented by the ongoing digital revolution. What unites these frames, however, is an orientation towards the future.

An orientation implies a direction (a facing towards or away from an object) as well as a point of view (a vantage, location, or origin). As Ahmed (2006) notes after Husserl:

> Orientations are about how we begin, how we proceed from here. Husserl relates the questions of this or that side to the point of here, which he also describes as the zero point of orientation, *the point from which the world unfolds* and which makes what is "there" over "there." It is from this point that the differences between this side and that side matter. It is also only given that we are here at this point, that near and far are lived as relative markers of distance. (p. 545; emphasis added)

As we argue in the chapters to come, we live in a time that demands an ethics of anticipation; an ethics that readies us for a world that is yet to be. To anticipate, from the Latin *ante-capiō*—approximately, 'to take before' (Wiktionary, 2025)—means to look forward to an event or events; to predict or expect. An ethics of anticipation is therefore a responsibility, even imperative, to contemplate and prepare for the future. Here we borrow from the increasingly rich study of anticipatory governance and research, with these fields emerging across both academic and policy spheres (Heo & Seo, 2021).

Ahern (2025) defines anticipatory governance as "a mindset of considerable openness to taking calculated risks in trying timely, fresh approaches" (p. 242); a mindset that "[anticipates] what may happen in order to be prepared, especially if and when things go wrong" (Nordmann, 2014, p. 87).

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Anticipatory practices, according to Kallo and Välimaa (2024) help "usher in changes in policies and governance" (p. 368) and can involve the research of past trends to develop possible scenarios, visions, and opportunities for direction change at policy and governance levels. Examples of anticipatory governance initiatives include the United Nations' *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015), the European Union's *European Green Deal* (European Commission, 2019) and *New European Bauhaus* (European Commission, 2021). Each of these policy and governance initiatives anticipate changes in how the world will look and operate (e.g. due to climate change and the impacts of climate change) and propose either methods of redirection (as in the Sustainable Development Goals) and/or values that might shape future decisions (the New European Bauhaus' investment in experiences of beauty; see also 3.1.3).

However, who gets to predict the future? Who are the authors of the anticipatory ethics we describe, and whose alternative, unfolding worlds are prized at the expense of others? Increasingly, it would seem this anticipatory role is filled by ultra-wealthy individuals who wield significant economic influence over States and governments (Alfani, 2024; Krcmaric et al., 2024; see also McNamara & Newman, 2020). Furthermore, the anticipatory influence of the far-right in Western politics is increasing, and the political centre is drifting rightward as a result—more emancipatory and egalitarian futures may have already been curtailed by these ethnonationalist interests (Balfour & Lehne, 2024). Perhaps even more fundamentally, criticisms of anticipatory governance note that by privileging certain predictions above others means that outliers are not accounted for. Indeed, prescribing the future—anticipating *too* specifically—or limiting our imaginations to those of so-called thought leaders may impede our ability to properly prepare (Muiderman et al., 2023; Nordmann, 2014).

How then do we manage these challenges given the importance of looking ahead? When discussing the anticipation and shaping of unfolding worlds, or what we might call *worldbuilding* (Dunlop et al., 2024; Taboada et al., 2024) the role of the creative arts cannot be understated. Though we expand on the notion of worldbuilding later in this review (see Chapter 8 on interactive digital technologies), the interplay between art and anticipatory research is worth considering here, at least in terms of the link between creativity and preparedness (Geden et al., 2019; Osburn & Mumford, 2006).

From a Classical perspective, philosophical inquiry and art have long shared a complex relationship (Nelson, 2006; Shusterman, 1992; Tuckwell, 2018). Of note here, art has long been drawn as the counterpoint to Nature: a term imperfectly paired with our use of 'reality,' but effectively meaning the true and immutable essence of all things (Brisson, 2018). Plato—prizing Nature above all else in his study of forms—deemed art *mīmēsis*, or a partial imitation of the natural world (Pappas, 2025; Shusterman, 1992). In this light, we might say that art permits a creative outlook or reinterpretation of the world through difference (Tuckwell, 2018). In other words, art is complementary to a postpositivist method: both emerge as non-definitive perspectives on an objective reality. Comparatively, in *The Division of Labour in Society* Durkheim reveals another perspective on the role art may play in a prepared society:

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> The case is even stronger with art, which is absolutely *refractory to all that resembles an obligation, for it is the domain of liberty*. It is a luxury and an acquirement which it is perhaps lovely to possess, but which is not obligatory; what is superfluous does not impose itself. (1960, p. 51, emphasis added)

Though Durkheim takes a critical tone, we agree insofar as he underscores a link between art and possibility. Art, per Durkheim, resists obligation: art is synonymous with liberty, with freedom. Art is therefore 'permission-granting,' or an enabling mechanism that, when encountered as either author or audience, may allow for a different world to emerge. In Durkheim's case, this world is luxurious and non-serious, but in INTRACOMP's it is a postpositivist space for imagination and foresight. Art therein permits both non-definitive perspectives *and* a plurality of said perspectives, and as an anticipatory method allows for multiple worlds to unfold.

For example, this concept relates to our use of narrative epigraphs in this literature review—each written by our review's authors. Stories allow readers to connect with an abstract subject in a meaningful way, and in the expanded field of narrative research stories are often used to evidence and illustrate the significance of data (Parks, 2023). Scholars have long reflected on the roles that stories can play in generating reader intrigue and imagination—as ways of eliciting a personal response to a text (Moezzi et al., 2017). An epigraph, therein, is a poetic invitation: it asks the reader to reflect before engaging, in turn allowing for an academic text like ours to be read as speculative rather than merely formal. As noted, this speculative tone aligns with our project's goal of worldbuilding. Being invested in the future—and how intercultural and transcultural competences (as evident in performing arts education) may help us connect despite increased climate mobility—INTRACOMP is guided by the idea that 'another world is possible.' By beginning each chapter of this review with a narrative epigraph about climate change and social upheaval, we ask the reader to build a world with us: *to create rather than wait* for the future to arrive. Though we proceed into the next section with a narrower focus, our review is foremost guided by this epistemology of unfolding (Ahmed, 2006).

2.3 Method of Review

Having unfolded our methodology of uncertainty, we turn now to the practicalities of the present review. In this section, we discuss two key areas of our method: our selected research design and research process. We have named these areas according to our approach; respectively, literature review as a form of critique, and literature review as a process of interdisciplinary suturing.

2.3.1 Literature Review as Critique

A systematic literature review is not the same as a review that is systematic. Though this statement may seem tautological, we believe it is an important distinction to draw when describing our research design in this section. Indeed, one of the first challenges we encountered when starting this research task lay in the authors' differing opinions on what constituted a 'systematic' literature review. All of the contributing authors wanted to engage in a meaningful, rigorous process wherein a breadth of sources

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were consulted and analysed. However, the method of achieving this shared aim was not immediately obvious, not least of all because of the diversity of topics we expected to explore (see, for example, 2.3.2.1).

Given that disagreements like these are not uncommon in large research teams (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006) we mention this challenge here not to bemoan our collective research process, but to underline the uncertainty that can accompany terms we may otherwise take for granted in academia.

Literature reviews provide the contextual and conceptual foundation and framework for scientific research; each review surveys a body of scientific literature to allow for new insights and data to emerge (Templier & Paré, 2015; Torraco, 2005). Though the term 'systematic' may apply to any rigorous process of conducting a literature review, *systematic literature reviews* are a subtype of literature reviews. Systematic literature reviews ideally involve a total review of all published literature on a given research topic, with this process guided by inclusion/exclusion search criteria (Jesson & Lacey, 2006; Smela et al., 2023). Often cited as the 'gold standard' for developing a literature base in experimental research (Uttley et al., 2023) systematic literature reviews attempt to capture all relevant, available knowledge on a topic. However, this 'totalising' process has grown more fraught following the proliferation of academic publications over the last two decades (National Science Board, 2023). Snyder summarises these challenges as follows:

> However, [the systematic task] has become increasingly complex. Knowledge production […] is accelerating at a tremendous speed while at the same time remaining fragmented and interdisciplinary. This makes it hard to keep up with state-of-the-art research and to be at the forefront, as well as to assess the collective evidence in a particular research area. (2019, p. 333)

That is, what we might call a positivist approach to reviewing literature—a total overview of the state of the art—is no longer insurance against bias, omission, or subjectivity. Uncertainty re-emerges as a matter of significance.

With this in mind, we have opted for a different research design. Considering the need to be systematic despite not undertaking a systematic review, in this project we have borrowed from the field of narrative literature reviews. Reflecting on our desire to anticipate the future, and to do so in a multivalent way, we chose to combine two literature review methods: the integrative and critical paradigms. Thus, we present a *critical-integrative* literature review.

In our usage, a critical-integrative literature review considers and combines research from multiple fields while allowing for the voice of the author/authors to evaluate and then present literature in a narrative format. First, a critical-integrative literature review is critical. A critical literature review foregrounds and embraces the author's subjectivity, expertise, and capacity for critique. Within a postpositivist paradigm, our relationship to an objective body of knowledge must be understood as at least partly interpretive or subjective (Maksimović & Evtimov, 2023). Within this partial interpretation, we must account for the possibility of judgment emerging, for instance, deeming certain sources more

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trustworthy due to their publication in a reputable journal, or treating other sources with hesitation due to their bold claims:

> Authors must acknowledge and embrace their role as critics. The criticisms they produce are statements with authors adopting the role of authorities on the focal topic—the words “author” and “authority” share the same Latin root, auctor. (Wright & Michailova, 2023, p. 189)

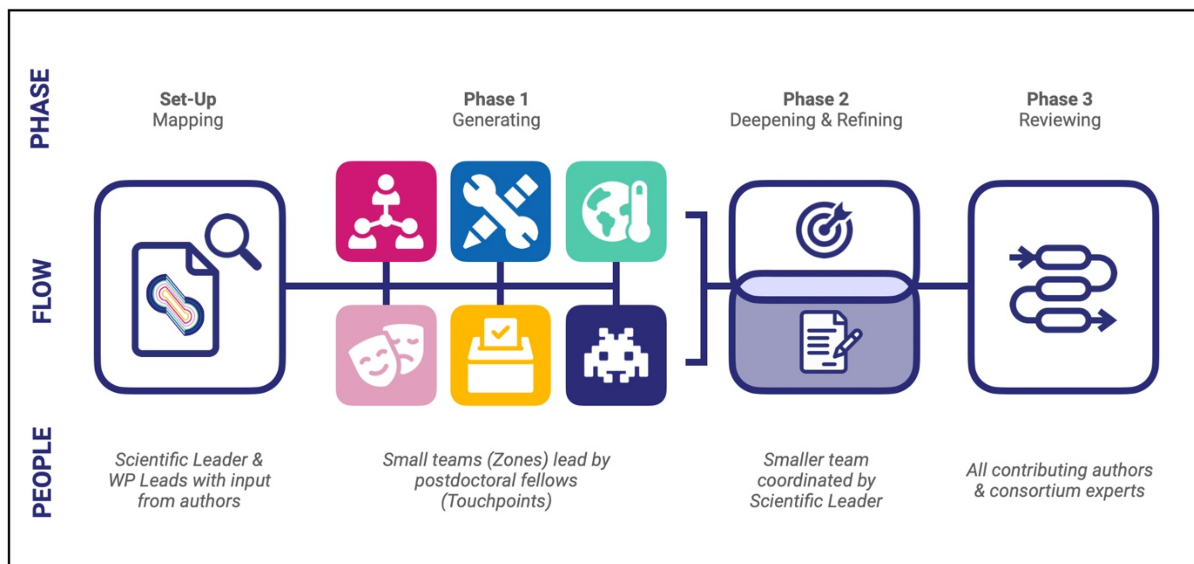
Ergo, by emphasising the critical nature of our review, we highlight the reality of conducting a literature review across myriad disciplinary areas. Secondly, our literature review is integrative. For Torraco (2005, p. 356) the integrative method “reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated.” For Snyder (2019, p. 336) an integrative literature review “should result in the advancement of knowledge and theoretical frameworks” rather than a summary of theoretical concerns. In this way, an integrative literature review is focused on particular forms of knowledge; it is targeted, non-totalising, and therein suited to postpositivist inquiries such as ours.

2.3.2 Literature Review as Suture

Cognisant of the size of our author team and the breadth of divergent scholarly domains we reviewed as part of this study, suturing emerged as a key idea in our project. Here we illustrate the steps taken during our literature review to suture six thematic areas across three phases of review (Figure 2). In this section, we offer a detailed account of our research process for the sake of clarity and specificity.

Figure 2

Overview of Collective Literature Review Research Process



Note. This flow diagram shows the distinct phases, tasks, and people involved in our literature review. Under Phase 2, the two tasks overlap to illustrate how these processes informed one another; our suturing (and review structure ergo) was guided and shaped by this phase’s deeper engagement with literature. Figure by H. McIntosh.

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Though 'only' a literature review, we argue that qualitative studies like ours benefit from this level of methodological description as it allows for greater reader accessibility and understanding (see O'Sullivan & Jefferson, 2020).

2.3.2.1 Set-Up: Preparing the Slab

Before commencing our review, we engaged in shared planning to ensure our task was driven by clear objectives. Returning to our project proposal, we re-read our work package descriptions and elected to map our review around three emergent threads—each connected to the project's efforts across the creative arts, professional capability training, policy development, and pedagogical research. These three threads were *cultural democracy*, as described in the *Porto Santo Charter* (Porto Santo Conference, 2021); *tā-vā* (or the Pasifika concept of a collective vibe or energy; see 'Ofamo'oni & Rowe, 2020); and, the nascent concept of *transensus* (a non-utilitarian mode of deliberation and collaboration beyond consensus and dissensus; see Chapter 6). Throughout the three phases of our review, the collaborating authors were encouraged to develop and reflect on these threads. Treating our literature review as a preparatory document as well as an anticipatory one, these prompts allowed the authors to look ahead to their wider interventions and impacts of the project.

Building on these three threads, we then identified six thematic 'Zones' to help scaffold our critical-integrative review. The Scientific Leader spearheaded this process given their familiarity with the project outline, and the co-authors were invited to provide feedback and discuss the relevance of each Zone. Electing to work with broad areas rather than narrow themes at this early stage, we identified the following Zones: transculturalism, competence, forced migration under climate change, participatory performing arts, democracy and citizenship education, and digital interactive technology. A mixture of more theory-dense concepts (theoretical (transculturalism, competence, democracy and citizenship education) and more practice-based issues (climate migration, participatory performing arts, digital interactive technology), these Zones were divided amongst the cohort along 'best fit/most interested' lines, such that senior researchers could offer advanced insights while less familiar researchers could extend their expertise into a new area if desired.

2.3.2.2 Phase 1: Building a Body

Each Zone was comprised of authors with different experience levels and backgrounds: from early career researchers in social theatre to full professors of interculturalism. To ensure the groups worked together in a dialogic yet focused way, each Zone was coordinated by a postdoctoral fellow (called a 'Touchpoint'). Touchpoints were responsible for developing an egalitarian energy in the Zones and for guiding the authors to produce draft material during Phase 1.

In early meetings, the Touchpoints for each group initiated a visual brainstorming process. Using interactive digital whiteboards (e.g. through Microsoft Teams or Zoom) and shared documents, authors were then able to nominate themselves to areas they wanted to research and write on, while also drawing lateral connections to other ideas and authors within their Zone. For example, during the first democracy and citizenship education meeting, the Touchpoint outlined different queries and areas

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of potential sub-themes in a mind map. Researchers were able to add their names to this outline during the meeting to indicate interest; the mind map grew in size and complexity as the meeting progressed to include new areas and connections. This type of organisation was consistent across the six Zones and allowed for a democratic and curiosity-driven approach to the research task. Early in these planning meetings, this process was likened to the building of Frankenstein's monster in Mary Shelley's 1818 novel. Conscious that our process would require discrete sections of draft text to be combined into a cohesive review, authors were tasked with creating a 'limb' or 'organ' for our burgeoning monster—each undertaking an independent and targeted review in a specific sub-domain of their Zone. Sub-domains included meanings of collective competences, quantitative figures on climate migration, and the way technology could prompt discrimination and exclusion.

2.3.2.3 Phase 2 and Phase 3: Animations

The coordinating authors and Touchpoints stipulated that the Phase 1 bursts did not need to be connected or related (as in a formal essay, for example). Instead, the authors were invited to produce either small, partly-related thematic sections—fingers or a hand—or larger portions of writing—a thigh, a spine (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Phase 2: Frankenstein's Literature Review

Note. The INTRACOMP literature review process has been likened to the construction of Frankenstein's monster in Mary Shelley's famous novel. This diagram illustrates how each Zone was prompted to contribute smaller 'limbs' of writing in Phase 1, with the ultimate aim of sewing these pieces together in Phase 2. Philosophical literature is rich with the kinds of images we employ here, such as the *monstrous children* of Deleuze and Guattari (Shaw, 2015) and Kristeva's *cadaver* (1980/1982). Figure by H. McIntosh.

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Once these sections were completed and compiled, the Touchpoints shared the collated limbs and organs with the Scientific Leader to begin Phase 2. Working with a smaller team of authors, Phase 2 began with an internal review of the Phase 1 materials. Analysing the drafted body parts against the skeleton proposed during the Set-Up Phase, the Phase 2 authors identified strengths, latent connections, and gaps. This process of review necessitated a re-examination of the six Zones, and the Phase 2 authors were tasked with diving deeper into the literature during re-drafting.

Re-developing the writing/body parts into a more cohesive, formal structure, Phase 2 continued in the dialogic spirit of Phase 1. Regularly meeting to discuss their drafting progress, emergent areas of interest, and writing challenges, the authors leaned on each other and shared informal feedback and support. In this way, the various body parts—researched and fashioned by the individual authors—became chapters, which were then brought together in a sutured assemblage to form a new body of work.

Finally, Phase 3 saw the draft review shared with the original authorship team. Continuing to foreground democratic engagement, the Phase 1 authors were asked to engage freely with the document. Authors were invited to read all or select sections of the review—again according to their interest or expertise if preferred—and asked to provide comments and feedback on any element of the draft. This decision ensured ongoing and meaningful participation across the authorship team as the task progressed. Allowing one week for intensive review before integrating the authors' commentary into a 're-animated' draft, the literature review was further refined and formatted by the Phase 2 team prior to submission and delivery.

2.3.3 Limitations

Before summarising this chapter, we would like to highlight a limitation that impacts our methodology and the project as a whole. In this chapter, we have focused on several interlocking paradigms: postpositivism, anticipatory governance, art as an anticipatory research method, and critical-integrative literature reviews, as well as a collective authorship defined by suturing and sewing. Each of these paradigms is united by our interest in *uncertainty* as a generative mode of conducting science, and the value of questioning established or canonical processes in research.

However, we recognise that by foregrounding these human, critical, and uncertain paradigms, we have introduced the risk of bias or perceived bias. It would be remiss to pretend that our selected methodology is not partially limited in this way. As noted earlier in this chapter (see 2.2.1), postpositivist inquiry is unable to fully control for researcher subjectivity (Maksimović & Evtimov, 2023). Though we have presented this as a strength in our inquiry, and underscored the role of scientists in judging and shaping how knowledge is shared (Wright & Michailova, 2023) we note that alternative paradigms (e.g. a positivist epistemology) or processes (a systematic literature review) would likely take a different view. As Snyder notes in their work on literature review methodologies,

> When researchers are selective of the evidence on which to build their research, ignoring research that points the other way, serious problems can be faced. In addition, even when the

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> methodology of the reviews is valid, there are often issues with what constitutes a good contribution. (2019, p. 333)

Though beyond the scope of our review, Snyder raises an important point that future research—both within INTRACOMP and across academia—should consider: what makes a contribution 'good'? Though this raises further questions on the status of validity in qualitative research, at least in terms of what constitutes valid and therein useful research (cf. Lather, 1993) it also reorients our review back to the status of certainty versus uncertainty. Though we hesitate to curb scholars from engaging with uncertainty as we have done, we equally encourage further study from divergent, even 'certain' perspectives. To privilege uncertainty over certainty would only replicate the positivist binary we have sought to depart from. For example, could a systematic literature review yield unique insights that our review has not uncovered? Might a smaller author team produce a more targeted review; might a less lateral or democratic process reveal a more precise thematic focus? Granted that prompts like these are speculative, we conclude by reiterating that we are not presenting or pretending to present a total review of the literature. By purposefully valuing deliberation amongst diverse perspectives, we are not seeking to reach a consensus, but to reveal an intellectual energy that can be generated by foregrounding possibility over prescription. Our approach is critical, integrative, and postpositivist: the future is uncertain, and so are we.

2.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we have outlined the theoretical, methodological, and practical dimensions of INTRACOMP's literature review. We began this outline by introducing our overall project methodology and rationale for creative anticipatory research, and the generative qualities of this approach. We argued that creative anticipatory research—which refers to the marriage of anticipatory governance with the worldbuilding potential of art—enables projects like INTRACOMP to prepare for uncertain futures by engaging with the uncertainty of knowledge itself (Wittgenstein, 1969). We pointed to the expressive and pluralistic qualities of art as a mode of imagining and understanding reality, and therein highlighted the similarities between creativity and postpositivism as our overarching research paradigm (Young & Ryan, 2020).

Continuing in this postpositivist vein, we then described the specific method of our literature review. In contrast to the systematic literature reviews that tend to dominate social science research, we proposed a critical-integrative model (Snyder, 2019; Wright & Michailova, 2023). We defined a critical-integrative literature review as a review that synthesises scholarship from diverse fields of study while recognising the author's role in shaping the scope of their inquiry. Departing from the value-neutral/objective perspective prized in systematic reviews, we justified this choice by acknowledging that subjectivity cannot be controlled for under postpositivism, and that the role of an author in science can, and sometimes should, be that of a judge—a position particularly important in anticipatory research wherein an argument for the future is put forward e.g. the value of intercultural and transcultural competence.

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We concluded this chapter with a discussion of our Frankenstein's literature review process. Alluding to Shelley's monster of many parts, we provided a phase-by-phase overview of our collective task; the delegations of thematic areas to small groups led by postdoctoral fellows, the re-examination of early drafting by a core team of writers, and the eventual re-socialisation of the research through internal peer review. Having introduced our literature review and expanded on its methodology, we now move to the contextual core of our project: the dangers and dilemmas posed by the climate crisis and climate mobility.

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3

Climate Change and Climate Mobility

"... if cowardice or carelessness did not **restrain our inquiries**."

—Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

3. Climate Change and Climate Mobility

Narrative: Across the Fjord

"Is it time to leave yet?"

A young man looks up from the grey mud, squinting. Saltwater soaks the hems of his jeans and creeps up towards his ankles. Flecks of sand pepper his arms—bare and red from a day spent in the sun—and sweat sticks to his lip like oil. A wind turbine, maybe from the late 2020s, with a belt of red paint rusting above the water line, stirs the thick air behind him. Against the silence of the fjord, the steady whir of the blades is interrupted by the occasional metallic screech. The turbine is under-serviced, nearing decommissioning and half-hearted re-wilding. The pivot from hydropower to offshore wind was a lukewarm success for coastal Norway, and these white fans like dandelions are slowly coming down.

"Not yet… A little longer," he mutters. He is accompanied by an older man. The man's hair is thin, and his eyes are glassy. The lashes of his once greener eyes are wet from the humidity, and his brow is heavy. He places a small hand against his cheek, pressing the flesh up over the bone towards his temple and dragging his mouth into a slant.

"I know it's hard to leave, but staying won't change things. It can't change things. At least in Riga there are jobs." Redder now, the young man looks up again from the mud. He stands up slowly. A sweat stain bisects him, left and right; a dark patch on a marbled shirt on a February morning.

"I've lived here my entire life. If you think I'm in any rush to leave…" He trails off. Dark clouds have gathered on the other side of the bay, drawing the turbine's dance into starker contrast. The smell of dead fish wafts up from the shallows. The ocean—an acidic bath—eating away at its thin bones. The old man sighs.

"The university is closed, the boats have been sold for scrap, the fish are gone, and a storm is coming. If not now, when?"

The first drop of thick rain strikes the youth's shoulder.

When indeed, he wonders.

3.1 Introduction: The Scale of the Climate Crisis

Ours is an age of hyperobjects. A term invented by philosopher Timothy Morton (2010a, 2013) hyperobjects are entities and phenomena of extreme scale across time and space. Morton's examples range from the natural—the Florida Everglades and Solar System—to the synthetic, like plastic waste (2013). We could call the water cycle a hyperobject; Large Language Models used by artificial intelligence, the Internet, and Earth itself are all hyperobjects. Certain qualities unite these objects regardless of their material size. In addition to spanning time and space, hyperobjects connect and entwine other objects and subjects, are 'nonlocal' and unable to be apportioned from their whole, and can shift our sense of temporality (Morton, 2013).

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Hyperobjects are, by definition, so massive that they verge on being unintelligible. Imagine standing in front of the Sun. A wall of curling white flames in all directions. Temporarily impervious to the heat and vacuum of space, you *know* you are standing in front of a star, but being mere metres away you cannot *perceive* the true magnitude of the object before you. Though you understand your immediate experience, oriented towards and even affected by the Sun—caught in what Morton (2010b) deems the viscosity of the hyperobject, or how knowledge of a system binds us to a system—you have no meaningful sense of what lies ahead of you in and of its own terms.

Morton's writing has a distinctly ecological focus. Their ontology is presented in terms of nature and the non-human. Perhaps unsurprisingly, a hyperobject they discuss at length is climate change:

> All humans [...] are now aware that they have entered a new phase of history in which nonhumans are no longer excluded or merely decorative features of their social, psychic, and philosophical space. From the most vulnerable Pacific Islander to the most hardened eliminative materialist, everyone must reckon with the power of rising waves and ultraviolet light. This phase is characterized by a traumatic loss of coordinates, "the end of the world." (Morton, 2013, p. 22)

Of the hyperobjects we find ourselves entangled in, climate change is one of the most pressing (Salonen & Reiser, 2023). It is, per Morton above, a world-ending phenomenon.

According to the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, climate change is defined as "a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods" (United Nations, 1992, p. 3). Though a level of climate variability is expected over time across the climate system, human activity—particularly since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in 1750 (Ahmed et al., 2022)—has accelerated and augmented global warming (Santos & Bakhshoodeh, 2021).

Often referred to as 'the climate crisis' in this review, following the precedent set by Al Gore and his contemporaries 30 years ago (Sobzyk, 2019), climate change represents a significant disturbance to the natural order of the climate system, and will bring forth manifold and extreme threats to human life. As temperatures rise due to the insulating effect of anthropogenic greenhouse gases, climate systems will be disrupted, causing more extreme weather events like storms and flooding to occur (Salonen & Reiser, 2023). Plant and animal habitats will be transformed and reduced, leading to a loss of biodiversity (Muluneh, 2021) as well as disruptions to the agricultural sector and food security (Escribano & Pons Ganddini, 2024). Coastal communities and infrastructure will be swamped by rising sea levels and rendered unsafe if not uninhabitable (Sandifer & Scott, 2021), and the risk of new diseases spreading through the population will increase substantially (Liao et al., 2024).

Even as a global threat, we can therefore anticipate that the climate crisis will (continue to) impact local communities in diverse and destructive ways (Salonen & Reiser, 2023; see also

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Auffhammer; 2018). Like a prism, the climate crisis is multi-faceted and will be encountered and endured in multiple ways. In summary, and to return to our present focus on human displacement, cultural tension and democracy:

> Not all weather-related disasters are the result of climate change, but it is making some hazards more frequent and intense. It is also making communities more vulnerable and addressing the underlying drivers of displacement more urgent. (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2024, Disaster displacement section, para. 5)

Although INTRACOMP seeks insight into the role that performing arts education may play in the strengthening of intercultural and transcultural competence as we navigate the climate crisis—what could be called an 'ideological' pursuit—as authors we are reticent to idealise the contexts in which our study emerges. Time and space are of the essence, and the dangers and risks of climate change are multiple and extreme: even for arts educators, a practical approach is vital. Ergo, and to fully rationalise our claims of significance for the benefit of readers unfamiliar with the scale of the climate crisis, we lean into the measurable and then projected realities of climate mobility. In this chapter, we therefore provide an overview of the latest available data on climate mobility and how it is likely to manifest over the next 25 years. In contrast to the following sections, and the critical theme of this literature review overall, here we adopt a more quantitative focus. We do this to comprehensively 'set the scene' for our project and provide insight into the global scale of our research, and to underscore the need for ways to encourage, measure, and evidence intercultural and transcultural competence as communities are thrust into new and dynamic proximities.

Following this introduction, we will continue to explore the hyperobjects of climate change and climate mobility. First, we will take time to define key terms from our project before returning to our methodological lens of anticipatory research to underscore the importance of our project. Then, having provided a clearer parameter for this review, we will examine two critical areas of research. We ask: who will be affected by climate change and therein displaced? Drawing on the significant body of scholarship that precedes us in climate mobility and migration research, we then ask where affected populations will move from and to—speculating on the types of intercultural and transcultural dynamics that may emerge demographically and geographically.

3.1.1 Terminology

Climate change and climate mobilities are both politicised areas of science (Boas et al., 2022; Ophir et al., 2024). For this reason, the authors would like to define our use of certain terms outright to avoid further politicisation and angst. Indeed, and although there are many rich debates on the language of climate change and how this can shape or not shape our responses to it (see Fløttum, 2014; Gabriel & Garrard, 2012; Goldwert et al., 2024) we have adopted a pragmatic approach.

First, the term 'mobility.' Per the World Bank's *Groundswell* report on internal climate displacement and migration:

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> [Climate-driven migration refers to] migration that can be attributed largely to the slow-onset impacts of climate change on livelihoods owing to shifts in water availability and crop productivity, or to factors such as sea-level rise or storm surge. (Clement et al., 2021, vii)

Immigration—and the term 'migration'—has garnered significant attention since the turn of the millennium, not least of all from scholars eager to understand the relationship between sovereignty, subjectivity, race, and nationhood (Balibar, 2017). From the advent of the so-called refugee 'crisis' in Europe in 2015 (Dražanová, 2022; Heath & Richards, 2019) to the ongoing anti-immigrant rhetoric and violence of the United States' government under Donald Trump (Cadena, 2025) the last decade has been punctuated by racialised suspicion of immigrants to the Global North (see also Bradley & de Noronha, 2022).

However, when discussing the ways in which the climate crisis may stir people to leave their homes and move, migration may prove an inadequate description. For example, to what extent does migration capture the high-levels of internal displacement (e.g. within current state borders) expected over the coming decades due to climate-related causes (Draper, 2023; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2024)? Does migration imply voluntary movement; does it obscure the relationality of climate, conflict, resource scarcity, and socio-economic change that can precipitate leaving one's home (Boas et al., 2022)? In other words, is migration a suitably complex term when it comes to examining how intercultural and transcultural competences may emerge or be fostered in years to come? By contrast, we posit that the term 'climate mobility/mobilities' provides a more nuanced view, as it;

> [Pays] attention to the multiplicity of climate change-related human mobility (involving immobility, relocation, circular mobility, etc), its embedding in ongoing patterns and histories of movement, and the material and political conditions under which it takes place. (Boas et al., 2022, p. 3366)

Moreover, we argue that 'climate mobility' better reflects the state of the science while meeting our aims as post-colonial researchers (see Piguet et al., 2018). Though we would hesitate to describe these present and ongoing changes as an opportunity, we equally hesitate to call climate mobility *of itself* a crisis. That is, climate change—induced and exacerbated by anthropogenic causes—is the crisis at hand. As Boas et al. (2022) declare, "the discourse of apocalyptic climate change-induced mass migration is now past its prime" (p. 3365) and the linear *cause and effect* view of mass, cross-national border migration not only tenuous, but indicative of the same cultural racism we highlight above. The plural mobilities, displacements, and movements that have and will continue to emerge from this are dimensions of larger change, and change of itself should not be essentialised as crisis. Ergo, in this review we use the term climate mobility to better explore the multifaceted phenomenon before us.

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Second, in this project we have decided against calling people displaced by the climate crisis 'refugees.' Though people will continue to seek refuge from climate change-related causes, similarly to migration we believe that the term refugee is too narrow. We appreciate that for those reading from outside of climate mobility and displacement literature this may sound dismissive, or even cruel. However, the determination of who and who is not a refugee is complex, and this complexity is beyond the scope and utility of our present review. Rather than attempting to tightly define who a refugee is or is not and why people displaced by the climate crisis may meet this criterion we have opted for a broader definition. Given that the climate crisis will ultimately impact all human life (if it has not already done so) our rationale is to avoid idealising the individuals and communities displaced by the climate crisis as 'escaping' persecution (Draper, 2023). Instead, throughout our review and INTRACOMP as a whole, we will refer to these people as *climate displaced*: people who change their geographic location due to factors primarily relating to the climate crisis. This definition permits us to discuss both 'popular' or colonial conceptions of climate displaced peoples, like the 50,000 Pacific Island inhabitants displaced by climate change each year (International Organization for Migration, 2023) and those who are yet to realise how the climate crisis will impact them despite their disproportionate contribution to it: the wealthy classes of the Global North (Arora-Jonsson & Wahlström, 2023).

In this light we are reminded of a public lecture by philosopher Rosi Braidotti. Titled *Inhabiting Posthuman Climates: Ecologies of Change*, following her presentation in Melbourne an audience member asked, "What will it take for people to start taking climate change seriously? Will people need to die first?" to which Braidotti replied (paraphrased here): people are already dying, they are just not people you know (Braidotti, personal communication, February 18, 2020; see also Braidotti, 2020). As such, by using the term climate displaced we hope to open the eyes of Global Northern readers in particular: climate mobility will inevitably affect us all, in either small or large ways.

3.1.2 Rationale: Policy Contexts, Practical Outlooks

While we emphasise that climate mobility itself will not be 'apocalyptic' (see 3.1.1; Boas et al., 2022) the urgency of the climate crisis as an 'existential threat' deserves our fullest attention (Escribano & Pons Ganddini, 2024). While it is often said that hindsight is 20/20, here we adopt a contrasting view: foresight matters.

As described under our methodology in Chapter 2, our interest in and use of an anticipatory paradigm is twofold across both preparedness and creativity. Here we briefly pause to expand on the connection between these two dimensions of anticipatory research, and draw on EU policy as an example of how our research aligns with existing dialogue in this area.

Let us consider a time of comparable social and cultural reorganisation, where cultural democracy was underlined as a means to engage with change. Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus school for art and design in Weimar, Germany, in 1919 (Errico et al., 2023). Following the economic and political upheavals wrought by the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolutions and the First World War, the Bauhaus embodied a radical need for adaptability in the face of change; a need to 'reimagine' the world

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through a synthesis of art, craft, and architecture in the wake of unprecedented, wide-spread trauma (Roasado-García et al., 2021).

What does the Bauhaus have to do with anticipatory research like ours? Reflecting on the climate crisis, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on public health and social cohesion, and the growing threat of the rise of the far right in the West, we suggest that we have entered a new Weimarian era in the Global North. As such—and over a century since the Bauhaus' inception—the European Commission has returned to similar ideas around mitigating the shock of the new through art and culture. Ergo, as a project, INTRACOMP is directly informed and guided by The New European Bauhaus (NEB). The NEB is an international policy and practice initiative launched in the EU in parallel with the European Green Deal (2019) (European Commission, 2021). Announced in 2020 by European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen, the NEB aims to develop an "ecosystem of innovation" by engaging with three pillars: *Beautifu*l, *Sustainable*, and *Together* (Roasado-García et al., 2021, p. 1).

In the European Green Deal, the EU sets out its aim to be the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 (European Commission, 2019). This is a significant goal and one that will invite equally significant changes in the lives of Europeans and those who seek refuge in the EU due to climate mobility. Citizens of the EU attest to the stress that the climate crisis is causing already, with 58% of Eurobarometer respondents stating that the green transition should be accelerated (European Commission, 2023a).

Broadly the NEB might be described as a bridge between EU citizens and the changes that the European Green Deal will bring (Bilić & Smit, 2024). Like the 20th-century Bauhaus before it, the NEB *anticipates* and focuses on the social experiences of this change, and has been positioned as a means of *easing* EU citizens through the green 'revolution.' In other words, the NEB combines European levers and capital to "[increase] the acceptability […] of the green transformation" (EU Science & Innovation, 2024, 5:20). To achieve this acceptability, the NEB has been designed around the three aforementioned pillars. The theme of *Beautiful* relates to our aesthetic experience of the world—the "quality of experience and style, beyond functionality" (European Commission, 2021, p. 4). This theme may be reflected in ideas of visual attractiveness, like the way a new building or public space looks (EU Science & Innovation, 2024). The theme of *Together* speaks to a need for inclusivity and diversity, while the *Sustainable* pillar echoes the ambition of the European Green Deal to promote environmentally conscious choices (European Commission, 2021).

Though critics have expressed concern about how the historic Bauhaus and its Modernist philosophy of unified design and experience (e.g. *Gesamtkunstwerk*) has been gentrified by the NEB (Hu et al., 2023) we believe the EU's desire to manage change through art and culture is commendable, at least from an arts education perspective. In particular by anticipating and then investing in the aesthetic and cultural experiences of its current and future citizens, the NEB provides a rich context for our enquiry. A key aspect of this richness is the clear relationship drawn between preparedness and creativity—an idea we discuss at length later in this review and one that shapes our project as a whole.

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3.2 Climate Displaced People and Their Movements

What is it that we are preparing for, or more precisely: whom? Who will be enabled and empowered by the kind of cultural democracy we propose, and how will they engage with their own cultures in new temporal and spatial contexts? Having defined our terms and located this chapter on climate mobility in the context of EU policy, we now examine who will be affected by climate mobility and the types of journeys they may take as they are displaced.

3.2.1 Many Movements: Who Will Be Affected?

Scientists agree that projecting future climate mobility trends is highly complex (Beyer & Milan, 2022; Piguet et al., 2018). As indicated by leading reporting across the fields of climate change, migration, and internal displacement,

> Estimates on future migrations linked to environmental change are still extremely fragile. They are often trapped in a determinist perspective, as if the number of future environmental migrants exclusively depended on future environmental degradation, independent of the political, economic or demographic context. (Ioneso et al., 2017, p. 12)

In the context of our inquiry, it is therefore difficult to definitively claim how many people will be displaced by the climate crisis between now and 2050. The reason that this task is so difficult is because both climate change and migration/climate mobility are multi-causal and multi-factorial (Beyer & Milan, 2022; Hofmann, 2023; Draper, 2023). In effect, society is wrestling with two ecological, social, cultural, and economic chimeras who, at times, merge and melt into each other. In other words, there is no singular, deterministic or linear way to address the question 'who will be affected by climate mobility?' because the reasons someone might mobilise can both overlap and diverge; the risks that some may tolerate in one region (for example, drought in Germany vs drought in Libya; coastal erosion in Norway vs Kiribati) will be reframed by exacerbating factors (like war, resource conflict, or political instability) and even levels of agency (a desire to move compared to forced displacement).

As such, we present a tabulated overview of a selection of the research undertaken on climate mobility that precedes us (Table 1).

We have given special attention to publications from major, supranational organisations with access to detailed, mixed methods datasets and projection models.[1] To this end, we note that this table is not intended as a systematic review of the literature or as meta-analytical in any way. Rather, this table is included to provide the reader with a sense of the questions, ambiguities, and disparities present in contemporary climate migration literature. From this table, we will derive some cursory figures, but again do so in the name of scale (to meet the hyperobjective demands laid out in section 3.1) rather than certainty.

[1] For more detailed insights, we encourage readers to refer to the modelling from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre's Global Displacement Risk Model 2.0 (2025).

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Table 1

Indicative Overview of Literature: Climate Displaced People, Areas of Impact, and Causative Factors

Source	Title & Publisher	Key Ideas & Figures	Implications
Jacobson, 1988	"Environmental refugees: A yardstick of habitability." *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*	Gives early definitions/parameters of 'environmental refugees,' and claims that **10 million** people are likely environmental refugees as of 1988. Suggests that **tens of millions** could be impacted by climate-related causes in future.	Provides an entry point into scientific debate on climate displacement (inclusion prompted by Ionesco et al., 2017).
Myers, 1993	"Environmental refugees in a globally warmed world." *BioScience*	Projects that **150 million** people may become environmental refugees due to climate-related causes by 2050.	Inclusion prompted by Ionesco et al. (2017).
Stern, 2007	*Stern review: Report on the economics of climate change.* Cambridge University Press	Follows Myers and states "that climate change could lead to as many as **150 - 200 million** environmental refugees by the middle of the century" (p. 77).	
Brown, 2007	*Climate change and forced migration: Observations, projections and implications.* United Nations Development Program, UN	Suggests that up to **25 million** people will be pushed towards climate mobility by floods alone by 2050. Compounds this argument by presenting an upper range scenario: "With high climate sensitivity, the number of people flooded per year could be as many as **160 million** by the 2050" (p. 21).	As flooding is a climate change-related risk, we can intuit that increased flooding may cause an increase in climate displacement numbers. We might extend this argument to other weather hazards exacerbated by climate change (see Salonen & Reiser, 2023).
Ioneso et al., 2017	*The atlas of environmental migration.* International Organization for Migration, UN	Argues that the multi-factorial nature of both the climate crisis and migration/mobility complicate our ability to accurately forecast impact. Shows that the older 'totemic' 200 million climate displaced figure may be based on an inadequately rigorous methodology Stern after Myers). Highlights the significance of weather-related hazards as the primary cause of displacement (86% of total displacements). Explains that between 2008 and 2013, the majority of displacements were caused by, in order, floods, storms, earthquakes, extreme cold/winter conditions, wet mass movement, volcano, wildfires, landslides, and then heatwaves.	Highlights the significance of extreme weather events as a causes of climate mobility. Reiterates the complexity of forecasting.
Piguet et al., 2018	"The uneven geography of research on "environmental migration"." *Populations and Environment*	Suggests that, "To our knowledge, mapping environmentally induced migration has not been attempted to date" (p. 358). Identify drought as the most studied climate-related hazard, followed by flooding, hurricanes, sea level rise, and rainfall. Identify the United States as the most studied country for climate migration, followed by Bangladesh, Mexico, India, and Burkina Faso.	
Institute for Economics & Peace, 2020	*Ecological threat register 2020: Understanding ecological threats,*	Assesses and generates projections for 157 states and territories between 2020 and 2050. Argue that by 2050, approximately **1.2 billion** people will be at risk of climate displacement.	Presents a harrowing estimate of climate displacement (>1 billion) underscoring the sheer number of

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Source	Title & Publisher	Key Ideas & Figures	Implications
	resilience and peace. Institute for Economics & Peace	Draws attention to 'hotspots' at increased risk of climate conflict/collapse due to ecological risk factors and extant issues with stability: Iran, Mozambique, Madagascar, Pakistan, Kenya, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, and Central African Republic.	possible intercultural and transcultural interactions and tensions that may occur by 2050 due to climate mobility.
Lange et al., 2020	"Projecting exposure to extreme climate impact events across six event categories and three spatial scales." *Earth's Future*	Evidences that weather events are a key driver of climate mobility, causing **23 million** people to be displaced between 2009-2019. Shows that areas at risk of heightened exposure to riverine flooding, crop failure, tropical cyclones, wildfire, droughts, and heatwaves include the lower states of the continental US, Mexico, Central America, and South America; Central and Southern Africa and North-Western Africa; South, Central, and South-East Asia; and Australia (see p. 10). Shows that populations exposed to significantly heightened climate risks live in South and South-East Asia, as well as Egypt, Sudan, the Netherlands, the Comoros, the Philippines, Solomon Islands, Iraq, Nepal, Zimbabwe, Angola, Mongolia, Morocco, Israel, and Algeria (see p. 11).	Considering the given decade trend of 23 million displaced people, we can likely assume that trends may continue in the tens of millions range moving towards 2050. The authors also provide specific countries of origin that may see displacement/mobility , which indicates the global significance of our project.
Clement et al., 2021	*Groundswell part 2: Acting on internal climate migration.* World Bank Group	Shows that under a pessimistic (e.g. more global heating) climate change model, that **216 million** people across 6 regions will be displaced by climate-related causes before 2050: 86 million in Central and Southern Africa; 49 million in East Asia and the Pacific; 40 million in South Asia; 19 million in North Africa; 17 million in Latin America; 5 million in Eastern Europe and Central Asia Extends their argument to show that people will also be displaced in the Middle East and across small island states (e.g. Pacific islands). Provides explicit reference to the possibility of cross-border migration: "The modelling results presented in this report do not explicitly include cross-border migration driven by climate change, except as a continuation of historical patterns of transboundary mobility. However, climate change could amplify or inhibit cross- border movements, depending on the contexts that propel individuals to decide to move" (p. 13).	Reengages with a >200 million climate displaced figure while breaking down this number across specific regions.
Beyer & Milan, 2022	*Climate change and future human mobility: Evidence summary.* International Organization for Migration, UN	Suggests that more than **1 billion people** will be exposed to increased risk of coastal-specific extreme weather events and hazards; proposes that tens of millions of people will be displaced/mobilised due to climate change in the near future. Suggests that, under a 'positive' climate change scenario, slow-onset climate hazards will cause **44-113 million** people to migrate by 2050. Also suggests that, under a 'pessimistic' climate change scenario, slow-onset climate hazards will cause **125-216 million** people to migrate by 2050. Further describes how half of Europe's population in Summer will be exposed to very high heat stress with 2°C of warming.	Contrasts in part to the figure provided by the Institute for Economics & Peace (2020; above), but still highlights that location (e.g. our place in the world) will play an outsized role in our exposure to climate displacement risk.
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2023	*Global report on internal displacement 2023.* Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre	Evidences that **32.6 million internal displacements** (e.g. displacement events) were caused by natural disasters in 2022, with 98% of these caused by weather-related events. Shows that 8.7 million people remained displaced due to natural disasters by the end of 2022. Draws attention to the at-risk populations in East Asia, the Pacific, and Central and Southern Africa.	Provides retrospective analysis of current climate displacement and mobility trends, with this suggesting that, at minimum, tens of millions of people will continue to be displaced annually.
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2024	*Global report on internal displacement 2024.*	Evidences that **26.4 million** internal displacements were caused by natural disasters in 2023; explains the 11% decrease from 2022 due to El Niño weather pattern. Presents figures on displacements due to flooding (9.8 million people) and storms	

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Source	Title & Publisher	Key Ideas & Figures	Implications
	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre	(9.5 million people)—both being weather events exacerbated by climate change.	
International Organization for Migration, 2024	*Who are climate migrants? A global analysis of the profiles of communities affected by weather-related internal displacements* International Organization for Migration, UN	Suggests that "displacement-affected populations are overall younger, more male and have lower income and education levels in Africa, Asia and Oceania than in Europe and the Americas" (p. vii). Expands on this by showing that younger people (mean age 27.6) are more likely to be climate displaced compared to the global average age (30.8). Further show that children are at greater risk of exposure to climate change-induced mobility; 29.2% of internally displaced people are children vs 25.5% of global population. Suggests that women may face unique challenges when undergoing climate mobility due to unique socio-cultural pressures or disadvantage. Characterise the 'average' drought displaced person as younger than the global mean (18.1 years), more likely to be male, more likely to have children, more likely to be recipient of a limited education, and living on pastoral land. Characterise the 'average' wildfire displaced person as older than the global mean (37.1 years), more likely to be female, less likely to have children, more likely to have undertaken advanced education, and living in urbanised contexts.	Evidences the particular (mean) characteristics of climate displaced peoples, revealing considerations of age, gender, and socio-economic status, as well as national origin.

Note. This table provides a non-exclusive, non-exhaustive chronological overview of literature considering the number of people who may be displaced by the climate crisis; countries or regions of origin and movement; and hazards or climate-related factors that may spur mobility. Pink cells in the first column highlight publications with specific future projections. The inclusion of this table is not intended to provide systematic insight into climate change and climate mobility statistics but is instead illustrative of a) the uncertainties and complexities of the field; and, b) the general trends and projections we refer to in this review.

We can state with relative confidence that climate mobility will likely affect most if not all countries, cultures, and peoples (Brown, 2007; Chen et al., 2024). Drawing from the current literature, for the purposes of our project on cultural democracy we therefore anticipate that between 44 million (Beyer & Milan, 2022) and 1.2 billion (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2020) people will be displaced and/or mobilised by the climate crisis by 2050. We recognise that this is a huge range, suggesting that traditional governance processes of prediction and planning are not a viable approach to future climate mobility (Campbell, 2006). Instead, anticipatory governance requires to shift from planning to preparedness (Muiderman et al., 2020), through educational interventions that actively enable localised adaptation in response to rapid transformation. This rationality underpins the INTRACOMP project.

While projections of climate displacements are mostly within the bounds of current borders (see McAdam, 2012), and climate displaced people will likely come from the world over, certain countries and regions will experience heightened risk (Chen et al., 2024), particularly based on current understandings of fragile states (Bergman, 2025). We note that people from Central and Southern Africa will likely be over-represented in climate displaced populations as we enter 2050 (Clement et al., 2021; Lange et al., 2020). We foresee other significant points of departure across the Middle East and Central Asia, Latin America, the Pacific Islands, Coastal Northern Africa, South-East Asia, and South Asia. Cognisant that people from many diverse walks of life and cultures will either be directly or indirectly affected by climate displacement and mobility, we also draw attention to the averages projected by researchers on climate mobility and migration: youth and children will be disproportionally

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affected by climate mobility, and men, women, and gender minorities will endure different challenges depending on their cultural contexts (International Organization for Migration, 2024).

Climate hazards like extreme weather events will evidently trigger the displacements and mobilities described above. Per Table 1, scholars usually characterise these effects according to temporal dynamics, grouping them as either *fast-onset* or *slow-onset* processes. For example, fast-onset disasters (e.g. floods, wildfires) will likely cause acute displacement (McLeman & Gemenne, 2018) whereas slow-onset changes (e.g. sea-level rise, desertification) will result in more gradual migration patterns or even entrapment (Black et al., 2011). However, some scholars argue for a framework that looks beyond environmental determinism, where migration is analysed in a multi-faceted way—asking how institutional exclusion and socio-spatial marginalisation can determine who is able or willing to move and who may lack the resources for migration (Cattaneo et al., 2019; Zickgraf & Perrin, 2016). We continue our discussion below with this expanded lens in mind.

3.2.2 Going Deeper: Some Consequences of Climate Mobilities

Will the movement of hundreds of millions of people change the world, and if so, how?

Global migration and mobility each challenge the long-held belief that nation states are the natural, immutable political frameworks of the world (Beck, 2006; Glick-Schiller & Caglar, 2011; Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2002). Through movement, the porousness of internal and external borders (and authority of the state) is brought into question. The intersection of climate change and mobility complicates this even further, as the climate change hyperobject transcends purely ecological or demographic concerns. At its core, it is a socio-cultural and political crisis—one that urges scholars and policymakers to reconsider how we navigate an increasingly complex cultural and political landscape. While migration has traditionally been examined through the lenses of economic opportunity and environmental stressors, recent scholarship has increasingly turned to the social dimensions of climate-induced displacement. In particular, there is heightened focus on how pressures related to acculturation, segregation, and social exclusion can intensify the challenges faced by displaced populations.

As climate change continues to disrupt ecosystems and undermine the habitability of affected regions, understanding the complex, multi-causal drivers of forced migration is increasingly urgent (Cattaneo et al., 2019; McAdam, 2012). Ergo, we wish to emphasise that migration is not just about physical movement, but also about the transformation of cultural identities as migrants navigate their place within new social structures.

The cultural and social risks of mass climate mobility are therein myriad and concerning. Aktürk and Lerski (2021) highlight that as people move because of climate change, connections to site-specific rituals, ancestral ties to land, cultural practices, and intangible cultural heritage may become endangered. A prominent example in the literature stems from the experiences of Pacific Island nations and cultures. Resilience and adaptation to change are both integral aspects of Pacific peoples' ways of life. However, facing significant risks of climatic change, extreme weather, and displacement, Pacific peoples' deep spiritual connections to their lands may be compromised; access to knowledge systems

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and practices specific to geographic place and ancestral space lost or rendered inaccessible (Newport et al., 2024). Mobility in the Pacific, particularly displacement, will also lead to loss of livelihoods and increased poverty (Ayius, 2020). Planned relocations, often promoted as proactive solutions, can also result in the loss of cultural heritage, social fragmentation, and exclusion from decision-making in these contexts (McAdam, 2012).

The socio-cultural consequences of climate mobility may also include violence between climate displaced peoples at arrival points where resources are scarce (Mitchell & Pizzi, 2021; cf. Oforle, 2012). Minority languages may be harmed or lost (Kobzeva et al., 2021) and displaced peoples' mental health may suffer due to depression and post-traumatic stress (Molendijk et al., 2024). Discrimination may also be compounded by climate mobility; for example, climate displaced people living with disability may endure increased risk of stigma during periods of movement (Adger et al., 2020; Roth, 2018).

Climate displaced people will also likely encounter legal challenges. Current climate-displaced individuals frequently face challenges in being categorised within existing legal frameworks, leading to exclusion from vital services and protections. This difficulty in categorization has significant implications for their access to rights and resources. As McAdam (2012) explains, legal frameworks often do not recognise climate migrants as refugees, leaving them without the protections or legal pathways typically afforded to those displaced by war or political persecution.

This brings us to the possibility of social exclusion and rejection. Exclusion and segregation often stem from systemic societal reactions to perceived differences. These dynamics can result in marginalisation or spatial segregation, where groups remain socially and politically distinct, even when geographically co-located or overlaid. As Berry (2001) asserts, dominant groups tend to shape the acculturation space, imposing limits on cultural expression or access to resources. As noted by Klepp (2016-2017), climate migrants, particularly from the Global South, are already subject to exclusionary policies that pressure them to assimilate into dominant cultural norms, disregarding their own identities and lived experiences. Neoliberal labour markets compound these issues, evaluating migrants primarily on their economic utility while disregarding their cultural and social contributions. This marginalises migrants further and reinforces hierarchies of belonging, with dominant groups maintaining control over the perception of who belongs in society (Bauder, 2011).

In this context, 'acculturation' refers to the cultural and psychological changes that occur when individuals or groups come into continuous contact with a different culture (Redfield et al., 1936, cited in Berry, 2001). Historically, the term 'acculturation' was first used in English in 1880 to describe changes in the languages of Native Americans (Rudmin, 2003, p. 11). As stated by Rudmin (2003), early psychological studies on acculturation date back to Thomas and Znaniecki in 1918, based on immigrants in Chicago, who theorised how the dominant culture imposed acculturative pressure (Rudmin, 2003, p. 11). Subsequent research has developed various taxonomies of acculturation, often presenting fourfold typologies, starting from Berry and his associates in 1984.

According to Berry (2021), acculturation encompasses the phenomena that emerge when groups of individuals with different cultures come into continuous and direct contact, leading to

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changes in the original cultural patterns of one or both groups (Berry, 2021). This definition distinguishes acculturation from *cultural change*, of which it is only one aspect, and from assimilation, which is sometimes a phase of acculturation (Berry, 2021).

While it is frequently portrayed as a means of integration and identity reconstruction, in practice, acculturation may serve as a mechanism of exclusion, especially when migrants' skills, experiences, cultural practices, and values are undervalued or dismissed by the dominant society. In such cases, migrants may experience acculturative stress, marked by psychological distress, a weakened sense of belonging, and social withdrawal (Berry, 2003).

When reflecting on the consequences of climate mobility, it can be valuable to account for individual choice and structural constraints in determining these outcomes. For example, displaced persons may seek integration, but host societies may only permit marginalisation or assimilation, based on legal, cultural, or economic barriers. Overall, the collapse of the bi-polar model, which has represented the migrant as a 'rootless' individual attempting to 'assimilate' in the immigration context, has favoured transnational analyses that better account for the displaced person's ability to be in *different places simultaneously* (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004).

Mobilisation and movement under climate change cannot therefore be solely understood through environmental or economic lenses—the types of movements that climate displaced peoples will undertake are too varied. Climate mobility is and will continue to be shaped by the deeper forces of acculturation, segregation, and exclusion—factors that determine who has the right and means to move and live, and who does not (see also Balibar, 1988; Mbembe, 2003). A relational, participatory model of climate mobility grounded in the principles of superdiversity, democratic and mutual aid could offer a more ethical and inclusive path forward; the NEB (see section 3.1.3) highlighting the significance of culture in this process. Indeed, as much as the climate crisis frames and underscores the urgency of our project, we cannot help but return to the fact that, ultimately, these are cultural matters wherein *culture matters*.

3.3 Chapter Summary

Anthropogenic climate change is a major environmental, economic, social, and cultural issue that demands our full attention as scholars and arts practitioners (Salonen & Reiser, 2023). In this chapter, we have initiated what will be a project-long discussion on the relationship between this crisis and arts education, climate mobility, and displacement.

We began this chapter with a narrative about the future—a portrait of a humid day in the sub-Arctic. We included this story of a young man and his older friend at the moment that 'departure' crystalises for several reasons. First, we sought to draw the reader into the speculative and anticipatory nature of our research. Second, we sought to underscore an important question: if not now, when? When will we begin to take seriously the challenges presented by climate mobility on society, democracy, and culture? When will we make concrete moves to connect policy ambitions with practical and creative steps forward? When will we recognise the need for a way to evidence, assess, and promote connection across cultures despite the potential strife ahead?

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In hand with our narrative framing, we introduced the topic of climate change and migration through the concept of hyperobjects—a philosophy that highlights the scale of the crisis we find ourselves in as well as the extraordinary need for shared paths forward. From this vantage, we have selected the terms climate mobility and climate displaced people to better capture the multiple ways that climate change can stir movement, both within and without the crossing of existing national borders.

Following a brief discussion of the NEB and the precedent for creative, anticipatory governance set by the EU (European Commission, 2021), we then examined two key areas of climate change and climate mobility: who will be affected and displaced, and what will their journeys look like?

Conceding that a definitive projection of how many people will be impacted by climate mobility was beyond our review, and acknowledging the well-established challenges of studying future climate migration (Beyer & Milan, 2022; Piguet et al., 2018), we then traced an overview of current statistics and trends. Therein we proposed that between 44 million and 1.2 billion people would be mobilised and/or displaced by the climate crisis by 2050 (Beyer & Milan, 2022; Institute for Economics & Peace, 2020). Reflecting on the breadth of this range, we suggest that the only definite in climate change is unpredictability, and therefore the need for anticipatory governance that embraces preparedness (rather than planning) as a strategic response. We noted that climate displaced people may largely travel internally within states (McAdam, 2012) and particularly come from or move within fragile states in Central and Southern Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, the Pacific Islands, Latin America, Coastal Northern Africa, South-East Asia, and South Asia.

Having 'set the scene' and summarised this chapter, we return to the question of unintelligibility; the problem of scale and the limits of human understanding. As we have described, the decades ahead will see hundreds of millions of people move from their homes in search of safety, opportunity, and connection while navigating a changing, non-human world. At the same time, the climate change hyperobject will remain (at least in part) incomprehensible—rendering our situation ripe for politicisation, conflict, and violence. Seated aboard a climate change-ship of our own design yet unable to fully change course, our situation demands imagination. As Morton posits in the final passages of their book:

> Nonhuman beings are responsible for the next moment of human history and thinking. It is not simply that humans became aware of nonhumans, or that they decided to ennoble some of them by granting them a higher status—or cut themselves down by taking away the status of the human […] They are more like one of the last gasps of the modern era, its final pirouette at the edge of the abyss. (2013, p. 201)

Having contributed significantly to the harm of the non-human and natural world, humanity finds itself at a juncture. In the absence of control, a new, shared creative agency will be critical to manage not only our new cultural configurations, but the hatred that may permeate these. This new mode will necessitate renewed focus on questions of democracy, interculturalism, transculturalism, participation,

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and creativity. As such, while watching Morton's pirouette play out in real time, a new question emerges to carry us into the next chapter of this review: who are we to intercede in this seemingly final dance, and how?

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4

Democracy and Citizenship: Ideals and Realities

"It is true, we shall be **monsters, cut off from all the world**; but on that account we shall be more attached to one another."

—Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

4. Democracy and Citizenship: Ideals and Realities

Narrative: Lost at the Rally

"Hurry up!"

It is Saturday morning and James' father is flying through downtown. Bright and cold, the city is aflame—frosted breath floating above a muddled crowd, and anxious footfall crackling over bluestone tiles.

James is 13 years old and struggling to keep up with his father's pace. In an awkward half-shuffle, he weaves between confused and curious bystanders as the shouting begins. His father, broad-shouldered and quick, is determined to escape the city.

Only a block over, the National Socialist Front has begun a surprise march to state parliament. With black boots on black asphalt, the Front have arrived bearing banners of hate: *Our Land for the White Man*. They are emboldened. But years ago, their limp salutes were hidden in the boxing gyms and garages of their suburban redoubt; chants barely whispered in their cowardly charade.

James loses sight of his father in the fray. A police siren blares and the morning crowd stops, compressed at the edge of a pedestrian crossing. Trams screech to a halt. Down jackets crush into one another, and bags swing off shoulders. The chanting grows louder, closer. White breath, red light.

Has he crossed the street already?

A group of counter-protestors rush across the intersection to face the Front head-on. Mounted police draw their pale horses into a tight line, separating the two groups as the bystanders are forced into alleys. The officers wear blue nitrile gloves, clinical as they are imposing. James strains to lift his chin above the throng.

I can't see him… Where did Dad go?

4.1 Introduction

Climate mobility is not, in itself, the end of the world. Shifts in the climate have continually prompted human beings to re-locate; from the movement of *Homo sapiens* out of Africa over 200 millennia ago (Beyer et al., 2021) to mass urbanisation in the 20th and 21st centuries (Chen & Goutte, 2025; Hornbeck, 2023). In doing so, human populations have thrived, adapting culture continually, in response to new environments and new encounters.

These cultural adaptations have enabled a sense of collective belonging, cohesion and purpose, both across and within generations (Bhabha, 1994). Essentialist tropes of cultural identity generally neglect the ways that all human populations have experienced such mobility, promoting fantasies of *eternal-ties-between-people-and-place* to centralise power, consolidate possession, and justify exclusion, conformity and inequality (Tummala-Narra, 2020). Given the forthcoming expectations of climate mobility, how might we reconsider culture and society in ways that bring greater light to the value of migration?

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This questioning opens our enquiry to the political implications of climate mobility. Within a global future shaped by mass migration, the ways that all people construct and sustain a sense of belonging, and thereby actively contribute to social cohesion, will become a political concern for all of humanity (Allsopp & Chase, 2021). This prompts us to consider the challenges that the climate mobility outlined in the previous chapter will present to our current conceptualisations of democracy, citizenship and universal human rights.

We begin with reflections on the current state of mobility and human rights, particularly in Europe, to identify the problematic rise in anti-democratic attitudes. The current challenges experienced by those subject to forced migration reveal the risks that current political trends present to all people in a future context of climate mobility, and the urgent need for a societal pivot on how mobility is socially perceived, culturally constructed and politically governed. We then consider the ethical mandates presented by superdiversity and cultural democracy, as ideological standpoints that value the opportunities for democracy that migration can present to a society. This opens a wider discussion on education for democracy in Europe, noting the decline in democratic attitudes and a pressing need to enhance life-long learning for democracy. This allows us to start envisioning alternate societal responses to mass forced migration, in ways that value the continual diversification of diversity. So how does such migration call for new understandings of democracy, and new approaches to education for citizenship?

We then enter a discussion on citizenship and democracy—considering the political responsibilities of individuals and societies to enable such a transition. We ask what this means for education for democracy, and how learners might experience transformative democratic processes, rather than simply imbibe cultured expectations of democracy. Through this discussion we value republican citizenship for the responsibility it presents to individuals and collectives to actively participate in democratic processes, and deliberative democracy as a relational discourse that might advance cultural democracy and superdiversity. We note however the limitations for participation presented by both consensus and dissensus within deliberative democracy. This prompts us to consider how alternate purposes within deliberative democracy may need to be bolstered, so as to enable full and active participation towards cultural democracy.

4.2 Declaring a “Crisis”: Responses to Movements and Encounters

We are living in a world of increasingly mobile populations, and rapid socio-political transformation. While the anticipatory approach of INTRACOMP prompts us into considerations of future governance, it is important to pause here and consider how current policy approaches are responding to incidents of mass forced migration. The current mobilisation of populations is taking place within a stark political context: a global decline in democracy, a growth of authoritarian regimes, a decrease in equality, an increase in human rights violations, and a disassembling of the rules-based world order (Ilcan, 2021). The concerns raised by these contemporary political directions underpin the urgency of INTRACOMP, and our need to find ways that might pivot Europe, and the world, from its current trajectory.

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Amongst the 281 million people currently identifying as international migrants around the world, more than 117 million have experienced forced displacement (McAullife & Oucho, 2024). Fortunately, following World War 2, the United Nations developed robust policies and frameworks for the management of those seeking refuge across borders (United Nations, 1948, 1951). Unfortunately, in the last two decades adherence to these mandates has been eroded, particularly in the Global North, where governments have been accepting fewer and fewer refugees (Bose, 2020). It is notable that Europe, the wealthiest continent on the planet, hosts fewer refugees per capita than any other continent (Bhambra, 2017) and that,

> [The] Global South is providing most protection for displaced people. Of the over 79.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2019, approximately 107,800 were actually resettled as refugees […] Eighty-five per cent are hosted in developing countries, and 80 per cent of them live in lands with acute food insecurity and malnutrition… (Ilcan, 2021, p.1)

We therefore need to question popular perceptions of the so-called refugee crisis in Europe, which has seen more a crisis of governance than of migration (Carlier et al., 2020).

Acknowledging the 8,500 migrants that died or went missing in transit during 2023, it is easy to recognise that "the most significant link between migration and security relates to the human security of migrants themselves, rather than the national security of States" (McAullife & Oucho, 2024, p. 12). The actual process of migration is making vulnerable populations even more vulnerable, as "human security is being challenged right throughout the migration cycle – from pre-departure, transit, entry, stay and return – and across a wide variety of migration and mobility settings regardless of policy category" (McAullife & Oucho, 2024, p. 139). The risks encountered by displaced people include risks of persecution, exploitation, torture, abuse, exclusion, detention and refoulement. Despite this, the *imagined* risks to *imagined* concepts of 'national security' are prioritised over the *actual* risks to *actual* persons migrating (Huysmans & Squire, 2009)—this is contributing to,

> [The] dramatic rise in the number of migrants who drowned in the Mediterranean, the rising campaigns which have led to the criminalization of the solidarity provided by NGOs operating in rescue operations at sea. (Massari, 2022, p. 459)

What are the discourses that position migrants as 'the problem', and how are these sustained? Rather than seeing the mobilisation of people as a problematic anomaly, we might instead question the sociopolitical and cultural forces that inhibit such mobilisation, and purposefully create risks for displaced people. This requires that we first acknowledge that risks to displaced people are increasingly systematised at a governance level. This includes EU initiatives to inhibit migration, such as *Operation Sophia* and the *EU-Turkey Statement and Action Plan* (Ilcan, 2021, p. 8), along with the EU financing of the Libyan Coast Guard to prevent so-called 'illegal migration', which in effect denies the possibility of migrants to pursue their legal right under international law to seek asylum in Europe.

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Such policies contribute to the externalisation of European borders (Massari, 2022) and further human rights abuses as migrants subsequently become commodified and integrated into human trafficking economies (Wirtz & Van Reisen, 2023). As Monica Massari notes:

> Removed from the sight of Westerners and confined to remote places, these policies are destined to have profound implications also on Europe, both ethical and political. (2022, p. 459)

While such anti-democratic actions may be sponsored by Europe but taking place beyond European horizons, other regulatory practices designed to inhibit migration take place within the microscopic intricacies of European biopolitics. For states like the United Kingdom, income requirements for spousal visas make it impossible for an individual who is unemployed, living on disability benefits, or even working on a minimum wage to marry someone who lives outside the EU (Bradley & de Noronha, 2022). Some states have denied even 'non-derogable' human rights to displaced people, including the right to education, through national legislation purposefully designed to override international standards (Bilgic et al., 2020). In tandem with the externalisation of borders, such policies contribute to experiences of "slow violence", which describes "the distress, state controls, regional migration agreements, and related obstacles that plague refugees and other migrants" (Ilcan, 2021, p. 2).

By framing climate mobility as a biopolitical phenomenon (see Foucault, 2008) we can see how this hyperobject poses significant ethical implications for our shared future. That is, current governance practices in Europe reveal the ways that *states-of-exception* have been established in order to reduce migrating individuals to bare life, stripped of the qualification of citizenry (Agamben, 2000). Within a global politic that purports to universal human rights, we find ourselves confronted by this exceptionalism, and return to Wittgenstein's aphorism that "at the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded" (1969, sect. 253). We are approaching a critical turning point in history, in which we need to ask: how do our 'well-founded' beliefs of democracy sit astride less-founded beliefs of national and cultural identity and heritage? This can further lead us to question: in an increasingly mobile world, what is the ethical foundation for determining 'birthright' as a geopolitical privilege? Which anti-mobility ideals continue to value barriers, demand assimilation, and entrench hierarchies? What inequities underpin the belief that location and possession determine culture?

4.3 Super-Diversity, Superdiversity, and Cultural Democracy

Culture has always been dynamic, plural, and constantly created through various interactions. It has enabled humanity to traverse the globe, live in diverse and complex societies, and transcend unimaginable catastrophes. How might culture guide us now?

First, we must recognise how cultural movement can transform societies. The ongoing cross-frontier movements of people continually renews the landscape of cultural diversity, prompting a different kind of cultural configuration that is characterised by the complex experiences of interaction that transgress cultural and material boundaries (Juneja & Kravagna, 2013). This understanding of cultural regeneration extends from constructivist cultural theories that value intersectionality (Crenshaw

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1991); hyphenated identities (Verkuyten, 2004); creolisation (Hannerz, 1987); hybridity (Hall, 1992, 1996; Werbner & Modood, 1997); Third Spaces (Bhabha, 1994); transnationalism (Glick-Schiller et al., 1992) and transculturalism. While these processes of cultural integration are examined further in Chapter 6, it is important to note here that this mobilisation of culture—along with people—has significant implications for biopolitics and democracy.

In complex urban environments, this phenomenon has been described as *super-diversity* (Vertovec, 2007). Adapted into a philosophical mandate aiming to continually grow this diversity, it has since been promoted through the un-hyphenated term *superdiversity* (Blommaert, 2015).

Super-diversity argues that the complexity of cultural diversity is continually diverging, as global migration patterns intersect with increasingly distinctive phenomena, prompting ever-expanding dimensions of identity and conceptions of difference. This ever-increasing diversification of diversity is not inherently equitable; it takes place in contexts of deep social stratification (Vertovec, 2023). Research into super-diversity therefore urgently seeks to understand "how we live, how we can live and how we are going to live together as intrinsically distinctive people" (Vertovec, 2023, p. 2).

This, in turn, gives rise to the democratic agenda of superdiversity, which argues that an ever-increasing diversification of diversity is an important societal mandate that should be ethically advanced. Superdiversity argues that cultural diversification should not simply be left to happenstance, as these intercultural encounters take place within contexts of deep sociopolitical inequities (Geldof et al., 2017). This ethical concern emphasises the ways that democratic principles underpin the ethics of superdiversity.

While these ethics often relate to ethno-cultural hybridity, critical superdiversity also promotes a continual intersectionality of varying aspects of society (e.g. sexuality, disability, neurodiversity) to enable an ever-widening approach to societal inclusion (Khazaei, 2018). These intersections construct an ever-growing plurality of cultural constructs within all individuals, so that no individual can be considered as a mono-cultural archetype of any particular group, or even as an aggregate of several fixed cultural categories (e.g. "Swedish, White, Male, Gay"). Our multiple cultural identities are continually reforming within us as they face new tensions, contradictions and possibilities, and are continually reconstructed as we encounter others and have our distinctiveness interpreted and reflected back to us through such encounters. In this way, pluralism shifts the emphasis of cultural diversity from *what* we are to *who* we are (S. Todd, 2011).

The unstable and dynamic experience of pluralism means that our intercultural actions are grounded in our actual experiences in the world, which continually shift in response to the particular historical and cultural locations and times we encounter. As a result, "interculturality is a point of view, not a given" (Dervin, 2016, p. 2) and the management of intercultural encounters through acculturation cannot be abstracted to a series of pre-programmed steps. Acknowledging this complexity, within INTRACOMP we advance the ethical mandates of pluralism and critical superdiversity, and support the ongoing diversification of diversity and pluralisation of plurality. It is only through constructively engaging with such growing cultural complexity that we can identify opportunities for democracy amongst ever-mobile, and ever-diversifying populations.

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Our desire for equitable and inclusive co-constructions of cultural diversity and pluralism elevates our agenda to a new level; presenting significant opportunities but also posing challenges for existing cultural agendas and for those concerned with cultural policy and politics (Robins, 2008). Many aspects of democracy, cohesion, and inclusion can be addressed at this level, where complexity can be seen both as implicit and as an asset for our communities—a social and democratic resource to be sustained and enhanced through cultural policy intervention (Robins, 2008).

Against this backdrop, this section of the review aims to explore the policy frameworks of cultural diversification, examining how culture can specifically engage with power structures, and exploring the political dimensions of cultural relations.

One notable trajectory in addressing the opportunities and challenges inherent in the evolving configurations of cultural diversity is the resurgence of the concept of 'cultural democracy,' particularly championed by the initiators of the *Porto Santo Charter* (Porto Santo Conference, 2021). Developed under the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, this guiding document seeks to highlight the position of culture within expanding understandings of democracy, especially among marginalised and subaltern groups. In doing so, it identifies a point of departure from historic approaches to 'the democratisation of culture', which sought to "make the masterpieces of humanity […] accessible to as many people as possible […] anchored on a top-down, albeit well-intentioned vision that there is only one monolithic Culture" (Porto Santo Conference, 2021, p. 5).

By contrast, the premise of cultural democracy positions culture as a pluralist and evolving phenomenon that deserves democratic deliberation. This deliberative democratic process can advance pluralism, by provoking rationalisations and considerations of diverse cultural choices. So, while cultural democracy,

> [Represents] an attack on the 'Great Tradition' of European Art…such a position did not seek to dismiss the art of the canon, but rather rejects the 'Great Tradition's' claim to the inalienable right to decide what was and, more importantly, what was not art. (Belfiore et al., 2023, p. 159)

Proponents of cultural democracy suggest that by challenging the privilege of such 'inalienable' cultural rights, societies can achieve more "dispersed patterns of support based on an acceptance of a parity of esteem for aesthetic values and tastes of different groups" (T. Bennet, 2001, p. 5). When we accept such a 'parity of esteem', we refute hierarchical cultural assumptions that advantage particular expressions of culture, and we validate the cultural choices of more diverse groups. The *Porto Santo Charter* therefore emphasises the significance of cultural democracy as a bulwark against totalitarianism:

> We can live in a democratic state and yet the different dimensions and institutions of community life remain authoritarian. In this sense, it is necessary to promote a conception of cultural citizenship based on pluralism: on the recognition of the multiplicity of voices and the valuing of differences. Reductive and single interpretations of cultural identity essentially deny the

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> democratic, inclusive, and open vision of cultures [...] *How can democracy be consolidated in the cultural sphere?* What power relations are at play in cultural and educational institutions and practices? How can cultural participation help empower people? Cultural institutions, their processes and modes of organisation, what they value and propose, impact the democratic health of a society. (Porto Santo Conference, 2021, p. 4, emphasis added)

Based on the recognition of the cultural practices of different social groups, the *Porto Santo Charter* aims to promote cultural democracy by fostering diverse, inclusive, and participatory cultural practices. The Charter highlights the role of these practices in critically evaluating the democratic models we implement, alongside the importance of intensifying and broadening "people's participation in order to legitimise institutions and decision-making processes" (Porto Santo Conference, 2021, p. 4)—particularly by empowering individuals as "active cultural subjects who participate in and decide the cultural life of their communities" (p. 6). To this end, the Charter continues:

> Access to the means of cultural creation, fruition and protection and the democratization of decision-making processes are required. Plurality must be guaranteed in the production and dissemination, and not only in the access to cultural creation. Cultural democracy thus favours pluralisation, the territorialisation of decisions and the sharing of power. (Porto Santo Conference, 2021, p. 6)

Cultural democracy, therefore, can be conceptually summarised as "a system of production and support of the arts, theorised from the point of departure that an improved representation of people in cultural policy has a democratic benefit" (Kolsteeg, 2022, Introduction section, para. 3). Johan Kolsteeg (2022) highlights the role of the arts as fundamental to democratic deliberation, where diverse forms of publicly accessible meanings, symbols, and norms intersect. From this viewpoint, a failure to acknowledge the value of varied cultural meaning-making practices within arts policy and government support systems constitutes a democratic deficit.

Explorations of cultural democracy therefore open questions as to how cultural participation can empower people, and also promote diversity, equality and accessibility: features central to the maintenance of democracy. This underpins the argument that participation in cultural activities can be a driving force to enhance young people's democratic attitudes and engagement in inclusive, diverse and egalitarian civic societies. Our interest in cultural democracy thus extends from reflections on 'cultural citizenship' (Delanty, 2002). So how might such an understanding of cultural democracy extend beyond a philosophical ideal, and permeate who we are becoming as global citizens?

4.4 Downturns: Declining Democratic Attitudes

The biopolitical challenges associated with migration and human rights are coming at a difficult time for Europe. Democracy is itself currently at risk within the European Union, where democratic attitudes and engaged citizenship are in decline (Schulz et al., 2023). While there is contention regarding how

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engaged citizenship manifests in different cultures and across different generations (Grassi et al., 2024) a democratic attitude generally reflects a willingness and desire to actively participate in collective endeavours that are situated in the public domain. Such democratic attitudes help sustain democratic values, which involve a willingness to respect diversity within the public domain, and a desire to promote the inclusion and equality of all (De Groot, 2022). The decline in democratic attitudes, and the growth in anti-democratic attitudes, has been attributed to several factors, notably digitisation and AI-assisted digital technologies (Matti et al., 2024). The proliferation of fake news and hate speech online has prompted hate-related violence and contributed to the fragmentation of civil society (Lawson et al., 2023). The lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic instability and the inability of governments to manage global migration in a humane manner has further contributed to the growth of societal division associated with anti-democratic attitudes (Erhard et al., 2023).

These challenges to democracy have been identified within the *European Democracy Action Plan* (European Commission, 2020) which argues that democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights are core European values, enabled through pluralistic debate. Such debate can only take place when citizens are enabled to form their own judgements and express views freely, which requires a ‘richness of participatory practices.’ So how might this participation grow in ways that leads to constructive engagement with diverse others? The EU’s *Defence of Democracy Package* (European Commission, 2023b) significantly identifies the importance of increasing the inclusive participation of citizens in constructive policy discourse. This therefore leads to questions as to how citizens learn to participate in democratic decision-making, highlighting the increasing importance of citizenship education, and the need to enhance its impact.

Primary and secondary schools are ultimately central to the development of citizenship attitudes, as they provide a location that all young citizens can access. As the Council of the European Union has emphasised, focusing on children and youth is critical, and there remains a need to enhance “critical thinking” and “civic, intercultural and social competences, mutual understanding and respect, and ownership of democratic values and fundamental and human rights in all levels and types of education and training” (European Council, 2023, p. 3).

Such citizenship education matters from a rights-based approach, which extends from the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (United Nations, 1989). This demands that we conceive of the child as a social being who has agency in their lives and has their own views and interests. A rights-based approach,

> [Recognises] the vulnerabilities of children, but it does not define them by reference to these vulnerabilities… Instead, it offers a conception of children that recognises their evolving capacities, their expertise, their agency and their insight into matters which concern them. It demands that children are not only seen, but also heard, listened to and taken seriously. (Coady & Tobin, 2020, p. 43)

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A democratic education for children is therefore not just about preparing children to be active citizens in the future when they reach maturity. Children are active subjects who are “experts in their own lives” (Clark, 2017). This means that democracy education needs to create opportunities to exercise their democratic agency now, as children, and for adults to create spaces that respect and take seriously what they have to say. Democracy education needs to be informed by an appreciation for children as ‘skilled communicators’ (Clark, 2017). Early childhood researchers also are sensitive to the way that meaning is co-created between adults and children (Clark, 2017). Eliciting children’s voices is a social and relational process between adults and children that demonstrates how relationships are a key aspect of understanding children’s democratic participation. Children’s democratic activity is not merely a process that is followed (even if the process is child-centred), as democratic possibilities are centred in concrete relational encounters. Educators can foster modes of being together characterised by belonging, solidarity, mutual affection, and care, allowing for experiences of democratic fellowship (Fielding & Moss, 2010). As the *Reykjavík Declaration* on shared European values emphasises, “The importance of education to give children and young people the necessary references to grow up embracing our democratic values in culturally diverse societies” (Council of Europe, 2023b, p. 5).

What might these ‘necessary references’ be? Is simply presenting young people with concepts of democracy sufficient? Given the ongoing decline in democratic attitudes, is there a need for a more meaningful approach to development of these necessary references? The European Parliament’s *Resolution on the Implementation of Citizenship Education Actions* argues for a significant “adaptation of educational systems, including citizenship education, (which) involves a combination of knowledge, skills, methods, tools, content, competences, attitudes, values and care, and is essential for the creation of solidarity and a feeling of togetherness” (European Parliament, 2022, The state of citizenship education section, para. 1). Education for democratic citizenship provides a vital means by which to advance democratic attitudes across the EU. Such democratic citizenship extends beyond simple procedural issues (such as voting), ergo learning involves the development of attitudes and behaviours that promote inclusion and engaged participation in the protection of democracy and the rule of law (Council of Europe, 2010). Global citizenship education further emphasises the need for citizenship education to extend beyond a cognitive awareness, and to engage learners in socio-emotional and behavioural development (UNESCO, 2016).

Fostering democratic citizens thus requires cultivating democratic values and attitudes—so much seems uncontroversial. There exists a voluminous literature about *what* attitudes and values ought to be cultivated as part of a democratic citizenship education—all the major frameworks, charters, and declarations standardly contain lists of values and attitudes that are considered essential.

The *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Cultures* (RFDCD) provides a significant example of how intercultural competence is valued as integral to the effective maintenance of a democratic culture (Barret et al., 2018). It is worth noting how such frameworks can be designed from a position of deficit or an attitude of fear, however; a concern that a hard-won ideal of democracy is in the process of being lost. In this regard, Barret (2025) notes the context of the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris and concerns over violent extremism that underpinned the development of the RFDCD,

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with an expectation that the RFDCD become a combative tool against "radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism" (p. 32). Such approaches to framing democratic attitudes may emphasize particular cultural ideals that extend beyond democracy, and sit in contrast to world-building, anticipatory approaches that seek to celebrate (and not simply control) superdiversification.

Further questions arise regarding *how* these attitudes are supposed to be cultivated, or rather; how educational activities that aim to cultivate these attitudes are supposed to lead to the desired outcome (e.g. more respect, empathy, compassion). There appears to be a rather widespread belief, in education and elsewhere, that these attitudes will flourish as long as we are exposed to the right experiences (Barton & Garvis, 2019; Cooper, 2013; Demetriou, 2018; Dolby, 2012).

Our own everyday experiences can emphasise the ways that we *do* sometimes use our imagination as "a tool so as to adopt a different perspective in order to understand how things appear (or feel) from there" (Matravers, 2017, p. 1), and that literature and arts do seem to offer novel and transformative experiences that provide further occasions for moral growth (Paul, 2014, 2015; Paul & Quiggin, 2021; Risberg, 2022). So, do we automatically become more open to cultural diversity simply by being exposed to greater cultural diversity?

4.5 Transforming Democratic Citizenship Education Through Culture

Regardless of the aspirations of democracy competence frameworks, existing educational systems designed to promote democratic attitudes are not achieving the sufficient regeneration of democratic attitudes at a pace needed to address the current challenges to democracy. While citizenship education within schools has historically been valued within the European Union, the ways in which it manifests has not always achieved more civic-minded learners. More traditional approaches to citizenship education have emphasised content knowledge on political systems, government structures and legal frameworks, and not necessarily supported the development of democratic attitudes. As the *International Civic and Citizenship Education Study* (Schulz et al., 2025) emphasises, the development of a democratic disposition (as opposed to just knowledge about democracy) can require a more transformational approach to learning, that actualizes values, moral principles and ideals. Such actualisation can emerge from more immersive and participatory learning experiences; experiences that bolster a sense of agency and personalised decision-making, along with an awareness and appreciation of the inclinations of others. Political subjectivities cannot emerge by only learning about politics, but require engaging in the process of politics (Lawy & Biesta, 2006). Learning to be a citizen is about learning to belong, which requires a complex and engaged encounter with personal and collective development.

There is a need therefore to look beyond traditional and critical models of education for democratic citizenship, and towards more transformative models (Schulz et al., 2023). This transformative approach has been described as a maximal approach to citizenship education, as learners learn about and experience citizenship as an active process, rather than fixed body of knowledge to be memorised (Kerr et al 2009). Cultural and creative activity has a significant role to play in this transformational education mandate. International research has evidenced that civic

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engagement, social cohesion and democracy are enhanced through participation in cultural activities (European Commission & Hammonds, 2023; cf. Porto Santo Conference, 2021). To this end, the European Union has emphasised the importance of *Cultural Awareness and Expression* alongside *Citizenship* as *Key Life Long Learning Competencies*, identifying an increasing urgency for all children and young people to access cultural activities through education. Cultural education and citizenship can be a complex nexus within a region as culturally diverse as the European Union however, and particularly if cultural learning seeks to support democracy and transcend cultural hierarchies and totalitarian dogmas (Council of Europe, 2023a).

This presents a challenging mandate, with seemingly no clear answer, particularly within contexts of intense acculturation. It can be too simple to claim that exposure to diversity or social injustice will *automatically* bring forth empathic citizens—it further depends on what other attitudes, values and beliefs the subject holds, the broader context in which the exposure takes place, and a host of socio-economic factors (Barrett et al., 2018). *Why* exposure has the effect it has, and *how* (under what conditions) therefore prompts important speculative and theoretical questions central to how we value transcultural and intercultural competence. For INTRACOMP, the *why* and *how* of education for democratic citizenship are key drivers, requiring an examination of culture, and cultural education, as a policy-driven political activity. Through these queries, we are further prompted to consider how schools and arts organisations present *Political Opportunity Structures*: locations that enable social transformation and democratic action (Kitschelt, 2024; Rootes, 1999). This requires consideration of active and participatory democratic citizenship.

4.5.1 Democratic, Cultural, and Active Citizenship

Within INTRACOMP, we are questioning the foundational beliefs of modern citizenship, and how these beliefs have defined boundaries of inclusion and exclusion (Beaman, 2016, p. 849). National conceptions of citizenship have primarily centred on formal membership and access to legal rights within a national community. More recent scholarship has broadened this perspective, shifting the focus beyond legal status to explore the cultural, racial, and ethnic underpinnings of citizenship, and to identify how restrictive assumptions of cultural, racial and ethnic citizenship can promote marginalization, by culturally designating certain groups as outsiders or "second-class citizens" (Stevenson, 2003, pp. 849–852). These manufactured expectations of cultural/racial/ethnic citizenship are simply ill-suited to a global population that will continually need to re-locate. So, what might be a more relevant cultural mandate for citizens on the move? What sort of 'active citizenship' might this require?

International frameworks, declarations and charters on education not only elaborate on the values and attitudes that are part and parcel of a democratic citizenship education, but have increasingly come to emphasise the need to foster *active* citizens (e.g. *Reimagining our Future Together: A New Social Contract for Education* (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021). Our interest in active citizenship is, in part at least, traceable to a critique of the liberal theory of citizenship and a return to an older conception of citizenship – one that harks back to antiquity and that has

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become known as the republican citizenship theory (Heater, 2013; Kymlicka & Norman, 1998). In contrast to the *liberal* model, which, roughly, takes a citizen to be someone who (passively) possesses a set of rights and freedoms, the *republican* citizenship theory emphasises citizenship as active participation: a duty undertaken for the good of the community. However, while deceptively straightforward, the call to foster active citizens through education raises some intricate questions about citizenship and the *kind* of activity that is cultivated through a citizenship education. Is *all* activity inherently good? And if not, who gets to decide what is good/desirable activity and what is not? As *The 5th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* notes,

> [Active] citizenship is not inherently good; it may also involve participation in actions that remove rather than protect the guardrails of democratic institutions – laws, policies and practices. Thus, the term 'active citizen' does not *per se* entail a democratic citizen respectful of civil rights. (UNESCO, 2022, p. 120)

This, of course, is one of the founding conundrums of democracy, and why political theorists since antiquity have generally taken a dim view of democracy (Held, 2006). From Plato to Alexis de Tocqueville, thinkers have worried about mob-rule or the tyranny of the majority – the unbridled majority that dismantles democracy 'democratically.' What we want, therefore, in invoking an active citizenry, is not really active citizens *tout court*, but citizens that are active for the 'right reasons', citizens that act from the right attitudes and values.

In addition to raising some tricky questions about what the right reasons are and who gets to decide what the right reasons are, this brings us to democratic attitudes, and to the somewhat messy role of our natural 'moral resources' in moral and political action. There is ample empirical evidence that suggests that we are easily duped by manipulation and non-essential features of a situation in doling out empathy, that we tend to empathise more strongly with those that resemble ourselves, and that we tend to focus on individual injustices and to lose sight of the large-scale, structural injustices (Bloom, 2016; Prinz, 2011a, 2011b). But while our moral resources may in many cases guide our action, "the sympathy which really engages us," as Glover (2001, p. 28) argues, "are often stubbornly limited and local. I may move mountains for my child, but perhaps I will not cross the street to be a good Samaritan to a stranger."

The connection between culture and democracy is therefore best understood through the ways in which culture facilitates *deliberation on difference* in society (Kolsteeg, 2022). This emphasises the dynamic relationship between cultural participation, deliberation, and democracy, with the *capability to contribute* as its central link (Kolsteeg, 2022). An improved understanding of how active citizens can contribute to democracy through enhanced participation in arts and cultural activities is therefore a key research issue, within the challenges to democracy that the European Union, and the world, is facing.

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4.5.2 Deliberative Democracy

Liberalism has had a formative influence in shaping the agendas and purposes of education for democracy. From a liberal perspective, universal democratic education is important for passing onto young people the requisite knowledge and values to be active citizens. Education provides young people democratic knowledge about democratic processes and institutions. Furthermore, it develops young people's knowledge, rationality, and ability to be critical thinkers (Sant, 2019). Liberal approaches to democratic education are criticized however, for their individualistic approach (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Sant, 2019). Liberal education centres the challenge of achieving democracy within the individual citizen—citizens lack the right knowledge, values and skills to engage in democratic processes; therefore, education will promote democracy by facilitating the development of these attributes in individuals. However, a focus on the individual can downplay the significance that the social good has in democratic life (Lim, 2011). Furthermore, it ignores how young people engage in democracy in their everyday lives. Educating democratic citizens therefore needs to view politics not as purely an issue of governmental decision-making, but as a complex and integrated dimension of social life (Biesta & Lawy, 2006). Young people are already situated in a social and political context and can identify how they participate in formal and non-formal democratic practices in their everyday lives. This suggests the importance of shifting education for democracy from 'teaching citizenship' to 'learning democracy'.

An alternative to the individualistic liberal approach is found in deliberative models of democracy. Deliberative democracy maintains the importance of rationality, but views rational deliberation not as an individualistic activity but as a collective activity. Building on the political theories of Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls, deliberative democracy involves communities working through issues and communicating with one another to reach enhanced decisions. Deliberative democracy argues that political learning and action cannot be abstracted to the individual, because political action is about existing together in plurality; it is "about a way of existing together in which we bear with strangers, and they bear with us" (Biesta, 2010, p. 568). This shifts the responsibility for democracy beyond individualistic conceptualisations of democratic action, and towards more relational understandings of democratic processes. By applying a "discourse principle" as central to democratic activity (Habermas, 1962/1991, p. 66), deliberative democracy values the collectivisation of rationality within decision-making. Derived from the Latin *librare* (to balance, as in the scales carried by Libra) and *de* (from), the process of deliberation describes an experience that emerges 'from balancing.' These deliberative processes have been argued as essential to the maintenance of a pluralist democracy, as such deliberations involve the participation of all in balancing rationalisations, through slow, transformative, communicative exchanges, in even the most polarised of societies (Curato et al., 2017).

By emphasising this process of co-construction, deliberative democracy presents a model of education for democracy that is not about learning predetermined ways of acting and being, but about learning to respond to the unique plurality that makes up the social environments we find ourselves in. In this way, deliberative democracy can be central to the goals of cultural democracy and superdiversity (Kolsteeg, 2022); it aims to be inclusive and requires a commitment to citizens being rational and impartial, to collectively reach the best possible outcome for the community. Education for democracy

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can promote this collective practice by supporting young people with the skills and values necessary for public deliberation, working in communities of inquiry to explore real problems and challenges in young people's lives (Sant, 2019).

The liberal and deliberative models of democratic education differ in their emphasis between the autonomous rational individual and the communicative/collective processes of decision-making. What both these perspectives share is the assumption that the good citizen can be defined in advance to political activity. Both models operate on an understanding of the nature of political life. Consequently, education becomes a matter of supporting young people to gain the prerequisite knowledge, skills and values required to effectively engage in politics. Democratic education becomes a matter of using our established definition of the good citizen as an ideal that we need to support young people to work towards.

The assumption that the image of the good citizen becomes assumed and uncontested in democratic education is, however, problematic (Biesta, 2011). Democratic education reproduces this assumption of the good citizen through supporting young people to foster particular attributes. By becoming a good citizen, young people are enabled to participate in political life by learning to play by the rules of the game. In other words, democratic education operates on the assumption that there is a political order, and that young people need to be ushered into the rules and traditions of this order so that they can effectively engage in political life. Political orders do not exist naturally however, but are created (Honig, 1993). A true democratic politics cannot restrict itself to playing by existing rules; rather, it needs to consider the processes that create the rules of politics.

Both liberal and deliberative models of democracy therefore risk imagining the political collective as made up of like-minded people who agree with the rules and tenets of the political order. If you are adept at playing by the rules of the game, then you will be able to participate in democratic processes. Conversely, non-conformity to the ideal of a good citizen and to the rules of political processes challenges someone's opportunities to participate. A democratic politics requires a questioning and contestation of political orders, to explicitly contend with how existing orders draw borders of inclusion and exclusion (Mouffe, 1993). If democratic politics is not conceived as simply the facilitation of a particular political order, it needs to contend with the process of how these orders are created, and critically reflect on how political orders might evolve in order to shift the borders of inclusion (Mouffe, 1993).

4.5.3 The Limits of Consensus

The mandates of superdiversity and cultural democracy require that deliberative democracy emphasise cultural dialogue, as it is only through deliberation that diverse cultural groups can democratically approach cultural diversification. Of relevance to INTRACOMP, deliberative democracy supports communities undergoing continual demographic shifts to engage in purposeful exchanges of knowledge and practices, and continually develop shared norms and ideals. This emphasis on shared reasoning through deliberation contrasts with aggregative approaches to democratic decision-making, in which choices can simply be imposed on all by a majority, without any consideration of diverse or

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minority perspectives (Bachtiger et al., 2010). Recognising the risk of 'mob-rule' within an aggregated approach to democracy, early proponents of deliberative democracy even proposed that as a result of an effective deliberation, "there would not be any need for an aggregation mechanism, since a rational discussion would tend to produce unanimous preferences" (Elster, 1986, p. 112). From this perspective, democratic processes of deliberation would allow for transparent, collective reasoning in ways that would inevitably result in consensus: a less divisive and exclusionary approach to decision-making than simply 'majority wins'. In this way, deliberation extends democratic expectations of equality, beyond just decision-making, to the actual *processes* of reaching a decision, as "outcomes are democratically legitimate if and only if they could be the object of free and reasoned agreement among equals" (Cohen, 1997, p. 73).

The expectations of consensus can be ambiguous, however. After all, consensus derives from the Latin *cōnsentiō*, meaning to 'feel together; agree' (Wiktionary, 2024). Within deliberative democracy, we argue that consensus inherently maintains a utilitarian mandate, as this 'unopposed decision between equals'—feeling together—becomes a means to achieve a particular end, or *doing together*.

Achieving consensus through collective deliberation has thus been valued in various ways, further instrumentalising both consensus and deliberative democracy, and leading to deeper ambiguity over the purposes of consensus (Landemore & Page, 2015). One epistemic purpose of consensus extends from a cooperative learning mandate (Slavin, 1995). Such interdependent learning seeks to reveal complex rationalisations that ultimately allow all involved to reach a shared conclusion as to what underpins the values associated with the decision (Elster, 1986). This emphasises a shared desire for not only consensus on the final decision, but also *consensus on the rationality* for that decision.

A more empirical purpose of consensus through collaborative deliberation is less concerned with a shared rationality, and instead emphasises *the quality of the decision* itself. This approach proposes that collective, democratic deliberation will reveal the 'best' responses to 'wicked problems' (Rittel & Webber, 1973). This is based on the assumption that an optimum postulate can be achieved through group-thinking, as the 'best possible' proposition can emerge by subjecting deliberative agreement to a 'zero-sum game' (Owen, 2015). This approach ultimately seeks to maximise efficiency and productivity within cooperative endeavours (Von Neumann & Morgenstern, 2007). The process of reaching consensus through deliberation has been further instrumentalised as a means of *enhancing social cohesion*: through collective deliberation and consensus building, individuals within a group might experience an enhanced sense of belonging and shared identity (Landemore & Page, 2015). As an outcome of each of these distinct purposes, consensus has become an idealised outcome of deliberative democracy (Young, 1996).

Consensus as a goal of deliberative democracy has also been extensively critiqued, as the expectation of consensus can challenge more pluralist aspirations of democratic societies. The processes of participating in collective rationalisation (as advanced by early proponents of deliberative democracy) inevitably reflected the cultural prejudices that conceived of logical, evidenced based arguments in ways that privileged a particular class, gender and cultural group. Such hegemonic approaches to deliberation exclude "those who are less likely to present their arguments in ways that

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we recognize as characteristically deliberative" (Sanders, 1997, p. 349). In particular, supposedly democratic processes of deliberation can ultimately disadvantage,

> [Women], racial minorities, and the poor, whose speech cultures depart from "rationalist" forms of discourse that privilege dispassionate argumentation, logical coherence, and evidence-based claims as practiced in the most exclusive kinds of scholarly debates, parliamentary procedures, and judicial argumentation. (Curato et al., 2017, p. 30)

This critical emancipatory position acknowledges the diverse complexity of how people and cultures represent themselves and their ideas, while emphasising that structural power also inevitably advantages particular forms of expression (Steiner et al., 2004). In particular, more emotive expressions can become undervalued within deliberative processes that maintain a stoic conception of sentiment and sensation, with passion considered irrelevant to intellectual discourse (Mouffe, 2000). The pursuit of unanimous agreement, in both a final decision and in the rationales that support it, was therefore both impractical and exclusive, as it relied upon conformity to established parameters for deliberation that were themselves undemocratic. These concerns emphasised the need for 'communicative democracy' (Young, 1996) which values more complex forms and layers of communication as pertinent to collective deliberation. These layers of communication can emphasise relational practices of greeting, humour, aesthetics, spiritualism and embodied expressions. The concept of communicative democracy resonates with early conceptualisations of cultural democracy, as it recognises and purposefully values the diverse and complex ways that humanity makes sense of the world (Belfiore et al., 2023).

It might therefore be argued that consensus could remain an ideal of deliberative democracy, if broader understandings of rationalisation and more diverse forms of expression could become a part of the deliberative process. Critical theorists further argue however, that the goal of consensus ultimately remains oppressive however, as achieving unanimous agreement inevitably relies upon the silencing of dissident voices (Young, 1996).

4.5.4 Agonistic Democracy and Dissensus

Dissent matters. To resist all forms of totalitarianism, societies need to actively promote pluralism, in which individuals encounter strangers and appreciate their strangeness without always seeking to resolve it into an agreement. As Hannah Arendt suggests,

> The reality of the public realm relies on the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives and aspects in which the common world presents itself, and for which no common measurement or denominator can ever be devised. (1958, p. 57).

By valuing the 'simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives', Arendt positions consensus as a risk to human complexity; a 'common denominator' that inevitably establishes parameters for

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exclusion. From this standpoint, the goal of consensus becomes a tool of control; a means of identifying who might be within (and who might be without) a particular society. To achieve this exclusion, consensus relies upon a homogenising system of perception. The more that a community relies upon consensus as a means of determining its identity and purpose, the more it creates, in Rancière's expression, "the part of those who have no part" (2000/2011, p. 33). This, in turn, emphasises the significance of dissensus:

> By naming the part-of-no-part, dissensus does not simply add a part that has hitherto been missing, but introduces a fundamentally different perception of reality that disrupts the totalitarian order of consensus and questions the 'normality' of its arrangements of in/visibility. (Gruber, 2020, p. 248)

This identifies the centrality of dissensus (drawn from the Latin *dis* meaning 'apart; differently,' so to 'feel/sense differently') within pluralist democracy, without which shared deliberation will ultimately become a process for advancing social exclusion. Through dissensus, subaltern voices might be valued, revealing the complexity of society and questioning supposed norms (Spivak, 1990).

This raises questions however, as to how society is maintained within continual disagreement. Attempts to address the position of dissent within deliberative democracy has given rise to ideas of 'conflictual consensus', which involves "consensus on the ethico-political values of liberty and equality for all, [but] dissent about their interpretation" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 121). This establishes parameters in which dissent may take place while still supporting a sense of social cohesion. Subsequent approaches to deliberative democracy sought to emphasise the significance of dissensus as a phenomenon, arguing that "Productive deliberation is plural, not consensual [...] Rather than consensus, deliberation should recognize pluralism and strive for metaconsensus" (Curato et al., 2017, p. 31). The process of metaconsensus is thus presented as achieving "agreement about the nature of the issue at hand, not necessarily on the actual outcome", which can allow for intersubjective rationalities to emerge, "when individuals who agree on preferences also concur on the relevant reasons, and vice versa for disagreement." (Niemeyer & Dryzek, 2007, p. 502).

This process of including and positioning dissent within democratic deliberations is particularly important within deeply divided societies (Curato et al., 2017), as it can allow irreconcilable antagonisms to transition into disagreeable *agonisms*. Within agonistic contestations, differences and diversity become the basis for political connection; an adversary is valued as someone that we disagree with, but with whom we share a commitment to liberty and equality and whose existence within our deliberations evidences that commitment (Mouffe, 2000). Actively engaging in agonistic contestations thus prompts us to transcend our "private subjective conditions" and engage in "enlarged thinking" (Arendt, 1961, p. 220), so as to deliberate through the perspectives of others. In this framework, deliberative democracy functions as a space for pluralism and meta-consensus, where differing values can be mutually acknowledged as legitimate, even in the absence of agreement (Curato et al., 2017).

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So what is the purpose of education within this process? While a socialisation purpose for education can function to support young people to become 'good' citizens within a society's established political order, an agonistic democracy requires education that enables learners to navigate plurality and difference through the development of their subjectification, as:

> [The] socialization conception focuses on the question how 'newcomers' can be inserted into an existing political order, the subjectification conception focuses on the question of how democratic subjectivity is engendered through engagement in always undetermined political processes. (Biesta, 2011, p. 141)

In this way, an agonistic education resists defining 'the good citizen'. The learning of democracy is nevertheless underpinned by a strong desire to transform antagonism into agonism, forming subjects that value and pursue equality (Ruitenberg, 2015). This requires fostering an openness to plurality and difference, and an awareness that sometimes individuals will use their freedom to undermine the freedom and plurality of others (Biesta, 2023). Agonistic democracy therefore has significant implications for how we understand democratic education, and the function of deliberation within democratic relationships.

While acknowledging the democratic importance of maintaining dissensus and challenging the pre-eminence of consensus as an outcome of deliberative democracy, these positions nevertheless seek *agreement* as a central goal of the deliberation. Agonistic democracy sustains the making-of-a-decision as the pre-eminent function of such deliberative, democratic encounters. This disposition towards determination through either consensus or dissensus has been described as the "deliberative stance," in which "a relation to others as equals engaged in mutual exchange of reasons oriented *as if* to reaching a shared practical judgement" (Owen & Smith, 2015, p. 228). But might a 'relation to others' within such a deliberative disposition be valued beyond only 'reaching a shared practical judgment'?

How might deliberative democracy be valued, rather than as simply collective a means to a determined end? Within INTRACOMP, we argue that education in deliberative democracy demands not just the de-privileging consensus—it also requires participants to transcend 'determination' as the singular purpose of democratic deliberation. This emphasises the importance of uncertainty within democratic deliberation, and within the development of democratic dispositions. As Biesta argues,

> The democratic citizen is not a predefined identity that can simply be taught and learned, but emerges again and again in new ways from engagement with the experiment of democratic politics. (2011, p. 152).

This process of experimentation can involve emergent, unintended, and unexpected logics that do not seek to conclude deliberations, but open new ones. For this process to be valued however, we may need to more fully articulate the possibilities of a collective 'sense' within deliberative democracy. So, what 'collective senses' exist beyond the binary of consensus and dissensus?

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4.6 Chapter Summary

Climate mobility, and the mass migration of populations, is not inherently a disaster. It all comes down to how we, as a society, anticipate it, prepare for it, and manage it. Amidst this migration, all of humanity can continue to thrive on earth, and democratic ideals of equality, diversity and inclusion can continue to grow.

This will require some radical transitions however, if we are to move from the current trajectory of denigrating, denying and dismissing those subjected to forced migration. Increasingly exclusionary governance approaches to the biopolitics of forced migration suggest that we may be losing a critical opportunity to pivot towards a more democratic approach to climate mobility. Within INTRACOMP, we focus on the role of arts education to support this pivot, yet we understand that arts education is itself underpinned by deeper political trends.

Within this chapter, we have emphasised the need for the active and learned participation of all within the formation of democracy. It is not sufficient for individuals to simply study a canon of democratic principles—instead, sustaining democracy is an individual and collective responsibility focused on democratic relationships. Democracy is not simply an electoral process; it permeates all our interactions. Education can provide fertile experiences for learners to become passionate political subjects, through opportunities to engage democratically with aspects of their everyday lives that are significant and meaningful for them. As a relational phenomenon, developing a democratic attitude further involves interactions and processes of deliberation with strangers.

But are current conceptualisations of education for deliberative democracy sufficient? Are the ways that we value participation within such deliberations adequately realised? Before we explore the competences that individuals and groups may need to effectively support cultural democracy and the ways that participatory arts education may extend these competences), our literature review opens a new (and we argue much needed) conceptual terrain for education in deliberative democracy: *transensus*.

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5

Beyond Binaries, Towards Transensus

"There is something **at work in my soul**, which I do not understand."

—Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

5. Beyond Binaries, Towards Transensus

Narrative: The Date Truck

Scratching her wrist along the edges of a heavy hessian sack, the girl's fingers probed the course fibres, eventually discovering the tip of a small, smooth cylinder. Another date had escaped its bag and would soon find its way to her pocket!

Gently clawing the fruit between the nails of her index and middle finger, the truck lurched over a pothole. Popping from her fingertips, the date slid deeper, beyond her haptic senses. Wriggling her arm from the gap between the large bags, she sighed.

The truck was dark, and she could not see her fellow passengers. How many bodies were crouched in the fissure between the date bags and the metal belly below? She and her sister had boarded first; perhaps 20 heavy breaths now wafted between her and the vents at the back of the truck.

"There will be a warm bath waiting for us in Tangiers," her sister prompted, sensing her irritation.

She could not see her face, but could hear her smile as it glided across her gums. In these moments she could never tell if her sister was comforting or tormenting her, or smugly proposing that *the-two-are-one-and-the-same*. A chuckle bubbled out from further down the truck.

"And the bath will be filled with coconut water!"

"And grapes will float across it," came another voice in an accent she did not recognise.

"And a lamb will roast on a spit just above you, so you can reach up and pull on its dripping flesh" her sister goaded the story along.

"The lamb, the lamb, the lamb on the fire…"

A voice, then a melody. Three or four more carried the tune in another language; a familiar song that she could only presume was about a roasting lamb? Several others began to clap along, joining the rhythmic, onomatopoeic refrain "Sasa sasa sa!"

Swaying, the girl started to bring her hands together—not quite in a clap, but in uncertain anticipation of one. The truck hit another pothole, suddenly throwing the hidden bodies forwards and back. The song stopped; her sister lowered her shoulder to accommodate her.

5.1 Introduction: Conceptualising Transensus

The nexus of deliberative democracy, participatory arts, and transcultural competence provides an exciting new theoretical zone for education that warrants a reconfiguration of existing knowledge, to allow new concepts to emerge. Within this section, we introduce the term *transensus* as an emancipatory and transformative concept that reflects the ways that democratic interactions can take place amongst participants in a creative endeavour.

Transensus presents a significant contrast to the dichotomous ideological constructs of consensus and dissensus as both activities and mandates within a deliberative encounter. By focusing on possibility (rather than resolution or prediction), transensus allows for experiences of *feeling-across*

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in ways that de-privilege 'determination' as the expected outcome of deliberation. Through transensual experiences, we encounter and engage with strangeness in the public domain in ways that can allow new, unexpected relational ideals to emerge. By acknowledging the significance of transensus, we can better understand the distinctive ways that participatory, embodied performing arts can support the development of transcultural competence, and thus powerfully grow democratic attitudes. While the term transensus may be new, we argue that it is a phenomenon so common within collaborative practices that it has perhaps evaded definition up until this point.

The concept of transensus holds significance beyond creative practices. Within expanded understandings of education for deliberative democracy, transensus provides a complimentary concept that is experienced as an individual and collective phenomenon. To introduce this concept, we first explore how transensus can provide an alternate, democratic way of being with others that transcends a utilitarian mandate of decision-making. As it shifts mindsets from arbitration to opportunity, transensus allows people to *feel-across* while suspended in a liminal state. Following this introduction, we explore the sociopolitical conditions that enable this state of collective uncertainty, with a particular valuing of the ways that *tā-vā*, as an Indigenous Pacific sociopolitical discourse, can enable a shared feeling that transcends neoliberal and utilitarian rationalities within deliberative democracy. This invites further questions as to the necessary conditions that can enable transensus to manifest, with a particular focus on intercultural and transcultural competence, and their development through participatory performing arts.

5.2 Transcending Determination

Deliberative democracy has generally sought to achieve the goal of a determination: a conclusive result that reveals either consensus or dissensus.

Derived from the Latin *determinare*, determination enables the termination of a deliberation and presents a 'stopping rule' within deliberative democracy (Landemore & Page, 2015). As indicated by expressions of consensus or dissensus, determination presents a bifurcation: the separation of something into two branches at a point in which "the multiplicity, the stability, or both, of solutions change" (Franci et al., 2019, p. 2). While we acknowledge the importance of determination as an outcome of deliberative democracy—and as an idea essential to the maintenance of a rules-based society—we propose that determination need not be the singular (or even pre-eminent) goal of deliberative democracy.

Discourses on deliberative democracy have generally maintained either a problem-solution purpose as "a method of evaluating and ranking proposed solutions" to an existing problem (Landemore & Page, 2015, p. 230), or a predictive purpose, which involves developing "some estimate, statement or belief about a future state of the world" (p. 235). Both of these rationalities seek determination as the goal of the deliberation: determining either 'the best choice' or 'the probable outcome'.

We therefore introduce the term transensus as a conceptual encapsulation of the non-determinate outcomes of deliberative democracy. Transensus is a portmanteau combining the prefix

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trans with the suffix *sensus,* as in consensus and dissensus; from *cōnsentiō*, meaning to "feel together; agree." 'Trans' has multiple meanings, but here it is used to mean 'across' as in the Latin *trāns*. We suggest that this *feeling-across* presents a highly significant sensation that is distinct from *feeling-together* and *feeling-apart*. That is, transensus is not simply another bifurcation: a binary split achieved through consensus or dissensus, because transensus is not contingent on the circumstances and factors from which an outcome may eventually arise. To borrow from Stryker's work on transgender theory and identity, transensus could be framed as "something more, and something other" (2023, p. 71) than what we are accustomed to in the fields of relationality and group learning.

So what is this something other? At least partly, the 'otherness' of transensus is temporal. That is, transensus purposefully *suspends* deliberation within a state of uncertainty; a state in which ambiguity can be appreciated.

Within transensus, we encounter a liminal sensation that is not dependent on determination, but instead opens opportunities for (and encourages) ongoing, speculative deliberation. This liminal state sits amidst determinations, and becomes "a world within a world" (Stenner, 2021, p. 6). By remaining liminal, transensus enables such new worlds to emerge that may or may not become fixed, and purposefully values their temporal uncertainty. This uncertainty provides space for a deeper questioning of who is advantaged and disadvantaged by the more deterministic and pragmatic mandates of consensus and dissensus within democratic deliberations.

Extending from this, a further aspect of the 'otherness' of transensus is the distinctiveness of its logical parameters. It is important to note that transensus maintains a collective logic, continuing to balance ideas and sustain a shared experience of rational deliberation. That is, transensus is not simply a transition into an irrational, impulsive or unreflective state of being and way of encountering differences. To recognize the distinctiveness of a transensus rationality, it is important to first acknowledge the aforementioned predominance of prediction and resolution as logical frameworks within deliberative democracy.

In contrast, transensus requires a shift within the logical parameters of the deliberative activity: from resolution and prediction to imagination. Through imaginative logic, individuals and groups are not asking 'What is best?' or 'What is most probable?' but instead interrogate 'What *is* possible?' This imaginative logic provides deliberation with a new purpose: to generate a multiplicity of (potentially contradictory) outcomes, which can in turn lead to further possibilities, stimulating ongoing deliberation and collective exploration.

This purposeful shift-of-purpose from evaluative thinking and probability thinking towards possibility thinking is particularly important within deliberative groups that seek to innovate. Collaborative innovation relies on the purposeful blending of distinct perspectives and ideas, rather than the collective selection of the one 'best' perspective or idea. Through the generation of 'what if' ideas (as distinct from the ideas that purport to resolve or predict an issue), possibility thinking has been extensively valued within the development of logics within creativity and education (e.g. Bruner, 1986; Craft, 2015; Cremin et al., 2006). In this way, the imaginative logic underpinning transensus is aligned with the worldbuilding approach of our INTRACOMP mandate, and its valuing of speculation and

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relationality (see 2.2.2). Such possibility thinking enables the codesign of complex, 'pluriversal' worlds (Taboada et al., 2024), so that transcultural phenomena can come into being. By valorising the rationality of possibility-thinking in deliberative democracy, the concept of transensus allows us to de-privilege rationalities associated with what *is* there, what *should be* there and even what *probably will be* there, to enable deeper collective exploration of what *could be* there.

5.3 Beyond Neoliberal Socio-Politics of Collaboration

Such evaluative, predictive, and imaginative processes of analysis are not usually siloed within our everyday individual and collective deliberations. We continually intertwine 'should,' 'would,' and 'could' mandates within our private and shared thought processes. This way of thinking will not, therefore, seem radically new to experiences of deliberative democracy. However, we argue that specifically identifying transensus is important, as transensus purposefully values such possibility thinking as an outcome of deliberative democracy, rather than a step towards a 'more meaningful conclusion' emerging from problem-solution or predictive thinking. We thus present transensus as a purpose of deliberative democracy, as valid and valued as consensus and dissensus.

This raises questions as to the necessary conditions that can allow individuals and groups to purposefully value transensus, as an outcome of democratic deliberations. To further understand how transensus can be experienced by a collective, it is helpful to consider transensus as a sociopolitical phenomenon. Extending from Foucault's biopolitics, transensus is sociopolitical as it exists in contexts "in which politics and relations of power are constituted through an authoritative discourse on the social" (Ssorin-Chaikov, 2015, p. 5). This is based on the premise that "humans do not simply act together" (Frith, 2012, p. 2220), and that our processes of collective action are guided by expectations established through specific discourses. As such, transensus gains its social legitimacy through the discourses that determine the norms of social activity.

For such discourses, deliberative democracy might expect to extend from theories of social interdependence, particularly those associated with collective decision-making. Social interdependence refers to the ways that individuals can rely upon each other to achieve shared goals (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). Negative social interdependence identifies competitive social relations in which an individual achieving their goal is dependent upon another individual *not* achieving their goal, such as two players each seeking to win a tennis match. By contrast, positive social interdependence identifies social relations in which an individual only achieves their goal if the other parties involved also achieve their shared goal (such as building a shared shelter) (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). This latter, promotive interdependence can involve *cooperation*, which includes a division of labour and often a maintenance of tiered, decision-making hierarchies (Dillenbourg et al.,1996).

A more complex process of promotive interdependence involves *collaboration*, which seeks more symmetrical relationships and centralised, collectivised processes of decision-making (Dillenbourg, 1999). The process of collaboration inevitably involves stages of cooperation, but collaboration also demands communication amongst the participants to expand the conceptual approach to the shared task. This requires that participants all take responsibility for contributions,

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perspective-taking and social regulation (Hesse et al., 2015). Their willingness to share ideas and have those ideas scrutinized fosters an openness to the possibility "that something new or unique might arise from a mutual inquiry that could reconstruct the participants' view of reality" (Raelin, 2006). To engage in collaboration, one must therefore be open to personal transformation. Collaboration further requires a collective responsiveness to the evolution of the task; an iterative social engagement that ensures the "active and insightful participation" of everyone involved throughout the production process (Hesse et al., 2015).

Promotive social interdependence has been further advanced by neoliberal socio-political discourses, emphasizing the transactional benefits for an individual engaging in collective action (Rowe, 2020). To challenge such transactional approaches to joint endeavours, critical discourses have further identified 'social capital' as an alternate mandate for collective action, which values the mutual benefit emerging from such collective action (Putnam, 1993, 2000). While shared deliberations may be motivated by a desire to simply interact together, the concept of 'capital' here emphasises the latent value within the social interaction (Coleman, 1988). That is, the social 'capital' generated by the social interaction can be subsequently drawn on to sustain other dimensions of the collective, particularly economic growth (Dasgupta, 2000).

Ultimately, these theorisations of social interdependence are situated within utilitarian and pragmatic socio-political discourses, ultimately valuing the practical consequences and applied outcomes of the interdependence. That is, from these standpoints, the fundamental purpose of collective deliberation is causal: to achieve a collective determination, which can then guide collective action towards a collective outcome that is of value to the individuals and/or the collective. This implicit mandate suggests that a relationship must produce something to be either valuable or even understood, and that 'moving forward, moving backward' through agreement and disagreement is critical to the very nature of a relationship. As a socio-political mandate, this justifies what happens next over what may be happening right now. Establishing the socio-political significance of transensus within theories of social interdependence and collaboration might, therefore, sustain a dominant discourse that positions transactional relationships and productivity as the expected outcomes of the collective deliberation.

5.4 An Indigenous Episteme: Transensus and *Tā-Vā*

We therefore position transensus beyond neoliberal, utilitarian and pragmatic discourses and paradigmatic boundaries. This can be achieved by considering socio-political discourses outside of Western histories of thought, and exploring the global relevance of the Pacific Indigenous philosophy of *tā-vā*. We argue that *tā-vā* presents an emancipatory discourse (Habermas, 1962/1991), as it allows us to challenge the entrenched dominance of discourses of power associated with neoliberalism. Our exploration of *tā-vā* responds to calls to bring Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, cosmological ideas and philosophies into global conversations (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017), and to further understand how democracy, as a global phenomenon, may find pathways to enaction (Faik-Simet, 2021).

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We acknowledge that engaging Indigenous knowledge systems risks further symbolic violence (Brigg & Walker, 2022). We therefore present *tā-vā* here as a philosophy authored by Tongan and Samoan scholars, rather than as a representation of the cultural activities of any particular society.

Within the Tongan language, the portmanteau *tā-vā* can be a way of describing 'time and space' as a relational philosophical concept. This combines the definition of *tā*, as a "beating of time, or our actions and expressions"(Diaz, 2022, p. 71) and *vā*, as socio-spatial relations (Ka'ili, 2017). The relational dynamic of this phrase extends beyond simply describing chronology and physical space. We might instead understand *tā-vā* as rhythmical:

> [That] tā-vā enables the temporary experience of relational patterns, informed by interpersonal and intrapersonal beats that result in a sense of synchronicity with people, places, and spiritual dimensions [...] tā-vā conveys how time is not passive or punctual, yet embodied and qualitative; requiring a consciousness that is aware of how intentional behaviours and expressive actions contribute to creating collective rhythms. ('Ofamo'oni, 2024, p. 14)

First described as 'a theory' by Hūfanga-He-Ako-Moe-Lotu 'Ōkusitino Māhina (1992), Māhina subsequently re-proposed *tā-vā* as 'a philosophy' because "a theory assumes it is a possible idea, but tā-vā *is* a way of life, therefore a philosophy" (in 'Ofamo'oni, 2024, p. 13). Understandings of *tā-vā* continue to evolve through applied research and theoretical investigations (e.g. Addo, 2017; Hau'ofa, 2000; Kalavite, 2010, 2017; Koya-Vaka'uta, 2013; Māhina-Tuai, 2017; O'Sullivan, 2017; Saltiban, 2012; Seve-Williams, 2017). While we do not undertake a deeper investigation into *tā-vā* as a Pacific philosophy here, we acknowledge that it presents a significant and emancipatory sociopolitical discourse underpinning collective actions, which may enable us to better understand the value of transensus as a global, interpersonal phenomenon within deliberative democracy. Of particular relevance to transensus, it is worth noting that the experience of encounter described by *tā-vā* is not fundamentally motivated by a desire for either exchange or agreement. The socio-political discourse of *tā-vā* values the coming together, the *sharing-of-senses*, as an outcome in and of itself. It is not the determined *feeling together* or *feeling apart* of consensus and dissensus, it is more an experience of *all feeling*.

So how and why might *tā-vā* present an emancipatory socio-political discourse that has relevance beyond the Pacific? First, this requires a deeper understanding of how *vā* can be valued.

Vā is an intangible phenomenon that nevertheless emphasises the significance of interpersonal relationships, as it is "not something we can see or touch. It is the feeling we experience [...] it is expressed throughout our daily interactions with one another through what we do, what we say, what we think, and what we feel" (Corballis, 2017, p. 71). This intangibility might be understood as an atmosphere, or 'vibe', that enables or inhibits deeper social and more meaningful social interactions. Albert Wendt identifies the ways that this phenomenon empowers social interactions with meaning and purpose, indicating the socio-political significance of *vā* as a discourse that promotes:

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> [The] space between, the between-ness, not empty space, not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space giving meaning to things. The meanings change as the relationships/the contexts change… (1999, p. 402).

As a transient yet potent force, *vā* does not sit within individuals, and is not subject to the will of an individual; like transensus, it is an 'in-between-ness' that gives meaning to interactions and encounters because of a multiplicity of impulses.

While *vā* is experienced in physical, intellectual, symbolic and social dimensions (Tevita, 2005) it is also valued within a fifth, political/ideological dimension (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009). This ideological dimension challenges libertarian, humanist values that promote the primacy of the human individual within all relational contexts (Bochner, 1994; Heller & Brooke-Rose, 1986; Smith, 2007). By situating the individual within an interconnected community (Mila-Schaaf, 2006; Tuagalu, 2008), *vā* finds association with emancipatory socio-political discourses in diverse Indigenous worldviews, such as the philosophical ideal in Ubuntu that proposes "I am because we are and because we are therefore I am" (Mabingo, 2020, p. 3) and the *Mbu* cultural education framework of Papua New Guinea (Mel, 2001). *Vā* emphasises the valuing of "relationships as the most influential dynamic in shaping both individual identity and the nature of the social world" (Mila-Schaaf, 2006, p. 10).

We might further understand *vā* as a process and not just an outcome. For instance, Refiti (2002) describes the common Samoan expression of "*la teu le va*," which means to cherish/nurse/care for the *vā*. This is entwined with rhythmic concepts such as "tauhi vā" describing the ways that *vā* can be nurtured, devalued, resolved or maintained through collective action (Koya-Vaka'uta, 2013, p. 207). The term *tauhi* here refers to the efforts to 'maintain rhythm' within *vā*, emphasizing the intersection between space and time (Ka'ili, 2005). *Tauhi* describes how "social acts create tempo, beat, pace, rhythm and frequency" (Ka'ili, 2017, p. 25). This "rhythm happens in time—expressing time, one could say" (Bostad, 2022, p. 155). *Tauhi va* thus identifies how the experience of a vibrant atmosphere within *vā* is constructed through the sense of rhythm that is brought to manifest in particular spaces in particular moments. *Tā* and *vā* are thus contingent on each other, as "in our interpretations of space (vā), one must consider the actions and rhythms or tā, within those spaces" (Diaz Jr, 2022, p. 72).

This heightened sense of *all feeling* is accented through the development of *malie* and *mafana*. Within experiences of highly energised *tā-vā*, *malie* can be understood as a "philosophy of process, energy and transformation" (Manu'atu, 2000, p. 74). The experience of *malie* involves "an energising and uplifting of the spirits, and to a positive state of connectedness and enlightenment" (Vaioleti, 2006, p. 24). *Malie* can manifest in diverse interactions between people and the world, including specific rituals such as kava drinking, music and dance, but also within conversation and physical activities like sports or fishing (Manu'atu, 2000; Vaioleti, 2006). This process of enlightenment further enables experiences of social emancipation, as "Malie, when experienced, transcends fear and other forms of social construction that 'put down' or oppress people […] The energy of malie mobilises everyone" (Manu'atu, 2000, p. 74).

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This mobilisation of a collective is further enabled through the phenomenon of *mafana*, or "movement of warm currents that energises the process of malie" (Manu'atu, 2000, p.77). *Mafana* gives *malie* a transformative quality (Kaeppler, 1971; Manu'atu, 2000), through a sense of "inner warmth" (Tevita, 2008, p. vii) and "elevated consciousness" (Johnson-Hill, 2008, p. 21). Through the sharing of *mafana*, the *vā* becomes a vibrant experience that animates a sense of presence and belonging. This sense of presence is not contingent on consensus, and it does not determine subsequent collective action. It is of the moment and values the intrinsic experience of *feeling-across*.

The sociopolitical discourse of *tā-vā* thus presents a value-driven mandate for democratic interaction by embracing equality, inclusion and plurality. While conceptualisations of *tā-vā* have been expanded to included "*lā*", or a 'scaling up' of tā-vā, so that it might enable a geopolitical re-imagining of the Pacific (Koro et al., 2023), we focus here on *tā-vā* as a sociopolitical discourse that enables an experience of transensus. *Tā-vā* presents a point of difference from theories of social interdependence, collaboration and social capital within western discourses, as it does not mandate this experience of coming together as reliant on productive outcomes.

5.5 More Than Words: Transensus as a "Vibe"

Since 2016, scholars in the Global North and South have grappled with the impacts of the Trumpian, post-Brexit political climate. In the United States, democratic institutions and ideals continue to be eroded by a reactionary creep towards authoritarianism: one defined by a rejection of consensus-driven and evidence-based notions of truth (Arvanitopoulos, 2022). Much has been said about this quality of truth in the post-2016 West, particularly with facts seemingly yielding to more emotional or polemical political rhetorics and debates (Rowe et al., 2018). This concern around the status of truth permeates popular culture and media—a recent article in *The Guardian* lamenting the end of 'facts' outright:

> Facts were cool for about 250 years. From the Enlightenment until this century, facts were where it was at. They had a good innings. But it is game over for facts, the end of the line for statistics. These days, what counts is what you feel. In other words, *it's all about the vibe*. (Cartner-Morley, 2024, para. 1, emphasis added)

Despite the 'post-truth crisis' we allude to above, questions remain around whether we can demean feelings, or *vibes*, as the lesser, binary opposite of truth. When discussing the possibilities presented by intercultural and transcultural competence, we are conscious that many 'truths' can be 'felt' at once when we collaborate with culturally distinct Others. As such, we are reticent to share in Cartner-Morley's eulogy for fact, and instead ask: in what ways might vibes help us understand changing notions of truth now and as the climate crisis progresses?

Vibes are spatialised and embodied feelings (Bentel, 2024; Watson, 2025). The term 'vibes' comes from the word vibrations, and they are posited to emanate from the body (Del Gandio, 2012) or bodies (Adjirakor, 2021) when situated in space. Vibes are atmospheric in this way and relate to our affective experience of space as moderated through our bodies (Heffernan & Poole, 2005; Watson,

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2025). In other words, vibes are determined by whether we vibrate *with* or *against* a given context. For example, if we are at a party with friends dancing to music we enjoy—the lighting is colourful, and the company is warm and energetic—the vibes could be called 'good.' By contrast, if we are at a party and the music is too quiet or downbeat, or if we are surrounded by strangers who make us feel uncomfortable, the vibes are probably 'bad.'

Per our party-based example, vibes can be positive or negative, with this possibly reflecting an individual's familiarity or identification with a context (Ball et al., 2020). Although vibes arise between people and/or their surroundings (Sönmez et al., 2022) they are not implicitly transient. For instance, we know that people living with major depressive disorder cannot just 'switch off' their 'negative vibes' (Monnart et al., 2016) with this hinting at the depth that vibes can attain within our psyche and bodies. Rather than ephemeral, vibes might instead be called a force (Washington et al., 2023; Watson, 2025).

Deliberative democracy requires transensus as a vibration: a coming together in a sense of enlivened presence that does not seek a determination, but instead allows for simultaneous differences to exist in an enlivened yet ambiguous, liminal state. Through transensus, we *feel across* without necessarily deciding that we are *feeling apart* or *feeling together*. We simply gain confidence that we are all, indeed, *feeling*. Through this valuing of shared feeling, we are actively exploring new sensations, we are curious about how our sensations may be extended, and we are excited by how others may express their feelings. We recognise that this state of collective curiosity is dependent upon a sense of inclusion, equality and diversity within the deliberative group, and thus resists a collective compulsion towards conformity, hierarchy and exclusion.

To the hum of the Beach Boys, transensus might be thus valued as a "good vibration". This enlivened feeling of 'the vibe' of a time and place emphasises the significance and rewards of *presence*. Such vibes reflect a relationship between bodies; an in-between-ness; vibrations that connect or influence a group's relationships physically or affectively. The across-feeling vibrations of transensus thus adopt an intimate spatiality and immediate temporality—they are here and now, and, as in any type of energy or force, they are acting upon objects in the present moment.

We further acknowledge that concepts of societal time, space and rhythm have been explored extensively within the Western canon (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017, 2019, 2021; Bostad, 2022; Brighenti, & Kärrholm, 2018; Mathisen, 2016), noting that "everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm" (Lefebvre, 1992/2004, p. 15). These include intrapersonal rhythms, as "each person brings their own internal rhythm into the presence of the other with the physicality of their body and voice (heartbeat, breath, speech)" (Gill, 2012, p. 17). These also include *inter*-personal rhythms that synchronise the interactions of individuals towards collective effort (Lumsden et al., 2014; Schmidt & Fitzpatrick, 2016). Roland Barthes (2002/2012) notably promoted the utopian ideal of idiorrhythmic interactions, enabling socio-cultural diversity to flourish, through an appreciation of, and sensitivity towards, the diversity of rhythms in a society. While evoking the significance of rhythms within social interactions in time and space, these theorisations do not present a sustained socio-political discourse that values the heightened sensation of awareness and presence

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within an experience of *feeling across*, or *all feeling*. We therefore introduce our conceptualisation of transensus as a democratic phenomenon as an extension of the socio-political discourse of *tā-vā*.

5.6 Chapter Summary

Without the value of transensus, democratic deliberation becomes fixated on outcomes; outcomes that are often predetermined by the privileged epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies that the deliberation is encamped within. To achieve cultural democracy, there is a need to continually expand these boundaries, diversifying the ways that those involved communicate. This is because democratic deliberation is more than mere discussion as,

> [Talk] alone can be pathological, producing wildly mixed results from an ideal deliberative perspective…Distinguishing between deliberation and discussion introduces an emotional dimension in which dispositional factors, such as open-mindedness, are important. (Curato et al., 2017, pp.146-147)

While it is understood that deliberation extends beyond words, we argue that to effectively enable cultural democracy and transcultural activity, deliberative democracy needs to do more than just expand *how* we communicate. Cultural democracy demands that we expand *why* we communicate. Transensus thus provides a significant contribution in this regard, as distinct from, yet complimentary to, the rationalizations for consensus and dissensus. This raises further questions however, as to the competences required of individuals and collectives that can enable the necessary conditions for transensus to manifest. The next chapter therefore explores how intercultural competence, and ultimately transcultural competence can be required to effectively enable experiences of transensus within deliberative democracy.

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6

Interculturalism and Transculturalism

"Harmony was the soul of our companionship, and the **diversity and contrast** that subsisted in our characters drew us nearer together."

—Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

6. Interculturalism and Transculturalism

Narrative: Waves

A child called River is lost at sea.

Shoulder-to-shoulder on an ancient ferry, they scramble to grip the railing as another wave lashes the frail vessel. Chipped paint comes away in one palm—beige scabs revealing rusted green flesh—as panic sets in. The boat writhes in the swell, winding and rolling like a drunkard's eye.

This was not what River imagined when they fled. Since the early 2020s, their hometown had become a dangerous place for queer people. Politicians and pastors decried the influence of so-called 'gender ideology' before criminalising drag shows. Legislators had a draft bill ready to re-codify marriage between a man and woman when the supreme court reneged in 2027. School boards had banned and burnt countless books. It was, in short, a state of contempt.

With little more than a bag in their hand and a sweatshirt at their waist, River had left their home two days ago. Not quite 18, River spent their meagre savings on a midnight passage to Havana with hopes of escaping south to Rio. Beneath a crude ceiling of blue tarpaulin, rain and wind soak River and their fellow travellers, their hopes muted. A terrible gnawing sound stirs from the hull: a deep *thunk* and straining of steel puncturing the violent spray.

Looking down, River notices their fingers curled tight around the boat's railing—each knuckle as white as the moon.

6.1 Introduction

Cultural democracy is rooted in the idea that people carrying diverse cultures can ethically interact, develop and sustain ever-evolving forms of culture. Cultural interactions do not always enhance one's sense of belonging however, and can involve extractive and hegemonic processes (Said, 1993) that undermine experiences of democracy. The continuation of democracy in contexts of acculturation can therefore require skills, knowledge, behaviours, values and attitudes that foster an ethical approach to cultural interaction.

In this chapter, we explore how intercultural and transcultural competence can support the conditions for cultural democracy and the growth of transilient communities experiencing climate mobility. Building on the arguments presented in Chapter 5, here we consider how transensus, as an aspect of deliberative democracy that can contribute to cultural democracy, may be dependent on specific cultural competences. We begin by identifying the complexity of *intercultural competence*, and the conflicting meanings and values that this crucial and evolving phenomenon can present. This leads to an exploration of *transculturalism* as a distinctive concept that extends from particular threads of intercultural thought, providing a potentially fresh way of articulating and advancing the necessary conditions for cultural democracy to thrive. We then discuss diverse facets of transculturalism, opening departure points into the development of transculturalism as a competence rooted in ethics and relationality. The following chapters then examine how such cultural competences, experiences of

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transensus, and growth of cultural democracy may be enhanced and inhibited through participation in participatory arts practices, the design of competence frameworks, and digital technology.

6.2 Cultural Action: From Inter- to Trans-

While intercultural competence (ICC) has been identified as one of the most important competences for living in a globalised world, definitions of both interculturalism and intercultural competence have gathered varying meanings. Scholarship on ICC is global (Peng et al., 2020), and more than 60 distinctive frameworks have been developed for measuring intercultural competence (Novikova et al., 2020). This has resulted in significant variation in our expectations for intercultural competence and the values that underpin such. Generally, intercultural sensitivity or competence is positioned in binary opposition to an ethnocentric paradigm: ICC reveals an awareness that cultures are different, and that such differences are legitimate (Bennett, 1993; Hammer et al., 2003). This awareness presents a contrast to historic, colonial attitudes, which may have acknowledged cultural difference but assumed with certainty that some cultures were inherently 'better' or 'worse,' or 'more advanced' or 'more primitive' than other cultures (see for example Arnold, 1869). The shift to cultural relativism in intercultural studies did not necessarily reflect a universal benevolence in approaches to intercultural activity, however, as intercultural knowledge continued to be used to exploit other cultural groups (Price, 2002). Though opening greater possibilities for cultural fluidity, the movement from a cultural relativist to a constructivist mindset in ICC has not always championed an ethical mandate for democracy (Bennett, 2024). That said, the theoretical framing of constructivism nevertheless opens pathways for intercultural dialogues on ethical mandates to take place, as constructivism recognises that all cultural phenomena is constructed—challenging any assumptions of essential or universal cultural ideals and hierarchies (Evanoff, 2004).

The varied mandates for intercultural activity noted above have led to a diversity of approaches to identifying and assessing intercultural competence. Some framings focus on communication as the core function of intercultural activity, and therein emphasise language and an interpretation of contrasting cultural meanings as key criteria for ICC (e.g. Byram, 1997; Deerdorff, 2006). Others examples push further into the arena of values, beliefs and attitudes—emphasising the significance of ethical behaviour and cultural literacy in ICC (e.g. UNESCO, 2013). Other definitions, meanwhile, underscore the centrality of ICC to broader competences in cultural citizenship in contexts of superdiversity (Barrett et al., 2018). Complicating this further, interculturality has also been described as a contested, polysemous, and ideologically ambivalent concept that cannot be treated as universal or even coherent across contexts (Dervin & R'boul, 2024).

These contrasting perspectives present challenges for INTRACOMP. Indeed, the complexity of ICC as a phenomenon has rendered the term—and our assumptions around intercultural competence—"so incoherent and trivialized that scholars now want to coin a new term to refer to research into the basic mechanism of cross-cultural relations" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 51). While the core concept of cultural construction and transformation is articulated within numerous intercultural theories, it has thus been argued that,

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> [The] traditional metaphor of 'inter' for intercultural communication is no longer adequate and such communication is better approached as transcultural communication where borders are transcended, transgressed and in the process transformed. (Baker, 2022, p. 280)

While the terms intercultural and transcultural might be read as discrete concepts, in practice they are enmeshed. However, specific the shift in nomenclature, from *inter*-cultural to *trans*-cultural, "may offer a process perspective on cultures and an invitation to view cultures as relational webs" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 51). As such, the concept of transculturalism presents a distinctive break from a more rigid 'bringing together' of cultures through an "either/or" paradigm; transculturalism instead allowing for a "both/and" approach (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 51).

Abu-Er-Rub et al. (2019) trace the concept of transculturality to the field of anthropology, specifically to the work of Cuban ethnographer Fernando Ortiz in the 1940s. Ortiz introduced the term *trans-* to challenge static representations of culture and nationhood, aiming to emphasise the complex processes of colonisation and immigration that shaped Cuban culture. He proposed that Cuba's history is marked by intertwined processes of 'transculturation.'

Several scholars have since critiqued Ortiz's perspective, arguing that although his concept of transculturation highlighted the positive changes and new cultural formations resulting from immigration, it overlooked the power imbalances and inequalities inherent in these interactions (Baker, 2015). For example, postcolonial scholar Mary Louise Pratt (2008, p. 7) links transculturation to the idea of "contact zones", which she defines as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination."

In other words, transculturalism is concerned not only with the stabilising effects of social conjunction, communalism, and organisation, but also with "dissonance, tension, and instability" (Lewis, 2002, pp. 24-25). As Jeff Lewis further explains, transculturalism "is interested in the disintegration of groups, cultures, and power" (2002, p. 25). Monceri (2019) expands on this view, arguing that transculturalism should not only describe new cultural configurations but also serve to *transgress and rethink* the very notion of culture itself (see also Baker, 2015).

A process-oriented ontology of culture, grounded in relationality, may help us with this rethinking. Within this, the 'cultural' is not assumed as a pre-given object, but is constituted and continuously reconstituted through transculturation (Juneja, 2023). Acknowledging the processes of transgressing and transcending borders that transculturalism enables, we might name and rename the boundaries as they are transformed—potentially giving rise to new social spaces and identities. It is also important to note that pre-existing structures, limitations, and asymmetries may continue to exert influence on this naming and renaming, and that new forms of inequality may emerge in the process (Baker, 2015; see also Alexander, 2003).

In this view, a place, region, or nation would no longer be conceived of as a closed, discrete, or self-contained entity. Instead, these contexts would emerge as processual and relational, shaped through transcultural interactions that span spaces, individuals, knowledges, and artistic practices. This

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perspective invites us to attend to scale—the local, regional, national, and global—not as rigid hierarchies but as fluid and interrelated dimensions. In this light, binary oppositions—West/non-West, centre/periphery, dominant/dominated—are also no longer treated as stable or fixed categories, but as mutable and generative, formed and transformed through transcultural processes.

6.3 Moving Towards 'Moving Across'

Looking to the forthcoming mass mobilisations and cultural configurations wrought by the climate crisis (see Chapter 3), transcultural competence emerges as a critical concept for encouraging social cohesion and democratic attitudes. Alongside a renewed focus on cultural democracy, transculturalism has been hailed as a promising framework for responding to the theoretical and political impasses of interculturalism and multiculturalism (Fischer, 2017; Welsch, 1999).

How might we conceive of such a framework without falling into essentialist tropes of cultural identity, though? How might we challenge binary perspectives of culture in both the theorisation and design of this framework, such that transculturalism is embedded throughout?

First, while essentialist and nationalist cultural frameworks have been criticised for reinforcing the idea that cultures are distinct, self-contained entities (Fischer, 2017), we reiterate that a transcultural perspective is premised on an understanding of culture as that which is "[conditioned on] being made and remade" (Juneja & Kravagna, 2013, p. 28). However, even if cultures are not really discrete, the idea of distinct nations and ethnic groups has still produced real social effects—such as community structures and political formations—that cannot simply be ignored (Abu-Er-Rub et al., 2019). This point is significant to a nascent transcultural framework, as it invites considerations of how imagination shapes our approach to reality. That is, despite the aims of transculturalism, imagined boundaries remain powerful in shaping social realities, and this demands a space to manoeuvre from—one where we can try to destabilise rigid notions of cultural identity while acknowledging their ongoing salience (Petersen, 2023).

To this end, it is worth noting that several 'loose' usages of transculturalism remain in circulation. Amongst these usages, a somewhat romanticised belief persists: that we live in a world where difference is, or at least may be, harmoniously 'dissolved'; where connectivity and mobility exclusively imply a cosmopolitanism and emancipatory society (Juneja & Kravagna, 2013).

Among the critics of both the notions of hybridity and homogenisation, Arjun Appadurai advocates instead for the concept of the "circulation of forms and the forms of circulation" (Appadurai, 2010, p. 9; see also Appadurai, 1996). This conceptual shift, he argues, allows for a more nuanced understanding of emerging cultural practices and contexts as they arise, calling for negotiation rather than hybridisation at the local level (cf. Baker, 2015). Emphasising the complexity of social networks and the movement of cultural practices and ideologies—which, in turn, lead to greater diversity rather than a homogenisation of cultural forms and identities—Appadurai asserts that "it is this negotiation which creates the complex containers which further shape the actual contents of local practice" (2010, p. 11). The strength of a transcultural perspective, therefore, should lie in its capacity "to grasp the intellectual gains that are secreted from the connectedness of cultures" (Juneja, 2018, p. 480); in

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avoiding simplistic binaries and engaging across multiple scales. Ultimately, a transcultural perspective should address “the dialectic between the dissolution of certain boundaries and the reaffirmation of other kinds of difference” (Juneja & Kravagna, 2013, p. 26).

Reflecting on the embedded theory/design issue noted at the outset of this section, this level of complexity presents us with further challenges. For instance, how might we develop the language necessary to capture the morphology of transcultural relationships and dialectical processes? Moreover, should we embrace the idea that transcultural competence involves more than just communicating, and instead reflects a dynamic and transformative orientation towards culture, how will me cooperate and connect in practice? Noting that this view of transcultural competence urges scholars and practitioners to rethink their foundational assumptions and shift toward an interactive, co-creative model of engagement (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022), we are called to ask how we might achieve this.

Both the transcultural approach and the concept of cultural democracy, as articulated in the *Porto Santo Charter*, have been widely commended for challenging Eurocentric and hegemonic perspectives on culture, cultural participation, and democracy, while advocating for a community-driven and deliberative ethos. However, and as evident from the questions above, current debates may benefit from a critical reappraisal of both transculturalism and cultural democracy—one that better accounts for power structures and the political dimensions of cultural relations.

6.4 Transcultural Trajectories

Challenges like these require imaginative solutions. One key trajectory for designing a transcultural framework may therefore lie in conceptually reconnecting transculturalism’s emphasis on a *third* (or in-between) *space* for cultural negotiation and the construction of *shared meanings* (Steenkamp & Fourie, 2023).

This process demands a “willingness and capability to interactively and intentionally construct new shared meanings and actions through shared experience in specific temporary constellations of cultural complexity” (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 51). With a mandate of cultural democracy, INTRACOMP therein argues that these shared constructions may take place at the *intersectionality* of cultural exchanges (hooks, 1989): a zone that draws attention to the structural inequalities—and deeper histories of oppression—that shape cultural interactions. These include, for example, the historical weight of colonialism, postcolonialism and the ongoing imposition of Western norms on non-Western cultures, economic dominance and global capitalism, social hierarchies, and real-world struggles of marginalised communities that affect their ability to thrive, let alone influence global cultural flow, and the mix of social, political, and economic forces that shape access to resources, institutions, and cultural capital (Fraser, 1997).

Drawing on the extensive work on identity and culture undertaken in poststructuralism, postcolonialism, feminism, and cultural studies (Saidero, 2013) the notion of intersectionality is worth expanding upon here. An analytical term that resonates is *transculturation*, which enables an interrogation of the complex discursive and material re-significations that emerge in contexts of cultural

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contact (Spitta, 1995), emphasising "people's tactics of transformation, transgression, and transcendence of modern/colonial borders" (Singh, 2023, p. 154). Hence, several scholars have argued for a *relational* approach to transculturality as both a necessary and complex undertaking (Gruber et al., 2023). A relational perspective foregrounds the dynamic, dialogical, and situated nature of cultural identities and narratives, especially in contexts marked by colonial histories, marginalisation, and resistance. Rather than framing transculturality as a seamless fusion of cultures, this approach recognises it as a (third) space of negotiation, contestation, and critical self-articulation—particularly for communities historically excluded from dominant cultural imaginaries (Gruber et al., 2023; Juneja, 2018).

This perspective prompts several questions. For example, what does the blurring of cultural differences, driven by globalised processes such as migration, travel, and media connectivity, mean in terms of interactions with cultural difference, and what new hierarchical structures emerge as a result? Where can we observe continuities in the disciplinary and institutional hierarchies of the past century, and what new boundaries are being established following the erosion of older ones? After framing transcultural interactions as conflicted spaces where power imbalances and struggles for recognition persist—rather than as a necessarily harmonious zone of cultural fusion—the next theoretical step may be to reconsider the potential of transcultural interactions for cultural resistance and subversion considering the previously mentioned points. In a more radical approach, transculturalism's focus on recognition and representation could be expanded to include redistribution (Fraser, 1997), with this acknowledging the economic implications of cultural hybridity.

Critical theorising within the domain of intercultural studies aligns with such an approach, particularly those that reframe interculturality not as a fixed set of competences or a finalised goal, but as an ongoing political and epistemological project attuned to questions of power asymmetries and essentialist conceptions of culture (Dervin, 2016; see 6.2).

Rather than presuming that intercultural dialogue is inherently constructive, we might interrogate its terms, functions, and embedded power dynamics. By rejecting essentialist understandings of culture, we can challenge mainstream intercultural communication frameworks for perpetuating reductive binaries and Eurocentric epistemologies.

Such ICC frameworks can obscure how cultural identities, meanings, and interactions are mutable—masking how cultures are continuously formed, negotiated, and reshaped through relational processes (Dervin & R'boul, 2024). Instead, by foregrounding reflexivity and positionality as foundational to 'interculturality-as-critique', we can examine how cultural differences are constructed, normalised, and operationalised, particularly within contexts marked by structural inequalities (Dervin & R'boul, 2023). Moreover, by interrogating the theoretical and political dimensions of 'criticality' itself, we can challenge pseudo-critical or tokenistic uses of the term, scrutinising not only dominant narratives but the limitations and blind spots within critical frameworks—remaining particularly alert to the risks of rigid dogmatism (Dervin, 2016, 2024).

This has implications for how we learn to navigate cultural differences. Of particular interest to INTRACOMP, we seek to appreciate the particular ways that intercultural encounters are meaningful for

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children and what interculturality means for them in their worlds: "[W]orking *on*, and maybe *with*, children and interculturality, requires us to step down from our pedestal as adults and to observe carefully what is happening in children's worlds [note the plural]." (Dervin & R'boul, 2023 , p. 11). Ergo, intercultural education can require an open-minded and dynamic responsiveness to pluralistic and contradictory manifestations of interculturality that emerge in everyday cultural encounters. We argue that a coherent framing of *transculturalism,* as an ethical and critical paradigm, more readily enables us to carry such a mandate into cultural education.

This emphasis on criticality and ethics leads us to question the extent to which a focus on transcultural *competence* prioritises Western frameworks of communication and behaviour, thereby sidelining non-Western epistemologies and practices that do not conform to these norms. A related question concerns whether defining competence as a set of neutral skills could reduce complex cultural and social issues to something that can be learned and managed on an individual level, fostering an individualised approach to cultural interaction. The latter risks overlooking the collective and political dimensions of cultural relations and shifting the burden of success or failure onto individuals, rather than acknowledging systemic inequalities or external factors. A critical effort in this regard would involve reconceptualising the notion of competence beyond its neoliberal, market-driven framework, which defines competence in terms of measurable outcomes and performance, emphasising the individual's capacity to meet market demands and produce economic value, while rewarding those deemed 'competent' and marginalising those who fail to meet these standards (see also section 8.2).

Valuable perspectives again emerge from the study of interculturalism, particularly at the methodological level. For instance, Broome et al. (2019) extends the conversation on intercultural competence by challenging conventional models that prioritise individual traits—such as knowledge, skills, or attitudes—as prerequisites for successful intercultural interaction. Instead, they advocate for a more dynamic, process-oriented approach, aligning with Dervin's call for a nuanced, relational, and context-sensitive understanding of interculturality—one that recognises the importance of power dynamics, reflexivity, and the complexity of intercultural engagement (Broome et al., 2019; Dervin, 2024).

A similarly critical orientation is found in the work of Portera (2014) and Milani (2018), who have foregrounded the fluidity of identities and competences, as well as the relational processes that shape intercultural dialogues. Taking this trajectory even further, Borghetti (2017) interrogates the conceptual and ethical implications of assessing intercultural competence—explicitly questioning the prevailing societal tendency to 'prove' or certify competences, even when they concern deeply personal dimensions such as empathy or cultural curiosity. Defining intercultural competence as a holistic combination of cognitive, affective, and behavioural elements that shape an individual's capacity to engage with diversity, Borghetti instead draws on postmodern understandings of fluid and hybrid identities. She warns that the push for assessment risks reducing complex, subjective dispositions into quantifiable outputs, and, ultimately, calls for an ethical rethinking of ICC assessment. We argue that more clearly identifying these concerns within a transcultural competence framework will allow for

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more nuanced understandings of this ethical mandate (closely associated with cultural democracy) to be shared and advanced.

6.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter we have considered the current state of knowledge in transcultural studies, and in doing so outlined some trajectories to carry our enquiry forward. Reflecting on intersectionality, competence, and the complexity of transculturalism within a world governed by imagined boundaries and supposedly 'discrete' cultures, we have illustrated both the potentials of and challenges inherent to transcultural research and interventions like those argued for in INTRACOMP.

Thinking within this relational frame enables us to reconceptualise such polarities as dynamic and historically contingent; as embedded in world-making practices and imagined geographies that unfold across national, regional, and international contexts (Juneja, 2023). Crucially, this view of transculturality does not simply refer to spatial mobility, circulation, or flow (though these are important). Rather, it focuses on the ways in which cultural forms emerge in specific local contexts through *circuits of exchange*, where contact, entanglement, and asymmetry constitute the relational field of the transcultural. Difference, non-equivalence, dissonance, and unevenness are not incidental but essential components of this field. This approach insists on interrogating how difference is negotiated through selective appropriation, mediation, translation, re-historicisation, and re-reading of signs—as well as through non-communication, refusal, resistance, or the coexistence of these processes (Juneja & Kravagna, 2013). Such a naming and re-naming framework guards against reductive binaries that often characterise postcolonial discourse. Ultimately, transculturality encourages us to view cultural difference as a structural and even normative feature of social life across time, foregrounding the complex negotiations through which meanings, affiliations, and subjectivities are continually produced and contested.

In seeking to address some of the critical trajectories outlined above, the chapters that follow tread paths traced by scholars who frame transculturalism as a relational logic; one that allows us to "rethink the world" (Juneja, 2018, p. 477). Centring this exploration on the potentialities of transcultural participatory arts in Chapter 7, the remainder of this review seeks to explore and combine perspectives and insights that may help address the following set of questions:

- How can transcultural, participatory arts critically expand deliberative democracy, advancing cultural democracy beyond normative Eurocentric rationalities and hegemonic tendencies? How might transcultural participatory arts create spaces for alternative and more inclusive forms of political engagement?
- How can artistic participation create opportunities for transensual moments that challenge the utilitarian focus on decision-making inherent in concepts like deliberative democracy? Which diverse paradigms and frameworks of social and cultural interaction can support this exploration?

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- How might artificial intelligence and digital technologies provide opportunities for making such participatory, creative, transcultural and transensual experiences more widely accessible and distributed in their design?

These questions reorient our review towards the practical applications of transcultural theory. Furthermore, these enquiries invite opportunities for reflection on how transcultural, participatory performing arts education (which represents a radical trajectory compared to traditional arts education didactics) might support the establishment of an intercultural and transcultural (or ITC) framework: a device that may, despite the challenges highlighted in this chapter, serve to evidence, promote, and assess the kinds of transcultural collaborations necessary to navigating mass climate mobility and social upheaval.

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7

Participatory Embodied Performing Arts: Pathways to Transensus and Transcultural Competence

"I do know that for the sympathy of one living being, I would make **peace with all**."

—Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

7. Participatory Embodied Performing Arts: Pathways to Transensus and Transcultural Competence

Narrative: Stained Glass

The morning is still; the air ripe with haze. In a quiet corner of a local childcare centre, the hum of conversation fades as a group of children gather in a circle. The teacher looks around her classroom as the chatter and drawn-out goodbyes give way to whispers, then silence. Cuffed in a crisp white shirt, she raises her hand. With a flourish of her wrist, the children begin to sing:

Giro giro tondo, gira il mondo, gira la terra, tutti giù per terra!

Each child has come from a different home. Many speak different languages with their family. Some communicate in hesitant half-sentences with each other, others through gestures or simple glances. However, all of them know the words to this song and sing with full voices. One by one, the children greet the song with movement and laughter as the chorus swells.

Giro giro tondo, il mare è fondo, tonda è la terra, tutti giù per terra!

Above the main windows in the centre is a thin strip of stained glass. Striped vertically like a snake—amber, pink, green, blue—the light filters down into the room below. With every turn of their heads and clap of their tiny hands, the light catches the children in a kaleidoscope; shards of colour dancing across their faces. The teacher looks up at the stained glass and back to the children, wondering: *What other songs do these children carry*?

7.1 Introduction

What is the future of democracy, and what role might the participatory arts play in this?

Against the fractured backdrop of the 21st century's political upheavals, a growing body of thought on depoliticisation has proffered possible scenarios, including 'post-democracy' (Crouch, 2004) and the 'economisation of politics' (Morgan, 2003). Increasingly, scholars from various disciplines have noted the overall decline of traditional forms of political participation (Staeheli & Mitchell, 2008; Swyngedouw, 2011). As discussed in Chapter 4, the future of democracy appears bleak: politics having been reduced to institutional management enabled by civic passivity; otherwise, disengaged citizens only periodically stirred by the spectacle of electoral debate and populism.

With this sobering image in mind, questions emerge as to where and how democracy might thrive in future beyond the electoral process itself. In response, a burgeoning discourse on alternative forms of political participation has emerged (Moralli et al., 2021). While addressing areas like consumption, culture, and creativity, these political forms advocate for what W. L. Bennet (2003) calls self-determined citizenship: fostering community action through relational capital and network structures. More than spectators, these self-determined modes of politics position the citizen as a participant—as someone who crafts their own future.

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In this light, art as a mode of cultural participation has emerged as a transformative force in this ongoing reconfiguration of our political sphere. Through both literal and symbolic crafting, art as cultural participation enables citizens to interface with politics. Amid the evolving dynamics of cultural diversification within communities, transcultural participatory arts in particular offer a vital public space for generating new imaginaries, fomenting forms of decoloniality, and opening possibilities for collective resistance (Moralli et al., 2021; see also Duncombe, 2003).

While it is important to recognise that art is deeply embedded in the political and cultural fabric of society—operating both within and against established power structures—transcultural participatory arts have, nonetheless, the potential to serve as a catalyst for a *subversive aesthetics* (Mazzara, 2019) capable of transforming how we engage with culture, identity, and politics. Indeed, while this vision of socially engaged arts remains tentative and is accompanied by its own contradictions and dilemmas, within INTRACOMP we explore pathways for the potential of the arts for transcendence, transgression, and transformation—particularly in relation to subalternity and coloniality (Singh, 2023)—as well as for revitalising public spaces and reclaiming democratic engagement in the face of politics being reduced to a set of technocratic procedures.

As such, there is a need to critically examine how transcultural arts may move beyond momentary disruptions that leave the existing order intact—remaining within the hegemonic field and "ultimately supporting what they intend to subvert, since the very field of such 'transgressions' is already taken into account" (Pittas, 2021, p. 55; see also Fisher, 2022)—towards more radical practices that redefine and reconfigure the terrain. This will ultimately require deep societal engagement. So, within the political role of cultural practices, what is "cultural participation" (Paltrinieri, 2019), and how does it span both the production and consumption of culture?

Within INTRACOMP, we argue that cultural participation, as a democratic act, involves the opportunity to collaboratively imagine a different future, with this enabling long-term collective action (Moralli et al., 2021). Echoing Gilles Deleuze's (2012) concept of participatory aesthetics, this position calls for decentralised, multidirectional decision-making (Carpentier, 2017). By linking the political, civic, and artistic spheres, art can be conceptualised as a participatory practice that fosters change and raises awareness about social issues (Moralli et al., 2021). While there is much academic literature documenting, valorising, and critiquing various participatory arts practices (see for example S. Bernardi, 2021; Bishop, 2011; Kester, 2011; Matarasso, 2019; Thompson, 2009), in this chapter we examine the particular connections between participatory arts, transensus, transculturalism and cultural democracy. This critical examination leads to our theoretical conceptualisation of Participatory Embodied Performing Arts (PEPA). We argue that this conceptualisation of participatory arts presents significant and distinct opportunity to grow intercultural and transcultural competence, enabling broad social engagement in deliberative transensus, towards the actualisation of cultural democracy.

We start by exploring recent histories of arts and political transformation before considering the significance of engagement with creative and artistic practices. Here we refer to emancipatory educational literature, focused on humanising, wise-humanising, post-humanising, and Indigenous approaches to arts, creativity and education. This then leads into a discussion of participation as a

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complex phenomenon within socially engaged arts. We extend into a rationalisation of PEPA, considering why, what, and how it may be relevant to cultural democracy, and how experiences of embodiment and performance (as distinctive, participatory processes) may allow collaborative transcultural journeys to be encountered, imagined, and shared.

7.2 The Arts and Democratic Expression

The idea of art as a space for social and political transformation is not novel; it has emerged in various forms throughout history. Political art has long been used to challenge power structures, such as in the subversion of colonialism, the critique of authoritarian regimes, and movements advocating for civil rights, labour rights, and environmental justice. Between the early and the mid-20th century, Critical Theory, and the Frankfurt School particularly, contributed significantly to the understanding of art as a means for individuals and communities to critically engage with prevailing social orders. Scholars like Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse regarded art as a tool for raising awareness of social injustices and challenging dominant ideologies. In *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Marcuse (1948) explored how art could critique and transcend social orders, presenting aesthetic experiences as forms of liberation where emotions, imagination, and critical thought unite to offer glimpses of freedom and possibilities. According to Marcuse, art offers an imaginative space in which new social realities and possibilities can be envisioned.

Our review assumes that the evolving dynamics of climate mobility and migration, and requisite increase in social and cultural diversity these will cause, will continue to generate complex and overlapping tensions between fluid, temporary, and dynamic groups (Petersen, 2023). Though cultural democracy supports the exploration of hybridised forms of cultural expression "without necessarily linking them to national origins and frames, yet still allows for the possibility of doing so," (Petersen, 2023, p. 94) questions remain as to how art itself will meet the challenges of the coming decades. If art can act as a form of resistance to the established order, encouraging people to think beyond the constraints of the present and imagine a liberated future, then how does (or will) this manifest in practice?

7.2.1 Art as Discourse

Michel Foucault's (1972) concept of discourse illuminates the ways in which knowledge, truth, and meaning are shaped through language and other forms of representation. Through this lens, art—as a form of discourse—therein contributes to shaping social reality.

Art achieves this not only though the gravity of its narrative dimension, or its ability to create and share symbolic and cognitive stories that elicit meaning, but through its capacity to transform (Castoriadis, 1997; Di Fraia, 2004). In particular, art contributes to the (trans)formation of subjectivity—that is, how individuals and groups come to understand themselves and their place in society—while, at the same time, eschewing universalism through its capacity to present particular, localised experiences or perspectives. In doing so, art can "open up [a] transformative potential of dislocation that decentres the very basis of national identity" (Demos, 2013, p. xix). From this perspective, art is a critical tool for

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subverting power as it designates sites of struggle against pre-existing cultural and institutional narratives—and the structures of meaning and power they convey (Davies, 2012, p. 25)—while also allowing for new possibilities for subjectivities and collective identities to emerge. As Mouffe argues, the cultural and artistic fields play a central role in generating discursive and affective practices that enable new forms of identification. These fields possess unique resources capable of eliciting emotional responses, thereby allowing them to profoundly influence human experience (Petersen, 2023, p. 73). For Mouffe, the agonistic role of art in political and cultural practices is particularly noteworthy, as:

> [Critical] art is art that foments dissensus, that makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate. It is constituted by a manifold of artistic practices aiming at giving a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony. (Mouffe, 2007a, p. 5).

According to Mouffe, public space is not a space of consensus but a field of negotiation where different hegemonic discourses contend with one another, without the possibility of reaching a definitive, rational, or fully inclusive consensus.

In this context, art in public spaces takes on the role of inciting dissent, making visible what dominant discourses tend to obscure or erase, and creating new points of collective identification (Petersen & Nielsen, 2021, p. 2; see also Rose, 1994). Mouffe's perspective thus assumes the inherent politicality of art: artistic and other aesthetic practices are inseparable from the political, as they play a role in shaping the symbolic structures of society (Petersen & Nielsen, 2021, p. 6). The theory of hegemony and radical democracy that Mouffe developed with Ernesto Laclau (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001), along with her own writings on art in public spaces (Mouffe, 2005, 2007a, 2007b), provide a useful theoretical framework for understanding art's methods of discursion and the generation of dissension (Petersen & Nielsen, 2021). Specifically, Mouffe has examined the phenomenon of art activism, or "artivism", where the intersection of art and politics—art practices and political engagement—is most clearly evident (Petersen & Nielsen, 2021, p. 5), as also noted by cultural studies scholars (Reestorff, 2017). Similar findings have been made in social movement theory—Goodwin and Jasper (2004) foregrounding culture as a central resource in social movements, where activists use symbolic frames, emotions, and narratives strategically to construct meaning, mobilise supporters, and sustain collective action.

These suggest that artistic practices are not a uniform system, but a dialectical and often conflicting process of cultural creation that challenge hegemonic discourses (Petersen, 2023). Art in public spaces offer the potential to bring underlying dissensus to the forefront, generating counter-discourses that highlight what dominant narratives tend to obscure (Petersen, 2023). This potential is especially critical in the context of cultural pluralism, for art can serve as a public site for negotiating complex identities, where dissent and differences can be addressed within a critically reflective sphere (Moralli et al., 2021; Petersen, 2023).

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Through the arts we can learn to notice and perceive in deeper and different ways, so the arts can create experiences within which moral perception are explored (Nussbaum, 1997). Imaginative experiences in the arts can help us to develop an empathetic imagination, to attempt to understand the perspectives of people who are different to us and see the world in different ways (Nussbaum, 2008). This process of shared perception emphasises the important discursive role of the arts in developing our 'social imagination' (Greene, 1995); we can become conscious of features of the world that we were previously blind to, potentially leading us to recognise injustice (Greene, 2011).

7.2.2 Art as Defiance

Anarchist thinkers like David Graeber (2013) offer valuable insights into the role of art as a tool for participation and resistance. Graeber's analysis of protest movements, particularly in relation to the Occupy Wall Street movement, demonstrates how art in these movements became a means of articulating resistance and offering an alternative vision of society. This need for *emancipation through imagination* was expressed on the ground during the Occupy Wall Street movement by Slavoj Žižek, claiming "It is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism," (Fisher, 2022, p. 2). Emphasising this constraint—our inability to untangle the future from dominant systems of power—bell hooks argues that "What we cannot imagine cannot come into being" (2010, p. 59).

Indeed, the constraints that current political realities place upon our imaginations are constructed by dominant discourses. As noted, art can and will likely continue to be used within these discourses to reinforce hegemonic politics; to promote docility. However, just as art can reinforce it can dismantle: constraints on the imagination can also be deconstructed through the expression of alternative fictions that challenge, undermine, and disrupt the 'big story.' In this way,

> [What] art *can* do is to create channels for subjectification that disrupt and reconfigure the distribution of roles, places and occupations within a community. When they do this in a way that disrupts and displaces a distribution based on a 'natural' logic of inequality, they share a common logic and purpose with democracy, and when taken up by politics, can contribute to democracy being enacted. (McDonnell, 2014, p. 51)

This demonstrates how imagination can be developed in ways that are democratically purposeful. We can imagine the world in different ways and ask ourselves "What could be?"

Within INTRACOMP, we further suggest that there is value in imaginative acts that do not result in any final determination, as an experience of transensus. As discussed in Chapter 5, such imaginative deliberation is enabled through possibility thinking, or worldbuilding. By supporting individuals to think beyond the limitations of the present, art can foster the radical imagination necessary to envision new forms of social organisation that challenge the dominant capitalist, bureaucratic, and technocratic systems, while simultaneously creating spaces for collective solidarity and action. Through engagement with art, individuals can tap into the creative potential required to advocate for societal changes that may otherwise seem unimaginable or impossible. This enables a democracy of

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imagination and creativity, where new possibilities for living together are continually explored and enacted (Graeber, 2013). This resonates with the aspiration of cultural democracy.

In these ways, art has been valued for its democratic power to foster collective action, defy dominant ideologies, and re-design societal structures. While this emphasises the ways in which art can enable social transformation, it is also important to note that sociocultural transformation is happening, whether we are ready for it or not.

As described previously, the ways in which the world is organised is rapidly transforming, and this new age is characterised by uncertainty, change and chaos (see Chapter 3). We will increasingly encounter people with different self-interpretations, who see different meanings in the world. We therefore cannot make sense of these changes by continuing to rely on old ways of thinking; our taken-for-granted understandings are unable to make sense of the world as we stare into a future that we can neither predict nor understand. Constructively engaging with such postnormal times therefore requires creativity and imagination (Sardar, 2010).

To effectively navigate a postnormal world, regardless of our diverse political ideologies, there is a need for everyone to develop an imagination that transcends existing assumptions and beliefs, and creates new understandings and possibilities. Without such processes of imagination, the world will simply appear to each of us as more and more incongruent with our expectations.

That the world is changing regardless emphasises that the need for imaginative thinking is apolitical: creativity is simply a necessary competence for navigating ambiguity and uncertainty. We can therefore anticipate that, regardless of our political ideologies, processes of imagining will become increasingly important aspects of our day-to-day thought processes. As with all cognitive processes, imagination can take us in many moral directions, so there is an ethical significance to the ways in which imagination is activated (Abowitz, 2007).

This emphasises the urgent political significance of democratic participation within arts and cultural imagining, and (of particular importance to INTRACOMP and cultural democracy) the significance of transcultural competence within such democratic participation. It is therefore important to look beyond the transformative power of artistic *products*, and consider the significance of artistic *processes*.

7.3 "Being Imaginative": The Ethics of Arts and Creativity in Education

As argued, the process of engaging in imaginative practices can be central to the maintenance of democracy and the navigation of social transformation. Artistic practices can enable each of us to construct our own imaginative possibilities, in anticipation of future realisations, and to envisage a political horizon for ourselves and our communities.

As such, the involvement of all people in artistic activities challenges the historic assumptions that only a select few are capable of such, and emphasises the inherent rights of all to engage in imaginative processes and worldbuilding. This extends from arguments that creativity is something that can be experienced and engaged in by anyone, and that there is no pre-requisite for creative activity (Craft, 2003), which challenges historic assumptions that creative processes can only be undertaken by

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a few 'gifted' people (Amabile, 2017; de Bono, 1994). While not specifying the concept of creativity, American philosopher John Dewey theorised that experiences in artistic processes were central to democratic education. Dewey envisioned art as an imaginative practice that enhanced communication between individuals, encouraged reflective thinking, cultivated a sense of shared experience and empathy, and built more harmonious communities (Dewey, 1916). This view of art involves considering creativity not as a "narrowly defined [...] artistic ability", but as "the underlying ability to re-envision and recreate the world in which we live" to form "expressions of who we are and who we want to become" (Shapiro, 1998, p. 11).

Through experiences of such creativity, we are transformed—the creative process enables us to see the world and ourselves in a different way (Chappell & Craft, 2011). The experience of creativity is thus not only *accessible*, but also very *meaningful* for all learners (Robinson, 2001). This presents a humanist mandate for creativity in education (Chappell, 2008; Chappel et al., 2012); extending from a fundamental human need to experience self-actualisation (Maslow, 1970). Such a mandate argues that,

> We need to continue dispelling the myth that creativity is some individual, divinely inspired and mediated gift. It is the right of our children, our adults, our elders and our communities in the same way that language and communication are rights. (Anderson, 2014, p. 116)

By augmenting the idea that everyone *can* experience artistic processes to the mandate that everyone *should*, democratic education systems are presented with an ethical responsibility to implement education in ways that enable creativity. It is important to note, however, that creativity does not simply happen as an inevitable result of learning in the arts. It is possible to spend years studiously engaged with an artistic form without ever experiencing creativity (Chappell 2007; Zimmerman, 2010). So what is creativity, how can arts enable us to experience it, and how does it intersect with ethics?

Experiencing creativity is a complex process, and distinctive approaches to experiencing creativity within arts education are continually evolving and emerging. As a mental and sensual experience (Finke et al., 1995) creativity involves the generation of novel and valued phenomena, which can potentially be captured, conceptualised and transferred to other domains of knowledge (Robinson, 2001). To achieve this, creativity requires people to go beyond *imaging* (recollecting/re-envisaging a known idea in the mind, e.g. summoning a memory of a former pet) and *imagining* (following external aesthetic prompts so as to enter into a state of fantasy, e.g. developing images in the mind while reading fiction). Instead, creativity involves reaching a heightened state of *being imaginative*, in which wholly new ideas emerge from the person engaged in the creative practice (Craft, 2002).

This creative generation process might result in original concepts for the world, as Big C Creativity, or more simply as new, self-generated epiphanies within an individual, as little c creativity (Craft, 2001). While these smaller, personal creative experiences may not have historical significance, they play a crucial role in personal growth and social development (Lasky, 2012).

By differentiating between *original-for-the-world* and *original-for-the-self*, we can move the valorisation of creativity beyond artistic *products,* and into artistic *processes*. Distinguishing the value of

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creativity as a cognitive and social process thus helps to rationalise the ethical significance of creativity in education. This places a critical responsibility for educationalists addressing the right to creativity, and prompts further questions to society, societal ideals, parents and teachers, whose support is critical for the growth of creative dispositions within childhood (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). Central to such ethics is an acknowledgment of the psychological safety provided by a supporting and motivating environment to enable such creative activity, by removing a fear of judgment, humiliation and even rewards (Amabile, 2014). This ethical rationalisation for creativity has thus underpinned a humanist approach to the inclusion of arts education within formal systems of education (Eisner, 2003).

The humanist mandate for creativity learning has prompted further questions and challenges for the inclusion of creativity in education. A notable extension of this ethical ideal includes the theorisation of 'wise humanising creativity' (WHC), which offers a relational ethics to the practice of creativity (Chappell et al., 2017). WHC considers the connections between the inside and outside worlds as significant for the generation of novel, creative ideas. This promotes dialogue and sharing thoughts and ideas with others, to enable individuals and communities to engage in collaborative thinking and joint action, so as to develop new ideas that hold value for themselves and their community (Walsh et al., 2017). Through this emphasis on dialogic and shared imaginative activity, WHC contrasts with arts education approaches that remain narrowly focused on expression of the self (Chappell et al., 2012). The ethical direction of WHC thus aligns with Biesta's (2019a, 2019b) concerns over how arts education can support a neoliberal agenda, through the valuing of individualised expression, and the privatisation of creativity as a personal competence.

How might arts learners value their interactions with others and the world, as a dimension of creativity? Such an emphasis on the impact of the world on our creativity harkens back to earlier theories of creativity, which emphasise the significance of the *creative climate*s that we inhabit (Taylor, 1972).

While creativity can feel like it simply takes place inside our head, the process of being imaginative cannot be separated from our encounters with the world. Our peak experiences of creativity (Privette, 2011) are more readily activated when we are in an optimal state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). As our physical, social and cultural environment can stimulate, but also suppress, this state of flow (Amabile, 2014), our ability to achieve these peak experiences of creativity can be seen as dependent on the environment (Ilha Villanova & Cunha, 2021).

This environmental factor underlines the significance of post-human approaches to understanding creativity. A post-human understanding of creativity and the imagination further de-centres the independent human as the loci for creative generation (Chappell, 2018). From a post-human perspective, diverse non-human aspects of an environment contribute to the experience of creativity, offering "affordances" for creativity (Glăveanu, 2013, p. 71). In doing so "This shifts attention from questions about "who" creates to "how" all actants create and generate new ideas, actions, and phenomena" (Chappell, 2022, p. 496). Post-humanism extends the relational ethic of creativity even further, by considering how environments, and particularly non-human life, should be provided opportunities to regenerate through the creative process. This responds to a need to situate education

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"in the ecological and democratic crisis in which we find ourselves" (Biesta et al., 2025, p. 4), moving us from a student-centred to a *world-centred* approach to arts education, in which we do not just think what we can get from the world, but also consider what the world may be asking of us (Biesta, 2022). While not explicitly identified within New European Bauhaus policies, WHC and a post-human ethics of creativity can be seen within the threading of *Beautiful*, *Together* and *Sustainable* as interconnected ambitions (European Commission, 2021).

WHC and post-human ethics of creativity find further resonance within research into Indigenous approaches to creativity in education. The African philosophy of *ubuntu* values collectivisation and acknowledgment of the world within processes of creative generation (Mabingo, 2020). The emphasis on *tatalou* (a sense of us, including present, non-present and ancestral relationships) can be central to Polynesian experiences of creative activity and revelation ('Ofamo'oni & Rowe, 2022). The significance of an interaction with metaphysical realms within peak experiences of creativity are further emphasised within traditional Melanesian approaches to education for creativity (Faik-Simet, 2021). Comparatively, within Māori educational philosophy, the natural environment presents an authorial role within experiences of learning creativity (Reihana, 2018).

While this by no means presents an exhaustive review of how creativity has been valued within traditional Indigenous education systems across the globe, these scholars evidence that approaches to creativity through education are not exclusive to contemporary Western or libertarian domains. They further evidence that creativity is so central to very diverse cultural groups that it is a component of traditional educational systems: refuting the colonial assumption that innovation is a phenomenon that indigenous populations can either resist or yield to, but not produce (Clifford, 1987).

Ultimately, the diversity and increasing complexity of the ethics for creative education around the world emphasise the importance of ongoing, inclusive, and critical investigations. Ergo, how might the mandate of cultural democracy intersect with the ethics of creativity? Within INTRACOMP, we are particularly focused on how deliberative, democratic experiences of transensus can be enabled through transcultural competence and creative encounters in the arts. This presents us with a particularly nuanced consideration of the ethics of creativity in arts education, and raises significant questions as to the meaning of participation within creative arts activities.

7.4 The Promises and Problems of Participation

Participation is a complex phenomenon and its understandings and applications within culture, and arts education, vary widely. From the Latin *participare*, the term participation brings together *pars* (part) and *capere* (to take): literally meaning *to take a par*t. Participation may therefore be understood as an active choice to undertake and maintain a role within a larger endeavour. Extending from Rancière's concerns over 'the part of those that have no part' (see Chapter 4), the very concept of participation already appears antithetical to the valuing of dissensus within deliberative democracy.

What does it mean for those that have no part to take part? How can arts practices value those that do not seek to participate? How can arts value their rationalisations for not participating? And how

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might these rationalisations prompt critical reflections that ultimately expand opportunities to participate?

These queries present a critical issue for those promoting inclusive participation within arts education, not least of all within PEPA. The very concept of participation can easily be romanticised, appearing to model inclusion while at the same time being instrumentalised within neoliberal social inclusion policies (Petersen, 2023). In such contexts, participation becomes a tool to foster,

> [Submissive] citizens who respect authority and accept the "risk" and responsibility of looking after themselves in the face of diminished public services [...] less about repairing the social bond than about enabling all members of society to become self-administering, fully functioning consumers. (Bishop, 2012, p. 14).

In other words, participatory art risks being absorbed into the commodification processes inherent to capitalist societies, transforming art forms that might otherwise serve as sites of subversion into instruments co-opted by dominant global markets or institutional structures.

Rejecting the notion that participation is inherently inclusive and the idea that everyone is equal in the process, architect and design theorist Marcus Miessen argues that participatory processes often serve to reinforce the asymmetrical power relations characteristic of contemporary capitalist societies (Petersen & Nielsen, 2021). What Miessen polemically terms "pseudo-participation" (2010, p. 120) should, he contends, be replaced by a conflict-oriented paradigm of participation—one that foregrounds the role of conflict in provoking political confrontation and driving meaningful societal change. Along similar lines, Nicolas Sternfeld advocates for an approach grounded in the concept of "post-identitary solidarity" (Petersen & Nielsen, 2021, p. 8). This entails engaging in collective practices that 1) challenge existing power relations; 2) resist the rigid ascription of minority identities; and, 3) take a political stance by acting "in solidarity with the disturbance that occurs when what Rancière calls 'the part that has no part' disrupts the police logic" (Sternfeld, 2013, p. 6).

In this vein, Grant Kester (2011) eschews the term 'participatory arts' in socially-engaged arts activities, preferring the term 'collaborative arts' as a way of ceding autonomy to the participants and challenging top-down approaches to social cohesion. For Kester, collaborative arts promote community members to determine the development of the artwork, so as to "transform our perceptions of difference and...open[ing] space for forms of knowledge that challenge cognitive, social, or political conventions." (2011, p. 11). This promotes the idea that participatory art should maintain dissensus as a goal (Charnley, 2011). At the same time, such an expectation implicitly assumes that marginalised community groups are (or should be) homogenous: that consensus will be reached within a group as to what the dissensus should be, and how it should be presented. Expectations of collaboration can inevitably provoke further dissensus, and so withdrawal from participation. So, what can participation offer, beyond collaboration?

We might consider participatory art as an opportunity to partake in "a specific and historically recent practice that connects professional and non-professional artists in an act of co-creation"

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(Matarasso, 2019, p. 19). This co-creation may involve very diverse processes of artistic cooperation, and it would be simplistic to assume all forms of participatory artistic co-creativity do (or should) involve a willingness to collaborate. Within INTRACOMP, we argue that François Matarasso's (2019) valuing of the *right to participate in arts* as a democratic principle contrasts with a *choice to collaborate in arts*. As such, *participation* and being a *participant* remain significant ethical concepts within art that is focused on cultural democracy.

While collaboration may be an aspiration within such participatory practices (an idea expanded within a subsequent section of this chapter), assuming participants will be collaborators *in order to participate* establishes an a priori expectation that participants will agree to agree with each other. This expectation of consensual determination thus diminishes the opportunity for, and value of, transensus as an outcome of artistic deliberation (see Chapter 5). While INTRACOMP therefore values collaboration as a high-level aspiration, we also value ways of creatively fostering a sense of togetherness amongst *participants* that is not wholly reliant on collaborative agreement.

This semantic distinction can be important in differing cultural contexts, particularly those that have experienced political conflict. The term *collaboration* can be a Janus-faced contranym: on one side, the term suggests working together, whereas on the other it implies "traitorous cooperation with an enemy" (Drumbl & Holá, 2022 p. 89). This complexity is made more problematic as ultimately,

> [The] dyad is chimerical because 'collaboration' connotates the same behaviour- going along to get along, to build *something* better for oneself or for the whole- which can be attractive and insidious depending on the 'something' (and the *whole*) in question. (Drumbl & Holá, 2022, p. 89)

An expectation for a community member to be 'a collaborator' in order to participate within an artistic activity does not acknowledge the ambiguities that such a term raises. This issue is particularly important for cultural democracy, as participation takes on further complex dimensions within multi-cultural contexts. When artistic and cultural expressions from marginalised communities engage with global or Western artistic frameworks, they face not only the risk of commodification but also of misinterpretation or appropriation in ways that reinforce existing power structures and dominant ideologies (Said, 1978, 1993). As such, multi-cultural collaborations in community arts has been rationalised as rendering the invisible visible (Marche, 1998).

This prompts us to ask, however: for whom is it invisible? For whom should it be made visible? What is the socio-cultural lens that renders it invisible? 'Collaborating' in such processes can feel like a weakened negotiation with a dominant ideology, and at the same time a betrayal to others from one's marginalised culture.

Such reflections further prompt us to consider how to "establish a dialectical relationship between the moment of disruption and its reconfiguration" (Pittas, 2021, p. 55) within participatory arts, so that the endeavour remains focused on a societal shift towards greater democracy, rather than simply the 'visibilising' of fascinating, innovative and culturally complex artistic products. To move beyond mere representation, the structural injustices embedded within individuals and institutions that

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sustain artistic knowledge and production requires further revelation. So how might we question the role of material inequality, along with the ideologies and discourses that sustain such disparities, within negotiations in the sphere of arts and culture, as well as their potential to challenge and subvert these inequalities (Bhandari, 2022, p. 175)? How are these negotiations influenced by unequal power relations, particularly in the context of globalism, colonialism, and economic and epistemic dominance (Mignolo, 2011)?

These queries highlight the challenges for participation as a democratic method for fostering greater inclusion, equality and diversity. Extending from Paolo Freire (1970), we argue that arts participation, as a democratic phenomenon, requires continual reflexive praxis. Within INTRACOMP, this reflexive praxis has prompted our examination of theory through this literature review, and guides our project's explorations of practice amongst arts educators across Europe and the world.

To clarify our aim within these explorations, in the following sections we rationalise what we are calling Participatory Embodied Performing Arts (PEPA), as a framework for enabling cultural democracy through deliberative transensus and transcultural competence through participatory arts. This includes a critical analysis of three aspects of participation within PEPA: 1) the purposes of participation; 2) the modes of participation; and, 3) the processes and relationships of participation.

By questioning the purpose of participation, we lean into Gert Biesta's (2012) framing of the purpose of education, and identify the significance of subjectification as a 'why?' for participating in the arts. This moves us into a consideration of the 'what?': performative embodiment as a mode of participation that enables a visceral, socialised immersion in transcultural collaboration. From here we consider the 'how?': participation is a relational activity that can involve methods of interaction that have been theorised in processes of co-design, collaboration and participatory action research. The threading of these queries forms a theoretical tapestry that reveals the intentions, and the significance, of PEPA for cultural democracy.

7.4.1 The Purpose of Participating in PEPA

In this section we examine potential rationalisations for participation within a performing arts activity that seeks to contribute to cultural democracy. It should be noted that this is distinct from examining the purpose or value of participatory arts themselves, which has been explored extensively elsewhere (see for example Kester 2011; Matarasso 2019; Thompson 2009). Here instead we focus on the *purpose of participation*, for the participant, acknowledging that participation is an act that requires intention.

Distinct from other forms of collectivisation and engagement that might ensue from enforcement, coercion or conditioning, participation can never be assumed. As participation is a self-determined act, it relies upon an individual's sense of agency, competence and relatedness in the activity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This might position participation as a hypothetical Gift : that is, participation is offered with no expectation of a return (Derrida, 1992). This presents an intriguing ambiguity over the purpose of participating: is it possible that participation is completely non-transactional, and given in a manner that does not expect some sort of equitable exchange? This opens

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considerations of participation as an act that purposefully supports the growth of social capital in a particular community, in contrasts with expectations of private acquisition for energy contributed (Putnam, 1993). This does not necessarily mean that there is no expectation of return, and as the return may not be clearly defined through a contractual arrangement, participation inherently becomes an act that requires vulnerability, risk, and trust (Uslaner, 2008). As an offering by the person participating, participation might inevitably be undertaken partially, as a strategic risk, which may in turn lead to subsequent strategic decisions to trust further and participate further, allowing further vulnerabilities to be revealed, bonds built, and contributions made to cooperative endeavours (Misztal, 2011).

This emphasises the significance of the question: *why* do we participate? And how does our *why* influence the *quality* of the participation? To explore these queries, we consider Biesta's (2012) examination of educational rationality, or *telos*. This involves distinguishing the purpose of education from the actual content taught and learnt, and from the practical teaching and learning strategies and relationships (Coelho et al., 2025). For INTRACOMP, this allows us to consider *why* individuals are *participating*, as a precursor to the more pragmatic queries of *what* they are participating in, *how* they are participating, and with *whom*.

Biesta (2020a) proposes three potential domains of educational purpose: *socialisation* (the cultivation of customs and behaviours amongst a particular practitioner community), *qualification* (the verifying of the transmission of specific knowledge, skills and dispositions), and *subjectification* (the development of choice-making, in response to encounters with the world). Applying Biesta's theory of educational purpose to our new conceptualisation of '*participational* purpose', we explore below what these three deliberations of intention might mean and how they may then shape expectations as to what the participation should achieve.

We propose that a *socialisation* purpose for participation would be driven by the participant's desire to become more acculturated into the distinct philosophical and practical customs of a particular group. Participation thus has an assimilative goal, by which one 'fits in' and feels a greater sense of confidence navigating the norms of the group. This can include gaining requisite skills and attitudes that align to the idealised expectations of a particular socio-cultural context. In a creative arts context, this might involve the use of applied theatre for training social workers through role-play scenarios (Innocenti Malini, 2021). Participating in such ritualised performance activities enables established norms and expectations to become consolidated amongst the professional group.

By contrast, a participatory purpose of *qualification* would prompt an individual to evidence the significance of their cultural capital within a group, thus *qualifying* their membership, and the membership of their cultural ideals. This qualifying purpose steers the goal of the interaction towards enhancing the acceptance and status of the participant (and their broader identity, or who they feel they 'represent') within a particular socio-cultural context. In a creative arts context, this might involve the presentation and sharing of a traditional folk dance at a school cultural day, thus qualifying both the individual and their cultural expression as valid components of a wider socio-cultural structure (e.g. the school and its community).

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While both socialisation and qualification are valid (and common) participatory purposes for individuals within PEPA, we argue that the experiences of transensus and transcultural collaboration require a distinctive intention that is not based on fitting in or qualifying identity. For this, we turn to the purpose of *subjectification*: a participant is intending to participate with the group as a means of prompting further choices (for themselves and others in the group) *regarding participation*. That is, the subjectification purpose of participation is to expand the conceptualisation of both participation and democratic deliberation. Such an intention would guide all participants, in Biesta's words, to come to exist as "subjects of action and responsibility, not objects of intervention and influence" (Biesta, 2012, p. 39). A subjectification purpose for participation could thus help participants consider,

> [How] we are, how we exist, how we try to lead our own life, what we will do with who we have become, with what we have learned, with the skills we have acquired, with the competencies we have developed, but also with our incompetence, our blind spots, the things we are not able to do, and so on. (Biesta, 2020b, pp. 1014-1015)

The purpose of subjectification prompts participants into "dialogue with the world around them", further considering "whether their initiatives are going to help or hinder in living their life 'in' and 'with' the world and in living their life well" (Biesta, 2025, p. 17).

Subjectification thus emphasises transformation (of both the self and others) as central to an intention to participate, and contrasts with participatory intentions more focused on fitting-in or qualifying a fixed identity. This purpose particularly resonates with the ideals of a world-centred education for arts, as emphasised by WHC (Chappell, 2017) and posthuman creativity (Chappell, 2022). Through a desire to encounter both the opportunities and the consequences of individual and shared imaginings, subjectification promotes an ethical *intention-to-participate* in arts activities. By rationalising participation as subjectification, we are inviting individuals to engage in arts practices not only for their own emancipation, but to further understandings of democratic approaches to cultural inclusion, equality and diversity: for the group and for the world.

7.4.2 The Participatory Modes of PEPA

Following an understanding of why we participate, we now consider *what* we might participate in, and the particular modes of Participatory Embodied Performing Arts.

Within INTRACOMP, we acknowledge that participation can involve diverse cultural practices, including visual arts, design and literary arts (for example, Holt, 2015; Kuusela, 2018; Mitchell et al., 2017). Such disciplinary boundaries separating performing arts from other forms of cultural expression can quickly become irrelevant within participatory arts contexts, as such practices of expression may overlap or intertwine. Similarly, maintaining discrete terms such as dance, music, or drama can present problematic assumptions, hierarchies, and exclusions for individuals from diverse cultural contexts. We nevertheless consider processes of performance and embodiment as particularly valuable and significant for experiences of transensus and the development of cultural democracy.

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What, then, do we mean by Participatory Embodied Performing Arts; by PEPA? A subjectification rationale for participation in performing arts can require a distinctive conceptualisation of performance itself. For this, we extend on Turner's (1995) anthropological consideration of Social Drama. This recognises the layered meanings of performance:

> In the most neutral sense it simply refers to carrying out an action, as in performing a medical procedure or the performance of roles in society [… yet] it has come to have a set of meanings associated with expressive modalities of action. (Strathern & Stewart, 2008 p. 68)

Along with actions purposefully framed as performing arts (e.g. as drama, dance, or music), such 'expressive modalities of action' can reveal performance in all manner of rituals, games, sports, daily actions, religion, politics. This provides an opportunity to consider performance not so much as a specific disciplinary domain, but as a way of affording heightened significance to practices within everyday action. Such an understanding of performance allows us to recognise the ways that we 'perform' particular roles and activities in particular ways, acknowledging that all such expressions are personally and socially constructed (Goffman, 1971). This understanding of performance can further prompt us to critically question and reflect on how and why we perform in the ways that we do (see also Butler, 1996).

Through this broader understanding of performance, we recognise that anyone can participate in the purposeful animation of performance without necessarily considering themselves as 'artists' or carrying a specialised disciplinary knowledge and skillset. This conceptualisation of performance is valued and advanced through approaches such as 'applied theatre' (Prentki & Abraham, 2021) and 'social theatre' (C. Bernardi, 2023) within various contexts, including projects with migrants, urban regeneration interventions, and initiatives aimed at strengthening social ties within communities (C. Bernardi, 2023; Guerinoni, 2019). Such applied or social performative arts activities have also been facilitated in formal educational contexts such as schools, and within the professional development of doctors, nurses, social workers and others, to support the growth of self-awareness, reflexivity, and interpretive skills (Fiaschini & Gandolfi, 2021; Innocenti Malini, 2021).

This educational instrumentalisation of participatory performance has led to its extensive application within formal education to enhance learning outcomes (Pettenger et al., 2014). Such an approach is challenged by the maxim that participatory arts should be for affect rather than effect, as through the experience of participatory performance individuals can be awoken to innumerable possibilities beyond themselves (Thompson, 2009).

Within INTRACOMP, this valuing of the *affective* experience (Hickey-Moody, 2013) rather than the educational *effect* (Hill & Rowe, 1998) aligns with our valuing of subjectification as a valuable purpose for participation in performing arts, as such affects can foster liminal experiences of transensus, and thus contribute to cultural democracy (see Chapter 5).

A central dimension of participatory performance is the concept of role-play. Through role-play, individuals adopt an alternate persona, set of attitudes or aesthetic behaviours (the role), so as to

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experience an alternate way-of-being in a safe environment (the play), which suspends normal consequences for such behaviours and actions (Ladousse, 1987). The cooperative dimension of role-play allows those involved to recognise that the roles are purposefully imagined and animated (Andrews, 1996). Such role-play can take place through diverse processes of imaginative and aesthetic action, and do not necessarily involve a dramatic narrative or characterisation. Role play can involve moving or making sounds in ways that deviate from normative expectations of functional and expressive action (Alexander & LeBaron, 2011). By beating our hands on a drum to construct an audible rhythm with another person, we are adopting a role and set of relational expectations associated through that role; it is a moment of play that contrasts with our usual expectations of ourselves regarding how we use sound to interact with other people. Such role-play takes on an intrapersonal as well as interpersonal relational dimension: we might temporarily choose to move our bodies in an exploratory way that enables a personal revelation of our bodily expression, to both ourselves and to others.

The alternate ways-of-being enabled through such role-play can allow a heightened imaginative, aesthetic state, to temporarily guide heightened performance activity (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2018). This emphasises the temporality of performance: it takes place at a particular 'when' that is circumscribed (although this may be somewhat ambiguous) and moments of 'formal' performance can be preceded by moments of 'proto-performance' during training, workshop and rehearsal (Wilson, 2012). This opens further ambiguity as to when such moments of performance might be considered art, which can be a central enquiry within a transcultural encounter.

The alternate ways-of-being enabled through performance further emphasise the involvement of our whole self within performance, and therefore open opportunities for embodied cognition (Kemp, 2016). Theories of embodiment recognise that our bodies and senses provide sites of discovery and analysis that can encounter and reveal the complexity of the world to us. Embodiment and the carrying of embodied knowledge have long histories within theories of performance (Levin, 1975) and within anthropological literature on knowledge transfer (Csordas, 1999).

Such embodied experiences are not limited to encountering the material world: experiences of performance can allow the imaginary to become embodied, or 'embodiary' (Zeitner et al., 2016). Within such a state, our experiences of imagination and the imaginary move beyond visual imagery, as our diverse senses become engaged in creative speculation. This is particularly significant within intercultural collaborations, as the experience of embodiment can enable us to transcend assumptions that cultural difference is textual and visual: superdiversity can be imaginatively felt and explored through multiple senses and ways of knowing (Shen & Rowe, 2025). When these embodiary discoveries are carried into embodied acts of performance, we are transformed from passive spectatorship and into a visceral state of becoming, questioning and deliberating. As we begin to embody difference and different ways of being, we are *physically* prompted to question our normative behaviours (Desmond, 1993). In this way, embodiment can surface ethical considerations of the future, in ways that are neglected by less active speculation.

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This emphasises the opportunities that PEPA present to us, for shared processes of imagining, and unpredictable interpersonal encounters. Embodied moments of performance can prompt our imaginings to be collectivised, through socialised creative activities in dance, music and drama (Anttila et al., 2019).

As previously noted, within the process of creation individuals enter into a state of becoming, constructing both themselves and the artistic expression (Chappell et al., 2012). Within shared, embodied performances, our contributions are socialised and prompt immediate, visceral responses. Through this process, our individual experiences of creative transformation contribute to collectivised experiences of transformation (Walsh et al., 2017). Constructively integrating the collaborative expressions of culturally diverse individuals can therefore allow for moments of both personal and societal transformation. At the same time, participating in embodied performance, as an art, allows individuals to interact with each other within an alternate state, confident that such interactions, and the encounters and cultural expressions that emerge, are temporally bound.

So how might individuals interact through PEPA in such a constructive manner? What does participation in embodied performing arts actually involve? It has been argued that all individuals attending an artistic performance may be considered as participating in the event (Innocenti Malini, 2021). This understanding of participation is emphasised within performance contexts that encourage audiences to 'sing along' or 'dance along' with performers (Mullen, 2019). In non-Western moments of ritualised performance, such audience-performer boundaries can also be blurred, involving fluid interactions and exchanges between performance/audience states of being (Grau, 2016).

Participatory arts are generally understood, however, as an arts-based method that somehow involves non-specialists or non-professional artists in the development of creative outcomes, not just in their moment of expression during performance (Bishop, 2012; Matarasso, 2019). Participants may enter into this creative process in varying ways, however, experiencing varying degrees of self-determination as participants, within artistic organisational practices that range from 'democratic' to 'didactic' (Butterworth, 2004). At one end of this spectrum, an individual may be involved in determining the goals and processes of the shared endeavour, whereas at the other they may experience pre-determined outcomes and circumscribed expectations of their involvement (Hart, 1992). This raises significant questions as to the agency of participants in such processes, and their experience of democracy (Shier, 2001).

7.4.3 The Processes and Relationships of PEPA

We have argued that cultural democracy can be advanced through a participatory purpose of subjectification and through the modality of PEPA. In this section we therefore examine how participation takes place, by considering how participants interact, with each other and with others associated with the actions.

Such relationships can be very diverse. These can involve 'delegated performance', in which members of the audience are included in creative activity at the moment of performance. In such cases, particular attendees may be specially invited to take part in the artwork or performance at a

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prescribed moment, following varying degrees of instruction (Musarò et al., 2022a). By breaking down distinctions between performers and spectators in a live performance moment, this process disrupts the 4th wall traditions found in some forms of European theatre, and positions the audience as an active subject in the production of meaning and knowledge (Allegrini & Paltrinieri, 2022). This participatory method is notably extended within Forum Theatre (Boal, 1979) for example, in which audiences become participants in the live construction of scenarios that seek to reveal structures of oppression and pathways to emancipation. While these interactions can allow for variations within the performed outcome, and a fluidity between roles of performer and audience, the participation remains situated in the moment of the performance itself, which comes with pre-established codes and expectations.

The relationships between participants (as non-specialists or non-professional artists) with those coordinating the event (e.g. artists, teachers, facilitators, trainers) can also extend into the development of the performance during workshops and rehearsals prior to the event. Commonly referred to as *community* dance, music, or theatre, such activities can involve broad or narrow avenues for participation (Jackson et al., 2003); sometimes open to whole-of-community participation (see Bradley et al., 2021) and other times focusing on the inclusion of particular individuals and sectors that remain marginalised from arts activities, such as individuals experiencing imprisonment (Woodland, 2019), disability (Hadley & McDonald, 2021) or ageing (Gough & Nakajima, 2019). While these participatory arts practices may promote inclusion, it should not be assumed that they inherently promote *democracy* within their methods and relationships. Approaches to such productions can involve didactic methods, in which the participants become objects given access to 'higher art'. The extensive programming of Shakespeare's plays in prisons presents a particularly vivid illustration of the ideological complexities and ethical quandaries of such participatory arts: the script and the outcomes can be predetermined, and the relationships between participants and facilitators/organisers can remain deeply stratified (Ward & Connolly, 2020). Such models hark back to cultural mandates that promote the democratisation of culture, rather than cultural democracy (Kolsteeg, 2022). In contexts of entrenched asymmetrical relationships, such participatory arts "may actually collude with punitive practices and behaviour modification in the name of personal growth and self-actualization" (Pensalfini, 2016, p. 169).

More democratic models of participatory arts involve broader engagement in the design of the project from the outset (Kester, 2011). Such models acknowledge that social transformation requires early engagement with stakeholders within processes of enquiry and innovation, so that emergent ideas respond to the particular issues raised by the community encountering the innovation (Kaiser & Gluckman, 2023).

Within INTRACOMP, we therefore argue that social transformation towards enhanced cultural democracy requires participants to experience PEPA in a manner that enacts democratic processes and relationships within the organisation of arts activities—allowing deliberative encounters that prompt complex new cultural expressions to emerge via processes of enquiry that engage not just the participants, but also their wider communities. This approach to participatory arts aligns with human-

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centred co-design frameworks (Calvera-Isabal et al., 2023) in which all stakeholders impacted by the innovation are actively engaged in the design process from its inception to completion.

This early engagement and deeper process of participation is further supported by theories of Participatory Action Research (PAR). As a form of action research that is grounded in a critical-emancipatory paradigm, PAR aspires to positive social change by exposing inequalities, supporting empowerment, and promoting voice (Kindon et al., 2010). Within PAR, the lived experience and knowledge of participants are actively valued and central to the process, which seeks to generate knowledge and action that is directly useful to those involved. The function of enquiry is to forge a direct link between intellectual knowledge and moment-to-moment personal and social action. In this way, human knowing is participative, growing from deliberation with others, and so action-based enquiry seeks to create a better state or reality (Heron & Reason, 1997). This involves establishing dialogic, working relationships that enable collective planning, analysis and action, not only with the participants, but also with wider communities (Cornish et al., 2023).

As cultural democracy recognises that individuals are situated within complex socio-cultural communities, there is a need to also take "community involvement beyond the subject participant level" (De Las Nueces et al., 2012, p. 1364). This requires "structures for equitable decision-making" (Yonas et al., 2013, p. 100) that extend beyond the forum of participation, especially for the involvement of minorities and marginalised groups. This broader engagement can ensure that participation is determined *with*, not simply *on*, the communities involved and impacted by the actions. Through such community-based creative practice research, new knowledge is generated through the creative expression of new cultural ideas (de Costa 2013; McQuaid et al. 2017), which involves an increasing level of community involvement, impact, trust, and communication flow in order for the ideas generated to be deeply relevant, meaningful and ultimately transformative (Israel et al., 2013).

The goal of INTRACOMP in this way aligns with a desire to involve community members as 'collaborators', rather than as 'participants'. We recognise however, that this aspiration requires scaffolding so that participants can effectively and wilfully transition into the role of collaborator, mindful of its full meaning.

This matters as the term 'collaboration' has been appropriated to describe various approaches to collectivised action, and its misuse can perpetuate social practices that are antithetical to its meaning (Rowe, 2019). The collective intentionality (Frith, 2012) that emerges from the phenomenon of collaboration requires a very particular, complex and highly sophisticated form of promotive social interdependence (Johnson & Johnson, 2005) based on the development of strategic trust (Robbins, 2016). Such strategic trust can only be achieved through the development of equitable relationships amongst collaborators, which involves actively identifying and disassembling hierarchies, normative expectations and exclusions involving access, social status and knowledge, which if left in place can inhibit such equitable collaboration (Dillenbourg, 1999). Collaboration further requires all collaborators to undertake multiple roles and responsibilities, as perspective-takers, social regulators, learners, planners, adaptors and implementors, and not limit their participation to moments of intransigent, individual contribution (Hesse et al., 2015).

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While individuals and communities may experience an implicit disposition towards such collaborative relationships and responsibilities, they are empowered to fully collaborate when they possess an explicit metacognition of the collaborative process (Rowe et al., 2021). This acknowledges that personal agency is not enough to allow individuals to experience self-determination; individuals and communities must also feel competent in collaboration in order to fully choose to collaborate (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For this reason, collaboration can require educational scaffolding that allows individuals and communities to build necessary skills and knowledge in collaborative processes. Such scaffolded education can be dialogic, enabling collective and collaborative learning to emerge through a process where members of a community-of-practice interact, share and experience self-discovery (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

For this reason, collaboration can never be assumed as inherent outcome of collectivisation, and loosely referring to 'participants' as 'collaborators' can unfairly conceal systemic exclusions and hierarchies. Within INTRACOMP, we acknowledge that collaboration involves a strategic commitment to a 'something' and a 'whole', and that it is unfair to require 'collaboration' without opportunities to further explore the 'something' and the 'whole' in question (Drumbl & Holá, 2022, p. 89). Through PEPA, we therefore seek to enable moments of deliberative transensus on issues of cultural democracy, which may ultimately transition *participants-into-collaborators*, and potentially transform *antagonisms-into-agonisms*.

7.5 Chapter Summary

Since imagination and creativity exist outside of what can be easily controlled, the participatory arts present a risk for those that seek to maintain a particular social order. This risk is particularly heightened when creativity is encouraged amongst those that have the least to lose and most to gain by disturbing the existing social order. Little wonder then, that historic approaches to the massification of arts education have adopted approaches more focused on aesthetic indoctrination than imaginative emancipation.

Articulated as the democratisation of culture in the *Porto Santo Charter*, such traditional approaches to participatory performing arts emphasise conformity-over-possibility, or even possibility-only-through-conformity. For arts education to be truly democratic, and for cultural democracy to flourish, *participation* in arts needs to aspire to *participation in collaboration*.

INTRACOMP is therefore guided by the premise that, to fully realise their transformative potential, participatory embodied performative arts must be understood not merely as pedagogical tools, but as foundational epistemic and ontological practices. In this view, the arts constitute vital ways of knowing (epistemic) and ways of being and relating (ontological) that shape how individuals imagine and interpret the world, engage with others, and develop intercultural and transcultural competence. Accordingly, INTRACOMP seeks to integrate the arts within its ITC framework not solely as means of content delivery, but as essential modalities through which learning is constituted and cultural relationships are formed, negotiated, and continually reimagined.

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In alignment with INTRACOMP's kaleidoscopic, constructivist vision, our presentation of PEPA in this chapter has underscored both the conceptual depth and practical methodologies needed to advance the INTRACOMP's core aims—inclusion, individual and collective agency, and the co-creation of meaning within diverse cultural contexts. PEPA enact intercultural competences as co-created and relationally embodied. As inherently iterative and affective, PEPA provide spaces in which intercultural understanding can deepen through aesthetic exploration, critical reflexivity, and dialogical engagement. In doing so, PEPA offer concrete enactments of the plural, evolving knowledge systems that INTRACOMP seeks to promote—through group-based practices including music, dance, and drama, participants can engage in the collaborative negotiation of cultural meaning, challenging essentialist notions of identity while simultaneously cultivating empathy, reciprocity, and shared agency (Heinicke, 2019). These practices operationalise INTRACOMP's rhizomatic and multimodal approach to learning, supporting fluid and emergent forms of knowledge construction that respond dynamically to both personal experiences and broader sociocultural systems.

Moreover, as discussed, PEPA interventions can be meaningfully situated across the framework's multi-level architecture. At the systemic or regulative level, it can inform inclusive policy development by legitimising culturally democratic practices and recognising the arts as vital components of educational and societal infrastructure. At the organisational or normative level, schools, cultural institutions, and community organisations can adopt PEPA approaches to challenge entrenched hierarchies, broaden access, and embed intercultural values within institutional cultures. At the group and individual level, these practices function as relational laboratories, enabling participants to experience and value transensus as a deliberative activity and outcome. Such frameworks reinforce the importance of contextual, ethical, and collective modes of knowing and being. By cultivating cultural ecosystems that resist reductive and extractive logics, PEPA thus directly contributes to INTRACOMP's goals of fostering democratic participation, cultural sustainability, and inclusive societal transformation. It translates theoretical commitments—such as cultural democracy, epistemic plurality, and relational learning—into lived, co-creative practices. In doing so, it animates the very processes of inclusion, collective reflection, and cultural negotiation that define intercultural viability and support the emergence of more just and pluralistic futures.

This raises questions as to how competence may need to be understood, so as to scaffold and support the growth of transculturalism and experiences of transensus in PEPA. The following chapter therefore considers the mandates relevant for competence frameworks for individuals, groups and systems involved in transcultural activities through the arts. This is followed by an exploration of access to experiences of transensus may be broadened through the bringing of ideals associated with transculturalism and PEPA into a digital sphere.

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8

Reimagining Competence

"... I **ardently longed to comprehend** these also; but how was that possible when I did not even understand the sounds for which they stood as signs?"

—Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

8. Reimagining Competence

Narrative: Aboard the EUSS Defiant

Red light burns Captain Cal Godber's eyes. Wincing from the intrusion, he runs his hands over his neoprene vest, trying in vain to flatten the ever-present wrinkles. The navy fabric gathers at his waist, puckering like some strange flower. He remembers the tagline from when he signed up with the European Union Space Service: "Join the EUSS: discover beautiful futures today!"

Nothing beautiful about looking like a blue cigar, he thought.

The light flashes again. Godber helms the EUSS *Defiant*—an ultraliner bound for Canis Major. Idling at the edge of Neptune, *Defiant's* cargo is varied. Rare earth metals, recently recovered from the asteroid Ceres; cypress saplings; fine art; vials of aldehydes in lemon and pineapple scents; the seeds of 15 essential crops; and 600,000 sleeping humans. She is covered in solar panels—a smooth, city-sized wedge of gold; a glittering shark tooth floating through the night. A beacon of humanity's resolve following the climate wars of the 21st century; a sorry memento of what little humanity remained.

Godber reaches for a sphere of thick gel hovering two inches above his console. He plucks at the gel with his fingers, drawing the clear film into five small peaks. With an absent-minded dexterity granted by years of practice, Godber manipulates the gel spires as a screen reveals its red warning:

"DEFIANT TO CANIS MAJOR, READY FOR FASTER THAN LIGHT JUMP."

Alone on the bridge, Godber takes pause. The screen pulses again.

"[EXECUTE] / [DELAY]."

Was it always going to end like this?

8.1 Introduction

A central aim of this literature review is to reassess the concept of intercultural and transcultural competence through the lens of cultural democracy (Kolsteeg, 2022; Porto Santo Conference, 2021). Building on our explorations of transculturalism (as a phenomenon that extends on but is also distinct from interculturalism), we consider how transcultural activities may depend upon the presence of certain competences. As discussed in the previous chapter, transcultural experiences can emerge through PEPA, but this, in turn, is contingent on a rationalisation of why individuals and communities may choose to participate. This suggests that transculturalism cannot be achieved alone, and therefore requires deeply interdependent and collaborative circumstances. This expectation presents particular challenges to traditional expectations of competence, which is often conceived of as individual, possessable traits that enable an individual to achieve a certain standard of performance.

In this chapter, we therefore examine progressive research into the theorisation of competence that allows us to see beyond this traditional standpoint. This allows us to move the discussion on competence from individuals skills to nested ecologies, and particularly explore the dynamics involved in group and collective competences.

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8.2 Problematising Neoliberal and Technocratic Views of Competence

The concept of competence has attracted sustained scholarly and policy interest since the 1970s (Dahl, 2018). Historically, competence has been associated with vocational training and labour market readiness (Sundby & Lackner, 2022). While the term enjoys widespread currency in educational discourse, its definition remains contested. In everyday usage, competence typically denotes an individual's capacity to perform, learn, reflect, and experience oneself as capable (Engh, 2004). This includes not only observable abilities but also latent potential—the capacity to respond to unfamiliar challenges (Bruner, 1996).

Institutional attempts to define competence have broadened its scope—one that has extended from the achievement of skills, knowledge and understandings in a particular domain (Winterton, 2002), and grown to include an emphasis on volition. through the addition of dispositions (Rieckman, 2012). This has been reframed as attitudes, so promoting Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes (KSA) within competence frameworks (Wiek et al., 2011), and the European Commission (2012) describes competence as a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes applied in particular contexts. The OECD (2016, 2017) similarly defines competence as including cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions, with an emphasis on reflective learning to facilitate meaningful, global engagement. Salman et al. (2020) identify recurring features across these definitions, including input characteristics (knowledge, skills, attitudes) and outcome measures (performance), as well as an underlying assumption of individual self-regulation and reflection. Meanwhile, Vare et al. (2022) distinguish three main paradigms: a pragmatic model that centres on discrete problem-solving skills; a *Bildung*-inspired model that links personal growth with vocational preparation; and an emergent potential model that views competence as context-dependent and activated under favourable socio-cultural conditions, such as institutional support or access to resources. Acknowledging the importance of belief systems to sustain ethical dimensions of competence, Values have been further recognised as a critical dimension of competence frameworks (Lambrechts et al., 2013).

In recent years, we have witnessed a growth in institutional interest in Intercultural Competence (Milani, 2022), as evidenced by frameworks such as the OECD's *Global Competence Framework* (OECD, 2018) and the European Union's *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* (European Commission, 2018). These initiatives aim to embed intercultural understanding and global citizenship across educational systems. For instance, the OECD defines global competence as the ability to examine global issues, appreciate diverse perspectives, interact effectively across cultures, and contribute to sustainable development. Similarly, the EU framework identifies intercultural competence as vital for democratic participation and social cohesion. This orientation has significantly shaped the field of intercultural competence, where focus is commonly placed on personal attitudes, values, and communicative proficiencies.

As Milani (2023, p. 4) observes, an individualistic emphasis persists "despite repeated calls for more relational perspectives where skills, knowledge, and attitudes are socially constructed and socially contextualised" (see also Dalib et al., 2017; Deardorff, 2006; Miike, 2006).

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Neoliberal, individualistic competence models are evident in multiple areas, including the field of interculturalism. Cognisant of the interplay between interculturalism and transculturalism (as described in Chapter 6), and the ways in which the limitations of interculturalism informed the emergence of transculturalism (Abu-Er-Rub et al., 2019), we discuss this example not to pit the concepts against one another, but instead to highlight how even relational concepts can be captured by neoliberal logic. To date, despite their progressive aspirations, many institutional frameworks tend to reflect relatively narrow and instrumentalised interpretations of competence and therefore risk being misused as assessment criteria. The valorising of intercultural competence has brought with it an expectation of assessment, extending from the belief that "developing plurilingual, intercultural, and democratic competences in schools, colleges, or universities, when viewed from the perspective of quality and equity in education, requires the use of responsible and ethical ways to assess such competences" (Borghetti & Barrett, 2023, p. 114). Intercultural competence is therefore frequently conceptualised as a discrete set of cognitive, behavioural, and communicative attributes that can be standardised and assessed—aligning with dominant educational logics that prioritise employability, adaptability, and quantifiable outcomes (Aman, 2017; Zembylas, 2013). This technocratic framing tends to marginalise the contextual, historical, and relational dimensions of intercultural engagement, in turn reducing cultural difference to a managerial challenge addressed through behavioural training. In doing so, such models risk overlooking the ethical, affective, and political complexities of intercultural encounters.

As Dervin and Gross (2016) contend, intercultural competence is too often presented as a decontextualised and static skillset, thereby masking the unpredictability, inequality, and discursive tensions that shape real-world intercultural dynamics. Moreover, by defining competence primarily in terms of measurable outputs and individual performance (Biesta, 2012), these frameworks inadvertently reinforce existing social hierarchies and marginalise those who do not conform to standardised norms. When treated as a value-neutral, marketable skill, competence becomes decoupled from its ethical and political stakes, reducing intercultural engagement to a technical exchange between autonomous individuals. This obscures the collective, contested, and situated nature of cultural interaction and deflects attention away from the structural, institutional, and discursive forces that shape educational and intercultural outcomes (Sundby & Lackner, 2022).

The limitations of conventional competence frameworks have prompted a growing call for more relational, situated, and critically informed models of intercultural learning. We answer this call by drawing on literature that reframes competence not as an individual trait to be measured through standardised performance indicators, but rather as an outcome that can be experienced within particular, situated, contexts. This reconceptualisation shifts the focus of competence away from individualistic, transactional understandings of skill acquisition and towards shared, societal practices. This view recognises the significance of the necessary conditions for competence to emerge, and acknowledges that these conditions extend beyond the control of the individual; highlighting the importance of environmental affordances (Wilhelm et al., 2019).

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Positioning competence in this way aligns with wider efforts to rethink education and cultural participation in response to the complexities of contemporary society. In terms of INTRACOMP's aims, across culturally diverse and increasingly interconnected contexts, transcultural competence might therefore be understood as something that emerges through *ongoing relational negotiation and co-creation*. The process of developing and experiencing transcultural competence transcends the mere acquisition of knowledge about 'the Other,' or the demonstration of effective communication and interaction skills. Instead, it involves active engagement in shared processes that cultivate a capacity and willingness to intentionally and collaboratively construct new, shared meanings and actions while challenging existing hierarchies. This occurs through lived, collective experiences situated within specific, temporary constellations of cultural complexity.

This reframing returns us to key questions raised in Chapter 6: how can transcultural interactions move beyond transactional or extractive logics to promote genuinely democratic educational outcomes? In what ways might transformative education empower individuals and communities to embody the values of cultural democracy in their everyday practices within transcultural competence? What roles can participatory arts-based interventions play in fostering such transformation, especially among those historically marginalised within educational and cultural systems? How might competence frameworks themselves function not only as diagnostic tools but as catalysts for educational transformation—revealing, supporting, and amplifying emergent, more equitable forms of learning? Finally, what are the risks that such competence frameworks might be interpreted in ways that sustain more traditional understandings of competence?

One notable response is Deardorff's (2006) process-oriented model, which reframes competence as a dynamic, lifelong series of experienced outcomes, rooted in respect, openness, and cultural self-awareness. While this represents a significant shift from fixed, trait-based models, it still places emphasis on individual transformation. Scholars such as Dervin (2016) and Aman (2017) caution that this focus may obscure the structural and historical forces underpinning intercultural engagement. Moreover, the model's grounding in liberal humanist ideals promotes empathy, curiosity, and openness as universally desirable, yet implicitly framed through Western epistemologies. Zembylas (2013) warns that such universalist assumptions risk reproducing dominant norms under the guise of inclusivity.

These theoretical critiques are reinforced by institutional practices. Process-oriented models are frequently incorporated into standardised assessment rubrics, thus reabsorbing their original relational intent into technocratic logics (Borghetti, 2017; Torres & Tarozzi, 2020). As Aman (2017) argues, this instrumentalisation detaches intercultural learning from its ethical, political, and historical contexts, reducing it to a technical matter of individual performance.

Such tendencies reflect deeper epistemological biases within dominant competence discourses. Despite rhetorical commitments to diversity, many frameworks continue to privilege Western norms of cognition, communication, and subjectivity. The global dominance of English in IC discourse exemplifies this trend, serving as a gatekeeper that marginalises other languages and epistemologies (Aman, 2017). In this way, competence models may inadvertently sustain colonial legacies and reproduce epistemic exclusions.

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Building on the turn toward relational models, Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder (2022) advocate a shift in emphasis from individual attributes to social processes. They propose reconceptualising competence as emerging through dialogic interaction, collective agency, and the dynamics of institutional culture. While their focus is primarily pedagogical, it implicitly expands the analytical lens to include structural and relational conditions that shape intercultural learning. However, their framework tends to engage with structural inequalities and epistemic hierarchies only implicitly. Without explicitly confronting dominant assessment paradigms or theorising knowledge plurality, their model risks being subsumed into prevailing educational logics.

This rethinking opens the door to a deeper ethical and political reorientation. Rather than framing competence as a personal asset linked to employability, it should be understood as a relational and co-constructed phenomenon grounded in contextual and historical awareness (Aman, 2017). Curren (2022) calls for a normative shift away from market-oriented goals toward human flourishing, understood as the capacity to live meaningful, socially embedded lives. This perspective emphasises the communal, affective, and dialogical dimensions necessary for navigating cultural complexity and fostering inclusive communities. As Aman (2017) further argues, a genuinely inclusive understanding of competence must also decolonise its epistemological foundations—recognising diverse knowledge systems and centring non-Western and indigenous ways of knowing.

Prompted by these concerns, there is a growing scholarly and practice-based call—on which this literature review builds—to move beyond dominant neoliberal and technocratic paradigms models of competence toward relational, critical, and contextually embedded alternatives. Rather than viewing transcultural competence as a fixed personal trait or a transferable skill applicable across contexts, this perspective conceptualises it as *a dynamic, co-constructed capacity that emerges through situated interactions within specific socio-cultural ecologies.* Such a reconceptualisation, in turn, can inform the development of more inclusive and responsive educational frameworks that are better equipped to engage with the complexities of intercultural and transcultural contexts. The next section explores the implications of this reconceptualisation in greater depth.

8.3 A Relational, Collective, and Situated Perspective on Competence

Building on the critique outlined above, and drawing from the existing literature, the following section seeks to reconceptualise competence within a process of *becoming*—one that is shaped by relational, collective, and critically situated perspectives. Rather than treating competence as a static possession of autonomous individuals, this approach understands it as an evolving capacity, co-produced through social relationships, communal practices, and institutional contexts. It calls for a critical reorientation: from personal dispositions to *collaborative agency*, from individual achievement to *collective enactment*, and from internalised traits to *systemic transformation*. This shift foregrounds inclusive and dynamic practices that empower diverse communities to engage meaningfully across cultural differences. In line with pedagogical models that treat competence not as a fixed endpoint but as a situated practice, this reconceptualisation promotes ethical engagement, affirms epistemic plurality, and enables inclusive participation within complex, interdependent learning environments. Competence, in this view, becomes

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a shared and generative series of learning outcomes—integral to co-creation and collective flourishing in an interconnected world.

8.3.1 Grounding Competence: Subjectification and the Foundations of Learning

To further ground this reframing of competence in relational and ethical terms, we draw on Biesta's (2020) concept of subjectification—a key but often marginalised dimension of educational purpose. Subjectification refers to the process by which individuals come into presence as ethical, responsible agents—subjects rather than objects of education. This contrasts with dominant paradigms focused on qualification (acquisition of knowledge and skills) and socialisation (integration into existing norms and communities).

Subjectification is not simply personal expression or identity formation, but rather the learner's emergence as someone capable of autonomous judgement and action in relation to others and the world. Crucially, this emergence cannot be programmed or measured; it involves risk for both teacher and learner. The educator risks making unsolicited interventions, trusting that the student may respond freely, while the learner must risk encountering difference and ambiguity without predetermined outcomes (Biesta, 2020a). This relational, interruptive dynamic positions education as a site of ethical encounter and democratic possibility. Indeed, Biesta's critique of the 'learnification' of education—its reduction to measurable outcomes and transferable skills—aligns with INTRACOMP's concerns about the instrumentalisation of competence. When learning is governed by technocratic logics of efficiency, accountability, and market value, the subject is displaced by the learner-as-consumer. This not only limits education to individual advancement but also sidelines the ethical, affective, and political dimensions of intercultural and transcultural engagement.

In contrast, subjectification underscores the importance of creating pedagogical spaces that foster *interruption, suspension,* and *sustenance*—conditions that enable learners to reflect, question, and author their own responses to complexity (Biesta, 2020a). This resonates with INTRACOMP's use of arts-based and dialogic methodologies as 'relational laboratories' where such conditions can be cultivated. Here, competence is not a fixed possession but an evolving, situated practice—a form of becoming that is co-produced through ethical engagement, shared responsibility, and openness to the unknown.

Incorporating Biesta's perspective enables a deeper articulation of competence as an existential rather than merely functional endeavour. It foregrounds relational ethics, freedom, and democratic engagement in educational practice, offering a philosophical foundation that strengthens INTRACOMP's call for a paradigm shift. Competence, in this view, is not only about knowing or doing, but about being and becoming with others in a shared and contested world.

8.3.2 Co-Constructing Competence: From Individual Skills to Nested Ecologies

Building on these relational foundations, one of the key theoretical trajectories underlying the development of the INTRACOMP Intercultural and Transcultural Competence (ITC) framework is the reimagining of competence as a dynamic and co-constructed process that unfolds through

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interdependence, contextual responsiveness, and shared meaning-making. Rooted in the normative principles of cultural democracy, this framework situates competence within broader ecologies—acknowledging that individuals are always embedded in, and shaped by, the organisations and systems around them (Bennett, 2021; Milani, 2018; Nokkala et al., 2024). Rather than reducing competence to a checklist of personal traits or isolating individual capacities, it positions competence as a situated and ethical construct that emerges through mutual interdependence across individual, organisational, and systemic levels—fostering both personal development and collective transformation.

A key organising principle here is the concept of *nested competence*—the idea that competences are not discrete, static, or strictly hierarchical, but dynamically interwoven across multiple levels (Hüther & Krücken, 2016; Nokkala & Diogo, 2020; Nokkala et al., 2024; Scott, 2001). An organisation's or community's capacity to act cannot be reduced to the aggregated competences of individuals; rather, it emerges from interdependent, multilayered dimensions shaped by both internal structures and external interactions (Nokkala et al., 2024). These interconnections form dynamic ecosystems that simultaneously enable and constrain collective action.

Importantly, nesting is not a top-down mechanism. Capacities frequently overlap, reconfigure, and shift in response to evolving contexts, rendering the boundaries between individual, organisational, and systemic competences fluid and context-dependent (Hüther & Krücken, 2016). Organisational capacity, therefore, hinges not only on individual skills but also on the quality of relationships, collective practices, and broader socio-political, economic, and cultural forces that structure educational environments and institutional possibilities.

This relational perspective is further extended through the notion of space as a fluid and evolving assemblage of competences, encompassing legal, political, ethical, and symbolic dimensions (Volvey et al., 2021). In this view, competence is always in the making—shaped by entangled processes across scales and sustained through relational interdependence.

Within this model, *group competence* is foundational. Individual competence gains significance through its contribution to collective processes, while organisational competence refers to an institution's capacity to support, coordinate, and sustain such group dynamics. This reframing shifts the emphasis away from institutional efficiency and individual performance toward collaborative agency and interdependence. Crucially, it also highlights the role of systemic structures in shaping the conditions under which relational and participatory forms of competence can emerge. Systemic factors—such as national education policies, accreditation regimes, funding mechanisms, and dominant societal norms—either constrain or enable the cultivation of relational and collaborative competence. While individuals and organisations are the immediate sites of practice, their capacity to engage in inclusive, ethical, and context-sensitive ways is profoundly shaped by how systems allocate resources, legitimise certain knowledge forms, and prioritise particular values. Systemic competence, therefore, refers to the ability of institutional and policy frameworks to foster environments that support collaboration, co-creation, and reflexive learning across all levels.

Taken together, these insights underline a paradigmatic shift in how competence may be conceptualised and operationalised within the INTRACOMP ITC framework. Under these lenses,

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competence is no longer treated as an individual possession or institutional deliverable, but as a multi-scalar, relational capacity that is continuously shaped by—and shaping—the surrounding ecologies in which it is embedded. By integrating nested and group competence into its theoretical foundation, the framework foregrounds the interdependence between personal agency, collective practice, and systemic conditions. This shift not only challenges technocratic, output-driven models of education but also creates space for more inclusive, democratic, and ethically grounded approaches to intercultural and transcultural learning. It calls on educators, institutions, and policymakers to create and sustain collaborative contexts that empower individuals and groups to meaningfully navigate cultural complexities.

8.3.3 Unlearning Competence: Reclaiming Assessment, Power, and Plural Epistemologies

The relational and structural shifts outlined above have significant political and epistemological implications. They necessitate a fundamental deconstruction of intercultural competence—from a measurable, transferable skill to an emergent and unpredictable process shaped by power relations, historical contexts, and discursive practices (Dervin, 2016; Dervin & Gross, 2016). Such a critical reorientation underscores the need to question not only the conceptualisation of competence but also how it is operationalised, assessed, and institutionalised.

Critiques of competence as an individualised skillset extend directly into the realm of assessment. As Engel et al. (2019) argue—drawing on Ian Hacking's (1986) notion of 'making up people'—the process of categorising and measuring competence renders individuals 'knowable' and thereby governable. When educational institutions attempt to quantify traits such as empathy, openness, or intercultural sensitivity, they risk instrumentalising inherently affective and context-dependent dispositions.

Within intercultural education, scholars such as Portera (2014), Milani (2018), and Borghetti (2017) have raised similar concerns. Borghetti, in particular, warns that standardised assessment frameworks often strip intercultural competence of its complexity, reframing it as a set of discrete, testable attributes. This approach overlooks the relational and reflexive nature of intercultural engagement, reducing learning to behavioural conformity. Drawing on postmodern understandings of identity and learning, Borghetti advocates for non-assessable approaches that foreground narrative, dialogue, and reflexivity.

The critique of instrumental assessment has broad educational implications, particularly within neoliberal contexts. As Maunumäki (2021) and Maunumäki and Valkonen (2022) note, neoliberal education systems increasingly prioritise productivity, accountability, and market-readiness. Competence-based models shaped by these imperatives tend to reward performance over reflection and standardisation over creativity; Kristjánsson (2023) warning that this erodes the cultivation of moral and civic agency. Consequently, one of the most challenging trajectories the INTRACOMP ITC framework must navigate involves reconsidering how intercultural and transcultural competence could be approached pedagogically and institutionally—by critically engaging with existing assessment-oriented practices on the basis of the complex and situated nature of intercultural learning.

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Alongside critiques of assessment, scholars have interrogated the epistemological foundations of competence frameworks. Dervin (2016), Aman (2017), and Milani (2023) argue that dominant discourses on competence tend to universalise Western norms, marginalising non-Western epistemologies and perpetuating colonial hierarchies of knowledge. In this framing, intercultural competence becomes a vehicle for reproducing, rather than unsettling, global power asymmetries. Aman (2017) deepens this critique by situating intercultural competence within the geopolitics of knowledge production. Drawing on the modernity/coloniality framework (cf. Mignolo, 2011), he argues that unless the 'colonial difference'—the structural legacy of Western epistemic dominance—is confronted, efforts to promote interculturality remain complicit in epistemic injustice. For Aman, this entails not just acknowledging difference but actively including historically excluded knowledge systems and rethinking the very criteria by which knowledge is recognised; for INTRACOMP, this equally involves Indigenous, holistic processes of learning that are inclusive of cultural and spiritual values and wider community participation (Dei, 2010; Hindle et al., 2015; Tedla, 1992).

Milani (2023) further complements these perspectives, calling for heuristic approaches that unsettle binary oppositions between 'Western' and 'non-Western' epistemologies. She advocates for pedagogical models that foster epistemic plurality—frameworks that allow for ambiguity, hybridity, and negotiation rather than closure or categorisation. This vision of epistemic justice reframes competence as a process not only of cognitive or behavioural development, but of ethical responsibility toward diverse ways of being and knowing in the world.

8.4 The Potential of Group-Level Constructivist Frameworks

This reframing of competence as relational, collective, situated, and critically informed provides fertile ground for reimagining the principles and practices that underpin transcultural engagement. It invites a decisive shift in emphasis—from viewing the individual as the primary unit of analysis to recognising the group as a dynamic site of collective meaning-making, negotiation, and co-action. In the context of transcultural engagement, where cultural boundaries are fluid and identities are continuously co-constructed through interaction, this shift is particularly significant. It foregrounds the relational processes through which cultural understanding emerges, highlights collective agency and responsiveness within diverse and evolving social contexts, and remains attentive to the systemic conditions shaping intercultural interactions. The present section explores how group-level, constructivist frameworks can operationalise this shift in practice: from theoretical models such as Milton Bennett's *Intercultural Viability Indicator*, to ethically informed approaches to collaboration, and the embodied co-creation enabled through participatory performative arts. Together, these frameworks illustrate how intercultural and transcultural competence can be cultivated not as abstract ideals or individual achievements, but as relational, situated, and systemic processes rooted in shared learning and collective flourishing.

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8.4.1 Bennett's Intercultural Viability Indicator

The epistemological and methodological critiques of conventional approaches are exemplified in Bennett's (2021) development of the *Intercultural Viability Indicator* (IVI), which interrogates dominant paradigms for their individualistic and positivist assumptions. Drawing on postpositivist and critical theories, Bennett critiques existing methodologies for overlooking cultural positionality, bias, and power, and for their dependence on static, objective metrics. In response, he introduces the IVI—a constructivist tool designed to evaluate a group's capacity to respond adaptively to emergent and unpredictable forms of diversity.

Grounded in the concept of *co-ontogenesis*—the idea that observers and phenomena are mutually generative—the IVI redefines intercultural competence as an emergent relational dynamic rather than a fixed individual attribute (Bennett, 2021). Instead of assessing stable competences, Bennett proposes measuring the probability that a group can co-create effective responses in unfamiliar and evolving situations. This group-level focus aligns with broader constructivist and post-structuralist perspectives that conceptualise interculturality as contextual, relational, and adaptive

Positivism, originating with Comte (2009), remains foundational within the social sciences (see also section 2.2.1). It is predicated on the assumption of a single, objective reality accessible through neutral observation. Within this paradigm, phenomena are presumed predictable and controllable through adequate data, and psychometric assessments typically interpret traits as stable internal states, with reliability signifying consistency (Bennett, 2021).

Constructivist approaches in the social sciences, however, posit a co-ontogenic model in which reality is co-constructed through the mutual constitution of observer and event. The level and unit of analysis—individual, group, or institutional—are therefore critical, as each constructs reality differently. Most intercultural competence assessments remain focused at the individual level, interpreting traits as causal (positivist), descriptive (relativist), or perceptually constructed (constructivist). However, group-level approaches are increasingly salient, particularly in research on institutional racism and organisational competence (Bennett, 2021).

How, then, do we assess and understand group-level competences? At the organisational level, assessing intercultural competence entails evaluating the extent to which an organisation increases the likelihood of desirable outcomes by aligning behavioural probabilities across and within groups. Bennett's IVI operationalises this framework by assessing how individuals and groups interact to increase the likelihood of *interculturally sensitive outcomes*. Rather than measuring static traits, it instead focuses on relational dynamics and systemic behavioural patterns that promote inclusive and adaptive practices (Bennett, 2021).To measure this, the IVI is grounded in the *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* (DMIS), which outlines a progression from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism through six stages: denial, defence, minimisation, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Higher positions on this continuum are associated with stronger intercultural competence, social justice orientation, and civic commitment. Although individuals may exhibit qualities such as bias or ethicality, the IVI focuses instead on systemic patterns—how organisational structures support or hinder

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intercultural responsiveness (Bennett, 2021). This relational approach therein considers how both observer and group behaviours interact across the continuum defined by the DMIS.

In this way—and of particular relevance to INTRACOMP—the IVI addresses two key methodological gaps. First, it treats collectives (e.g. teams, organisations, societies) as distinct units of analysis rather than as aggregates of individuals. Second, it situates intercultural competence assessment within a constructivist paradigm that emphasises adaptive potential over static traits. While it incorporates conventional statistical methods, the IVI's validity is primarily evaluated according to constructivist criteria of trustworthiness.

However, as with any innovative approach, the IVI has limitations. It is fundamentally theory-driven, and its credibility ultimately rests on its capacity to predict long-term group viability—an inherently longitudinal challenge. Nonetheless, its basis in the well-established DMIS, which has demonstrated predictive validity in intercultural learning contexts, strengthens its prospective utility (Bennett, 2021). Another challenge stems from the IVI's foundation in constructivism, which may cause 'paradigmatic confusion' among evaluators operating within different epistemological traditions. Positivist researchers may critique the IVI for lacking defined independent and dependent variables, while relativist or critical theorists may challenge it for insufficient attention to cultural assumptions or power dynamics.

Despite these limitations, the value of IVI to INTRACOMP lies in is shift away from aggregation and towards co-ontogenetical understandings of competence as a relational phenomenon. Rather than assessing fixed attributes, the IVI highlights systemic and relational conditions that increase the probability of inclusive and effective intercultural outcomes. It emphasises group-level adaptability over individual mastery, co-created responses over static competences, and contextual processes over universal metrics. While it prompts further theoretical and methodological dialogue, the IVI opens promising avenues for understanding how intercultural capacity can emerge in real time. Ultimately, it foregrounds the need to move beyond individualised models of competence toward more dynamic, situated, and ecologically grounded approaches to navigating cultural difference.

8.4.2 Collective Agency and Collaboration for Intercultural Viability

Where might we extend the relationality of the IVI? Building on the constructivist approach outlined above, this section examines how relational frameworks, such as collaborative learning and social capital, provide a practical and ethical foundation for transcultural engagement within organisations, offering complementary perspectives to foster intercultural viability. Building on the group-level, constructivist framework exemplified by Bennett's (2021) IVI, we can further interrogate prevailing assumptions about transcultural interactions, particularly the neoliberal framing of collaboration.

Whereas the IVI reconceptualises intercultural competence as an emergent, relational dynamic among groups, collaboration too can be reclaimed from its neoliberal drift (see sections 7.3 and 7.4) and reframed beyond individualistic and transactional paradigms towards a collective process grounded in shared social capital, inclusion, mutual recognition, and democratic engagement.

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Collaboration has traditionally been understood in higher education as knowledge co-construction, reciprocity, and collective problem-solving. However, under neoliberal influence, its meaning has increasingly shifted towards an individual competency valued primarily for its economic utility (Rowe, 2019). This shift reflects broader trends in education, where collaboration is assessed by productivity and employability metrics rather than its potential to foster democratic engagement and relational learning. Such a market-driven conception risks commodifying collaboration as a skill to be optimised and measured, paralleling the IVI's critique of static, positivist assessments of intercultural competence (Bennett, 2021).

Drawing on social interdependence theory (Johnson & Johnson, 2014) non-Western epistemologies such as the Māfana Framework ('Ofamo'oni & Rowe, 2020), and critiques of neoliberal mandates (Rowe, 2019), a relational and constructivist reimagining of collaboration prioritises collective meaning-making, equity, and inclusion over individual performance. Unlike cooperation, which often preserves hierarchical structures and aligns participants towards predefined goals, collaboration entails deeper engagement, joint problem-solving, and shared ownership of both process and outcomes (Rowe, 2019). Raelin's (2006) concept of 'collective reflection' further distinguishes collaboration as a dialogical and emergent practice, contrasting with the more functional and parallel efforts typical of cooperation. Indeed, this approach aligns closely with the IVI's emphasis on co-ontogenesis and collective adaptability, challenging traditional top-down organisational paradigms and highlighting the dynamic capacities of groups to generate interculturally viable responses (Bennett, 2021).

Social capital theory offers another useful lens to reclaim collaboration from its neoliberal co-optation, emphasising trust, reciprocity, and shared values within collaborative relationships (Bourdieu, 1980; Putnam, 2000), particularly when understood as a "resource of resistance" and a basis for solidarity and collective agency (Rowe, 2019, p. 106). This redefinition reinforces collaboration's potential to empower marginalised groups through inclusive, participatory practices, reclaiming it as a space for democratic engagement and shared authorship.

Reframing collaboration as a relationship-building endeavour foregrounds its transformative potential in transcultural contexts, where mutual recognition and collective agency are vital. Extending the constructivist and relational paradigms outlined above, participatory performative arts, or PEPA as we have argued (see Chapter 7) offer a vital modality for enacting intercultural viability in situated practice. While frameworks such as the Intercultural Viability Indicator and reimagined models of collaboration underscore the importance of mutual recognition, collective meaning-making, and co-ontogenesis, participatory arts provide a tangible, embodied space in which these principles are not only conceptualised but actively rehearsed, experienced, and reconfigured. Particularly aligned with the constructivist view of identities and cultures as performed and always in the making, these performative practices foster democratic engagement through aesthetic, emotional, and corporeal encounters, thereby rendering relational learning a lived and collectively shared experience.

Informed by pedagogies of social inclusion (Raphael & Freebody, 2018) and culturally responsive arts education (Wang, 2021), participatory arts resist assimilationist logics by sustaining and valuing difference as a generative force within group-level learning (Heinicke, 2019). As such, they

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constitute dynamic 'laboratories' for the cultivation of intercultural competence as an emergent, context-sensitive process. Crucially, they move beyond the constraints of verbal or transactional collaboration, enabling participants to inhabit new forms of relational agency and to navigate the complexities of social and cultural systems through embodied co-creation.

These socially mediated aesthetic spaces align with the IVI's emphasis on collective adaptability, co-constructed responses, and group-level reflection (Bennett, 2021). They invite critical engagement with power, positionality, and identity in ways that can subvert hierarchical norms and foster inclusive authorship. Although such practices remain under-theorised within formal education contexts evidence from community-based and arts-led initiatives demonstrates their potential to cultivate intercultural competence as a dynamic, evolving capacity grounded in participation and solidarity. When framed through inclusive, participatory lenses, performative arts contribute to the development of inclusive cultural ecosystems. Rather than reducing diversity to a normative centre, they create conditions under which cultural expressions co-evolve through collaboration. In doing so, they embody and extend the principles of intercultural viability—transforming collective imagination and interaction through lived, aesthetic, and relational practices that foreground equity, belonging, and shared agency.

8.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has sought to identify emerging directions for rethinking intercultural and transcultural competence through relational, collective, and contextually grounded frameworks. Moving beyond individualised and technocratic models, these approaches reposition competence as a dynamic, co-produced capacity shaped by the broader social, institutional, and policy environments in which it is enacted. By drawing on critical, constructivist, and arts-based methodologies, this work seeks to contribute to the ongoing development of the INTRACOMP ITC framework by suggesting possible theoretical, methodological, and policy entry points to help address some of the complex challenges in intercultural and transcultural learning, education, and governance. The focus shifts away from what individuals *possess* towards what groups can collectively *generate*—how they flourish amid diversity, navigate tensions, and co-create meaning across cultural boundaries, provided that broader *systemic conditions* support collaborative, context-sensitive, and inclusive forms of competence.

Together, these perspectives offer a grounded, multi-scalar understanding of intercultural and transcultural competence as an evolving, relational capacity deeply embedded within and responsive to its social and institutional ecologies. With this paradigm in mind, we now move onto the final frontier of our review: the equally generative if not problematic domain of technology and artificial intelligence.

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9

New Connections: Artificial Intelligence and Digital Technology

"I will pioneer **a new way**, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation."

—Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

9. New Connections: Artificial Intelligence and Digital Technology

Narrative: The Door

The door opens before her. No handle. No sound. Just a glistening light on the edges of the frame. She hesitates as the tiny hairs on her arms rise, while her stomach flips and turns indicating a sense of anticipation and nervousness.

As she steps through, she pauses and glances around. A mosaic of soft whites and emeralds stretch out into the space. Above her, rows of lights flicker out of sync, amplifying her uncertainty. Groups of children begin to appear. Some by walking—some just appearing, as though unzipped from the air itself. One boy flickers for half a second, buffering into space.

She sees another girl sitting cross-legged and hurries toward her.

"Is it your first day of school?" she asks. The girl nods with a gentle smile.

"Yeah, I didn't have enough tokens to buy the jeans I really wanted though".

"Neither did I! I hope I pass all my assessments so I can buy new outfits. I want to be the best dressed here."

Hundreds of children continue to arrive, popping into the emerald-white space. Scratching her forearm, she wonders if she will be able to find her new friend tomorrow.

She takes a breath before lifting the goggles off her face. The sun peers through half-open blinds as she rises from the couch, tripping over the blanket tangled between her feet.

9.1 Considering the Future

As discussed in the preceding chapters, INTRACOMP is deeply invested in the opportunities that participation in arts can provide for a world of change. However, and returning to our anticipatory paradigm, we also recognise that possibilities for participation in creative arts are of themselves rapidly shifting. Technology is increasingly shaping how individuals build communities, access knowledge, and express themselves through immersive environments, social media, and interactive creative arts platforms employing generative Artificial Intelligence (AI). This prompts us to widen our own conceptions of Participatory Embodied Performing Arts (PEPA) and the experiences of transensus they may promote. Indeed, and to conclude this review, we ask what conditions might allow both PEPA and transensus to flourish in digital spaces.

As the digital domain expands, it is no longer sufficient to treat technology as a static utility. Instead, it must be viewed as a dynamic space that both enables and restricts different ways of knowing, being, and becoming. We therefore need to imagine and work towards a future where arts education and practices exist in the digital world in diverse ways.

Within INTRACOMP, the digital is therefore conceptualised as a world: a rhizomatic, multidimensional space of immersion, interaction, and knowledge production (on worldbuilding, see also 2.2.2); a world that is both iterative yet fraught. In this world, we propose that we can experience

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participation, embodiment, and performance. Equally, we propose that it is a world with the potential to empower marginalised communities. Simultaneously, we note such a world will likely reproduce and amplify existing inequities. These inequities might arise through unequal access to digital infrastructure, algorithmic bias, dominance of language, varying levels of digital literacy, and the embedded political logic interwoven into digital systems. While technologies such as AI and immersive digital platforms offer powerful possibilities, they also introduce complex challenges related to power, and control.

Within such fraught emerging technologies—no matter how exciting—cultural democracy therein provides a critical lens for understanding how digital systems might disrupt and transform intercultural experiences. Indeed, cultural democracy raises questions around the types of accessibility, representation, and agency embedded in technological infrastructures. Addressing these issues is a necessary step toward fostering a digital future that is not solely focused on innovative outputs, but also democratic, transensual, and relational collaborations. This also requires us to imagine alternative digital futures, ones where immersive environments are mobilised in ways that support transcultural connection, critical dialogue, and democratic cultural participation.

In this chapter, we therefore examine these challenges and opportunities, and draw attention to the potential of immersive digital worlds as spaces of cultural exchange and transformation. We delve into *how* technological systems such as AI have been built, and how this might shift as these tools develop, and extend our discussion of world-building as a critical approach to exploring said digital worlds.

9.2 Digital Democracy

Globally, educational and cultural organisations are recognising the potential for digital technology to transform their practices. While these shifts offer opportunities for transformation and empowerment, they also risk reinforcing dominant narratives experienced in the 'live' space, unless supported by critical and reflexive engagement. This concern is growing with the rapid advancement of AI, which simulates aspects of human intelligence (Russell & Norvig, 2021). These elements include learning, problem-solving and creating, and are communicated through the generation of textual, visual and aural expressions.

Proponents of Artificial Intelligence in Education (AIEd) argue that Generative AI (GenAI) presents opportunities to democratise and expand access to quality education (Hao, 2019; Woolf et al., 2013). GenAI opens opportunities for diverse educational roles, including as an intelligent tutor, tutee, learning tool/partner, and policy-making advisor (Hwang et al., 2020)—increasing the scope for many more learners to enjoy access to personalised support during their education (Kamalov et al., 2023). In an ideal world, such interactive technologies would serve all individuals fairly, regardless of race, gender, ability, language, or geographic location. However, these aspirations often fall short and require a critical examination of digital technology that challenges "narrow assumptions regarding the universalisation of digital experience" (Varis, 2015, p. 3).

Lack of accessibility is one significant shortcoming of digital technology. The most common accessibility issues relate to the cost of digital technologies and not having access to hardware,

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software, connectivity, teachers, and a lack of digital literacy (Willems et al., 2019). While non-equitable digital design includes accessibility, it also covers issues of usability, functionality, and engagement. Currently, AIEd is predominantly designed to advance Eurocentric ideals and positivist, empirical epistemologies and ontologies underpinning education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (Nemorin, 2024). There is, thus, an urgent need for AIEd to extend beyond the educational purposes of qualification and socialisation, and then into subjectification (Biesta, 2020a).

Such a focus on the personal, situated, interpretive and critical construction of knowledge presents distinct hermeneutical challenges for AIEd (Heimens et al., 2023). While AIEd has begun teaching creativity (Anantrasirichai & Bull, 2022; Markauskaite et al., 2022), these practices have approached creativity as an individual competence that can be instrumentalised to support design innovation needs (Habib et al., 2024); this entrenching neoliberal, colonial and empirical hierarchies of knowledge and approaches to creativity across the globe (see also Chapter 8).

The limitations of AIEd illustrate how this codified system of intelligence is informed by socio-political constructs, which can mirror and amplify the identities of its developers (Broockman et al., 2019). These computational systems are designed to mimic aspects of human cognition and perception, but have been trained on datasets that encode particular cultural, historical, and political ideals and perspectives (Peters, 2022). These systems thus construct an algorithmic bias: procedural logic behind data processing and content delivery, determining what becomes visible or invisible in digital space (Bucher, 2018; Gillespie, 2014).

These mechanisms (intentional or otherwise) accentuate that AI is neither neutral nor objective, but rather often reflects the discriminatory logics embedded in the data they consume—reproducing systemic inequality under the guise of efficiency (Noble, 2018). Such automated systems can perpetuate a 'New Jim Code,' with technologies that appear neutral reinforcing existing racial hierarchies (Benjamin, 2019). We note that this is already giving rise to further ethical issues, with the hegemonic potential of digital technology further disempowering marginalised communities (Schiff, 2022).

Whose ways of knowing, interacting, and engaging are supported, and whose are erased or flattened? Within the digital world, digital tools therefore function as *cultural actors*: shaping immersive environments, reframing communication, and redefining what is possible in the technological sphere. Anticipatory governance approaches are increasingly integrating digital tools, particularly AI, within the development of future-focused policies (Tõnurist & Hanson, 2020). This compels us to critically examine how these tools are designed, who they serve, and how they might support or challenge cultural democracy.

This line of questioning highlights a central tension. While digital tools have the potential to connect across cultures and contribute readily to our transcultural aims, they also carry embedded assumptions that may flatten or distort cultural specificity. The concept of 'design justice' is continues to highlight the need for technologies that are developed with (and not just for) historically marginalsied communities (Costanza-Chock , 2020).

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Importantly, equity in design should not be confused with equality. While equality implies distributing the same tools to everyone, equity recognises that different communities have different needs, histories, and relationships with technology. Ultimately, equitable design requires both intercultural and transcultural frameworks that acknowledge the movement, negotiation, and entanglements of identities in globalised, digitised contexts. Designing in this way transforms digital interactive spaces into potential sites of and for learning. It invites us to imagine technologies not as sterile tools for efficiency, but as living environments capable of holding multiple worldviews; ideally creating space for radical empathy and fostering plural futures.

Extending from recent OECD and UNESCO policy papers, ethical technology frameworks have thus examined how inclusion and accessibility may be maintained through a human-centred design approach to AI (Nguyen et al., 2023; Wei & Niemi, 2023). These frameworks seek to avoid a totalitarian digital system that further marginalises by responding to the divergent cultural, disciplinary, and learning needs of all people (Adams, 2021) and the diverse purposes of education (Pinkwart, 2016). Alternative design principles rooted in relationality, situated knowledge, and Indigenous epistemologies might also offer paths forward (Escobar 2018; Z. Todd 2016).

9.3 Digital Worldbuilding for Transcultural Collaboration

To critically engage with the universalist and neoliberal ideologies that underpin much of contemporary digital technology, we might explore alternative methodologies that resist homogenising culture and foster multiplicity. One such approach is the notion of *worldbuilding,* a practice emerging from narrative theory, speculative design, and participatory storytelling (Turner & Taboada, 2021). Traditionally associated with fiction, cinema, and game development, worldbuilding refers to the creation of detailed and immersive environments. However, as a critical design methodology, worldbuilding extends far beyond entertainment to become a tool for imagining new sociocultural realities (Martin & Sneegass, 2020). In this sense, worldbuilding can be understood as a generative methodology that operates at the intersection of speculation, design, and collective imagination. Rather than assuming a singular, fixed reality, worldbuilding encourages the development of layered environments that accommodate conflicting narratives and perspectives. Worldbuilding thus enables dialogical processes between participants, opening possibilities for negotiation, experimentation, and reflexive engagement (Taboada et al., 2024). These processes diverge from user-centred design's often market-oriented logic and instead emphasise pluralism, relationality, and worldmaking as an ethical practice.

Extending from this, Escobar's concept of the *pluriverse* presents a political rejection of the universal world of Western modernity—shifting in favour of a world where "many worlds fit" (2018, p. 4). In this framework, design is not a neutral, technical activity but a process driven by philosophical, societal, and political underpinnings. Escobar draws from decolonial thought to critique the imposition of universalist, techno-specific ideas, and urges designers to engage with culturally situated practices that reflect diverse ways of knowing and being. Worldbuilding, then, can become a practice of resistance; a means to rupture norms and design worlds that open us to speculation.

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We have argued that within PEPA, as a pathway to transensus, such speculating involves experiencing and experimenting with roles, and speculating on alternate perspectives and behaviours (Papacosta, 2023). These embodied possibilities urge us to question, what kind of social interactions or artistic imaginations are made possible or challenged by digital design? As Willis (2006) suggests, what we design will design us back. Therefore, INTRACOMP explores worldbuilding as a speculative methodology that allows designers, artists, and communities to interrogate whose futures are being imagined and engage in collective authorship of digital worlds. This pushes against the desire for fast-paced innovation and quick solutions to a conscious, slower, collaborative, and reflective mode of worldbuilding as a path to imagining a world together.

Worldbuilding through digital technology offers a way to centre experiences that are frequently left at the margins. As Costanza-Chock (2020) contends, most mainstream digital design practices operate within a space that privileges whiteness, masculinity, heteronormativity, able-bodiedness, and economic power. These norms are often embedded into algorithms, interfaces, and AI—reproducing social exclusion beyond the human.

The very 'nonhumanness' of these oppressive structures as existing within the digital sphere demands an approach that calls upon co-creating and imagining new worlds together. This speculation is, as Dunne and Raby (2013) note, less about solving problems and more about asking better questions. In speculative worldbuilding, we seek out discomfort, search for contradiction, aim for tension, and look out for difference. Our world is space full of these aspects, and while we are drawn to sameness and similarity, in building a digital world we must resist the urge to resolve difference. Instead, worldbuilding becomes an act of tension, a place of holding multiplicities together that refuse to be unified. Through this lens, posthuman theory becomes a necessary framework for making sense of digital design and worldbuilding beyond human exceptionalism. As Braidotti (2016) argues, the category of 'the human' is not universal, as "we are not human in the same way or to the same extent to begin with" (p. 15). This leads to questions on how digital worldbuilding might unravel differences and contradictions within this space.

Our proposal to use digital worldbuilding to enable transcultural competence and transensus is not without risk that said. Though we contend that marginalised experiences can be centred by digital platforms, and that diverse experiences and perspectives can be shared with and by users in ways otherwise unfeasible in everyday life, the possibilities rendered by these avenues are contingent on desire. One key concern for INTRACOMP's digital mission therefore relates to our tendency to design and dive into worlds that we are *already* accustomed to.

For example, the much-debated phenomena of online echo chambers (Dubois & Blank, 2018; Liu et al., 2025). An echo chamber is defined as a space where an individual's views and beliefs are reinforced by repetition, with other like-minded actors in said space sharing similar views (Hartmann et al., 2025). The 'call' of the individual's worldview is therefore 'echoed' back by other participants in the space. This worldbuilding process is enabled by *filter bubbles*—online algorithms that recommend information and opportunities to a user based on their use-indicated preferences (Erickson, 2024; Kaiser & Rauchfleisch, 2020). Through filter bubbles, echo chambers emerge and see their effects

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compounded: a user's viewpoint is validated by an echo, which emphasises certain user behaviours, in turn reiterating a user's preferences to a platform's content algorithm, with these analysed by the filter bubble again, leading to 'more of the same' content being recommended and engaged with, and so on.

Though dissenting research on filter bubbles challenges our more negative framing (see Erickson, 2024; Zhao, 2023) and contentions surround the scale of echo chambers' present impact on society (Dubois & Blank, 2018), our caution is based on the aims and scope of this chapter and project as a whole. While we recognise that algorithms and certain echoes could have positive roles to play in building a cohesive society (e.g. by protecting at-risk groups from surveillance or stigma; Zhao, 2023), if digital worldbuilding is to contribute to transculturalism, then it will ideally entail a lack of echoes by design.

The challenge is to therefore build a world where people with opposing views are able to connect, and—more than simply agree or disagree (see Chapter 5)—engage in a transensual deliberation that moves beyond binary outcomes. This design process will, of itself, invite new risks. Beyond willpower, use, and algorithmic tendencies, we must reconcile our ambitions for digital worldbuilding with data showing that unstructured digital interactions between people with opposing beliefs worsens interpersonal relationships and increases the risk of in-person, physical violence occurring between groups (Gallacher et al., 2021; cf. Chueca Del Cerro, 2024; Suhay et al., 2017). In other words, it is not sufficient to simply design an open world and assume that proximity alone will engender transcultural interactions and transensus (see also Jacob & Banisch, 2023).

By contrast, it appears that liminality—a key quality of transensus (see 5.2)—requires digital structures to truly flourish. Research suggests that face-to-face cross-ideological communications may elicit more positive experiences than online ones (Binnquist et al., 2022). Comparably, MacInnis and Page-Gould (2015) propose a positive correlation between psychological investment in intergroup interactions and arriving at what they call the 'contact threshold,' where short-term negative experiences between different groups are finally outweighed by long-term positive experiences.

How, then, might a digital space be designed to enable these structures? Based on the literature discussed above on 'in-person' interactions, we argue that privacy, or at least intimacy, matters in matters of open exchange. We should not assume that the value of participation is dependent on it being public. For this reason, it is critical to consider how opportunities for private contact—direct messaging or video calling, for example (Binnquist et al., 2022)—might be integrated into digital worlds; public content interaction and consumption alongside other users being insufficient means for inspiring transensual and transcultural learning.

Digital worldbuilding through a posthuman lens recognises that algorithms, data, interfaces, and AI are not passive technical tools. They influence perception, access, identity formation, and cultural understandings. To speculate on the future, we need to imagine the digital world as a space that is not built *for* users, but as something experienced *with* them. That is, that the very experience of engaging with the digital world and worldbuilding aspect is to experience the intra-action (Barad, 2007) of all human, nonhuman, and more-than-humans in that space and recentres the relations between them. As Bayley (2018) asks, who and what gets a voice, right down to an atomic level? The digital

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world, in this light, is not an extension of human imagination, but a field of entangled agencies where the nonhuman is already active and already political. Understanding digital worldbuilding in this way carries radical implications for how we understand inclusion and representation in digital environments. It moves beyond adding a cultural avatar or character and asks to examine the political within design. It challenges designers to unlearn anthropocentric habits of fixing broken systems toward imagining.

A transcultural digital space might thus amplify the experience of culture being made and remade (Juneja & Kravagna, 2013), through immersive environments, AI, and a process of world-building. Such digital world-building might act as a place where users co-create, shape, and build the environment in ways that attend to issues of power, identity, and culture.

9.4 Chapter Summary

INTRACOMP is driven by a desire to advance cultural democracy. This approach emphasises co-creation, dialogue, and participatory engagement across diverse communities. Rejecting reductive and static definitions of identity, INTRACOMP instead calls for a more pluralistic, fluid, and evolving understanding of culture, in response to the ever-changing realities of a digitised and interconnected world. While the significance of embodiment (as articulated in the PEPA model in Chapter 7) might appear marginalised within the digital sphere, we recognise that how embodiment is experienced may be radically shifting as a result of technological innovation. As we seek to anticipate the future needs of learners, we therefore need to be mindful of how digital technology will inevitably be central to their experiences of participating in embodied performing arts.

One of the most urgent considerations for exploring digital interactive technology through a transcultural and intercultural lens towards a culturally democratic experience is the question of diversity and equity. These issues point to a necessity for digital interactive technologies to be shaped by and with community, towards a fluid approach that might decentre hegemonic ideas of technology usage. As such, any effort to design inclusive and interactive technologies must begin by asking not just who has access, but also whose ways of knowing are legitimised within these systems.

We are also moving toward a future where knowledge generation is not solely human nor solely nonhuman. We thus require a deeper understanding of the ways that nonhuman others shape our perceptions of the world. As we navigate through times of significant global and cultural change, an embrace of human-centred design is not sufficient as we are not 'human' in the same ways (Braidotti, 2016). Remaining human-centred leads to assumptions regarding who the human might be in the design, thereby neglecting differences and homogenising the digital user. As such, we seek a deeper consideration of the entanglement of human and non-human collaboration and how technologies, particularly AI, operate with their on embedded intelligence and logic.

Whatever the future might bring, we can anticipate that our embodied experiences of interacting and collaborating will become more complex. Through this chapter, we have introduced some key themes that may therefore guide us as this project proceeds and as we travel into an interconnected, pluralistic universe.

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10

Conclusion

“Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a **great and sudden change**.”

—Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

10. Conclusion

Narrative: Crossings, Part 2

"It's Mercedes Sosa, isn't it?"

Surprised, the guard looks up at the young woman's warm face.

"Yeah, *Todo Cambio*. One of my favourites. You know it?"

"Of course—it was my mother's go-to for road trips when we first moved here. We weren't travelling a heap back then, because of the border closures, but…"

The guard cuts in: "But it made you feel like things could change?"

The woman smiles. Remembering those trips, out of the house and even further from home, the music did precisely that. Times had changed and were changing, but never more so than in those drowsy backseat moments.

Turning the volume up, the guard passes the passport back under the glass.

10.1 When Time is of the Essence

The future is upon us.

The aphorism above presents several dimensions, and we might interpret it in two distinct ways. First, and on one hand, the expected impacts of climate change are already influencing how we behave today. What may have felt, for some, like a far-flung future is already the present for millions of people (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2023, 2024) and the anticipation of forthcoming crises persists as an underlying factor in current decision-making and governance (Ahern, 2025).

On the other hand, how the future continues to manifest depends on *us*: our actions, ambitions, and enquiries. Acknowledging the twin aspects of this idiom may offer us a collective sense of both direction and agency. That is, the future is already shaping whatever we choose to do individually, and—at the same time—what we choose to do in the present will influence our shared future.

Though a simple phrase, we argue that claiming "The future is upon us" really invites a complex mandate. We must critically explore the diverse pathways that the climate crisis may prompt humanity to tread, and identify how our current actions may bolster those pathways that align with Europe's democratic and humanitarian ideals.

As we noted in our introduction chapter, this process of ideological worldbuilding has prompted a juxtaposition while approaching our task. While this report is framed as a literature review, it carries the 'vibe' of a manifesto (see 5.5).

Within INTRACOMP, we recognise that whatever research and creative action we undertake, it must be in support of societal transformation. We also recognise that societal transformation does not simply 'happen' by conceptualising our shared concerns. Transformation requires a purposeful disruption of the dominant paradigms that inhibit cultural change, and the illumination of viable, alternative paradigms. Our manifesto therefore presents a sustained argument that first identifies and challenges particular theories and practices we believe will inhibit the future of democracy. In a process

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of unfolding, our manifesto then advances theoretical frameworks that may guide our pathways around these problematic habits of thought and practice.

We began this review/manifesto by promoting a socio-political shift from resilience to transilience (Rosati et al., 2024). Amidst the migrations of the present day and anticipated mass mobilities of the future, we argued that individuals and communities will be better prepared to sustain equality, inclusion, and diversity if the cultures and identities we carry can adapt rather than remain rigid across time and population changes. To remain ethical, we posited that this process of adaptation will require the foregrounding of cultural democracy, which—in turn—may be supported by experiences of transensus within deliberative democracy as a transcultural activity. We further argued that these experiences can be enabled through Participatory Embodied Performing Arts, or PEPA, across both live and digital spheres, and then measured and scaffolded through competence frameworks that value the nested ecologies of transcultural competence.

To explore this pathway, our literature review has taken a creative, if not slightly unconventional, approach to surveying the current science. Informed by postpositivist thought and the need for creative, anticipatory research, we therefore believe that this document is as much a review as it is a starting point: a pluralist, speculative call to action and guide for the remainder of INTRACOMP's work.

10.2 Summary of Review

In this review, we adopted a critical-integrative method, using a narrative style—embracing author subjectivity and fictions to promote imagination and worldbuilding—to explore the nexus of diverse disciplinary (and interdisciplinary) fields. These contextual and conceptual fields included climate change and mobility, political science, cultural studies, education, creativity, performing arts, and digital technology. This led us to theorise and propose several new ideas around deliberation, cultural interaction, competence, and participation. We therefore conclude this review by summarising these discussions and our contributions below, before finally detailing some directions for future research activities.

Following our introductory and methodological chapters—the latter of which described our 'Frankenstein's method' of suture *qua* review—we grounded our study in Chapter 3's hyperobject of climate change. In this chapter, we explained that a significant but unknowable number of people will be displaced by the climate crisis over the next 25 years. We contended that this uncertainty emphasises the value of postpositivist approaches to anticipatory research, and the worldbuilding, possibility-thinking significance of preparedness over planning.

Advocates and academics alike have expressed concerns over how this level of mobility will be received, specifically in terms of cultural exclusion or assimilation. Looking to current trends in xenophobia and the mistreatment of migrants, in Chapter 4 we questioned whether we are prepared for the cultural configurations that will emerge as climate mobility intensifies. Interrogating the 'foundational beliefs of modern citizenship,' we explored how ideas of civic participation may be enhanced and enabled by cultural democracy. This led us to critically question the determinist,

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utilitarian mandates of consensus and dissensus, and open possibilities for alternate mandates within deliberative democracy.

In Chapter 5, we introduced the term *transensus*—a 'feeling-across' liminal state that enables complex deliberation beyond binary outcomes. Through transensus, we suggested that we can establish a vibe with others in democratic deliberations, with this allowing us to experience togetherness without necessarily identifying shared or disparate values and goals. From this point, we proposed that we can encounter cultural difference and allow such encounters to disrupt our assumptions about essential or universal cultural manifestations. The Indigenous Pacific philosophy of *tā-vā* underscored and enhanced this conceptualisation of collective being, identifying how sharing temporal rhythms can be a valuable democratic outcome, in and of itself.

We then explained that, through transensus, we can engage in transcultural activity: the generation of new, temporary, and meaningful forms of culture relevant to the individuals and communities involved. Such ethical processes of cultural collaboration directly support the development of transilient individuals and communities. In Chapter 6, we explored how transcultural activity may extend from (yet be distinctive of) intercultural activity, elaborating on a philosophical transition from cultural relativity to constructivism in cultural interactions and relationships. We noted that this phenomenon is not new and is perhaps pervasive around the world. This clear articulation of transculturalism provides, however, a distinctly collaborative and fluid mandate in contrast to some prevalent understandings of interculturalism. This, in turn, raised questions as to where and how such transcultural encounters might be actively enabled.

In Chapter 7, we then identified how participatory, embodied performing arts provide opportunities for fluid, collaborative, and imaginative transcultural encounters through the potentials of roleplay, shared experiences, and creativity. We argued that participation is a complex action that requires a particular rationale in order to support transcultural activity. Leaning on Biesta's (2020a) framework for education, we identified how a participatory rationalisation of subjectification may contrast with participatory rationalisations of qualification and socialisation. We therein sought to explore and evidence how cultural democracy may be extended through subjectification within the Participatory, Embodied, Performing Arts (PEPA).

Our interest in evidencing such transcultural activity thus moved us into the zone of competence frameworks and considerations of how a phenomenon as complex as transculturalism might be identified, measured, and scaffolded to support the growth of transcultural competence through education. Reviewing traditional approaches to competence frameworks in Chapter 8, we identified some of the limitations presented by a neoliberal focus on the 'achievement' of competence as an individual trait. This prompted us to consider how transcultural activity may be assessed in nested ecologies of individual and collective competences instead. Finally, in Chapter 9, we acknowledged the significance of digital interactions to transcultural encounters. We examined the ways that digital technologies, and particularly generative artificial intelligence, may present opportunities and challenges to the growth of cultural democracy. Of particular relevance to transilience, we noted how digital interactions can provide us with a space to explore other ways of

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being—living, working, and playing with people from diverse cultures around the world that we may not encounter every day.

10.3 Next Steps

Our review has traced a wide body of literature to produce a significant conceptual foundation for our forthcoming research tasks. In this light, we contend that the theoretical evidence base amassed will inform and support the progress of INTRACOMP, and turn to practical matters: beyond theory, how can we connect in broken times?

Conscious of the multiple crises faced by both European and global society, INTRACOMP explores how the performing arts might enable cultural democracy and cohesion during a period of increased climate mobility and political fracture. Our work will therefore continue after this review in several areas—competence assessment, capability training and development, digital platform studies, creative arts research, educational interventions, and policy writing—under the remit of five research work packages.

In Work Package 1 (WP1), we will further develop our conceptual basis for identifying, assessing, and promoting intercultural and transcultural competence (ITC) for individuals, groups, and organisations. Seeking insights from an international community of pedagogues, policymakers, and performing artists through online forums and in-person workshops, expert data will eventually be interwoven with the ideas presented in this literature review to advance the first iteration of the INTRACOMP ITC Framework. Reflecting on the questions that emerged in Chapters 5, 6, and 8, this nascent Framework will represent a significant opportunity for INTRACOMP to practice and test our theoretical ambitions for a participatory future.

In WP2, our ongoing Capability Training Program—currently being co-designed and tested with the cultural organisational partners within our consortium—will further support the iterative development of the Framework. Reflecting on the strengths and knowledges that our cultural partners both embody and practice, this Capability Program will then be shared globally through an online, digital learning service: another opportunity for INTRACOMP to connect the aims of PEPA, as a mode of engaging in ITC, with a larger audience.

This digital dimension of our project will be more extensively explored in WP3, which has begun development of the *RhizoVerse*: an online space to connect, create, play, and collaborate. With a focus on transensual interactions and the development of transcultural competence, the RhizoVerse foregrounds encounters with difference, and critically examines how users might engage with such.

Meanwhile, WP4 will explore the potential of PEPA: undertaking creative interventions with and through inclusive arts organisations in Italy, Greece, Serbia, Slovakia, Hungary, and Papua New Guinea. These interventions will offer an opportunity for formal practitioners and practices to learn from those engaging with cultural difference in non-formal arts education. WP5 will then analyse and adapt these lessons into formal education contexts in Norway, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, and Finland—undertaking additional case studies from early childhood to tertiary education to ask how transculturalism may be effectively assessed. We will then explore how these discoveries might be

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translated into policy initiatives and strategies in WP6. Seeking to extend our scope and impact, we will work with local, national, regional, and global governance bodies to co-construct meaningful policies that further advance cultural democracy.

Though time may be of the essence, and the urgency of our enquiry rendered even clearer with the conclusion of this review, the INTRACOMP project presents an opportunity for us to take what time remains to connect and consider the significance of acting together. Within this, we can creatively and collaboratively explore the inevitable changes that the future will bring, and design possible pathways to both meet and navigate it.

The future is upon us, and we are upon the future.

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11

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"My education was neglected, yet I was passionately **fond of reading**."

—Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

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