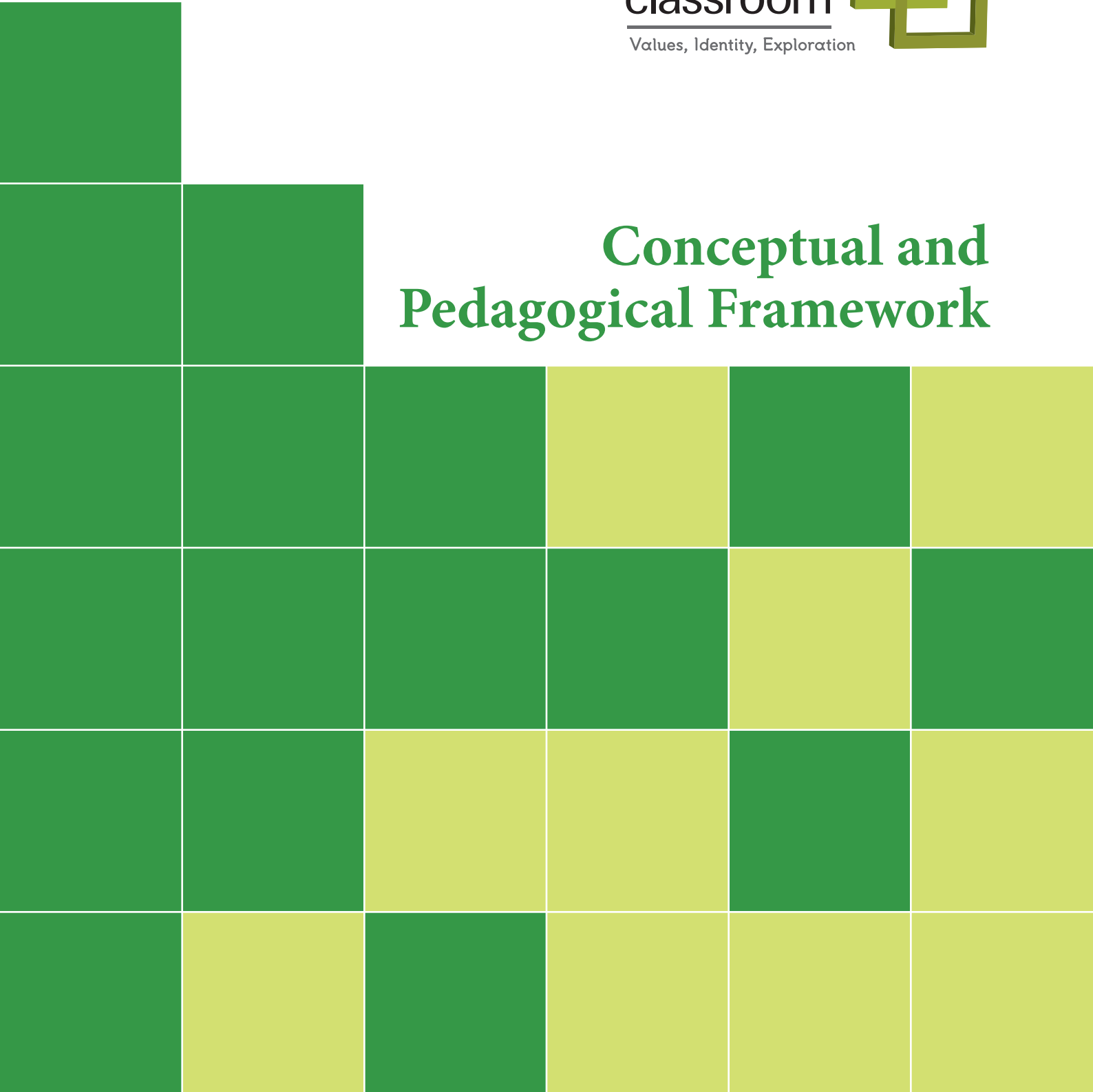


the
enquiring
classroom

Values, Identity, Exploration



Conceptual and Pedagogical Framework





Conceptual and Pedagogical Framework

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I. The Enquiring Classroom: General Objectives

Motivations and Contexts

The principles and pedagogical practices informing this conceptual framework are further elaborated in the project handbook. Here we provide the conceptual and theoretical commitments informing *The Enquiring Classroom* project and indicate how these have shaped the nature of the pedagogical and reflective exercises proposed in the handbook.

Questions of integration, cohesion, identity, democracy and belonging are at the forefront of both European educational and political discourses. Sometimes we are told that multiculturalism is a failed experiment, yet the acknowledgement and cultivation of diversity has been and remains at the heart of the European project and the very fact that the ‘other’ exists is both presupposed and valued in pluralistic societies. Yet, too often, extremes of secularist, political, and religious beliefs alike can see one another as sharing no common ground or values, often presupposing divisions and thus failing to locate those beliefs and values that they share, in principle, even if they may interpret them differently. How might we begin to re-imagine the commons, publics, and pluralism in educational spaces by approaching questions of values through a different set of lenses and commitments?

The Enquiring Classroom has been undertaken in collaboration with teachers and other educators all over Europe. Its clear philosophy of education rearticulates the relationship between values, democracy and education, and refuses to equate the democratic process with the ‘will of the people’ or the ‘rule of the majority’. The conceptual framework and philosophical approach that motivate the pedagogical exercises and propositions outlined in the handbook situates this endeavour within the educational tradition and the ‘natural history of humankind’; that is, it contextualises in both time and space our relationship to education.

At the time of writing the original proposal for *The Enquiring Classroom*, a number of issues were at the forefront of our minds. We wanted to work to support the creation of educational spaces that would be pedagogically inclusive and educationally welcoming, and that would also provide a space where, for example, questions of values could be put ‘on the educational table.’ As a consequence, we were aware of the contemporary political and policy agendas and priorities. One set of policy initiatives with educational implications to which the project wished and wishes to respond is the introduction of approaches or duties that are aimed to prevent (violent) extremism or terrorism into educational spaces, a number of which, both globally and in the European Union, are informed by or modelled on the UK’s Prevent Strategy, one of the strands of its counter-terrorism strategy CONTEST. We share the concern with other researchers and educational practitioners that initiatives that privilege the priorities and logics of ‘security’, in particular at a time of pre-emptive counter-terrorist policies, may have considerable implications for educational principles and practices (Mattsson and Säljö, 2018; O’Donnell, 2016; 2018; Sieckelink et al, 2015; Van San et al, 2013; Ragazzi, 2018), in particular given a rise in reports of Islamophobia and other forms of racism. We suggest that new initiatives, even if benevolent in intent, seeking to institute preventative measures in education as part of counter-terrorist strategies risk undermining the trust of communities, teachers and parents, instead of engaging them in open and honest conversations about the specific challenges of our time.

The project was also conceptualised in the context of significant forced displacements of people fleeing from conflict, resulting in the migration of millions to multiple countries to seek refuge, including Eu-

European countries. The refugee crisis has been born disproportionately by those countries at the front line of the movement of those fleeing persecution. For this reason, we believe that teachers and educators across Europe and beyond need to find ways of exchanging experience, knowledge and practice. Whilst certain European countries initially welcomed refugees, like Sweden, though there has also recently been a significant rise in the far right there, others like Greece have borne a heavy burden in reception that has been compounded by a financial crisis, and still others, like Ireland, have failed to welcome refugees in numbers that would be anticipated, and indeed has been seen as hostile to those seeking asylum or refuge given its controversial ‘direct provision’ system.

Considerable attention has been given to tendencies toward polarisation, with some (Brandsma, 2017) highlighting the risk of too excessive focus on the extremes rather than the complex ‘middle’ ground that might serve to further polarise by ignoring those dissenting voices that refuse to occupy simplified, extreme positions. Yet, language of populism, in particular that which has an authoritarian bent provides, oftentimes, a substantive vision for society and a set of precepts for belonging, albeit one that is at best exclusionary and often intolerant, if not hateful. Those populisms that are premised on narrow ‘identitarian’ claims, often privilege ‘purity’, and tend to be hostile to migration and pluralism. They appeal to regressive or nostalgic images of ethno-nationalism rather than, for example, civic republican ideals, more complex images of belonging, migration, and history, or the pluralistic commitments and principles of (liberal) democracy. Those who disagree with such a position, including European policy makers, have unfortunately, sometimes framed their responses to these significant social and political issues in the language of negative and procedural norms (You Ought/Must Not!), including through appeals to human rights, without also providing a countervailing *substantive* pluralistic and democratic vision.

There is a risk of focusing too much on polarisation or offering responses and reactions that are only premised on negative and proceduralist logics (including the appeal to the law) rather than offering substantive forms of belonging, living values, and connection with others. Our concerns about the insufficiency of such responses have led us to develop a project that does not simply seek to *prevent* (populism, anti-democratic forces, dissent, terrorism and so forth) – in this sense *The Enquiring Classroom* is an affirmative project, as will be elaborated more below – but rather seeks to *connect* with and *promote* values, meaning and purpose, and to do so in a way that takes pluralism as a given point of departure in educating for a sense of commitment to a common world. The critical nature of the project stems from a pedagogical and educational commitment to listening, dialogue, understanding, perspective-taking, and imagination. This means that students, at least in educational settings, must move beyond a single vision, a single story, and the absolute certainty of dogmatic views.

By orientating the project around the question of values, we seek to create educational atmospheres that address existential questions through which students can explore what matters to them, what values they hold valuable and that hold them, and how to live with others. Through the commitment to historical sensibility, we invite students to come to understand how things have come to be as they are, and to imagine how things might have been, and might still be otherwise. In what follows, we will describe our approach to the questions of education, democracy and values in contemporary times.

Publics, democracy and education

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, political theorist Hannah Arendt writes:

With each new birth, a new beginning is born into the world, a new world has potentially come into being. The stability of the laws corresponds to the constant motion of all human affairs... The laws hedge in each new beginning and at the same time assure its freedom of movement, the potentiality of something entirely new and unpredictable; the boundaries of positive laws are for the political existence of man what memory is for historical existence: they guarantee the pre-existence of a common world, the reality of some continuity which transcends the individual life span of each generation, absorbs all new origins and is nourished by them (1973: p.163)

At a time when the democratic project is not only being questioned but attacked, and when secularism is pitted against the religious, reflecting on the relationship between education, publics and democracy invites forms of educational exchange and pedagogical encounters that sustain what Gert Biesta (2013) has called ‘the beautiful risk of education’. This risk involves opening ourselves to one another, acknowledging our inter-dependence and mutual vulnerability, and sustaining a sense of our common world, without wilfully ignoring injustices, both past and present. Educational spaces can provide a temporary and provisional ‘shelter’ that allow us to think and talk about difficult questions, rather than moving us too quickly into the agonism of the public sphere of politics. When we speak of ‘publicity’ we mean, following Arendt, that part of the human condition means that we appear to one another in our plurality and that we need spaces in order to do so.

In the *Human Condition*, she writes “The term ‘public’ means, first, that everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity. For us, appearance—something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves—constitutes reality” (1958: p.50). The fulfillment of this desire depends on the existence of a plurality of others who share a common world. Our very sense of reality “depends utterly upon appearance” in a common world, the reality of which “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” (ibid. p.57). Making ‘public’ in the educational space, as distinct from the political space, requires that there be something on the table around which we gather and which we come to study together (e.g. Masschelein & Simons, 2013).

Like the political space, this requires virtues of openness, acknowledgement of inter-dependence, interest (*inter-esse*), and a pluralistic sensibility, even if the orientation is to the ‘objective’ world of culture, knowledge and artefacts. This sense of a common world is a fragile achievement, and this includes the conservation and renewal of the world through the educational endeavor. The sense of a common world is paradoxically given a grounding in the human reality that Arendt calls ‘sameness in utter diversity’. In turning to the world in an educational space, one may find oneself transformed. Anyone who has fallen in love with a poem, who experiences the delight of mastering the violin, or sees through an equation, or who suddenly sees one’s life story in a different light by putting on a different set of conceptual lenses knows this well. This falling in love is not just a personal matter, no matter how profound; it is part of this task of renewing and disclosing the world as things come to appear under a different light as part of a pluralistic universe.

Education is not primarily concerned with making or forming the self or citizen; its orientation is, we suggest with Arendt and others, to the world. We are born into a world that long preceded us and that will long outlast us. Yet so often educational discourses and policies seem to view education as a tool for preparing for the (unknown and unknowable) future, intent on creating growth, the entrepreneurial self, fostering innovation, or even promoting psychological or individualised approaches to resilience and well-being, despite this being a time of increasing precarity and insecurity for many people, young and old. In the image of education offered in this project, we maintain a commitment to a vision of education as the inter-generational project of passing on the stories of the world, the natural and cultural history of humankind in all its beauty and horror, so that the next generation can decide what it will keep, what it will renew, and what it will create.

Approach and rationale

Contemporary educational landscapes include many projects and approaches that seek to address questions of ethics, values, democracy, citizenship, and violence. Some of these do so through building communities of philosophy with children and young people, others create sites for aesthetic exploration and expression. Some invite reflection on presuppositions, bias, discrimination, and prejudices, whilst others engage in citizenship education and in values or character education.

This project seeks to adopt an explicitly pluralistic approach that is sensitive to the temporalities and rhythms of educational spaces; to space, to place, to time, to existence and to experience. The purpose

of such pluralism and sensitivity is to invite and support professional judgements that are attuned to the rhythms and particularities of different educational domains and classrooms. Our experimental approach to pedagogy maintains a strong sense of and commitment to the specific potentials of educational spaces – spaces that are suspended temporarily from the immediate concerns of the world. In educational spaces, forms of enquiry are possible that may not be possible or welcomed in other settings. The word ‘enquiry’ communicates this commitment to curiosity, to openness, to an investigation and exploration that extends us, as students and teachers, beyond ourselves.

The Enquiring Classroom is cognisant of a number of the contemporary debates and pedagogical approaches that seek to address inclusion, integration, alienation, prejudice, extremism and violence and has, as we note above, been devised as a positive and creative response to them by engaging with a plurality of positions and perspectives. Enacting the approach of *appreciative/affirmative enquiry*, the project seeks to reframe (temporarily at least) the language of the contemporary situation *from* one of difficulty, challenge, prevention, and problems *to* one which sees disputation, dissensus and indeed conflict as essential to the democratic process, and that engages appreciatively with values and beliefs. This is done by sustaining the desire to understand, whilst connecting those values and beliefs with lived experiences that are themselves articulated through interpretative stances. Building communities of practice and learning begins in local contexts, including finding creative and sensitive ways of engaging with the fears of suffering experienced by communities in times of crisis without retreating into monolithic divisions.

The aim of *The Enquiring Classroom* is to build communities of practice and exchange to support teachers across Europe in sharing their learning, experiences, ideas and practices and to build a set of creative pedagogical approaches that can be tailored to specific contexts, cultures and history. This, we hope, will manage to educationally address some of the most pressing contemporary issues facing western liberal democracies today whilst finding ways of connecting with ‘what matters’ for young people: how they live their lives, what they value, the ways in which they feel silenced and the ways in which they have voice, inviting them to explore diverse cultural heritages and shared worlds.

It is for this reason that we sometimes ask participants and students in *The Enquiring Classroom* not to identify themselves too quickly, asking instead why we feel the need to label and classify from the outset, asking as well what difference this makes to how we listen, what we hear, and how we speak. In inter-faith and inter-belief dialogue such a ‘de-identification’ strategy is not commonplace. Our desire is not to shut down discussions of one’s own faith or beliefs, rather, it is to the contrary, to ask whether we must *begin* with such identifications. We wonder whether our educational conversations might be different were we to allow our ideas and values to slowly unfold as we listen to one another without the prejudgements and presuppositions that might too easily accompany prior classifications or assumptions that allow for only for single identity commitments. In so doing, we aim to ensure that young people are listened to with care in classrooms and as educators that we also take care not to ‘read’ their statements through a lens that either distorts their words or refuses their questions and critiques. This means coming to welcome and to gather stories, inviting a slower temporality that allows us to get to know one another and our diverse ways of seeing, living, and knowing the world, such that we permit of more ambiguity and complexity in our encounters. Self-identification can be sometimes used as a stratagem of power and it risks locking people into a position to which they may feel they must adhere. Of course, this does not mean that we do not speak of experiences, ideas, beliefs, commitments or values or that we do not tell our stories, but rather that sometimes we avoid beginning with the closing gesture of making a firm personal statement like ‘I am a ...’ or ‘I am not a...’.

The Enquiring Classroom seeks to explore and understand values in pedagogical spaces. It engages with questions of diversity and democracy, enters into creative forms of dialogue, and seeks to examine our responsibilities as citizens – to one another on a relational and national level and well as on a European and global level. We find at both a national and European level a growing emphasis on questions of inclusion, tolerance, integration, counter-terrorism and radicalisation. As we have indicated above, we understand the motivation for preventative approaches to, for example, racism and extremism, but

choose instead to engage with sensitive, difficult and complex questions through creative pedagogical approaches that enable students to explore commitments, beliefs, and values, through philosophical enquiry, aesthetic encounter, and reflection on lived experience in the context of rich cultural heritages. We understand the desire to engage with controversial or ethically and politically difficult questions in schools and to up-skill teachers in this regard, but as is acknowledged in much of the literature, it is important to ensure that appropriate conditions and norms are embedded in school life before beginning such dialogues.

Timings, judgements and distinctions

One of the central dimensions of our project is to support teachers in making judgements and distinctions in terms of their professional engagement that are sensitive to the timing of things, that is, to judge *when* something that arises ought to be pursued pedagogically or educationally as an object of study, when it is to be deferred or suspended from the classroom as something (temporarily) irrelevant or requiring time for emotions to settle, when it is to become an issue of pastoral care, and when it is to be treated as a ‘judicial’ issue and as an incident to report. At times, a child or young person requires a professional intervention, at times risk management needs to be deployed, and at times, the situation needs to be clarified before intervening, for example, in situations of preventative counter-terrorism where the judicial dimension may be invoked before the teacher has had the opportunity to speak with and listen to the child or young person in order to fully understand the situation. Pre-emptive action that has not engaged in such a sensitive conversation with young people (and their families) can break trust, sometimes irrevocably, and this can induce fear in communities. Teachers need to know what kinds of responses best suit the situation at hand, and there is no rule for applying the rule, as Immanuel Kant and Hannah Arendt both tell us.

One pedagogical response that can be useful to engage with ‘controversial’ moments or ‘difficult’ topics is philosophical enquiry. Communities of philosophical enquiry ask that participants critically evaluate their own and other positions and that participants offer reasons for their positions. This can provide a fertile environment for the exploration of difficult and complex questions, whilst ensuring that young people do not feel silenced or that they cannot offer counter-arguments or counter-positions. Even extremist statements and positions can be dealt with in this way once a community has been established within a classroom and within a school.

In cases of evidence of radicalisation to violence or violent extremism, we recommend that schools and other educational and youth spaces engage pastorally with the young person and seek multi-agency and specialist supports in order to work with the young person. This would include any instance in which there is evidence of a risk of violence by or to the young person. In such cases more comprehensive responses will be required in order to safeguard the child and others. As educators, however, we feel we need to be careful in attributing such intent too quickly in cases of what may be read as extremist statements and that pedagogical responses rather than judicial responses might be more appropriate in such instances. We understand the importance of creating educational atmospheres and environments in which young people can experiment with and test ideas, cultivating their capacity for responsible speech and active listening. Therefore, in respect of questions of beliefs, values and ideas, contested as they may be, we believe that educational and pedagogical spaces can constitute robust and safe spaces for dialogue about complex questions about identity, values, conflict, cultural heritage, and history, and allow us to think about the kind of society that we want to create together.

The purpose of the school

Education does not aim directly at democracy and at fostering democratic citizens. The space for education is a more subtle space that creates a set of preconditions for democracy: thoughtful people who can listen, disagree, make well-informed judgements and learn from one another so that they, in due course,

can engage in democracy – the practice of agonistic negotiation. Hence, education is not the space for implementing political goals or for imposing onto the children the societal problems of the times, problems that the adult (and responsible) generation itself has not been able to solve (e.g. Arendt). The educational realm, by contrast, is the ‘time and space’ we insert between the private sphere of the home and the public space to make the next generation’s transition into political and democratic life possible (e.g. Arendt). Hence, the purpose of the school is to explore the values, traditions, norms, practices and stories that motivate democratic citizenship – to put them ‘on the studying table’ (Masschelein & Simons, 2013) for the next generation to pick up and take on, so to speak – but it is not to solve societal problems.

Central to this project, as we have outlined, is its affirmative and constructive orientation founded in dialogue and encounter which refuses to choose between binaries commonly found in educational discourse, policy and practice and in wider societal discourses. In this regard we distinguish between the procedural and negotiated nature of democracy and the ‘content-full’, if contested, nature of values. This is an important distinction as it welcomes contestation, negotiation, and agonism as part of the democratic process whilst understanding the importance of understanding and reflecting on values, alongside the need to understand how they are experienced, lived, negotiated, and interpreted.

Part of this gesture involves re-appropriating terms that have been appropriated by certain traditions in ways that exclude others. We don’t find the practice of framing ideas, encounters or practices in oppositional or binary terms pedagogically useful, such as for example: secular *or* religious; progressive *or* conservative; preservation *or* change, orientation toward the past *or* the future; skills *or* content; and so forth. Instead, we introduce the language of the sacred to the secular; the language of heritage and culture to liberalism; the language of ritual to everyday life in order to illuminate and educationally explore the *relational ways* in which these binaries constitute one other. We also aim to transform discourses of prevention into creative and engaging discourses by trying to connect with what matters to humans, as individuals, as societies, as citizens. This is done by developing a range of creative methodologies to complicate stories about the genesis and shared heritage of our species and our common world. Perhaps more controversially, whilst we acknowledge the necessary and vital contribution of human rights in our world in ensuring protection and norms, we argue that human rights cannot provide the ground or purpose for education, nor are they equivalent to the democratic process. Hence, what is required are more careful discussions and explorations of key concepts and values, including those associated with human rights, like equality, and the introduction of more careful consideration of questions of responsibility, obedience and duty. Again, this is to ensure that certain voices and interpretative traditions are not *de facto* privileged at the ‘studying table’ but rather that we are all given the opportunity to explore the stories of key concepts and values and our understanding and experience of them, and their meaning to us. For instance, freedom might not only be understood as freedom of choice but also as duty, emancipation, submission, choice, responsibility or obedience.

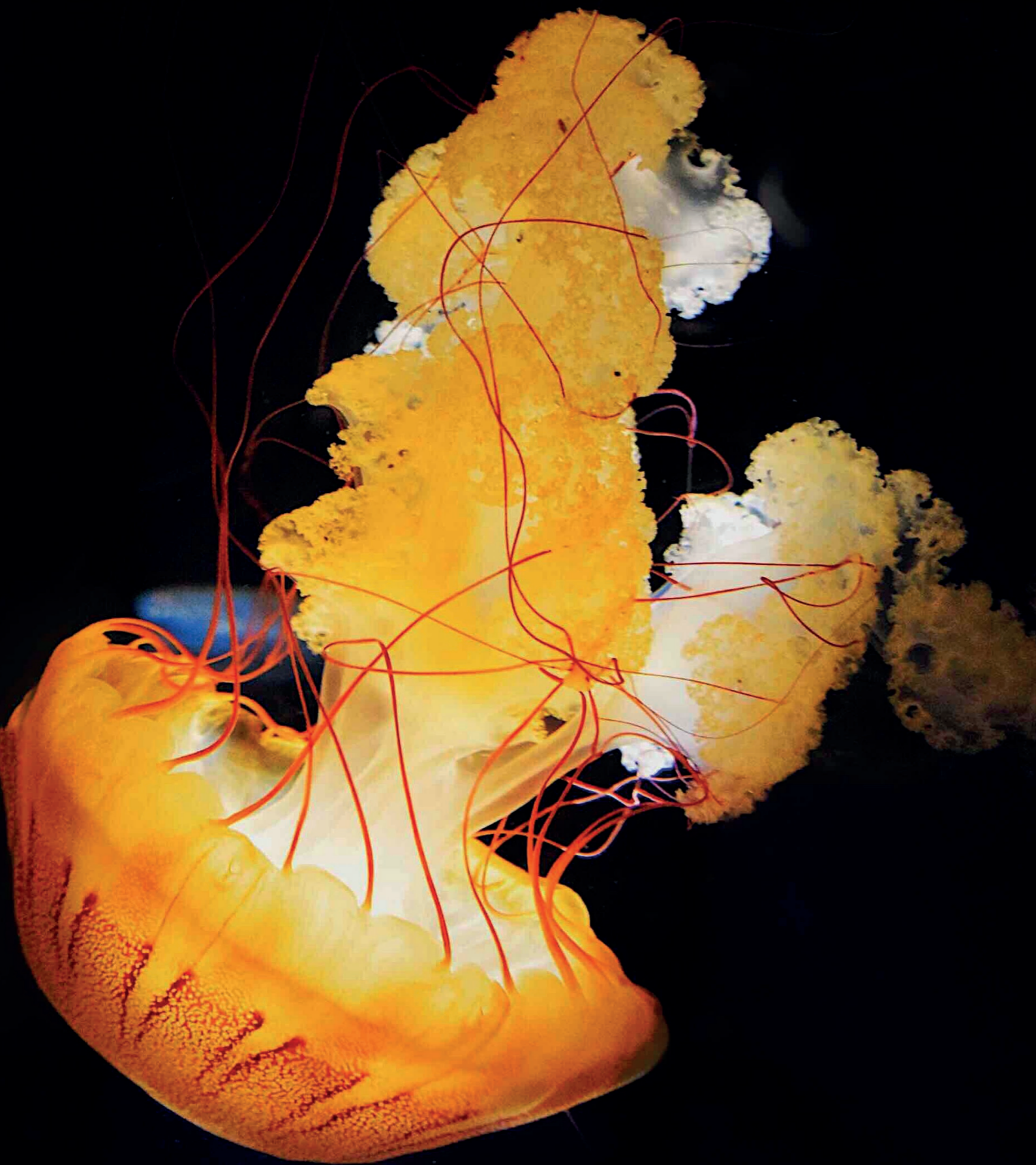
Here we want to suggest that whilst we encourage engaging with the so-called classical liberal values in educational spaces, these values are approached and understood through the lens of diverse positions, perspectives, beliefs, and heritages. These ‘liberal democratic values’ include freedom, generosity, tolerance, solidarity, care, justice, integrity, equality, inclusion, and responsibility, but we caution against the tendency to frame this as ‘core’ or ‘common’ values, shared only by those committed to Western liberalism. Rather we want to put these values ‘on the studying table’ to explore their diverse meanings and significance across a range of traditions and perspectives, as is proper in pluralistic societies. Furthermore, this conceptual framework is underpinned by a series of important images and metaphors that are constitutive of some of the key concepts that inform the pedagogical dimensions of the project. These images and concepts include the following: commons; estrangement; suspension; distance; the world; pluralism; poetic contiguity; agonism; sensibility; temporality; space and place; playfulness; trust; non-identification; fostering; atmosphere.

One of the main purposes of the school is to ‘make things common’ in and through joint enquiry, exploration and study (Masschelein & Simons, 2013). Instead of beginning in the idea of a presupposed (need for) commonality where the role of education is simply to implement an abstraction or a fiction, we be-

gin in the concrete realities of a pluralistic society where people may have very little in common (Biesta, 2006). Together with other scholars in the field we argue that one of the main purposes of education is to ‘make things common’ (such as, for example, liberal democratic values), in particular where commonality is scarce and that the embodiment of this purpose makes the school a unique place in this day and age. It is, in fact, what makes the school a *school*. Coming from different backgrounds, cultures and religions traditions, the school, we argue, is the only place in our contemporary societies where the next generation (the pupil) can study something (a subject matter) under the guidance of someone (a teacher) for a certain purpose (turned into a matter of concern) (e.g. Biesta 2012). Making things common in and through joint exploration and study, building from the bottom-up instead of beginning in a presupposed (but fictitious) commonality, is the guiding principle for *The Enquiring Classroom*. It is the sustainable living-on of values, traditions, norms and cultures, building this from the bottom-up, which guides the work that is being done in and through *The Enquiring Classroom*. This is how we make liberal values meaningful and live on into the future (Bergdahl & Langmann, 2017b). This is also how we ‘make democracy’ from an educational perspective. This is how we engage with tradition, and this is how we build community in the classroom (ibid.). The conceptual framework we seek to offer and the practices and exercises we aim at designing in this project all strive towards making commonality amongst people who may have very little in common, from the bottom-up.

In choosing to mobilise the concept of the ‘common’ or ‘commons’, we aim to place alongside one another, contiguously, heterogeneous ideas, beliefs, concepts, and values that might ordinarily be separated into different classifications or seen as occupying different temporalities or even different worlds. The image to which we return in this regard is ‘putting something on the table’ (Masschelein & Simons, 2013) – it is what we introduce to create a space between us that gives us something about which we can talk, and that also allows us to reflect on our own experiences and stories without retreating into monologues, merely ‘expressing’ our opinions without listening to others, or retreating into dogmatic certainties born of the ‘authenticity’ of experience. By engaging with mediating objects, concepts and themes, reflection and transformation are permitted, without reducing the educational space to either a therapeutic space or making it a permissive space of uninterrogated and uncontested expression of opinions. The image of the commons that is part of ‘putting something on the table’ does not begin, as mentioned above, in presupposed commonality, but seeks to create it, in and through education. It encourages us to come together in ways that allow for the ‘who’ of each of us to be encountered without beginning with the presuppositions, prejudices and assumptions that can accompany those approaches that begin with identifying and classifying ourselves and others. In this way, it is understood as a public or quasi-public space that allows for ideas, values and practices that might be otherwise be seen as disparate or unconnected to be gathered and set alongside one together in a mediating space.

We disclose who we are as we enter into dialogue with one another, and as we listen to one another ‘we train our imaginations to go visiting’ (Arendt, 1992; Disch, 1993). The common or the commons is not about seeking agreement or consensus. It is about imagining different ways of encountering one another and the world through activating the specific potential of educational spaces, spaces that involve the temporary suspension from the immediate cares of the world enabling us to direct our focus outward, initially at least, to the world so that as we return to reflect on our own beliefs, values, ideas and commitments, we do so with a sense of a world that is greater than us, that long preceded us and that will long outlast us; that is, with a sense of humility. Before we continue with our own educational vision and commitments, we offer some context for the genesis of our ideas.



II. Examples with and from which *The Enquiring Classroom* thinks

Example 1: Education, religion and beliefs in the context of European policy

This project responds to and is informed by a range of European Union and global policy documents, as well as scholarly work and research, in particular that concerning education about religions and beliefs. There has been an increasing awareness of growing religious and belief diversity in Europe as well as a recognition that religion and belief cannot be simply relegated to the private sphere. Zygmunt Baumann's (1993) work describes religion as being of deep importance in relation to ethnic and cultural identity, and other research has outlined the complex interplay between religious identity, ethnicity, citizenship and faith (Baumfield, 2002: p.82; Barnes, 2012: p.109; Bergdahl, 2010). Madood (2010) argues that religion is part of humanity at all levels - personal, social and civilisational - and that respect for the religion of others, even while not requiring participation, is based on a sense that religion is a good in itself. He also suggests that religious identity is linked to political identity, even if negatively, for if political equality means merely ignoring religious identities we are favoring religious identities that are purely private and *not* treating all religious identities equally. We are *preferring* a particular kind of religious identity (Madood, 2016). Religions and beliefs are also present in the preamble of the European Union's first Constitution. It describes how the EU draws inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritances of Europe, as well as from the universal values expressed in the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, including a commitment to democracy, equality, freedom and the rule of law.

Yet, prior to 2001, the Council of Europe did not include a religious or belief dimension to its work on intercultural education, as religion and belief tended to be viewed as a private, personal, individual matter. Post 9/11 there was, however, a discernable policy shift, in particular in inter-governmental institutions who began to advocate the study of religion and beliefs in public schools in Europe (Jackson 2008). The motivation for this range of initiatives was at least indirectly prompted by the security concerns in the wake of political violence and acts of terrorism, and the fears that these were provoked by ideological and religious fundamentalisms. The framing of religious education under a 'security' or 'counter-terrorist umbrella has been challenged by Gearon (2013) and O'Donnell (2018). Nonetheless, religions and beliefs increasingly became 'a topic of concern' in the public sphere, and the Council of Europe took the view that all young people should have an understanding of religions and beliefs as part of their education (Jackson, 2014: p.5). In many ways this began to open up a different way of understanding the relationship between democracy, education and values, for good and for ill.

Initially, research and educational priorities tended to focus on religious freedom and human rights (Uitz, 2007) highlighting the universal right to freedom of religion and belief as well as the obligation to protect the rights of others (OSCE, ODIHR, 2007: p.14, Jackson et al, 2007). These commitments were drawn from Article 9 of the *European Convention on Human Rights* and Article 10 of the *EU Charter of Fundamental Rights* protecting freedom of religion or belief, a right also listed in Articles 18 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR). Freedom of religion or belief, understood here, involves two inter-related but separate dimensions: Firstly the freedom to choose to have or not to have, or to change or not to change, one's own religion or beliefs; secondly, the freedom to practise or manifest one's own religion or beliefs, as an individual or as a member of a community in public or private, by worship, teaching and practice. This

positioning in a human rights framework is significant as a response to extreme right wing politics in Europe (Faas, 2013), as well as hostility towards those who are perceived as different (Carr, 2016; Fanning, 2012; Breen, 2012 et al.). However, in *The Enquiring Classroom*, we argue that whilst necessary, the human rights framework is not sufficient in terms of engaging children and young people to engage deeply with values from a range of lineages and perspectives.

Still, the framing of these questions of religions and beliefs within the field of intercultural education has been to the forefront of European educational priorities for some time. More than a decade ago, the Council of Europe began its work on the religious dimension of intercultural education. This resulted in the publication of its reference book for schools (Keast, 2007). Religions and beliefs were no longer viewed as belonging to the child's private world outside the school walls, but rather as something that needed to be engaged with sensitively and competently in an educationally appropriate manner inside the school. Their place in the curriculum was often seen to be a key aspect of intercultural education and citizenship education (Jackson et al, 2007: p.32) where religions and beliefs were to be taught through sensitive, appropriate and inclusive methodologies, including interpretive and dialogical approaches.

In 2008 the Council of Europe published a white paper on *Intercultural Dialogue Living Together as Equals in Dignity* (2008) and its Committee Ministers published a series of recommendations on the place of religious and non-religious convictions within intercultural education (Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12). Teachers and schools were viewed here as facilitators for dialogue about religions and beliefs and values in Europe. In this respect, in the period post 9/11 a number of research projects were designed to promote inter-belief dialogue such as the Oslo Coalition project on *School Education, Tolerance, and Freedom of Religion or Belief* (Unesco, 2004); *Religion in Education: A contribution to Dialogue or a Factor of conflict in transforming societies of European Countries* (REDCo 2006-2009); and *the E-Bridges Project* (2008). The overall tenor of the research was a commitment to the idea that schools and educators have both the capacity and the responsibility to promote inter-religious understanding, dialogue and tolerance (Council of Europe, 2005).

Of critical importance in shaping the way that this would be approached was the publication of the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* (OSCE 2007). This was founded on two inter-related principles that 'there is positive value in teaching that emphasizes respect for everyone's right to freedom of religion and belief, and second, that teaching about religions and beliefs can reduce harmful misunderstandings and stereotypes'. *Toledo's* principles are generated from within a human rights framework where freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as the rights of minority and religious communities are emphasised. The principles emphasise the need for a variety of pedagogic approaches to teaching and learning about religions and beliefs as well as the cultivation of multi-perspectivity and sensitivity to different interpretations of reality and local manifestations of religious and secular plurality. Most interestingly *Toledo* states that there should be no opt-out to teaching or learning about diverse religions and beliefs. 'An individual's personal religious (or non-religious) beliefs do not provide sufficient reason to exclude that person from teaching about religions and beliefs. The most important considerations in this regard relate to professional expertise, as well as to basic attitudes towards or commitment to human rights in general and freedom of religion or belief in particular' (2007: p.14).

Although *Toledo* recognises that there are many possible approaches to teaching and learning about religions and beliefs, it firmly locates itself in the *teaching about* religions and beliefs approach in Europe. By this it is meant that students in schools should be given 'quality education' about diverse religions and beliefs, to prepare them to live in a belief-plural society (2007: p.18). Rather than leaving religions and beliefs at the 'school gate', it recommends that the school open its doors to work with families and community organisations to provide a mutually respectful balanced curriculum which reflects local and global issues in a manner that is sensitive to local manifestations of religious and secular plurality. However, *Toledo* has also been interpreted as recommending a phenomenological approach which advocates the exploration of religion and beliefs through the suspension of judgment, as children 'bracket out their own commitments in considering other religions' (Barnes, 2012: p.71). Whilst certain of our pedagog-

ical exercises are informed by this commitment, *The Enquiring Classroom's* approach is one that also creates spaces for living values and for connecting with lifeworlds, cultural traditions, and religions and beliefs, inviting a rich and deeper understanding of why these questions matter to humans. *Toledo*, on the other hand, recommends that 'teaching about' religions and beliefs should be balanced, inclusive, fair, respectful and impartial'. However, we suggest that sometimes this kind of approach can risk disconnecting such knowledges from lived values, experiences and living traditions because it adopts an *informational* approach (teaching about religions and beliefs) that risks being didactic in an instrumental sense of this term. We are not promoting in its stead mono-religious, essentialistic, confessional or formational approaches known as 'teaching/learning religion' (Ziebertz and Riegel, 2009: p.14), but instead *The Enquiring Classroom* adopts a pluralistic, living approach to religions, beliefs, values and ethics, that rejects the secular-religious binary and connects knowledge with traditions, histories and lived experiences without imposing or privileging any one single position, or bracketing the life and knowledge of the child from the classroom.

The *Toledo* guidelines state that it:

strives for student awareness of religions and beliefs, but does not press for student acceptance of any of them; it sponsors study about religions and beliefs, not their practice; it may expose students to a diversity of religious and non-religious views, but does not impose any particular view; it educates about religions and beliefs without promoting or denigrating any of them; it informs students about various religions and beliefs, it does not seek to conform or convert students to any particular religion or belief. Study about religions and beliefs should be based on sound scholarship, which is an essential precondition for giving students both a fair and deeper understanding of the various faith traditions. (2007: p.21)

The Enquiring Classroom understands and appreciates the commitment to educating children and young people about religions and beliefs, however, our interest in bringing together a commitment to pluralism, to understanding and to lived experience and living values and traditions has meant that we are particularly interested in traditions of dialogue and listening in education. In this respect we have been informed by both interpretative and dialogical approaches in this field, whilst extending and transforming these approaches. We describe the principles of each below in order to contextualise and differentiate our own project in this wider field.

The Interpretive Approach

Robert Jackson's (1997) *Interpretive* approach has challenged a number of the conventional ways of representing religions and beliefs. Jackson argues that no neutral study of religions or beliefs is possible because religions are not intellectual or systematic sets of beliefs amenable to neat classification. Moreover, prejudices and stereotypes can get reproduced through static ways of looking at religious traditions. For instance, a teacher might generalise from the particular, partial and incomplete case or fragment of knowledge, and erroneously represent individual religions by using sweeping generalisations to suggest that 'All Muslims do x', or 'All Hindus believe y', 'All Catholics celebrate z'. The interpretive approach shows, instead, the complexity and nuance of lived experience, and the possible dissonance between children's own lived experience of their religions and beliefs and scholarly representation of religions and beliefs in text books. To address this gap, Jackson pioneered the use of materials written collaboratively by children and their families in his *Bridges to Religions* and *Interpreting Religions* series.

The Interpretive approach pays careful attention to three key concepts: representation, interpretation and reflexivity (Jackson, 1997; Jackson, 2004). This approach focuses on how religion is *represented* in educational contexts, how it is *interpreted* and how it is *critically reflected* upon (reflexivity). Jackson suggests that children need to be given more time to reflect upon the relationship between what they study and their own views (Mc Kenna, Ipgrave, Jackson, 2008: p.16). The concern here is with how children and educators interpret religions and beliefs, the real-life experiences and interests of children, and the complexity of lived religious and belief traditions at local, national and international levels. Jackson's ethnographic-based approach reassesses how religions are represented and attempts to 'bridge' the experience of the student

and the ways in which children are portrayed in curricular materials, helping pupils deepen their self-understanding through engaging with the religious and cultural lives of others. Furthermore, Jackson encourages educators to move away from ideal types or universal essences to the ‘messy’ complexity of religious communities at local and national level. In this respect, the starting point for teaching and learning is not in some abstract religious concept, but rather in the children’s own ideas, values, experiences, and curiosity. The children do not just learn *about* religions and beliefs but rather learn *from* them. In this interpretive approach teachers become co-learners with pupils who co-navigate the direction of learning. Children are encouraged to compare and contrast their beliefs with the beliefs of others (Jackson 2003, 2004).

The Dialogical Approach

The Enquiring Classroom is also influenced by Julia Ipgrave’s research on dialogical approaches to teaching about religions and beliefs. This approach emerged out of her experience as a primary school teacher in a school in the City of Leicester in the UK where over 85% of the children were Muslim (Ipgrave 2001, 2002). As a primary school teacher-researcher, Ipgrave was particularly interested in the interactions between Muslim and non-Muslim children aged 8 to 11 years old. Her pupil-to-pupil dialogue work focused on children listening to and learning from children whose beliefs were different to their own. The children were not just learning *about* other children’s ideas, they were active participants in the research who were engaging personally with other children’s ideas and concepts and were encouraged to relate other children’s religious thinking to their own views and experience. The children themselves were collaborators in the research project. ‘One class of 9 and 10 year olds, for example, identified three key ideas: respect for each other’s religion; talking and thinking seriously about differences; being ready to learn new things including about their own religion’ (Mc Kenna, Ipgrave, Jackson, 2008: p.18). These three ideas were then adopted as the basic rules for the study of religions in this classroom. Through her observations of the children’s interactions, Ipgrave came to realise that children adopted and shaped a language of diversity, including vocabulary relating to religion, power, race and equality. Her groundbreaking research revealed that children were ready to engage actively with religious questions and to negotiate their way through different viewpoints and understandings (Mc Kenna, Ipgrave, Jackson, 2008). Children could draw on their own understanding of religions based on their own particular experiences of home, community, peers etc.

Interestingly, Ipgrave also explored how children used the reported words of other children from different faiths to provide information and resolve disagreements. In this dialogical process, children appeared to be interested in the beliefs of other children, and in focus group discussion and classroom dialogue they exhibited a capacity for critical skills, engagement with religious and theological issues, as well as an ability to discuss fundamental human questions. As a consequence, children were empowered to arrive at personal solutions to problems instead of adopting other people’s answers. In Ipgrave’s terms of reference certain conditions need to be present for dialogue to take place, as dialogue is not just a ‘random’ spoken exchange between children.

The elements of collaboration and search for meaning need to be present. Dialogical RE is not just an exchange of differing points of view (‘alternating monologues’), but requires an interplay between them; does child A agree with what child B has said; does child C develop any of her ideas in the light of what she has heard from child D; or is it possible to draw child E and child F’s thoughts together?’ (Ipgrave, 2001: p.20)

The hallmarks of this dialogical approach are personal engagement and active interchange, higher order thinking through questioning, discussion and revision of ideas, as well as the interconnection of lived committed belief and a community of critical thinking. The teacher becomes the ‘prompter, chair, interviewer and questioner as well as providing information when required’ (McKenna, Ipgrave, Jackson, 2008: p.19) and the children are active collaborators in the community of learning. Talking face to face or via e-mail or Skype to another child provides a personal immediacy and spontaneity that is lacking from engagement with a textbook. In this understanding of dialogue, respect and tolerance for another’s point of view are not theoretical or abstract concepts. It relates directly to the quality of interaction between the dialogical participants.

Dialogical approaches emphasise critical thinking and reasoning but should not be categorised exclusively as a cognitive method. Neither are they exclusively affective, i.e. methods focusing on the emotions and feelings (praying, meditation, listening to music, stories) (Ziebertz and Riegel, 2009: p.14). In the dialogical process, learning involves head, hands and heart. It is dynamic, complex and linked to the child’s personal self-understanding and search for meaning. It is embedded in the child’s personal child-to-child interactions based on the children’s lived experience and their connections to local communities of belief. The process of dialogue can lead to a refining and clarifying of a child’s beliefs, while simultaneously fostering a greater confidence in the expression of personal beliefs (Schreiner, Kraft, Wright, 2007: p.56).

The Enquiring Classroom draws on a commitment to dialogue and listening, but opens up the educational space for the exploration of beliefs and values beyond the sphere of religions to a diverse range of convictions, positions, stances and ideas. It thus allows a space for the plurality of stories, experiences and knowledges that one might expect to find in contemporary educational spaces and societies, whilst connecting these stories with the stories of our common world and our shared humanity, helping to create spaces of common concern for questions that matter.

Example 2: Lived Values Approach – the Swedish Perspective

In Western democracies characterised by cultural and religious pluralism, teaching ‘liberal democratic values’ in schools is often seen as a way of safeguarding and maintaining a common moral ground. In a time of ‘legitimation crisis’ (Habermas), however, peoples’ trust in societal institutions like the school is declining which means that the meaning and legitimacy of the liberal democratic values are far from being self-evident or given. In such a time and place it is urgent to address the lived and complex ethical dilemmas that may arise in pluralistic classrooms, as well as philosophically analyse the content dimension of the values and virtues that teachers should foster and communicate.

In educational research, the task of fostering values and virtues in schools is traditionally addressed within the field of ‘values education’ (Thornberg and Oguz, 2016). Much educational research on values education in Sweden has to date been devoted to *form*, analysing *how* pre-supposed values can be implemented and realised in and through education. What has been missing, however, is an integrated approach to values and knowledge (e.g. Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2012) as well as systematic research on *content and embodiment*, that is, on *what* the liberal democratic values mean that teachers in school should foster and educate and on *how* these values are embodied in peoples’ everyday life. This kind of content-orientated project becomes particularly important in a time of increasing migration and plurality where people live their lives according to a variety of different beliefs, practices, values and traditions. In such a time it is in no way self-evident what, for example, values like freedom, generosity, tolerance, and equality might mean (Bergdahl & Langmann, 2017a).

In educational practice, a similar picture emerges. According to a national report from The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (2012), teachers are not, on a daily practical basis, integrating knowledge and values in their teaching and many feel an increasing uncertainty about *what* the values that are to be fostered in and through education might mean, something that prevents them from “going deeper” into complex ethical discussions in the classroom (ibid. p. 38). However, there are also exceptions to this picture. In the nineteen schools that the Swedish Schools Inspectorate visited, there were always one or two teachers who broke the pattern (i.e. “exemplary teachers” or enthusiasts) and who managed to integrate fostering and knowledge in their teaching being regarded as exemplary in their formative and fostering work.

Conditions and Questions

As a response to this situation, the overall purpose of the Lived Values Approach within *The Enquiring Classroom* is to: a) provide scientific/philosophical *legitimacy to teachers’ actual work* with integrating knowledge and fostering in school, and; b) offer a thought-through content oriented perspective on lib-

eral democratic values, *grounded in a systematic philosophical analysis*. In the case of *The Enquiring Classroom's* pedagogical focus, we call this strand Living Values.

The Lived Values Approach in this research project in Sweden aims to develop an educational-philosophical language for the content dimension of the fostering task of schools, a language where bringing philosophical analysis and aesthetic experience together allows for a deeper understanding of the educational work in classrooms marked by cultural, social and religious pluralism. To this aim, the Lived Values/Living Values Approach seeks to answer two questions; 1) How do practicing teachers reflect upon the content dimension of the liberal democratic values in relation to their own teaching (*empirical/practical question*, i.e. exemplarity and “best practice”), and; 2) How can an educational-philosophical analysis (philosophy of education) and an aesthetic experience of the content dimension of the liberal democratic values enable and enhance practical work with democracy and liberal values in teachers' daily work in the classroom (*theoretical question*)?

Conceptual Framework

Within educational philosophy and theory – a research field that is relatively small in Sweden, but more prominent internationally – there are studies that focus specifically on the content of the values and virtues associated with democratic societies. Most of these analyses are based on an analytic philosophical tradition, where the aim is to reach clear and rationally founded definitions of liberal democratic values (White, 2004; Katz, Noddings and Strike, 1999; Halstead and Taylor, 1996). Within this field, however, there are also studies, like the *Lived Values* study, that draw on continental philosophical thinkers to highlight the *lived ethical dilemmas* that may arise when a teacher is to navigate between educating for universal values, on the one hand, and taking responsibility for each individual's unique way of portraying them in his/her life, on the other (Todd 2010; Biesta 2006; Hansen 2011; 2001; Bingham and Sidorin, 2004; Blake, Smeyers, Smith and Standish, 2000). What is common in these latter studies is that the values and principles associated with democratic societies are not seen as conceptual abstractions but as an experienced responsibility that grow out of the proximity to, and, hence in relation to, the world we live in together with real, concrete others.

The philosophical approach to the content dimension of the liberal democratic values is bound together by a theoretical framework as well as by a specific philosophical “method” or way of reading and/or understanding. Jacques Derrida's philosophical deconstruction (1976; 2010) is taken as point of departure and characteristic of deconstruction as a way of reading and/or understanding is that it shows how the very borders that are meant to define and clarify a concept (such as in tolerance is tolerance, freedom is freedom, equality is equality, etc.) are, in fact, contingent and mutually constitutive.

This means, more precisely, that the inside of a concept is always already contaminated by the outside, and that the border between (what seems like) binary oppositions (such as freedom/dependency tolerance/intolerance, solidarity/enmity, equality/inequality etc.) are never absolute (Derrida 1976). According to a deconstructionist reading, then, the liberal democratic values that are to be fostered in schools cannot be understood as independent, unambiguous or monolithic “units”. Instead, the purpose of deconstruction is to show that the content of the liberal values associated with democratic societies always changes in relation to context and through the language used when talking about them (Derrida, 2010). Thus, deconstruction as a philosophical “method” creates space for a double reading (Critchley, 1992) of the values mentioned above: it makes possible both a systematic reconstruction of the concepts' current meanings, and “opens up” the concepts for new meaning and thus for new opportunities to live and portray them. Hence, deconstruction as a theoretical framework and as a way of reading is meant to help researchers and teachers in educational practice to spot the lived and complex ethical dilemmas that may arise in classrooms, taking into account both the need for commonality and universality and each individual student's particular need for respect and recognition.

With deconstruction as theoretical framework, the *Living Values Approach* as part of *The Enquiring Classroom* chooses to make *relationality* and *becoming* the prism through which the liberal democratic

values are read. Characteristic of concepts like freedom, equality, generosity, tolerance and responsibility etc. are their practical and relational meaning in concrete interpersonal encounters (here called “the values' *lived and living dimension*”), as well as in the theoretical formation of these values' opposites (the excluded or contaminated outside). For example: to show tolerance someone must be tolerated; for someone to be free someone must be enforced; for someone to be equal someone must remain unequal.

In terms of *becoming*, Derrida's deconstructions of the central concepts of Western thought, such as justice, hospitality, friendship and democracy, is that they also hold a critique of the modern subject as an independent and self-sufficient “I am I” (Critchley & Dews 1996). Our understanding of the subject thus represents a shift *from* a subject understood as an independent individual with a pre-given identity – an approach that is dominant in both the liberal democratic tradition and the modern education project – *to* a subject that is vulnerable and dependent upon others to “be” and “become itself.” To focus on relationality rather than identity helps us to analyse the complexity of the teachers fostering task as it appears in concrete and sometimes conflicting classroom situations. We develop these ideas further in the pedagogical exercises that we offer in our handbook.

Examples: Educational Thought Strategies

In order to respond to the conditions and questions above - that is, that the content dimension of the liberal democratic values seems to be in crisis in a pluralistic and multicultural Europe and that teachers are finding it increasingly difficult to integrate fostering/formation and knowledge in their teaching - *The Living Values Approach* has developed educative tools that serve the purpose of: a) re-enlivening the meaning(s) of liberal democratic values (particularly in their lived dimension) and; b) helping teachers integrate the fostering/formative task of education with the task of enhancing knowledge.

In order to make sense of these tools, and given the current status of educational research and practice, some strategic shifts in thought need to be made. In short, these shifts include rethinking *place*, *time* and *matter* and we begin by rethinking *the place of the school*, that is, *where* education takes place, since it has consequences for becoming more specific about the role of the teacher (giving voice and authority back to the teacher) as well as for reorienting our understanding of *what is to be done* (bringing content back to fostering) and *how this is to be done* in the concrete classroom (materialization, or studying the tradition).

Strategy I. Place – Giving Voice and Authority Back to Teachers in Fostering

Brief background: In time of marketization and cultural and political turmoil, schools are increasingly being transformed from public institutions into private learning environments and, as a consequence, the public voice of teachers ‘seems dimmer today than ever before’ (Masschelein & Simons, 2013: p. 141). Teachers are pulled between being seen as public servants of the State, on the one hand, and private servants of parents' needs and desires, on the other. In such a time, some sort of precision regarding the school's location and place seems necessary since such precision affects, we argue, the voice with which teachers can foster other people's children as well as their responsibility and authority.

The shift in thought focusing on *place* draws on the classical distinction between the private and the public spheres, arguing that the school is neither a public place (an agora) nor a private place (a living room). Why do we argue this? Because even if educational institutions are a concern and a responsibility of the State, what goes on in classrooms is different from what goes on in the students' homes or in other private places. Following Jan Masschelein & Maarten Simons (2013) we argue that the school is *a specific place* between the private and the public that turns children into pupils through suspension, that is, by temporarily suspending both where they come from (their private social identities) and where they are heading (i.e. coming professions and public/political involvements). If the school is neither a private nor a public place, it is neither possible to foster pupils with the voice of a parent nor with the voice of a politician. What, then, does it mean to foster other people's children *as a teacher*? This strategic move seeks to help teachers retrieve and to strengthen their own voices as well as their responsibility and authority.

The tools offered in the handbook are meant to help teachers find the specificity of the teacher's voice and articulate the specific responsibility that comes with being a teacher (i.e. cultivating moral judgement). 'The Educating Seeing Strategy', for example, is meant to help teachers to more thoroughly engage in ethical discussions in the class-room both by distinguishing between thinking and seeing, between interpreting and describing, and by becoming aware of the difference between values and evaluations/judgements. 'The Collective Drawing Strategy', as we call it, is meant to encourage teachers to tread unknown terrain in ethical discussions in the classroom by seeing the fostering task less as an ethical codex and more as an opportunity to engage in ethical exploration and to cultivate students' moral judgement in relation to concrete examples.

Strategy II: Time – Bringing Content Back to Fostering by Making Values Common

Brief background: In educational practice, fostering liberal democratic values in schools has long been seen as an antidote for fundamentalist and totalitarian thinking, as well as a way of optimistically safeguarding the existence of a common moral ground in Western democracies. Spurred on by educational politics, the content dimension is in this area alive and well but what is ignored is the turbulence of our time and that the liberal democratic values are in many countries under threat. However, in much educational research the so-called 'crisis of traditions' and the 'crisis of authority' is being taken seriously, and, by and large, the content dimension of the fostering task of education tends to be marginalized, even forgotten. There is thus a discrepancy between, on the one hand, *educational practice and politics* that tends to ignore the fact of pluralism and that too optimistically seeks to implement common values (as if their commonality is pre-given and as if the content of them is self-evident) and, on the other, *educational research* that takes the state of pluralism so seriously that it despairs about commonality altogether, tending to ignore the content dimension of the fostering task of schools (as if there is nothing to say about these values in multicultural and pluralistic settings).

The thought strategy advocated here moves beyond this dichotomy of optimism versus despair, building instead on the idea that there is a difference between *implementing common values* – which entails an unrealistic belief in predefined commonalities and values (tradition) and a following of universal moral standards beyond the fragmented reality of worldly concerns – and *making values common*. The latter, in our view, entails a realistic aspiration for sharing the world with others in and through education, that is, by continuously *creating new commonalities* and for cultivating the ability to act and judge as thinking moral agents in specific, lived and worldly cases.

Following the work of post-holocaust thinkers (such as Hannah Arendt and Zygmunt Bauman), we read the loss of the content dimension in fostering mentioned above as a *loss of tradition* and a *neglect of the past*, generated by a one-sided orientation towards *the future*. Hence, in order to think educationally about what it means to pass on liberal democratic values to the coming generation, particularly in a time when liberal values are in crisis and when there is no automatic way in which teachers can enjoy authority in fostering other people's children, education must be seen as an encounter between generations. This encounter is only made possible if education is placed *between the past and the future* where the teacher represents the adult world and the pupil the newcomer. Furthermore, education is by necessity oriented towards the past since the past is the only content that teachers can teach. Therefore, fostering liberal democratic values always involves rethinking and retrieving – in the present for the future – the cultural heritage that previous generations have valued and cared for and that the adult world seeks to pass on to the children or the new generation.

The tools suggested for this exercise in the handbook are meant to bring content back to the fostering task of teachers by *making values common in pluralistic classrooms*, that is, in places where there might be no commonality (yet) as to which cultural heritage the next generation is to rethink and retrieve. The 'Metaphoric Language Strategy' offers a way of opening the liberal democratic values up to their inherent and lost dimensions, helping teachers and pupils to continuously translate 'the old' heritage into new contexts and lived cases. In this sense, this tool is also advocating a 'living on' of the fostering task of education by issuing a reminder of its currently lost dimensions, that is, of the call from the past and of our necessary embeddedness *in living traditions*.

Strategy III: Matter – 'Putting things on the table' or Studying the Tradition

Brief background: Given that there is a heritage to pass on from one generation to the next, albeit fragmented and in crisis, we need to be more specific about *how* we make the world common or *how* the cultural heritage can become concrete and meaningful. This move is what we here call *studying the tradition*.

Following Jan Masschelein & Maarten Simons' work (2013) on 'scholastic techniques' we suggest not only that knowledge can be materialized and "put on the table" for the coming generation to take interest in and renew but also the values that European schools are to foster. Thus, the shift we make is about arguing that not only is there *a fostering dimension to knowledge*, but there is also *a knowledge dimension to fostering* which is another way of saying that the fostering task in schools – mediated through the voice of the teacher – is always about *something*, a subject matter or a content matter that can be turned into an object of study.

The tools offered in the handbook are thus meant to help concretize and materialize the values being studied and return teachers to the actual content dimension of the fostering task, although with a philosophical and aesthetical take on the work that needs to be done. The Educating Seeing Strategy, for instance, is here about distinguishing between what we see and our interpretation and conceptualization of our seeing, helping both teachers and students to become more attentive to the specific values being studied and to make distinctions between descriptions and judgements. The Metaphoric Language Strategy, on the other hand, is about turning values such as freedom, generosity, tolerance and equality into *common objects of study*, un-packing each value's inherent tensions and inconsistencies.

Re-Educative Practical Tools

The following *re-educative tools* (which are more explicitly elaborated on in our handbook) are designed to support the teaching of liberal democratic values in classrooms marked by social, cultural and religious pluralism. The tools are designed to respond to two different but interrelated educational challenges: a) the fostering of common values in pluralist societies and; b) the cultivation of children and young people into responsible and thinking moral agents. Even if the tools primarily relate to teaching practises in Sweden, they are suitable for use also in other European contexts.

Learning how to engage in open dialogue and transformative communication with people whose values or religious beliefs radically differ from one's own, is central to liberal democratic societies. Yet, research shows that students rarely get the opportunity to engage in difficult ethical discussions in the pluralistic classroom. Many teachers feel that they lack the right educational strategies for addressing the content dimension of the liberal democratic values being fostered as well as for creating "safe educational spaces" where students from different cultural and religious backgrounds can explore moral and ethical issues freely and without to many pre-given normative constraints. This situation raises difficult pedagogical questions, such as, how to be sensitive to students with different cultural and religious experiences, how to prevent friction in the classroom, and how to teach liberal democratic values even-handedly in a pluralistic classroom, avoiding bias, stigmatisation and exclusion.

In what follows, then, we suggest three *re-educative tools* or strategies that have the potential to a) strengthen the voice and authority of teachers by creating "safe educational places" for engaging in difficult ethical discussions in the classroom (e.g. cultivating moral judgement), and b) create commonality of what is not (yet) common by turning liberal democratic values such as freedom, tolerance, and equality into *common objects of study*, that is, into 'things' worth studying and to take interest in for children and young people with different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Tool I: Educating Seeing

Theoretical framework: To *think* what you see, not *see* what you think (Jan Masschelein) is about temporarily refraining pre-given value judgements

Aim: Striving for realism by temporarily suspending normative judgements.

Tools: Film and visual aesthetics (Seeing/The Eye)

Educating Seeing when teaching living values in pluralistic classrooms is inspired by the work of Jan Masschelein (2010). In contrast to more traditional philosophical inquiry in the classroom, this strategy is *not* primarily about helping students become more conscious about their own values and beliefs in order to arrive at more open, critical or emancipated views where they are realising that their own seeing or “gaze” is bound to specific perspectives and positions and that they, therefore, need to take into account the perspectives of others. Such is the commonplace view of what it means to ‘enter someone else’s shoes’. Instead, *Educating Seeing* is about liberating or *displacing student’s views* by helping them become more attentive to the specific values under study. In this sense, the approach relies more on *being attentive to* and *taking interest in* what is ‘put on the table’ by the teacher, than on increasing mutual understanding and views on things or engaging in critical discussions.

Attention, here, represents a state of exploration in which the students and the values put on the studying table by the teacher are opened up so that they create a shared educational space for both exploration and contestation and possible self-transformation and self-displacement. The aim of this teaching strategy, then, is to help students to temporarily suspend normative judgement by entering into a mode of shared research practice. By using film and other visual aesthetics (e.g. paintings, pictures, photography) as teaching material, the students move from describing what they *think* they see – pre-defined values, beliefs and concepts – to learning how to think and conceptualize what they actually see in the given material. In order to put into words and communicate their different experiences with their fellow students, the students have to rely on both traditional concepts and words, the creative resources of poetic language, as well as on the infinite possibilities of interpretation and translation (Bergdahl, 2009).

Tool II: Metaphoric Language

Theoretical framework: From definitions to deconstructions (Jacques Derrida)

Aim: Making values common by letting concepts and conceptions unfold in their constitutive contradictions and inconsistencies.

Tools: Etymology, poetry and metaphors (Speaking/The Word)

Using Metaphoric Language when teaching living values in pluralistic classrooms is inspired by the work of Jacques Derrida. Since teaching needs an object – a place or *topos* where thinking and judging can unfold – teachers have to put something concrete between them and the students when fostering common values in schools, otherwise the students will have nothing to relate to, take interest in, and, hence, to make common and shared through study and exercise. The aim of the exercises suggested in our handbook, then, is to turn values such as freedom, tolerance and equality into *common objects of study* in and through the collective writing of a haiku (i.e. a Japanese poem). However, in contrast to more traditional philosophical inquiry where commonality is created through clear-cut definitions, conceptions, theories and traditions, the aim of Metaphoric Language is to un-pack concepts and unfold the necessary incompleteness in the values of living traditions. Since the values of the liberal tradition such as freedom, tolerance and equality are not understood as independent, closed or unambiguous concepts, the purpose is to show pupils that the content of the values being studied always changes in relation to context and through the language we use when talking about them (Derrida 2010).

The aim of this approach, then, is to create an educational space for a double reading of the values ‘on the table’ by making use of; a) a systematic reconstruction of the concepts past meanings (preservation), and b) an “opening up” of the concepts for new meaning (renewal). In order to create an educational space in the classroom that makes this possible – a space where no (pre-defined) values are shared from the beginning but where every value has the potentiality to be shared through study and exercise – both teachers and students have to draw on the creative resources of poetic language - metaphors, synonyms, similes and allegories - as well as acknowledging the infinite possibilities of translation (Derrida).

Tool III: Collective Drawing

Theoretical Framework: An ethics without ethics (John Caputo & Zygmunt Bauman)

Aim: Cultivating (moral) judgement without an ethical/moral codex

Tools: Painting and drawing (Touching/Sensing/The Hand)

Using Collective Drawing when teaching living values in pluralistic classrooms is inspired by the work of Zygmunt Bauman and John Caputo as well as recent attempts within philosophy of education to find new and innovative directions for values education, directions that move beyond the traditional frameworks of critical thinking and ethical reasoning. The aim of Collective Drawing is not to *make* children and young people *moral* (as if they lack morality) but to encourage them *to make moral judgements* given their ‘originary’ morality (Bauman), and to help them handle the unavoidable ambivalence that comes with this ability. Grounded in the idea of an “ethics without ethics” (Caputo), Collective Drawing supports a relational view of moral selfhood through which the subject is encouraged to recognize its own complexity and vulnerability (rather than recognizing external principles and rules) as the basis for moral responsibility and action. In practical terms, the teaching approach suggested here aims at engaging students in activities in which they are encouraged to constantly “gather themselves together” to answer to the well-beings of others (Derrida), rather than in activities which presuppose the application of pre-existing moral rules or external ethical codices to different cases. Beginning with a blank piece of paper, the students are encouraged to continually move between two different but interrelated positions. This is done by; a) embodying the ambivalence and loneliness of (moral) choice by translating the specific value to lines on a blank paper; and, by b) reflecting over the content of that value by taking a step back from their own drawings and enter into a transformative conversation with other students.

Example 3: Contemporary debates about democratic education and ‘democratic values’

There is a huge debate in Europe and globally at present in respect of the issue of democracy and how to teach and cultivate school children of various ages and educational settings the concept of democracy, democratic competence, and democratic dispositions. Indeed, there is considerable interest by policy makers, designers of curricula and educational content, teachers and parents in increasing the democratic footprint of school classrooms as a way to tackle the rise of extremism, racism, nationalism, xenophobia, antisemitism, islamophobia, as well as the surge in popularity of past autocratic regimes, the outright rejection of scientific reasoning, etc.

Many familiar approaches to democracy in the classroom put a strong emphasis on teaching/transmitting a set of fundamental values with the aim of communicating a ‘democratic state of affairs’, whether this concerns how a state is run or how a group of people (citizens of a state, members of an organization and, of course, students of a classroom) engage socially. From the most innovative ways to the most banal teaching methods, it is the all-too-familiar prescriptivist strategy of teaching and learning a set of concepts.

To take the example of Greece, however, the subject of philosophy is taught to sixteen year-old students as an elective in the 2nd grade of upper high school. *Philosophical Foundations* (2013) is a highly engaging book, addressing a huge range of philosophical issues including, aspects of classical thought, ethics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, science and language, aesthetics and philosophical anthropology. In the section, “Democratic values in theory and practice” (pp. 181-184), there is an analysis of two fundamental values that, according to the authors, are the basic ingredients of any democratic system of rule. These are freedom and justice. The two values are thoroughly examined (offering a good example of how to conduct a philosophical investigation of a concept - a value in our case). In the case of freedom the authors look into two major approaches, one liberal and one Rawlsian!

Democratic values also dominate an important European document, the *Paris Declaration* of 2015. The *Paris Declaration* is a response to the 2015 terrorist attacks in France and Denmark and calls for support

to “fundamental values” that lie at the heart of the European Union. The signatories of the document, the ministers responsible for education, culture youth and sport, call for “for renewed efforts to reinforce the teaching and acceptance of these common fundamental values and laying the foundations for more inclusive societies through education - starting from an early age.” (2015). It also calls for action at national and European levels and the promotion of democratic values, critical thinking, dialogue, engagement, tolerance, awareness of diversity, respect of rule of law, equality. On the global stage, it is often the case that international organisations and major players address instances of political violence, conflict or terrorism by calling for a respect again to democratic values. For example, a recent piece of news on the Sri Lankan conflict finds the General Secretary of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, making a similar call: “The Secretary-General is following the latest developments in Sri Lanka with great concern. He calls on the Government to respect democratic values and constitutional provisions and process, uphold the rule of law and ensure the safety and security of all Sri Lankans.” (2018).

The examples addressed in this project afford the opportunity to entertain the idea of a different approach to democracy in the classroom; that of democracy as a condition and/or a process that allows for the examination of all values and beliefs, without assigning a special status to a set of so-called fundamental democratic values, especially if by fundamental one means conclusive and non-negotiable (at least philosophically). Indeed, there seems to be a slight contradiction in calling for the promotion of critical thinking, as a way to tackle the rise of all types of threats to democracy, but, at the same time, demanding that one exclude from the process of critical examination basic components of such a system, form of government, state of affairs, organization, etc.

Having raised certain doubts on the idea of teaching a (or to a) set of democratic values, it is important to note that there is absolutely nothing wrong in offering a thorough account of concepts related to democracy in theory and practice (values, for example), especially when and where there is a genuine effort in examining as many of its aspects as possible, as with the case of philosophy taught in Greek high schools. The idea of going a step further in investigating democracy as a process by which a classroom puts all issues on the table, should be seen as complementary to the approach taken by the authors of the philosophy curriculum for Greek high-schoolers, given that, in their case, the values of freedom and justice are not presented as conclusive and non-negotiable. It is equally important to state that when describing democracy as a process by which all values and beliefs are subject to investigation, one does not inevitably promote the tenets of relativism. Questioning (or even doubting) the status of fundamental values does not amount to considering all values and standards as simply contingent to particular situations, societies, groups, tastes, etc; a matter of subjective preference. The discussion on relativism is beyond this introduction to democracy-as-a-process, but it is important to reiterate that one may allow for the examination of all values by using both universal and relative standards. This is developed further through exercises in the handbook.

III. The Enquiring Classroom: Philosophical and Pedagogical Framework

The meaning of the school

It has become commonplace in education to ask, ‘but does it work?’ and to ask questions like ‘do schools work?’. But what do we mean by ‘work’? And is this the wrong question? We do not ask if cathedrals, synagogues or mosques ‘work’? Or if life ‘works’? Does ‘breathing’ work? Or ‘loving’? The question seems absurd. Striving to simplify complex institutions like schools degrades them, in particular if they are judged in terms of a set of prescribed measurable outputs. We find education reduced to an instrument for employability, and so students ask, why do I need to learn that? Or they state that it is useless and irrelevant. Even apparently benevolent aims like “education for democracy” or “education for democratic citizenship” do not ask what is the educational purpose of schools? Or what is the relationship between democracy and education? Too often democratic education is reduced to voting on rules, introducing a school council or teaching about democracy. Instead, we ask *when* is democracy in schools? At what moments do we see the force of the democratic process? At what moment do processes of negotiation need to be (temporarily) put on hold?

We suggest that the school is a place for encountering the world, and that good democracies are committed to having good schools rather than seeing them as a tool to enable the development of democratic citizens. Hence, the responsibility for creating a good school lies with society and it is not the responsibility of the school – i.e. of the children – to create a good society (e.g. Arendt). Too often children and young people are seen as those who will sort out the mess of the world that adults have created. To our minds, the reverse order is true, and to enact societies’ and adults’ responsibility for its schools and its children we need a different sense of intergenerational responsibility where the older generation (the adults) is responsible for the new generation (the children).

It is said today that since our time is in constant flux, we need to stop teaching content and focus on skills and competences, thus teaching for an unknowable future. Technologies are in this way reified rather than understood as tools, important in some contexts though not in others, just as a hammer is useful if one needs to fix a nail to the wall but is not so useful for eating dinner. The ‘old’ education, the conservative ‘didactic’ education was, it is said, turned towards the past but our progressive education will be about future innovations. Yet, what does it mean to teach for flexible citizens? That we should be able to turn on one another to survive if needs must? That we should be able to scavenge in the case of ecological catastrophe? That we should adapt to regressive forms of governance and systemic inequality?

In our view, by contrast, education is inevitably concerned with the past. The past constitutes the content of our curricula from the Rosetta Stone to Cartesian coordinates to non-linear equations to the structure of the cell. We relate to and select from the past according to our contemporary contexts, asking ourselves as teachers, what is important for the new generation to understand at this point in time. Curricula are then taken up in new ways by the young as they interpret their own coming into being in the world and imagine their futures. So too, our values give us the content about which we can negotiate and co-enquire in the present. This idea of ‘fostering’ and introducing children and young people to a plurality of cultural heritages is an important one that, particularly in this day and age, needs to be retrieved from narrow and xenophobic nationalistic discourses.

Pluralism, imagination and equality

The Enquiring Classroom is part of a field of creative, experimental and engaging approaches to pedagogy that seeks to put the voices of children and young people at the heart of their practice by introducing them to the world, saying ‘this is our world’ (Arendt). But it differs from other projects in a number of ways. The ethics, philosophy and approach to pedagogy at the heart of this project are explicitly *pluralistic*, though not relativist, seeking to create a ‘commons’ that affirmatively responds to the rhythms and qualitative shifts in experience and encounter in the life of schools and in educational spaces. It is committed to connecting discussions of philosophical concepts and values with lived and living experiences and values, tapping into the existential concerns and imaginative worlds of children and young people, and providing new ways of engaging with religions and beliefs. The ‘negative’ dimension of the project is not framed in preventative and restrictive terms but rather through encouraging the understanding that the other is *not me*, suggesting that distinctions need to be made, and that educational ways of disagreeing that deepen understanding and invite creative forms of action can be sought out.

In this respect, the focus of *The Enquiring Classroom* is not solely on outcomes, skills, and competences, important as these are, but on the educational practices and conceptions of educational life that can create the conditions for existential shifts, for reflection, for experimentation, for sense and meaning-making, for dialogue, for criticality, and for a desire to understand more deeply the human condition and our relation to the cultural and natural world. We introduce strategies for evaluation in this regard. This pedagogical approach invites different rhythms in the classroom, from contemplation to discussion to expression. It works with the imagination, with dialogue, with experience, and with reason to try to create the conditions for different kinds of experience and knowledge in educational situations in a way that is inclusive.

But primarily we are committed to the idea of a school or classroom or youth project as an *educational space* and as such to the idea of education as ‘a public issue’ (Masschelein & Simons 2013) in which we can put any kind of subject matter on the table including values, which are at the heart of the *Lived Values* project (Bergdahl and Langmann). We work on the basis of the assumption that every student has the capacity to understand and to speak, and with freedom of speech comes responsibility. The principle of equality underpins our approach and our framework. The role of the teacher is one of the ‘honest broker’ who teaches the world, *qua* curriculum, and does so in a way that is careful not to impose his or her views and ideas such that they close down the space for engagement and dialogue of the children and young people in his or her care, even if the teacher may share those ideas and views. This is not to say that she is ‘neutral’ but rather that she is curious and interested, gathering the voices and ideas of the young, supporting them in enquiring, making distinctions, and deepening their understanding. They may know her views, but she takes care not to impose them, and where she does, her sense of timing is key, as is her ability to ask what difference it would make for her students to know her position. She may well be changed in listening to their voices, and her questions will also open new lines of enquiry, especially as they learn to ‘think-together’. Her role as teacher in the educational space is, broadly speaking, a *kenotic* one that involves and invites creative attention through careful and discerning listening.

Pitfalls and challenges: pedagogical counter-strategies

We are aware of the arguments against approaches, like ours, that mobilise philosophical enquiry and explorations of ethics, religions, beliefs and values in classrooms and other educational contexts. We know some of the pitfalls that can arise when approaching complex questions that go to the heart of peoples individual and collective identities, for example, in particular of deploying didactic, information-based or moralising approaches that fail to connect with the lives and concerns of children and young people. This is why we focus on creating the conditions for conversations, for explorations and for enquiry by building communities in classrooms, schools and other educational settings that demand self-reflection, criticality, the ability to give reasons, the capacity to use the imagination, and that foster attachment to the world and a sense of interest and curiosity in the world and in others.

If we genuinely wish to find ways of talking about those questions, ideas, concepts, and events that often create polarisation or disagreement, it is essential that we also create the conditions in classrooms and schools that foster a sense of responsibility in speaking. An ability to listen, the capacity to think and offer reasons that cultivate a sense of reverence for the stories of humankind and the earth, and that we train the imagination to ‘go visiting’, are essential, as political theorist Hannah Arendt (1992) once suggested. Educational spaces are ideal spaces in this regard as they allow us to temporarily suspend the immediate conflicts and concerns of the world in order to understand together more deeply the subjects of our study, permitting us the intimate distance that will enable us to figure out what matters to us and what we value as individuals, as a collective and as a community, rather than retreating to crude forms of relativism that close us off from one another and imprison us in our own monologues or filter bubbles. So, in this way the space of the classroom that allows us to relate to one another and to our subject matter in a different way than what is done outside the school, way that is appreciative of dialogue, contemplation, expression, and that asks for a deeper understanding of the stories of our shared world, past and present.

Pedagogical counter strategies

Whilst sharing in many respects a number of the principles of learning that we find in citizenship education, we also mobilise a number of pedagogical strategies that involve distancing, estrangement, suspension, visiting, poetic contiguity, and ‘depersonalisation’ or decentering of the self. These pedagogical strategies are adopted not simply to take the ‘heat’ out of discussion that might become divisive. They also make it possible to put something on the table without having to be tied to one’s identity and one’s inherited or given position. When working with these approaches we often use the third person rather than the second person so that students can speak freely without feeling that they must disclose their own views – it allows for some distance that can be important, in particular when students may feel at risk of being suspected of being at ‘risk of radicalisation’.

To do so, we use images that are ambiguous and sometimes abstract, we draw on contemporary art practice, and we use anthropomorphic tasks and exercises to extend an ecological sensibility. We speak of the G/gods to imagine different ways of encountering the sacred and divine, to remind us that from our small localities we can trace the histories of the world from Mesopotamia and beyond, and that our histories are entangled. We ask people to bring objects symbolising rituals to find common ground on which to place our contiguous experiences and allow for religious practice to co-exist alongside other forms of ritual. We refuse to segregate experiences and commitments and convictions. We ask participants to imagine the gods of democracy today as well as the gods of Europe, and to bring something to symbolise democracy for them. We place values on the table and again allow ourselves to temporarily open ourselves to discussing those concepts as experienced and conceptualised in our lives as well as in the traditions and lineages that hold us. For example, how might an ecological activist, a Catholic, a Buddhist, and an anarchist respond to ‘freedom’, ‘sustainability’ or ‘responsibility’? Instead of centring on the disclosure of a variety of personal beliefs by inflecting the discussion toward that which is ‘on the table’ a spaciousness or a distance is created that trains our imaginations to go visiting – a gesture that can hold heterogeneity without seeking consensus and without retreating into one’s own position in a monolithic fashion. We speak about our beliefs for set times, listening to one another, without interrupting or debating, and reflect by again speaking and listening. To this end, philosophical enquiry allows us to build a different community premised on disagreement, with questions generated by the community, in the context of an agreement on principles for listening and discussing. We move from the person to the community (and back), we welcome disagreement as a provocation to help us think better together and to allow us to change our minds. In this way we are transformed, teachers and students alike, on our own terms.

Intergenerational encounters and love of the world

We think it’s important to develop a sense of creative curiosity, wonder, intellectual humility and understanding in children and young people, and that we need to not only focus on the future in an ever-changing world but to remind ourselves of the rich stories of humankind and the natural history of our earth

and of our universe. It is this historical sensibility and sense of perspective that we also hope to cultivate through the exercise of the imagination, philosophical enquiry, and exploration of beliefs and values. Hannah Arendt has described this as ‘love of the world’. This does not mean that we admire it or that we turn from its ugliness or cruelty but rather that we reconcile ourselves to it with a sense of realism and tell the story of the world so that the next generation might bring something new to it.

This gesture of transmission of cultural heritages is conservative but not static and its selectiveness is born of the questions of the present – herein lies the question of curriculum. Whilst there has been a return to Great Books in images of a classical education, the story of the world that we are suggesting ought to be told is not bound to narrow or self-serving forms of nationalism. We can begin with locality, something important in contexts like Greece, Sweden and Ireland, but open up the stories to more complex tellings. In this way, conservatism is not authoritarian or oppressive but more akin to an affirmative and curatorial practice (Felski, 2015) whereby one takes care of the things of the world without killing them, allowing cultures to breathe, to become and to be interpreted and re-interpreted by future generations in light of their presents.

As we have noted above, we aim to create a sense of the commons and of a ‘common and shared world’ by placing pluralism at the heart of our project and through the development of an experimental set of creative methodologies that will give teachers and educators the skills, imagination and ideas to engage children and young people in conversations that matter in our time. We begin with a supposition of the equality of all students *qua* students in the classroom, in terms of their capacity to engage and to think. We do not prejudge a student on the basis of their background, culture, religion or commitments and neither do we equate ‘equality’ with neutrality or sameness. Each student is a singular being who discloses their perspectives on the world by virtue of the story that is his or her life, but he or she is seen as a student with his or her own voice, ideas and questions, so matters of dress or religious items are welcomed in the classroom as part of who that student is. In this regard, we are critical of those approaches which claim to ensure secularism or neutrality but *de facto* close down the expressive and symbolic clothing of only some groups. Indeed, dress invites pedagogical exploration and enquiry. Of course, where items worn by students constitute forms of hate speech, this principle is not adhered to.

Important to our project is to distinguish between *democratic or political spaces* and *educational spaces*. This is to suggest that we need to think no longer of schools as *servicing* democracy or *preparing* for democracy but turn this on its head. It is the responsibility of a democratic society to provide a good school for its children. Of course, it’s also important to remain vigilant for ‘democratic moments’ in schools, as we might remain vigilant for moments of creation, of existential transformation, of pedagogical encounter and so forth in political spaces. This reframes the discourse so that our focus is on the situated encounter and its temporality. This leads us to ask different kinds of questions like: When is security important (in society and in schools?); When is a democratic moment? What potentials do extremist statements offer? This approach is attuned to the qualitative nature of educational spaces and to the different characters and qualities at different moments. Although schools are not democratic spaces by nature, they may have democratic moments that are of real significance to the transformation of the pupil’s life and for that pupil’s willingness to – in the future – take part in the living-on of the world and the society.

It is here important not to call things democratic when they are not; a school council or deciding the class rules do not make schools democratic or education democratic. But this is not a problem for education because its relation to democracy is such that democracies think about the kinds of schools that will value education for its own sake, and not for the sake of unknown futures or polities. If democracy is understood procedurally in terms of negotiation and as an unfinished project that involves us speaking of that which we most value, then schools are the sites where we speak of values, what we hold as valuable and what we are held by as humans – in our different contexts with different stories and lineages.

Seen this way, democratic spaces are free and unpredictable spaces that cannot be harnessed for single purposes. Learning to imagine ourselves into the worlds of others involves what we call training our

imagination or ‘to go visiting’ (Arendt). Our curricula can allow for this exercise through stories of geography, biology, poetry, and history but so too can we learn from one another in the European context, becoming in some ways, strangers in our own presents. Thinking, as the Greeks do, about the co-imbriation of Greek legacy with the Ottoman Empire and beyond offers a different story of the world and another way of understanding concerns about culture and identity that is not the same as the stories of Empire that implicitly or explicitly structure curricula and the European imaginary in other countries. It invites other ways of thinking not only how we might co-exist as citizens, but also of stories of co-existence and of conflict.



IV. Strands within The Enquiring Classroom

Creative pedagogies

[P]luralism is not relativism, but the encounter of commitments. The new paradigm of pluralism does not require us to leave our identities and our commitments behind, for pluralism is the encounter of commitments. It means holding our deepest differences, even our religious differences, not in isolation, but in relationship to one another...pluralism is based on dialogue. The language of pluralism is that of dialogue and encounter, give and take, criticism and self-criticism. Dialogue means both speaking and listening, and that process reveals both common understandings and real differences. Dialogue does not mean everyone at the “table” will agree with one another. Pluralism involves the commitment to being at the table — with one’s commitments (Eck, 2006).

This project is comprised of six primary strands: 1. **Making Democracy** (the political); 2. **Living Values** (the ethical); 3. **A Rough Guide to the Sacred** (the religious and the secular); 4. **Thinking Together** (the philosophical); 5. **Encountering the World** (the aesthetic); 6. **Engaging with Tradition** (the past and the historical). The purpose of this multiplicity of strands is to support teachers in making judgments that allow for *phronesis* and to become further attuned to the emerging qualities and questions of classroom and school life, or where appropriate, youth projects. We work with teachers and other educators to develop their sensitivity to the rhythms of classroom and school life so that they can adopt the different exercises and approaches that make best pedagogical sense given the question or problem that has arisen. As we recall above, this attunement involves knowing at what moment a judicial instance has arisen that requires discussion, consultation and referral, or when a pastoral moment requires care rather than making it a pedagogical moment. It involves times for exploring responses, beliefs and feelings from a personal perspective, as with belief circles and dialogical approaches to religions and beliefs, and also judging when topics or questions lend themselves better to discussion in a community of philosophical enquiry. Given the dissatisfaction on the part of both students and teachers of certain readings of the *Toledo Principles* that are seen, rightly or wrongly, as encouraging the absolute neutrality of the teacher, or refusing to allow opportunities for children and young people to connect stories about religions and beliefs to their own lives, our ‘lived and living values’ approach demands we examine our presuppositions but it also affords the opportunity to explore the sense and meaning of what are often seen as ‘classical’ liberal values in the lives of students. In this way, students (and teachers) can ask ‘what does this mean to me?’ and ‘what does it mean in the context of my traditions or lineages?’

Our approach also permits of phenomenological approaches to those who we know and care for as living exemplars of values. They can be manifested through sculptural form in a playful manner that gives students the opportunity to reflect on those lives who, in their view, embody the values that they value. Our work with museums and gallery spaces has allowed us to optimise distancing and estrangement techniques that can intensify the ethical and creative imagination. A sense of playfulness allows for intimacy in imagining the genesis of material objects allowing them to tell their stories, and thus the imagined stories of their time. Working with tasks and exercises drawn from contemporary art or engaging with contemporary art practice offers a critical lens with which we can explore the critical questions of our presence, again by ‘putting something on the table’ that both gathers and separates us by allowing us to engage from a plurality of perspectives and to speak and enquire with one another. Case studies and scenario-based learning helps to develop peer mediation strategies as do thought exper-

iments like ‘Grandma’s rule’. The purpose of providing an array of creative pedagogical approaches is not just to provide techniques but to offer opportunities, depending on the situation, for critical enquiry, imaginative engagement, experiential encounter, storytelling, listening, dialogue, in ways that allow us to decentre ourselves, our ready-made positions and our immediate concerns.

In this way, the school becomes a suspended space from the immediate needs of the world, allowing students to first establish a relationship to the world – that is, to love the world – and to say, ‘this is our world’, believing that they have something to say and something to offer. By creating the conditions for encounter, trust and dialogue, teachers can become better equipped to pursue those wonderful moments when the world opens up in a class as well as those difficult moments where it might be easier to shut things down (as indeed one may have to temporarily until the time is right). Instilling the idea that there must be free speech (if not all the time) but that with this comes responsibility is part of the discipline of education. Understanding that as we think together and speak together that we also create together offers a different way of thinking about the nature of educational spaces and helps to make us better able to understand the importance of process. It is not that everyone has the ‘right to speak’ or is ‘entitled to their opinion’ or ‘has the right not to be upset by the state of the world’ but rather that *dialogue is privileged over self-expression*, and expression comes to be understood in terms of manifesting ideas and commitments rather fixed views and opinions.

By temporarily suspending the immediate needs of the society in and through the place of the school we seek to reclaim the common, that is, the ordinary, the common humanity, the commons, the spaces where we can come together that exemplify the public dimension of education where we put things on the table, and we speak about them together. Understanding education not in terms of preparing for democracy but in terms of what we humans do to renew humanity, as we have done for millennia as we passed knowledge and gestures and rituals and artefacts to one another, gives us a different sense of the importance of the educational endeavour as an initiation into the rich and often difficult stories of humanity. Retaining this historical sensibility matters as we are reflecting on our becoming present. We must ask ourselves what would humanity be without education, and what would it mean to exist in a world without education? In this way, we might become more open to the complexity of the world and move into those stories with the students, doing so not to immediately prevent terrorism or radicalisation, or promote inclusion and integration head on, but because these are our shared stories – the stories of humanity and the world – stories that belong to everyone from the newly arrived refugee from Syria to the child in a small rural Irish village on the Atlantic coast. Beginning then with the common and what we share also allows us to hold our different stories and lineages in a common space without privileging one over the other. Where democratic moments may arise, it may be in the communities of philosophical enquiry that seek reasons and thrive on agonism and contestation, allowing us later to contemplate, reflect and perhaps even change our minds.

Building Community: Coda

The Enquiring Classroom works with educators, sharing ideas, knowledge and practices in peer groups, in order to develop a skillset that can help to create an environment that will allow for the careful and sensitive exploration of ideas, questions and values that matter to teachers and students. The aim is not to propose a single approach to navigate complex questions but to work with multiple approaches that are attuned to the different rhythms and experiences of classroom life. Research shows that it is important that children and young people be given opportunities to discuss and critically examine such issues in safe contexts with trusted facilitators in order to foster critical thinking skills and the capacity for ethical imagination. This is most effective when questions, concerns, and issues are generated by the students themselves.

By developing communities of enquiry in classrooms and educational spaces and by fostering communities of enquiry and practice amongst diverse groups of educators, this project enables us to learn from one another and to build knowledge, ideas, and strategies whilst being able to discuss the difficult situ-

ations that sometimes arise in educational settings. Yet the idea of community extends to understanding schools as part of and often shaped profoundly by their local communities, in particular as those communities may have undergone rapid change as in times of crisis, economic or political.

This idea of the school as a suspended place in which the cares and inequalities in society are temporarily set aside can also be an important force at times of difficulty. Pedagogical and educational spaces have problematic lineages, but they also offer potential for other kinds of dialogue and conversations. They demand that parents and family members or carers as ‘some child’s’ carer enter the conversation from the principle and perspective of equality. They might use the quasi-public nature of the spaces to offer interstices between the world of the home (or the camp) through exchange and sharing. The equality of carers is presupposed in the space of the school where it may not be in the rest of life. Even the question of non-citizenship can be temporarily suspended by ensuring that in the space of the school all have a voice, all can participate, and all can imagine together. They can ask what needs to be put on the table and discussed and they can enact the commons by speaking and thinking together about those questions that matter. They also offer openings and gestures to a wider world – perhaps through gestures of welcome to those fleeing persecution rather than framing their arrival as a problem or challenge. In this way, teachers can help to make such encounters pedagogical encounters in their deepest sense.



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