

Decolonisation of Learning Spaces

Background

This project has arisen from the growing concerns about:

- the threats and opportunities of global digital technologies for the livelihoods, resources, lifestyles, and knowledges of rural and remote communities around the world;
- the need for learning that exploits these digital technologies yet preserves local cultures, traditions, ways of knowing, languages, and spiritual practices;
- the role and importance of local ways of knowing that spring from within small, marginal, and fragile communities;
- the need for better communication strategies and research techniques, ethics and governance that enable (outside) digital education and technology experts to understand these communities, their worldviews and their meaning of 'learning' and ways of sharing wisdom with others in order to help each community develop its own digital learning spaces;
- the need for the development of such digital learning spaces to be designed, developed, and maintained by the local communities in culturally, environmentally, and economically sustainable and appropriate ways.

Our mission

- To build an informal global network of local communities interested in the research necessary to collaboratively design and build informal digital learning spaces addressing their own, unique needs, contexts, environments, and socio-economic conditions. The learning spaces they build should be under local ownership and control following local knowledge, values, practices, languages, cultural traditions, livelihoods, and social practices.
- To use these informal digital learning communities to empower diverse local communities, especially those distant and different from the national and global metropolitan mainstream, to understand and evaluate the threats and opportunities presented by global digital organisations and initiatives with the aim to preserve and enhance their local, cultural practices.

What We Hope For

The chance to work with different local communities. Specifically, we would like to ask one community representative to bring together a handful of fellow community members for some sessions trying out one or two simple research methods.

We are *also* keen to learn about local research methods; for example, how do communities traditionally recognize, examine, and address their needs?

In working together, we hope to identify effective ways of communicating across cultures, addressing challenges, and finding solutions. Naturally, the format may vary from community to community, and we are keen to hear about different circumstances and challenges and to adapt the format as we understand more.

What we offer

We are developing a global network of research collaborators. Currently, we are in communications with organizations and individuals who work with peoples from South Africa, Kenya, Canada, Finland, Australia, Borneo, Congo Basin, and India. We very much welcome community members and representatives as well as research collaborators to share in a variety of activities such as

- Participation and representation in a growing global network of like-minded communities, activists, and researchers.
- Authorship on any publications that come directly out of our collaboration as well as participation in any online events we organize.
- Participation in any funding proposals to support ongoing work in the communities' areas of interest and expertise.

What will be asked

We will ask you to locate a community representative or researcher who works with one or more communities. The representative would then be asked to try out one or two research methods with a small group of community members and report on the outcome of the research methods and their effectiveness. We will ask if the methods made sense, if the methods seemed culturally appropriate, and if the methods were (or would be) useful to the community in gathering information, finding useful solutions, and making decisions.

While we will be happy to specify the research methods for testing, we are also flexible and open to suggestions for different methods that might be particularly relevant to certain community projects, concerns, or circumstances. In addition, we are very much interested in communities' traditional ways of understanding, examining, and researching the world; therefore, traditional research methodologies are very much welcome.

When will we do this?

Because we are currently at a stage in which we are making initial contacts with communities, activists, and researchers around the world, the timeline we propose is:

- January 2022: Agreement to join this initiative.
- February 2022: Identify community representatives, choose research methodologies for testing.
- Mid-February 2022: Begin community meetings and testing research methodologies.

Who We Are and How to Find Us!

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