

Peer Review Article

# “Lifting the Roof” With Democracy-as-Becoming

The Potential of Aesthetic and Embodied Learning for  
Innovating Governance in Educational Institutions  
A Pattern Approach

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Lea Spahn<sup>a</sup>, Susanne Maria Weber<sup>b</sup>, Pauliina Jääskeläinen<sup>c</sup>, Karen Mpamhanga<sup>d</sup>,  
Cláudia Neves<sup>e</sup>, and Karine Oganisjana<sup>f</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Education, Philipps-University Marburg, Germany

<sup>b</sup> Department of Education, Philipps University Marburg, Germany

<sup>c</sup> Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland

<sup>d</sup> School of Law and Education, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield, UK

<sup>e</sup> Departamento de Educação e Ensino a Distância, Universidade Aberta, Lisboa,  
Portugal

<sup>f</sup> Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management, Riga Technical University, Latvia

Corresponding author: [lea.spahn@uni-marburg.de](mailto:lea.spahn@uni-marburg.de)

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## Abstract

Contemporary societies face interrelated crises that strain democratic institutions, social cohesion, and ecological conditions. This article approaches governance as a relational, processual practice that can be reconfigured in and

through aesthetic and embodied approaches. Drawing on qualitative material generated in the three-year Horizon Europe/UKRI project *Transforming Education for Democracy through Aesthetic and Embodied Learning, Responsive Pedagogy and Democracy-as-becoming*, the analysis revisits case studies with a focus on aesthetic and embodied learning in adult, professional, and organizational learning settings to ask what patterns of governance innovation towards democracy-as-becoming become visible when democratic learning is enacted as embodied, situated practice. Empirically, the study draws on data generated through case trials in six European countries with a participatory action research design and unfolds five patterns with analytic vignettes that illuminate repeating moments, processes and situations of embodied governance. Conceptually, the article is informed by an epistemic shift towards commoning, framing governance as embedded in concrete practices of possibility rather than bounded procedures. A pattern-oriented re-reading identifies recurring situations in which governance shifts are enacted through power-sharing, transforming dialogue, relational well-being, and holistic learning. These shifts appear as changes in individual stance, collective practice, and institutional culture, including processes of unlearning hierarchy and reworking institutionalized power relations. By articulating “promising patterns” grounded in situated educational practice, the article links democratic renewal to common(ing) activities and collective imagination in education.

## Keywords

aesthetic and embodied learning; democracy-as-becoming; governance transformation; commoning; vignette research; organizational learning

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## Introduction

Multiple crises endanger the co-habitation of humans and—in relation to planetary boundaries—more-than-human interdependencies. Otto Scharmer (2018, p. 40) distinguishes three abysses in the collapsing of present systems: anti-democratic forces put the foundations of social equality at stake and with that collective policy making, social cohesion and societal solidarity; an ecological crisis that is all too present through accelerated changes in the planetary ecological well-being and noticeable overstepping of planetary boundaries; and finally an abyss through the loss of a perception of self and future potentials,

recognizing the alienation of humans in search of resonant relationality. These abysses shape, constrain, and fracture democratic institutions and their practices of organizing.

Acknowledging these challenges, we turn to governance as site of transformation in the field of education. Wondering how we, as educational researchers, can not only address this planetary situation but attend to it and give transformative impulses, we foreground aesthetic and embodied learning allowing learners to be involved with their lived bodies, sensations and biographical becoming. Within our three-year Horizon Europe / UKRI project "Transforming Education for Democracy through Aesthetic and Embodied Learning, Responsive Pedagogy and Democracy-as-becoming" (AECED),<sup>1</sup> we have trialed and analyzed how aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy (AELD) can transform education on individual, collective, organizational, and epistemic levels. AELD is grounded in the presence of learners as embodied beings in situations. It attends to this aspect through creating learning situations based on experience, co-creation, and reflection—all integrating the sense-based, embodied dimension of learning. In this sense, we perceive all participating bodies as knowing actors, incorporating their biographical and social path of becoming, attentive to atmospheres and others, and willful in respect to the capacity to intervene through somatic and felt responses (Sheets-Johnstone, 2020; Spahn, 2022). As education is the institutionalized form of societal values, beliefs, norms and hope—practiced, shared, induced and transformed in educational settings—it is crucial for the cultivation and critical learning of democracy as lived practice. As such, we align with Isabell Lorey who refers to education in her unfolding of a presentist democracy—a notion she developed through the analysis of (feminist) democracy movements that establish horizontal practices of self-governance. She highlights that presentist democracy is not a question of participatory procedures but based on multitudes and situated assemblies "deeply anchored in social relations, in mutual dependencies and affections" (Lorey, 2022, p. 14). Thinking along with Lorey, we pursue an understanding of democracy as relational and social practices beyond participatory approaches; for transformative learning towards democracy-as-becoming, we center AELD around for key dimensions: power-sharing, transforming dialogue, relational well-being, and holistic learning. These dimensions contour an attentional shift in educational practices grounded in the presence and situatedness of subjects as lived bodies and the way educational practices design their relations. Situated in the field of adult education, this project stands in relation to transformative learning theory, which emphasizes how disorienting experiences may unsettle established frames of reference and open processes of critical reflection and perspective transformation (Mezirow, 2000). Yet rather than centering transformation primarily at the level of the

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<sup>1</sup> More information about the project, can be found on our website: [www.aeced.org](http://www.aeced.org)

individual learner, AELD foregrounds the collective, embodied, and relational constitution of democratic learning practices.

For that reason, the shift towards democratic learning practices interconnects with Collet-Sabé and Ball's (2025) endeavor to establish a different episteme for education altogether: pursuing an ontological and epistemological recognition that we are part of a social and ecological collectivity, they argue for an episteme of commoning responding to the need to transform our relations to ourselves, others, and the earth based on care, more-than-human relations and an ethics of life continuance. Thus, commoning is an epistemic shift in which education is part of foundational commons, understood as "living social structures, in which humans deal with their common problems in a self-organized way" (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019, p. 20) cultivating and caring for the relationships that exist around the production of shared resources.

With this interweaving of aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy, a transformation of relations, and how they are embedded in governance practices, not only subjectivities that emerge from aesthetic and embodied learning in adult, professional and organizational learning became visible in our research process. More so, we ask how AELD inspires governance transformation toward this open-ended epistemic shift—or democracy-as-becoming. Based on that question, we want to unfold an understanding of governance based on a process-ontological perspective with relationality at its core. That said, we align ourselves with Collet-Sabé and Ball's critique of modern schools and education that remain unable to change their learning environments to respond to pressing socio-ecological and political challenges. They suggest "common(ing) activities undertaken by/in social infrastructures" (Collet-Sabé & Ball, 2024, p. 448) in education. We understand AELD as a commoning activity embedded in educational practice and centered on educators and participants. This entails an exploration of "the forms of care, presence, and discernment that underpin the holding of democratic spaces" in facilitation processes (Zubizarreta-Ada, 2025, p. 132; see also Escobar, 2019). Thus, enabling transformations towards democracy requires a firm understanding of the multiple perceptions, experiences, and knowledges involved in and governing the facilitation practices. In this sense, we argue that placing attention on aesthetic and embodied approaches in adult, professional and organizational learning creates conditions for action-taking, emotional agency, and allows for collaborative creativity to emerge.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> At the same time, forms of governance attuned to relationality, care, and ecological interdependence are already emerging—often in the margins, in Indigenous and place-based traditions, and in community-led initiatives that reimagine democratic accountability beyond the nation-state. These innovations, however, remain underexplored in mainstream governance discourse (Weber et al., 2024).

Based on that outset, this article draws on an extensive participatory action research in 19 case studies across six European countries. At its core, the research developed, introduced, and trialed aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy (AELD) in a range of educational context—generating insights into facilitation and (self-)governance practices as they unfold. Consequently, our methodology for this article aligns with the embodied nature of our research processes. We develop a pattern approach referring to the work of Christopher Alexander (Alexander, 1999, 2004; Alexander et al., 1977), Silke Helfrich (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019), and relate it to Otto Scharmer's (2007) as well as Dutra Gonçalves' and Arawana Hayashi's (Dutra Gonçalves & Hayashi, 2021) perspectives. All use pattern languages to address recurring social problems solution-oriented and relationally. Inspired by their work, we have re-analyzed our material to see if we observe repeating situations of transformation and generated 'promising patterns' of governance transformation in education. We show that educational institutions can be understood as patterned configurations and dispositives with specific onto-epistemological effects (Foucault, 1978/2008). By articulating promising patterns, we trace the aesthetic and embodied dimension of un/learning, arguing that these insights generate an innovative perspective on governance as a matter of discursive-social shifts in (institutionalized) practices towards democratization and the emergence of collective imaginations for governance futures in education (Koenig et al., 2023, p. 3).

For this article, we first introduce the project and contour the impact of aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy (AELD)—rooted in the project's premise that learning for democracy needs a grounding through the recognition of the aesthetic and embodied as key dimensions in education (section 2.1). Following this, a governance perspective in the field of education considers (organizing) processes as they unfold as relational practice between different spaces, bodies involved and situated knowledges—all equipped with forms of agency (section 2.2). When re-analysing the material generated in the AECED project from a governance perspective, transformational shifts could be observed on the individual level, in collective practices, and as institutional cultures. These shifts are analyzed, discussed and developed in a pattern approach in combination with vignette research (section 2.3 and 2.4). We then present five promising patterns and ground them in vignettes drawn from AECED trials (section 3.1). In this section, the initial reference to the three abysses finds its response. Finally, we discuss the necessity of institutional openings for a grounding of governance practices in aesthetic and embodied approaches and their relevance for a common(ing) perspective in future governance (section 3.2). In this way, we argue, a reflexivity and an awareness for participation and difference grow toward transversal relationships and democracy-as-becoming (section 4).

## Adult, Professional and Organizational Learning as Space of Democracy-As-Becoming Through Aesthetic and Embodied Learning

### *The AECED Project: Transforming Education Through Aesthetic and Embodied Learning for Democracy*

The aim of the AECED project was to transform the role of aesthetic and embodied learning in education for democracy. For that, we developed a pedagogical framework for aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy (AELD) and related guides for practice for all phases of education, designed for facilitating educators, researchers and policy makers.<sup>3</sup> AELD, as we understand it, is grounded in an awareness or sense of difference—in relation to others, objects, environments—which allows a new ‘seeing’ or perception of otherness, going beyond and changing the self. With a focus on this mode of facilitation and experience in education, learning for democracy is grounded in active engagement in democratic relationships, responsiveness and an ethical stance of involvement. Understood as an open-ended process of becoming, the democratization of educational environments is a relational practice of imagination, holistic growth and future-shaping, characterized not only by responsibility and accountability, but also by care, connectedness and reflexivity—or: democracy-as-becoming. As such, AELD is a learning process based in aesthetic and embodied experience for a deepened understanding of democracy as lived practice.

The prototype pedagogical framework and associated guides in the first part of the project were trialed across nineteen cases in the six participating countries and built on two key pillars. First, the transformation of education for democracy through aesthetic and embodied learning methods implemented within responsive pedagogical environments. These methods enable the experience of democracy-as-becoming, as evidenced by indicators such as power-sharing, relational well-being, transforming dialogue, and holistic learning. Second, each case engaged in a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, following six interconnected phases: Introduction, Familiarization, Collaborative Reflection, Planning, Action, Analysis and Synthesis (Kemmis et al., 2014; MacDonald, 2012). As a “research-to-action approach”, PAR treats participants as collaborators and co-creators with expertise in their own settings. Consequently, participants co-designed, adapted, trialed, and reflected on AELD activities together with the researchers involved. In that way, the project itself was designed as a space where democracy-as-becoming was enacted by involving

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<sup>3</sup> AECED is conducted by researchers in six European countries: Croatia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Portugal, and UK. The educational phases ranged from Primary Education, Secondary Education, to Higher Education, and Adult, Professional and Organizational Learning.

educators, teachers, facilitators, and learners in the conception, trialing, and reflection. Material was generated throughout all phases of the iterative PAR process, leading into field notes, interview transcripts, and memos in a project-intern metadata-matrix—a shared virtual platform where descriptive and reflective memos were produced for cross-case analysis. Coding and case comparison were supported by MAXQDA, while analytical rigor was enhanced through collaborative interpretation, reflexive discussion of pattern identification, and the assessment of saturation across concepts, groups, and interfaces (Tracy, 2010). In this process, the researchers met in small groups according to educational phases which led into a cross-phase analysis with inter-researcher validation, coding indicators of individual, collective, organizational and epistemic transformation. This amounted to a power-sensitive analysis inquiring into enabling and hindering conditions of AELD through facilitation, social positioned-ness, spatial arrangements, structural and normative orders, and specific cultural contexts in the different countries. Seven cases were selected from the broader dataset; all are in adult, professional, and organizational education and were chosen because they provide particularly rich insight into facilitator roles within small communities of practice.

With interest in a transformative impact on education, the project's attention was directed to the potential of aesthetic and embodied experience in educational environments: the potential of knowledge acquired, shared and expressed through the lived body (Payne & Jääskeläinen, 2023; Spahn, in press). As the PAR methodology fostered processes of collective experimentation with the aim to observe transformation through the introduction of AELD, the research generated insights into the potential democratization of the learning environments and educational contexts. This aspect is of special interest in this paper, as the research practices intervened in educational institutions and their organizing: the governance perspective brings to the fore the institutional setting of learning, social and educational innovations, and multilayered policy learning as open-ended processes of becoming.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Shaping Democracy-as-Becoming in Educational Organizations: Governance Transformation Through AELD***

With an interest in governance practices that incorporate aesthetic and embodied learning, the analysis brought forth examples that have been condensed into specific patterns that articulate promising practices for governance innovation. Situated in the field of education, we understand educational institutions as “an established set of relations, roles, practices, behaviors, norms, disciplines, and

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<sup>4</sup> This also coincides with Hayashi and Dutra Gonçalves' approach who understand their approach of social change within a social group, organization, or system both “as a piece of social art, as well as a research outcome” (Dutra Gonçalves & Hayashi, 2021, p. 38).

resources, in many diverse social areas (education, health, religion, etc.) that, according to the Foucauldian model of analysis, has its own truth and forms of knowledge; specific forms of power and government” (Collet-Sabé & Ball, 2024, pp. 443–444). Against this backdrop, we ask how the practices, arrangements and techniques in educational institutions aimed at governing individuals can be changed toward more democracy. Placing attention on practices, the interplay of agents and social orders, a governance perspective can give insights into structures, dynamics and practices in their interrelatedness. By addressing “questions of regulation and structure formation in complex social structures” (Altrichter, 2018, p. 444), a governance perspective can generate a complex image of the design and development of working and learning processes within educational institutions with an interest in the coordination of actions between different actors.

Aiming at generating insights into the grammars of educational organizations, we turned to vignette research as ethnographic process to generate patterns of governance practices. Vignettes, which are condensed moments of practices, interactions and relational patterns offer quasi ethnographic insights, what the anthropologist Clifford Geertz called “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973). This was enriched by Lund’s institutional ethnography who points out how “[s]ocial institutions and formations ‘compel subjects to direct their energies in particular ways’” (Gunnarsson, 2016, as cited in Lund, 2025, p. 147). In her feminist practice theoretical approach, Lund intends to understand the entanglements between specific societal conditions and societal formations that materialize as kinds of energies that enable, offer, incite or enforce specific responses (Lund, 2025, p. 149). If we understand organizations as sites of learning where knowledge is always embodied and experienced through sensory orders, governance has to be seen as performative and grounded in sensory orders, affective registers, and bodily practices (Voß et al., 2023). That said, we are interested in how governance practices can also be critically reflected and changed towards more democracy by aesthetic and embodied approaches.<sup>5</sup> This is also taken up by Prinz who argues: “What distinguishes aesthetic practices from other modes of critique or reflection is precisely its ability to challenge the sensory order of a dispositive by a re-constellation of its formal elements” (Prinz, 2023, p. 52). She highlights the potential of bodily practices as expression, reproduction and resistance to social and sensory orders. As such they are “guided by a collectively shared, implicit bodily or practical knowledge that the subject performs through repeated and regular interaction with the surrounding social and material environment” (Prinz, 2023, p. 52). The reference to collectively shared and embodied knowledges reminds us to integrate felt and affective resonances in their critical

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<sup>5</sup> In practice theoretical approaches, we observe and analyze situations, rather than subjects alone—which leads to a perspective of dispersed agency while recognizing the embodied situatedness of subjects (Spaargaren et al., 2016).

capacity and as resource for governance practices (Allen et al., 2025). In our material, it became evident that power operates “on and through bodies and the meanings attached to bodies that are not only products of social relations but are organized, regulated, and normalized in ways that reinforce dominant social order” (Fotaki & Pullen, 2019, p. 5). This turn to bodies as living, material and sensate participants in organizing also necessitates a shift in governance perspectives. Recognizing bodies as sensate participants in organizing means to include their potential to be affected—“because affect presents us with the promise of a state of becoming that can potentially destabilize and unsettle us into new states of being” (Fotaki & Pullen, 2019, p. 6). In line with that, we argue for an attentive shift toward a recognition of a diverse range of embodied experiences and their relevance for governance practices, hence, a democratization of lived experiences and their relational qualities in their effect on organizing. A turn to aesthetic and embodied approaches recognizes the bodies involved in their felt, sensory, emotive and physical dimensions of sense-making (Pors, 2019).

Following Hayashi and Dutra Gonçalves we dive into the relational and felt dimensions of social systems yielding “new ways of making visible intangible qualities of our social systems and social fields” (Dutra Gonçalves & Hayashi, 2021, p. 37). Social fields is a term developed by Scharmer and colleagues to describe the “quality of relationships that give rise to patterns of thinking, conversing and organizing” (Scharmer, 2018, p. 14). This interrelation will be of interest in the following sections: we intend to contour different patterns through an in-depth analysis of ‘relational practices’ that foster aesthetic and embodied governance toward democracy-as-becoming. The patterns emerged through the researcher’s attention to power relations and subject-forming practices, reflexive and participatory spaces for co-learning under conditions of uncertainty and the question how embodied and aesthetic forms of knowing become observable as factors of organizational change. This culminates in vignettes, a concise, vivid and condensed depiction of particular situations that responds to the embodied entanglement that marked our participatory action research (Agostini et al., 2024, pp. 10–11).

### ***The Body of Research and Analysis Approach***

Looking to identify more democratic governance practices within adult, professional and organizational education sites, AELD can serve as one model for future governance practices. For the matter of this article, seven of the nineteen cases situated in adult, professional and organizational learning contexts were re-analyzed. These cases span a diverse range of educational settings, all situated within adult, professional, or organizational learning contexts—and likewise a variety of aesthetic and embodied approaches co-created and experienced by the researchers and participants in educational settings.

Country	Case(s)	AELD interventions
Finland	6	Movement-based interventions with a focus on the acceptable gaze in Higher Education seminars
Germany	9 & 10	Application and Development of Methods with the card deck Pattern Language of Commoning in further Education Seminars; Workshop for Art Educators and Development of Movement Performance on democracy as lived experience
Latvia	12	Drama sketch and collaging with teachers in a workshop setting
Portugal	16 & 17	Arts- and movement-based methods, storytelling in online vocational training
UK	18	Gesture-response, found images / drawing, collage and participant-selected methods to support reflection in a supervision context

*Table 1: Overview of AECED Cases included in the Study*

The PAR methodology generated a multitude of material that illuminated the impact aesthetic and embodied approaches can have on learning for democracy in educational institutions and practices—such as increased responsiveness, collaborative performance, communities of learning and ethical commitment. For this article all participating partners revisited their material to identify commonalities across the diverse cases that inform the development of governance practices from the perspective of democracy-as-becoming. The focus of the analysis was, therefore, on how bodies organize and become organized through aesthetic and embodied learning (methods) and intercorporeal encounters during learning processes (Cooren et al., 2011; Gärtner, 2013; Gherardi et al., 2013; Spahn, 2025). From this perspective, governance is seen as constituted through the intercorporeal actions and embodied ways of relating embedded in specific organizational and hierarchical systems. In this sense, analyzing the cases with governance as embodied organizational practices as point of view, fostered an inquiry into how aesthetic and embodied learning can contribute to democratizing governance practices.<sup>6</sup> The analysis brought to light repeating situations through which five patterns for governance innovation toward democracy-as-becoming emerged.

### ***Combining a Pattern Approach With Vignette Research***

The term “pattern” has been decisively shaped by the architect Christopher Alexander. In *A Pattern Language* (Alexander et al., 1977), he defines patterns as recurring solutions to problems that occur repeatedly within specific contexts. This definition highlights three crucial aspects: patterns pinpoint recurring issues in human environments; they establish the fundamental principle of a solution rather than dictating a fixed formula; and they permit infinite

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<sup>6</sup> For examples in the field of leadership, see Payne and Jääskeläinen (2023); Ropo and Parviainen (2001).

variations in application, flexibly adapting to various contexts (Alexander, 1999). Alexander sees patterns as embedded in a "circular scheme for the creative process" and in an "ethics of design" (Leitner, 2015, p. 31). This approach is process-oriented and dynamic: "Each pattern represents the best current assumption as to which arrangement of the physical environment will work best in solving the given problem" (Alexander, 1995, xvi). A pattern has the "form of an instruction" (Alexander, 1995, xi) that can be used to respond to a recurring problem. As patterns are embedded in a whole in conjunction with other patterns, they can form a language "in which an infinite variety of combinations can be created" (Alexander, 1995, xii). In this way, patterns serve as units of knowledge that connect problems, contexts, and solutions, while allowing for adaptation and combination—they are a methodological framework that can be systematically applied and integrated into larger pattern languages (Alexander et al., 1977).

Helmut Leitner (2015) systematized the concept of patterns and refers to them as knowledge units of medium range, since patterns are neither as abstract as theories nor as concrete as individual examples. He sees precisely this intermediate level granting them practical applicability and flexibility. In addition, they enable the transformation of experiential knowledge, which is usually implicit, into something explicit and communicable. This transformation facilitates the transfer of expert practice across various disciplines and communities (Borchers, 2001). Moreover, they offer middle-range theories that bridge the gap between single cases and abstract theory, ensuring that research is both empirically grounded and theoretically relevant, as well as a tool for documenting, organizing, and conveying experiential knowledge in various contexts. (Iba & Isaku, 2016; Leitner, 2007, 2015).<sup>7</sup>

From an onto-epistemological perspective, the pattern approach connects to the work of Foucault, who analyzed truth games, discourses, and dispositives as power/knowledge formations and especially was interested in the discursive practices which constitute and subjectify the subject (Foucault, 1978/2008). Foucault described dispositives as connected discourses, institutions, and practices that structure power. From a Foucauldian perspective, power/knowledge settings need to constitute and reproduce constantly. This is why process approaches are relevant, as patterns can be understood as micro-dispositives of individual, collective and organizational path-creation into the future (Weber, 2022) and commoning patterns actualize the dispositive of radical democracy (Weber, 2025).

The pattern approaches introduced above not only offer a process ontology but refer to the aesthetic constitution of the "care of the self" (and the institutional self). As the pattern language aims to describe relational

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<sup>7</sup> As exemplified by the Pedagogical Patterns field, where teaching practices are recorded, disseminated, and enhanced (Bergin, 2000, 2006).

connectedness as a “fundamental conception of the world” (Alexander, 1995, xiii), it breaks with the causal-dualistic thinking of modernity. In fact, the view of humanity and the relationship between humans and the world focuses on relationships and vitality. It corresponds to an ethical-processual understanding of organization, like that advocated by organizational education (Göhlich et al., 2018).

Vignette research lead into a second analysis of the material with an interest in “democratic openings” in institutionalized practices. Vignettes offer a methodological, methodical and empirical grounding with rich process descriptions based on the co-presence and involvement of the researchers as sensate bodies—with memories of situations, incorporated experiences, and a sensorium for aesthetic and embodied encounters gained through “co-experiencing” (Agostini et al., 2024, p.14). Developing patterns from the material required attentiveness to configurations in which livable, democratic, embodied settings emerged or were created. The search for AELD and the emergence of democratic governance practices was a process of zooming in and out (Nicolini, 2009), re-turning to material and seeking out repeating situations in which aesthetic and embodied learning and relating played a central role. Especially this process was one of corporeally re-remembering the data and resonating with it. Methodologically, we draw on vignette research rooted in phenomenology as philosophical approach to lived experience and its embodied, sense-constituting relevance for subjects as part of the world. As such, the research process but also the engagement with data is based on ‘experiencing with’—the embodied involvement and entanglement of researchers with the researched. After co-creating patterns collectively, we developed their conciseness by adding vignettes. Vignettes are descriptions that emerge from the researcher’s resonances with the experienced situations. As a methodological strategy, they do not erase embodied sensations and insights gained; instead, they explicitly rely on the researcher’s resonances with “the experiential flow of the action” (Agostini et al., 2024, p. 20). Thus, the purpose of the vignette is not to explain something but “to recreate the experience” (Agostini et al., 2024, p. 12). It is a movement of ‘pointing to’ generating attention to a specific way of seeing a situation (Herrmann & Agostini, 2025, p. 214). In this way, the vignettes intensify the pattern approach by translating embodied expressions, atmospheres and sensations into a concise and aesthetic language—while incorporating perceptive ambiguity (Herrmann & Agostini, 2025, p. 215).

In this way, using the pattern approach in combination with vignette research for an analysis of governance transformation does not simply aim to provide tools for problem solving in governance and organizing but rather to presuppose a different, onto-epistemological understanding of the world and the relatedness of actors involved (Alexander et al., 1995, p. 33). We address promising patterns as micro-dispositives of organizing democracy-as-becoming and as epistemic innovation.

## Developing Promising Patterns for Governance Transformation Through Aesthetic and Embodied Practices

[T]o address the complex challenges of our times, we must cultivate embodied and perceptual capacities and a language for our embodied experience(s). (Dutra Gonçalves & Hayashi, 2021, p. 35)

Based on this invitation to develop embodied and perceptual capacities and ways of their articulation, we unfold five patterns of governance transformation and associated vignettes. By attending to the presence of bodies in educational practices, we noticed situations of collective, affective and corporeal encounters as impulses for democratizing governance practices. Addressing bodies as responsive sites of knowing and acting acknowledges their potential to intervene in social practices with reflexive and critical modes of awareness (Sheets-Johnstone, 2020). Bodies, as we grasp them, are “concrete, material, animate organizations of flesh, organs, nerves and skeletal structure” (Grosz, 1999, p. 382) embedded in social and more-than-human environments they are a part of. This corporeality is the basis of lived experience—or, as phenomenology states, the embodied foundation of being in the world and engaging with it (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002).<sup>8</sup> On that basis, we will present a set of promising patterns of governance transformation based on aesthetic and embodied interventions that reconnect with bodies as a relational source of experiencing, learning and knowing.

### ***“Lifting the Roof”: Promising Patterns of Governing Towards Democracy-as-Becoming***

Centering organizational governance around the aesthetic and embodied does not only address the presence of different bodies and their situatedness but also the lived body as source of knowing and acting in organizing. With our research situated in education, giving attention to the embodied foundation of learning can create transdisciplinary sensemaking, emotion-driven creativity, empathetic enactment and, embodied boundary-spanning (Allen et al., 2025). While these aspects create a sensitivity for the value of embodied learning, we articulate ‘promising patterns of governance’ for a transformative shift in a time of pressing systemic challenges—as relational practices of perceiving, sensing, knowing and acting in processes of (self-) organization. This is also argued by Hayashi and Dutra Gonçalves who claim that a pattern language can provide “a tangible knowing-for-action that might support change makers, leaders, educators, and organizations in shaping the social world” (Dutra Gonçalves & Hayashi, 2021,

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<sup>8</sup> Therefore, experiences are embodied and embedded; especially feminist and posthumanist perspectives consider bodies as “implicated” and “collaboratively worlded” as planetary cohabitants (Neimanis, 2019, p. 38).

p. 54). The turn to patterns (and pattern languages) opens new ways of governing that are not centered around subjective sensations; they are based on the sensate body as knowing agent but specifically attend to the recurring situations and patterns of relating in groups, collectives and organizations. Thus, the patterns introduce a solution-oriented way to approach change by means of an epistemic shift toward education as a common(ing) activity that includes communal undertakings and becomings (Collet-Sabé & Ball, 2024, p. 451). Each of the following five patterns, as illustrated in Figure 1, is accompanied by a vignette from the data material through which the pattern becomes tangible.



*Figure 1: Promising Patterns of Governing*

### **Facilitating vulnerability through/in aesthetic and embodied practices**

The first pattern centers facilitating vulnerability through/in aesthetic and embodied practices as a critical condition for relational transformation. Within this pattern, vulnerability becomes a shared experiential resource that opens space for establishing transformative dialogue through solidarity and sustained professional dialogue and power sharing. Through aesthetic and embodied modes of engagement, participants cultivate the trust and openness necessary for redistributing power, supporting relational wellbeing, and enabling dialogue that can disrupt habitual professional hierarchies. This pattern demonstrates how embodied and aesthetic practices do not simply accompany governance practices but actively generate the conditions under which solidarity and sustained professional exchange can emerge.

This session is the first time the participants come together; we meet in a virtual setting. We are all doctoral supervisors, and some of us know each other.

We are sixteen minutes into the ninety-minute session when I invite them to engage in a gesture-response activity. I am nervous about this first embodied activity, and I'm not sure how participants will react. I aim to be supportive: explaining what a gesture might be, telling them they can turn off their cameras and share their gestures only if they wished. I reflect later: 'Am I overcompensating for my own uncertainty and lack of experience with these approaches?' Someone questions "what a gesture might constitute." I describe again, demonstrating with my facial expressions, with my hands, moving more markedly. Then I quickly turn to the other researcher, who is more experienced in facilitating gesture-response activities. They propose to do one, remind the participants they "don't have to copy." And then, quietly and calmly, they share their gesture-response and resume their sitting position with no commentary...When back in the virtual room, I ask: "So how was that? Is anybody happy to share their reflections?" One participant speaks of feeling aligned with the aims of the project, but also a sense of struggle: "It's alien to my, you know, to the way I've worked as an academic." By way, perhaps, of reassurance, I say: "And I would imagine that some approaches might be more comfortable than others." As facilitator, I felt my lack of experience with this approach, tried to make the space comfortable for others who might also feel uncertain, and I valued having a researcher with more gesture-response experience in the room. I benefitted from experiencing the activity, then sharing it, and in the sharing of myself. Later I wrote: 'I really shared quite a lot about myself, really—and my vulnerability. This felt very authentic and real.'

The activity gave the participants an opportunity to reflect on their feelings towards the aims of the project, providing space to reflect on the positives and their anxieties. Surfacing one's vulnerability as facilitator, sharing it, and sharing the experiences, helped to foster an environment which supported further engagement in and co-creation of the aesthetic and embodied activities and the learning for democracy they brought.

### **Cultivating embodied responsiveness**

The second pattern is defined as *cultivating embodied responsiveness*, which foregrounds an attentional and perceptual shift as central to systemic transformation. This cultivation is enacted through collective reflection, where shared inquiry enables participants to sense and articulate emerging dynamics; through shifting attention habits, which challenges perceptual and interpretive routines; and through an acceptive gaze which we understand to be an

expression of embodied democratic values in the sense of perceptual openness as an ethical practice (Jääskeläinen et al., in press). Together, these components support valuing aesthetic and embodied methods as process that makes visible, enabling underlying organizational patterns, affects, and relations to become perceptible. In this pattern, aesthetic and embodied approaches function as methodological and epistemic tools that enhance the collective capacity to respond to systemic conditions.

In one early online session of case 16 (Portugal), vocational teachers were invited to return to the images they had chosen to represent their learning environments and to look at them again—more slowly, with attention to what usually remains unnoticed. As they shared their observations, small details began to surface: a student’s hand resting on a bench, a tilted chair, the soft light from a high window. These elements, previously overlooked, opened a different kind of conversation. Rather than analyzing problems, the group shifted into a mode of collective reflection, sensing affective and relational dynamics embedded in their everyday settings. This gentle reorientation of attention—an acceptive gaze—allowed teachers to perceive their contexts with greater openness, revealing patterns of interaction and organizational tensions that typically remain invisible. Through this shared attentional shift, aesthetic and embodied methods became tools for cultivating a more responsive, democratic awareness.

This vignette illustrates how a subtle shift in collective attention can make underlying organizational dynamics perceptible, strengthening the group’s embodied responsiveness to their professional realities. The attention to ‘usually unnoticed’ aspects can differentiate the experiential field or, as captured by Manning, alters “the wider field of experience” (2016, p. 117). The abovementioned reorientation of attention bears the potential of a reflection responsive not only to personal ‘doings and sayings’ in a situation but the wider ecology of educational situations—including affective atmospheres, a growing awareness for democratic processes but also our embeddedness within a planetary situation that we are a part of (Neimanis, 2019).

### **Establishing collective aesthetic practices**

The third pattern emphasizes *establishing collective aesthetic practices* as a way of reconfiguring organizational culture. This involves re-imagining organizing and organizational cultures through shared exploration and creativity that challenge prevailing norms and structures. The pattern is operationalized within a learning community that cultivates collective experimentation, discussions, and collaborative implementation of AELD through which participants jointly explore new practices and reflect upon their systemic implications. Central to

this pattern is a relational responsibility—a balancing of hierarchies highlighting how collective aesthetic engagement fosters more equitable relational configurations. Thus, this pattern illustrates how collective aesthetic practices support the emergence of novel organizational governance.

Students enter the studio space, arriving from different classes (case 10, Germany). They meet and sit at the side of the room until the session begins with an invitation to lie down, to stretch, to let the body melt into the floor. A silent phase of the class begins, punctuated only by the rhythm of breathing and the subtle shifts of bodies finding comfort on the floor. Each week this ritual of 'arrival' recurs—a shared moment of settling into bodily presence.

Later in the semester, the students receive time to work on developing movement phrases. While observing the group, I see them talking about their ideas for a while and need to remind them gently to move together rather than "talking things through." This situation shows that learning to trust the method and one's body and learning to appreciate the movements possible at this moment with this body needs trust and continuous effort. After the seminar, one person comments that she learned to appreciate the very simple movement that was almost "every-day-like"—that she was striving for complex movement but realized the beauty of the simple movements that happened. At a later point, one participant points out that, at first, she felt disoriented before she realized the potential: "So I think it can create a completely different view again. I would have taken a different rational approach and would never have come across this relationship issue. I believe that this physical aspect can or does create more in relation to people. And I think it also creates more openness if you approach it through the body and allow that" (Participant 04, July 14, 2024 interview, lines 195-200). Another participant explained that much of the process for him was about finding trust into the group to then notice how the group opened up and also told personal stories.

This vignette carves out how educational settings usually carry implicit or explicit norms of what is valuable and acceptable. Establishing a course structure in which participants get involved in an embodied beginning creates an atmosphere of 'opening up'; the repeated beginning becomes a threshold to enter a different mode of acting together. Even if participants often meet personal limits when introduced to the method of acting from an established common silence, the participants experience the establishing of relationships through a shared embodied practice. In addition, by bending the course logic of 'teaching' towards more relational responsibility, spaces for self-governed engagement open up.

### Otherness as resourceful not-knowing

*Otherness as resourceful not-knowing* is the fourth pattern which focuses on the navigation into uncertain futures in governance practices. While educational practices often demand a knowing subject, acting collectively as situated bodies places attention to moments of not-knowing in which new insights may emerge. Otherness—in this sense—stands for processes in which uncertainty and newness are embraced and welcomed even when they challenge prior knowledge or a subjective positionality. This pattern also refers to realizing that established orders of relating can be interrupted when we enter an open-ended process of embodied practice together.

During a trial AELD activity in case 12 (Latvia), the team, consisting of the principal and four teachers, entered the classroom in silence, standing in front of their colleagues without saying a word. After a few moments, they left, still silent. The audience was puzzled, momentarily suspended in not-knowing how to respond. The teachers re-entered, again in silence, and left once more—this time joined by two colleagues. With each repetition, more “spectators” rose from their seats to join them, until almost all teachers formed one moving, silent body, leaving only the two researchers seated apart.

In the reflection, the principal explained that the activity had been deliberately designed as an experiment to see whether mutual understanding could emerge without verbal instruction or a pre-given script, and without knowing in advance how colleagues would respond. For her, this intention materialized in the moment when the group finally stood together: “We stood together as one body, breathing and moving as one. We realized we were on the same wavelength, even though we said nothing. For me, it was like a manifesto of democracy: you reveal yourself as a person... You rise at your own pace and movement.” Another colleague stressed how rare and valuable such cultivated moments of not-knowing and emergence felt in everyday school life: “We lack such moments. We miss these authentic experiences of becoming, which emerge spontaneously without being declared in advance. Democracy opens up when you move, when you step forward, when you immerse yourself.” A third teacher connected this experience to education practices, noting that we can learn simply through physical presence and embodied learning.

The scene foregrounds a situation of not-knowing: both principal and teachers deliberately step into an unfamiliar, open-ended embodied practice that suspends explanation, clear roles and predictable responses. Rather than treating the disorientation and lack of a (social) script as a problem to be solved, they lean into this shared not-knowing as a resourceful space from which new forms of togetherness and understanding can emerge. In doing so, they

momentarily interrupt established orders of relating in the school and experiment with how uncertain, bodily co-presence can open imaginative possibilities of acting together.

### Ethics of care-fullness

Lastly, *ethics of care-fullness* addresses the affective and corporeal dimension in educational organizations and their subjects. Relating spaces, subjectivities, artefacts, relationships, and processes, this pattern contours governance practices as ethical situations in which agency is dispersed. With the notion of care-fullness, we address different aspects at once: care as attention to and dependence on a sensitivity for bodies' vital and somatic being, care as embodied practice for others, care-fullness as *embodied listening* to the felt sensing and knowing in situations that leaves space for difference and diversity.

During the workshop day in case 6 (Finland), one person takes up quite a lot of space. We exchange glances with another participant, and we smile at each other in a way that we both recognize that something needs to be done to this space-taking. I begin to move a bit, change my sitting position to show with my body movements to the person, who continues to speak, that now it is time to give space to others, too. I get nervous, because I feel that it is my responsibility to make sure that everyone gets to share their experiences and that nobody takes too much time with their comments. This feels difficult to me, and I don't know how to do that.

Afterwards, I left wondering how the group makes a silent decision concerning how much talk we tolerate and how far one can meander from the subject. That decision seemed to be made between the bodily gestures and postures, causing affective responses and, for me, pressure to control the situation. This raises the question: Did we really give space to different ways of participating? Were we, as a group, inclusive also to those who express themselves with meandering, long speeches? There seemed to be some kind of non-verbal norm that we as a group tried to stick to the subject and keep the comments concise, and this silent agreement did not tolerate very long expressions.

This event left me wondering how much we are willing to stretch the boundaries of our tolerance of differences and those of normative time. It seemed that emphasis on being both inclusive to different expressions and guarding the equality between the participants caused affective tensions and resonated in my facilitator's body.

Balancing with these emerging tensions seems to be crucial in the facilitator's role, to be able to reflect situations and their way of subjectivizing participants—and to work towards more democratic learning situations. This vignette illustrates the capacity to reflect on normative orders and tensions by staying resonant within the situation. Governance practices require a care-full understanding of the diversity of backgrounds from which the people involved enter a situation. Noticing one's embodied responses while holding the space with presence creates an ethical stance of involvement, responsiveness, and agency in facilitation processes.

The promising patterns propose a perspective on social change as a change in social practice. They articulate how governance can be reconceptualized through AELD. With the aim of cultivating sensory, emotional, and ethical dimensions of democratic practice in professional educational settings and organizational learning, the focus on patterns may yield an understanding of democracy as relational, processual, and embodied. Tracing personal, collective, and organizational transformations in the illustrative vignettes, the five patterns give insights into transformative governance practices, however, they also bring forth an epistemic shift in what we understand as governance.

### ***Discussion: Supporting Institutional Openings for the Cultivation of AELD in Governance***

Instituting and organizing can be understood as forms of duration which take place in constant recomposition, in an enduring constituting: as duration of a transversal assemblage of differentiating repetitions which enable institutions of the multiple and of the common. (Lorey, 2022, p. 83)

A pattern approach responds to Lorey's claim of instituting and organizing as enabling constant recomposition. As the presented patterns can show, democratic governance practices are nourished through aesthetic and embodied approaches. The five patterns with associated vignettes give insight into ethical and embodied ways of relating—and the potential to connect sensory, emotional and cognitive dimensions of knowing. Addressing (educational) organizations as symbolic and cultural orders (Elven & Weber, 2022) in which pedagogical and ethical impulses become prevalent before an "administrative" one (Rosenbusch, 2005, p. 21) an aesthetic and embodied transformation toward democracy-as-becoming intervenes into habitualized orders. In this process, the positionality of participants and "inner point of listening and speaking" is core (Scharmer, 2007; also Heidelmann, 2022; Heidelmann & Weber, 2022; König & Volmer, 2018; Königswieser & Hillebrand, 2017). From this perspective, knowledge is based on sensory and embodied ways of perceiving related to being affected (feelings, sensations, and experienced atmospheres), hence, sensory and imaginative approaches facilitate shifts in attentional practices. As also Wulf and Zirfas argue, aisthesis—understood as a knowing of the world based on sensory

perceptions as corporeal beings— becomes topic, methodology and research strategy of organizational learning and governance innovation (Wulf & Zirfas, 2007, p. 9; see also Weber & Wieners, 2018).

However, institutional support appears indispensable for the implementation of AELD practices. Introducing or practicing aesthetic and embodied approaches in adult, professional and organizational learning, we observed diverse responses ranging from joyful connectivity and exploration, shared meaning making with openness toward other perspectives, and revelations concerning seemingly 'given' orders. We were also able to observe moments of irritation, unease and friction and especially these moments of challenge illuminated strategies of absencing, a trajectory of rational denial, emotional decoupling and actionist ignorance up to destruction and self-destruction. Absencing is the counterpart to Scharmer's notion of presencing, understood as "systemic forms of in-built resistance designed to avoid consciously experiencing and sharing the interpersonal risks inherent in creating a necessary condition for this emergence to occur" (Cox, 2014, p. 30). By listening not only to the processes on the positive spectrum but also to the challenging moments, we became sensitive to organizational practices and how they structure the spectrum of the possible. As all institutions and social forms can be understood as temporary materializations of shared imaginaries based on "shared collective symbols, representations, and meanings through which people imagine, encounter, and make sense of the social world" (Salmenniemi et al., 2025, p. 350), they reveal shared imaginaries and how they orient practices and their subjects as institutionalized grammars. In this way, the development process towards governance patterns was a process of carefully revisiting our material to trace moments of aesthetic and embodied dimensions of governance practices. In this way, the patterns and vignettes capture aspects of institutional openings that create (more) democratic ways of (self-)governance. Aesthetic and embodied methods involve and enable participants to become active and responsible participants of the communities they live and work in. They can not only create competence and confidence in specific situations and governance processes but also redefine governance practices as relational acting within spaces of not-knowing, uncertainty and changing orders.

Critical situations faced in encounters with educational institutions made visible participants' vulnerability, institutional restrictions, and systemic difficulties to integrate AELD. First of all, vulnerability became a topic: aesthetic and embodied approaches triggered moments of discomfort as they involve both process-based learning and uncertainty and because participants can become very visible in their doings (case 6 Finland; case 10 Germany). Also, some participants marked personal boundaries around the extent to which personal sensations and reflections were shared with others. Strengthening embodied and ethical sensibilities also emerged as a key area for development, such as the proposal to incorporate the Acceptive Gaze, drawn from case 6 (Finland), as a core pedagogical principle (Jääskeläinen et al., in press), which cultivates relational safety, emotional openness, and ethical co-creation—capacities

essential for navigating the vulnerability and emotional labor inherent in aesthetic and embodied approaches to governance. This is also mirrored in the pattern *Facilitating vulnerability through and in aesthetic and embodied practices*, expressing the necessity to register, address and hold spaces for vulnerability in facilitation processes. Likewise, the pattern *Cultivating embodied responsiveness* marks the (learning) process in becoming a “listening body,” attentive to sensations, atmospheres and embodied knowledge and ways to respond in the situation as it unfolds.

As second challenge, participants reported difficulties in applying AELD and integrating it into their fields. They perceived the aesthetic and embodied approaches too distant from their subject matter and experienced a lack of confidence with the methods. Here, the pattern *otherness as resourceful not-knowing* can be applied as a possibility to immerse oneself into the uncertainty or lack of experience, as formulated by one participant. In addition to that, participants perceived tensions between institutional demands and democratic practice and struggled with adapting open-ended ABE methods to adult, professional and organizational learning (case 9 Germany; case 18 UK). However, we can trace that exposure to AELD increases the willingness to apply methods and practices that engage in processes of shared vulnerability, embodied trust-building and reflexivity. The pattern *establishing collective aesthetic practices* further reinforces the importance of embodied and ethical connectedness in advancing democracy-as-becoming in organized ways of relating to each other.

Third, structural and bureaucratic barriers were repeatedly perceived to hinder, and did hinder, the systematic integration of AELD, suggesting that sustained institutional engagement, coupled with committed leadership, is necessary to embed these approaches meaningfully within educational settings. AELD should not be confined to individual practice but positioned as a catalyst for institutional learning, organizational redesign, and policy dialogue—with an awareness of cultural embeddings and organizational histories. As an example of institutional reflexivity, Case 12 (Latvia) revealed that aesthetic and embodied co-creation—even without explicit cognitive interaction—generated a strong sense of oneness: one joint body of organizational authority and teachers, characterized by enhanced solidarity, deep mutual understanding, and a genuine willingness to stand up for one another. Likewise in Cases 16 (Portugal) and 17 (Portugal), the self-initiated development of communities of practices was a strong indicator for a sense of belonging and growth in self-governing principles. Especially the pattern *ethics of care-fullness* mirrors this process when embedding AELD within professional development, organizational reflection, and governance processes. Here, the pattern is not only contouring a shift in social practice but also an epistemic shift: AELD can support institutions in rethinking teaching practices, decision-making structures, and internal dialogue systems—as well as institutionalized rationalities as such. Collet-Sabé and Ball have formulated a strong critique of current educational institutions in the modern rationality of exclusion; in contrast, they imagine and promote more democratic,

relational, inclusive, place-based, diverse and ethically grounded educational cultures (Ball & Collet-Sabé, 2021; Collet-Sabé & Ball, 2023, 2024).

Synthesizing these insights suggests that cultivating AELD in governance practices requires a multidimensional approach. By articulating challenges and transformational shifts, we intend to acknowledge organizational and individual restrictions to interventions. However, we argue that the turn to aesthetic and embodied approaches allows novel patterns of thinking, conversing, and organizing to emerge that respond to the existential challenges of entangled and situated life-worlds in the Anthropocene that demand urgent responsiveness (Lowenhaupt Tsing et al., 2017). Applied to governance innovation, the implementation of AELD needs institutional commitment, conceptual clarity, responsiveness, collaborative 'becoming with,' contextual adaptability, and embodied ethical practices. Collaborative engagement among participants proved central to both learning processes and democratic practice. Dialogic co-creation, characterized by mutual exchange and shared agency, not only facilitated collective learning but also encompassed key principles of democracy-as-becoming. This included relational well-being, the redistribution of power, relational agency, and transformative dialogue. As the evidence across cases indicates, only when these elements intersect can AELD function as a transformative force in governance capable of supporting democracy-as-becoming on individual and collective, organizational, and systemic levels rooted in aesthetic and embodied reflexivity and relational agency (Weber & Wieners, 2018). In this way, a pattern approach based on the dimension of aesthetic and embodied practices does not only establish an ontological intervention in governance practices, but it also enacts a different episteme. Returning to the title of this article, "lifting the roof" in educational practices requires an epistemic shift in governance (Göhlich et al., 2018).

## **Conclusion: "Lifting the Roof" by Patterning Aesthetic and Embodied Learning Toward Commoning Organizations**

Describing practices of successful problem solution, patterns focus on the interplay of context, problem and solution. The promising patterns of governance transformation are grounded in aesthetic and embodied learning practices that emerged through a participatory research design, in which researchers were involved as participants as well. This involvement led to an analysis and theorization rooted in embodied responsiveness and reflexivity. As illustrated in the case vignettes, aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy paved the way for peer-led learning and co-creation which leads to a change in consciousness and practices alike. Especially the cultivation of an acceptive gaze (Jääskeläinen et al., in press) as an attentional structure supports the democratic processes by valuing difference and practicing an embodied listening to one's own responses and the embodied interactions within a social situation. An important aspect in this regard was attention to power-dynamics. Following Foucault, power/knowledge is understood here not solely as domination, but as productive

of subjects, practices, and possibilities of relation. From this perspective, aesthetic and embodied approaches to governance can be read as practices that reconfigure power/knowledge by cultivating attentiveness, shared responsiveness, and collective forms of self-governance. Yet this productivity is not outside ambivalence, as the conditions that enable democratic becoming also shape its limits.

Arguing for a shift in our attentional focus from individualistic learning spaces into collective endeavors, commoning may become an alternative episteme for governing practices in education. Commons are understood as “living social structures, in which humans deal with their common problems in a self-organized way” (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019, p. 20) cultivating and caring for the relationships that exist around the production of shared resources. When applying this to the educational system, the philosophers Jordi Collet-Sabé and Stephen Ball (Collet-Sabé & Ball, 2023, 2024, 2025) claim commoning as an alternative episteme for education in the current times of social, political, health, and ecological crisis.

From this angle, a governance perspective must intertwine the dimension of lived experience and practices of (self-)organizing. This can happen through moving towards in three forms: first, as a collaborative horizontal network expanding education as an open reciprocal and cooperative experience based on mutuality, a shared knowledge base, and social communities. Second, through establishing collective practices of integrating and transforming the (virtual) spaces in which we act, educate, and co-create. Third, through transversal subjectivities that undermine individualizing subjects and extend to more-than-human actors, extending to and becoming with all kinds of bodies as planetary worlding. Promoting democratic forms of organization and collective action, supporting transparency, accountability, democracy, and eco-social responsibility, we see governance transformation happening at the level of foundational rationalities—from a rationality of exclusion towards a rationality of inclusion.

As we have shown with the promising patterns, a shift towards the aesthetic and embodied dimensions of governance can bring to light and support transformational practices: Aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy supports “lifting the roof” of established governance practices in adult, professional, and organizational learning. It can support institutions to become common(ing) spaces. Patterns and the methodological contribution of pattern languages might support the daily struggles toward governance innovation, which can be understood as situated and related boundary work toward commoning organizing (Poderi, 2021). By the governance innovation strategies of

“lifting the roof”<sup>9</sup> we would realize “ontological politics” toward new institutionalized structures—and daily practices—of care (Bollier, 2024).

In this sense, *lifting the roof* with democracy-as-becoming names both an analytic and a transformative gesture: it reveals the often-invisible grammars of governing in education and, at the same time, opens them up to renewal through aesthetic and embodied practices. By patterning democracy-as-becoming in and through concrete organizational situations, AELD invites educational institutions to understand themselves as commoning organizations—spaces where governance is not merely exercised over bodies but generated with and through them in relations of mutual care, responsiveness, and shared responsibility. The patterns we have outlined do not offer a ready-made blueprint; rather, they constitute a living, revisable language for orienting situated experiments in search for future governance. As such, they call on researchers, educators, learners and policymakers to continue co-creating responsive, sensate, and life-sustaining forms of governance that remain open to difference, grounded in embodied experience, and dedicated to democratic ways of organizing.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

The author(s) declare that there are no financial, professional, or personal relationships that could be perceived as having influenced the research reported in this article.

## Ethics Statement

All partner countries received approval of their respective ethics committee: the Finnish team on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2023, record number 1121/13.02.01/2023 ; the Latvian team on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2024 with the corresponding Ethics Decision Letter No. RTU-PEK-001/2024; the Portuguese team on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2024, with the document CE-Doc. 24-0 and ComÉtica\_Parecer\_03-2024; the German team on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 2023, file number AZ3-07-2023; Case 18 (UK) was approved by the University of Hertfordshire Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee with Delegated Authority: protocol numbers: SLE/SF/UH/06090; aSLE/SF/UH/06090(1); 0264 2024 Oct SSAH.

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<sup>9</sup> Our title, “Lifting the Roof”, refers to a foundational presencing seminar with Otto Scharmer in Berlin, in which the transformative potential of institutional change through the presencing approach was explored—an orientation closely connected to democracy-as-becoming.

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