

The AECED Project: Transforming Education For Democracy Through Aesthetic And Embodied Learning, Responsive Pedagogy And  
Democracy-As-Becoming – The Experiences Of AECED Within Higher Education Settings

# VIRTUAL ENCOUNTERS WITH DEMOCRACY

## AESTHETIC AND EMBODIED LEARNING IN PORTUGUESE HIGHER AND ADULT EDUCATION

**Presenters:** Claudia Neves & Juliana Oliveira

**Authors:** Claudia Neves, Juliana Oliveira, Ana Patrícia Almeida, Marta Abelha & Pedro Abrantes

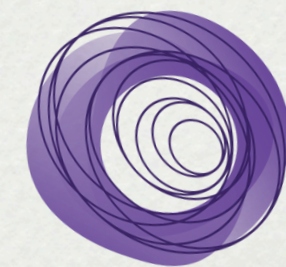
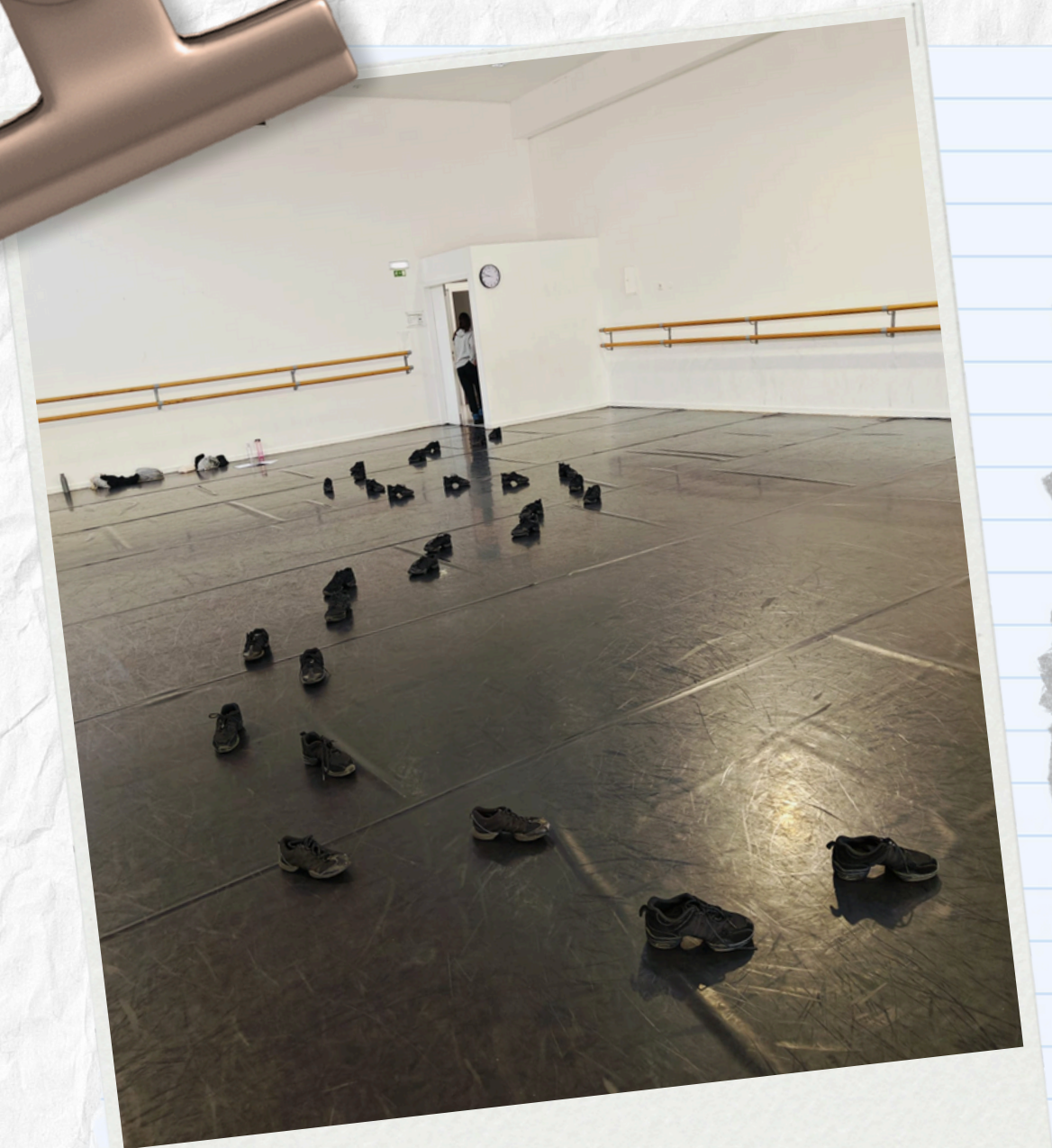
**PORTUGAL**

# CONTEXT & OBJECTIVES

- **Part of the EU project AECED:** Transforming Education for Democracy through Aesthetic and Embodied Learning (AELD)
- **Focus:** Adult, Professional & Organisational Learning (Portuguese cases)
- **Aim:** Create an online participatory space for educators to co-explore democratic pedagogies (Democracy-as-Becoming)
- **Key idea:** Moving democracy from an abstract principle to an embodied, experiential practice.

# COURSE DESIGN & PARTICIPANTS

- **8-week online course** (April–June 2024) on UAb Moodle
- 50h total (15h synchronous / 35h autonomous)
- 20 selected teachers/educators, 11 completed (ages 43–65)
- Accredited (2 ECTS)
- **Methodology:** Participatory Action Research (PAR) in six phases (Intro → Familiarisation → Reflection → Planning → Action → Final Reflection)



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# PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH



- **AELD (Aesthetic & Embodied Learning for Democracy)**  
+ **ABE (Aesthetic & Bodily Engagement)**
- **4 dimensions of democracy in the course**

**1**

## **POWER SHARING & PARTICIPATION**

co-design, mutual respect

**3**

## **HOLISTIC LEARNING & IMAGINATION**

arts, movement, storytelling

**2**

## **TRANSFORMING DIALOGUE & DELIBERATION**

seminars, debates

**4**

## **RELATIONAL WELL-BEING & RECOGNITION**

valuing diverse experiences

# RESEARCH & DATA COLLECTION

## MIXED-METHODS

- Surveys & reflective journals (N=11)
- Forum posts (50+ topics)
- Intervention project proposals
- 100+ photos, 3 videos
- Email interviews

## ANALYSIS

Qualitative content analysis + thematic coding + triangulation + Shared Memoing Matrix

## GROUNDING, ITERATIVE APPROACH

(Charmaz, 2006)



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# KEY FINDINGS

## INDIVIDUAL TRANSFORMATION

### DEEPENED DEMOCRATIC AWARENESS

shift from democracy  
as theory to  
democracy as lived  
participation

### EMBODIED & EMOTIONAL LEARNING

movement,  
storytelling, arts  
revealed hidden  
assumptions

### INCREASED PEDAGOGICAL AGENCY

teachers moved from  
knowledge transmitters to  
facilitators of democratic  
learning

### CHALLENGES

40% struggled with open-  
ended ABE; institutional  
constraints limited  
implementation

**“I realized democracy is not just about discussion but  
about how we move, listen, and feel together.”**

Participant from one of the portuguese cases

# TRANSFERABILITY TO UK/FINLAND HE CASES:

Highlights how arts-based and embodied learning can shift staff development and student engagement beyond Portugal.



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# KEY FINDINGS – COLLECTIVE & ORGANISATIONAL SHIFTS

## CO-CREATION OF AELD

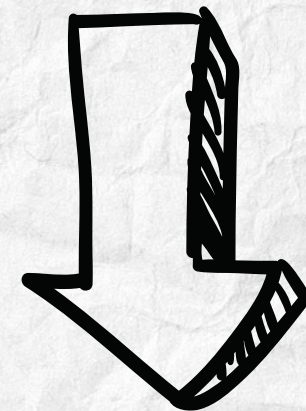
collaborative, non-hierarchical, context-responsive

## PEER LEARNING NETWORKS

sustained exchanges beyond the course

## INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

arts-based methods adapted to vocational settings



## TRANSFERABILITY TO UK/FINLAND HE:

shows potential to build cross-institutional communities of practice in democratic pedagogy.

## TENSIONS

need for clearer frameworks and step-by-step guidance; balancing creativity with curricular demands

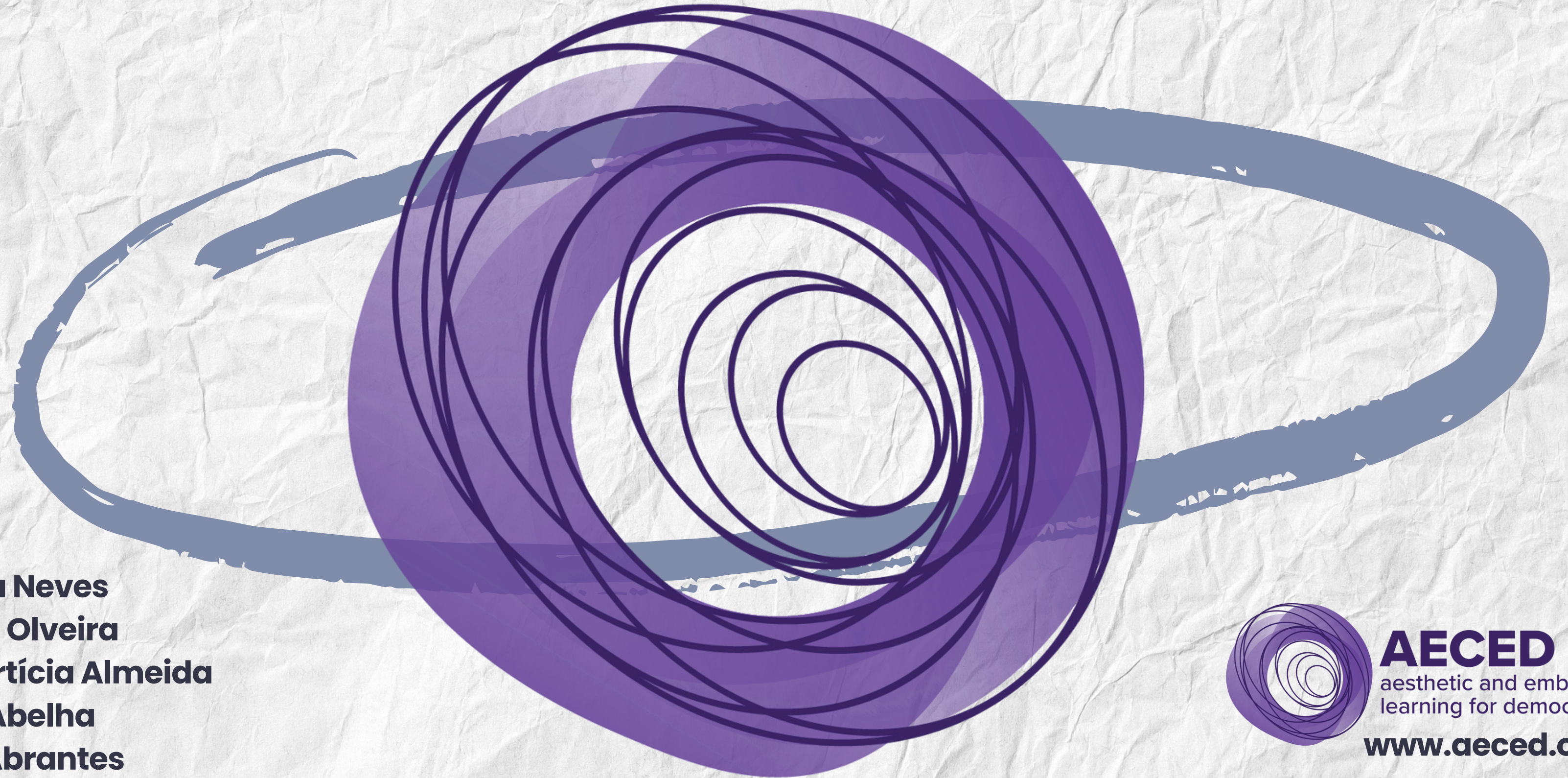
# LESSONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make Framework & Guide more accessible: simpler language, clear indexing, practical examples, localised case studies
- Enhance scaffolding for vocational/professional educators
- Strengthen co-creation toolkit & reflective evaluation mechanisms
- Integrate gender inclusivity & ethics (flexibility for caregiving, inclusive language, diverse examples)
- For international HE contexts: consider co-creation toolkits and context-sensitive guides to adapt AELD principles across different educational systems.

# CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

- Virtual courses can foster democratic imagination through arts-based, embodied learning
- PAR turns teachers into co-researchers, creating both individual and collective transformation
- Need to address institutional barriers to sustain innovation
- Portuguese case shows alignment with local democratic culture but also structural tensions
- Contribution to the refinement of the AECED Prototype Framework & Guide

# THANK YOU



**Cláudia Neves**  
**Juliana Olveira**  
**Ana Partícia Almeida**  
**Marta Abelha**  
**Pedro Abrantes**



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