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Can Art in Sustainability Education Challenge Marginalisation?

Conversations with Youths and Practitioners in a European Context.

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Abstract:

Marginalisation is present in youth education for sustainability. Reducing marginalisation in youth education for sustainability is crucial in the field of human ecology since it strives to understand environmental and social justice. This thesis explores the role of art in European youth education for sustainability and the potential of art to transform dominant Western industrial cultural assumptions in European youth education for sustainability to reduce marginalisation. As a theoretical framework, the EcoJustice Education theory is applied. Then a thematic analysis is conducted to analyse the qualitative data acquired through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with sustainability educators, artists, a diversity consultant as well as youth and art teachers. The findings suggest that the role of art is a tool for embodiment, diversity, collectivity, empowerment, process-oriented space, and nature connection. This suggests that the interconnectedness of the themes in transforming youth education for sustainability is crucial. Furthermore, these themes revealed that art in youth sustainability education can transform the dominant cultural assumptions of scientism, ethnocentrism, individualism, top-down approach, progress and result-oriented space, as well as anthropocentrism and human-nature superiority. This research shows that using art as an approach in youth sustainability education transforms the dominant cultural assumptions and thus reduces marginalisation.

Keywords: *Art, Youth, Sustainability Education, EcoJustice Education, Dominant Western Industrial Culture, Marginalisation*

Table of Contents

Abstract	II
Acknowledgements	VI
1. Introduction	1
1.1. Aim and Purpose.....	2
1.2. Relevance for Human Ecology.....	2
1.3. Structure of the Thesis.....	3
2. Theoretical Framework	3
2.1 Theory of EcoJustice Education.....	3
2.2. Domination of the Western Industrial Culture and Marginalisation.....	5
2.3. Assumptions of the Dominant Western Industrial Culture.....	7
2.4. The Educational System of the Dominant Culture in Europe.....	8
2.5. EcoJustice Education and Art.....	9
3. Methodology	10
3.1. Philosophy of Science.....	11
3.2. Reflexivity and Positionality	12
3.3. Ethical Considerations.....	13
3.4. Data Collection Method: Interviews and Focus Groups.....	13
3.4.1. Sampling, Recruitment, and Profile of Interview and Focus Group Participants.....	14
3.4.2. Procedure of Interviews and Focus Groups.....	16
3.5. Method Limitations.....	17
3.6. Data Analysis Method: Coding and Thematic Analysis.....	18
4. Analysis	18
4.1. Art as a Tool for Embodiment.....	19
4.1.1. Emotions.....	19
4.1.2. Free the Mind.....	20
4.1.3. Body and Senses.....	20

- 4.2. Art as a Tool for Diversity.....21
 - 4.2.1. Personal Interests.....21
 - 4.2.2. Cultural Differences.....22
- 4.3. Art as a Tool for Collectivity.....22
 - 4.3.1. Collective Learning.....23
 - 4.3.2. Peer to Peer Teaching.....24
- 4.4. Art as a Tool for Empowerment.....24
 - 4.4.1 Active Participation.....24
 - 4.4.2. Focusing on Competences.....25
 - 4.4.3. Understanding Agency and Applicability.....26
 - 4.4.4. Reduce Power Dynamics through Facilitation.....27
- 4.5. Art as a Tool for Process-Oriented Space.....28
 - 4.5.1. Non-formal Space.....28
 - 4.5.2. Create Safe Space and Atmosphere28
- 4.6. Art as a Tool to Connect to Nature.....29
- 5. Discussion.....31**
 - 5.1. Discussing the Role of Art in Youth Sustainability Education.....31
 - 5.1.1. Summary of Key Findings.....32
 - 5.1.2. Different Perspectives on Themes.....32
 - 5.1.3. Relevance of Art Specifically for Sustainability Education.....32
 - 5.1.4. Interconnectedness of Themes.....33
 - 5.2. Discussing the Role of Art in Transforming Dominant Cultural Assumptions to Reduce Marginalisation in Youth Sustainability Education.....34
 - 5.2.1. Embodiment vs. Scientism.....35
 - 5.2.2. Diversity vs. Ethnocentrism.....35
 - 5.2.3. Collectivity vs. Individualism.....36

5.2.4. Empowerment vs. Top-Down Approach.....37

5.2.5. Process-Oriented Space vs. Progress and Result-Oriented Space.....38

5.2.6. Nature Connection vs. Anthropocentrism and Human-Nature Superiority.....39

5.2.7. Effects of Themes on Multiple Dominant Cultural Assumptions.....40

5.2.8. Interdependencies – Individual and System Change.....41

5.2.9. Implications.....42

5.3. Limitations, Reflections, and Future Research.....43

6. Conclusion.....45

7. References.....47

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: Overview of participant groups and research method.....16

Figure 1: Thematic map, showing the six themes and their codes regarding which role art plays in youth sustainability education31

Figure 2: Thematic map, showing the interconnectedness between the different themes and codes.....34

Figure 3: Thematic map; themes with connections to multiple dominant cultural assumptions.....41

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1. Introduction

The global environmental crisis is progressing due to the continuous nature exploitation and degradation such as deforestation (Krause & Nielsen, 2019; Daly, 2020), biodiversity loss (Bang & Khadakkar, 2020) leading to global warming (Steffen et al., 2018) as well as exceeding the planetary boundaries (O'Neill et al., 2018; Steffen et al., 2018). However, there is not only environmental suffering but also social suffering through racism, sexism, heteronormativity, and inequality globally (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). To avoid the increase of these devastating consequences mostly elicited by people from the dominant Western industrial culture (referred to as 'dominant culture' from here on) (Malm & Hornborg, 2014; IPCC, 2022), a sustainability approach is needed and people have to work together to build sustainable systems. Sustainability is referred to as environmental as well as social sustainability since 'issues of social and ecological justice are interwoven' (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016).

Therefore, education for environmental sustainability is important but it is also crucial to acquire knowledge on how to reach social sustainability. Education about sustainability is relevant for everyone but especially for young people as they are representing future generations (Walker et al., 2019; Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). Youth is referred to as ranging from teenagers to people in their mid-twenties. To provide a context, this thesis focuses on sustainability education in Europe, and I gained my data from a European partnership project.

Sustainability education educates about environmental and social sustainability. However, applying and practising social and environmental sustainability in teaching institutions or organisations still has to be improved (Wolff & Ehrström, 2020). That means that the educational system is teaching about social sustainability, but it is not necessarily educating and practising it in a socially sustainable, equal, and just way because it is built on the dominant cultural assumptions (referring again to assumptions of the dominant Western industrial culture) which is leading to marginalisation (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). Marginalisation is referred to as treating a person or a group as inferior (Foster & Martusewicz, 2019).

To reduce marginalisation in education, a more diverse and holistic approach is needed. One promising approach could be including artistic methods since 'the acquisition of

scientific knowledge (i.e. environmental literacy) is not enough to transform dominant cultural assumptions (Morrison, 2016, p.113). Therefore, it has to be explored how art can be a means to achieve transform the dominant cultural assumptions, as these assumptions have to be critically questioned. However, the role that art plays in transforming those dominant cultural assumptions present in sustainability education to reduce marginalisation has not been studied (see e.g. Foster & Martusewicz, 2019). Thus, this thesis contributes to the field by looking at the dominant cultural assumptions leading to marginalisation in sustainability education from a range of diverse artistic and sustainability perspectives and applying a framework of EcoJustice Education.

1.1. Aim and Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how to transform dominant cultural assumptions to reduce marginalisation by looking through the lens of the EcoJustice Education framework. This thesis aims to highlight art as a tool for decreasing marginalisation in sustainability education that is reinforced by the dominant cultural assumptions. Hence, it is important to discuss assumptions of the dominant culture present in the current educational system in Europe leading to marginalisation and to investigate how art can help transform them.

Therefore, the two research questions will be:

1. Which role does art play for youths and practitioners in youth sustainability education?
2. How can art transform dominant assumptions of the Western industrial culture in European youth education for sustainability to reduce marginalisation?

1.2. Relevance for Human Ecology

Human ecology deals with the dynamic interconnections between human and non-human nature concerning different cultures, power relations, as well as social and environmental sustainability (Lawrence, 2003; Lund University, 2022a,b). This thesis topic is relevant to the cultural aspect of human ecology by highlighting the importance of cultural diversity because it is problematic that one culture dominates others. Additionally, this thesis considers political and justice aspects of power dimensions by dealing with the power relations present in the current educational practices leading to marginalisation (Sperling & Bencze, 2015). These aspects are embedded in a broader frame of education for sustainability

to strive for a socially and ecologically sustainable future. Moreover, art provides an alternative approach, trying to oppose the dominant cultural assumptions. This thesis reflects on different fields ranging from art to sustainability and the social aspects of education while stressing the need for holistic approaches which is mirroring the interdisciplinary understanding of human ecology (Lawrence, 2003).

1.3. Structure of the Thesis

To investigate the role of art in sustainability education and how to transform dominant cultural assumptions, after this introduction (1) including the aim and research questions I will start with a theoretical and conceptual framework (2) and introduce the lens of EcoJustice Education and the assumptions of the dominant culture. In the methodology section (3) the participants of the semi-structured interviews and focus groups will be introduced followed by the thematic analysis (4). The discussion section (5) discusses the first as well as the second research question and then focuses on limitations and reflections of the study and future research. Lastly, the conclusion (6) is rounding the thesis off.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework shows the conceptual and analytical approach I am going to take to fill the gap described above. To do so, the aim is to explore the role of art in youth sustainability education and how to transform the dominant cultural assumptions to reduce marginalisation. In the following, I will elaborate on the theory of EcoJustice Education (EJE) as the lens for the thesis through which reality will be filtered. The theoretical framework will provide definitions of marginalisation, the dominant Western industrial culture, sustainability, education for sustainability, and art from an EJE lens to understand how these key concepts are applied in the thesis. Additionally, the assumptions of the dominant culture, as well as their presence in the educational system in Europe, will be introduced. Thus, I will go from abstract to concrete to introduce the overall ideas and then guide towards the theoretical direction which will be taken.

2.1. Theory of EcoJustice Education

The research topic in this thesis will be approached from an EcoJustice Education framework. Firstly, EJE emphasises that social and environmental issues and the suffering of humans and nature are interdependent and caused by the assumptions of the dominant culture (Martusewicz, 2018; Foster & Martusewicz, 2019; Lowenstein et al., 2010). The assumptions

of the dominant culture include the belief of existing inferiority and superiority over others. That means that there are human-nature relations in which humans are seen as superior to nature and the same applies to human-human relations in which humans are superior to others. Therefore, the EJE goal is to strive for an ‘ethic of care and social ontologies of connection’ (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016, p.57) and considers ‘interconnectedness, cooperation, mutual obligations, trust, restraint, humility, and interdependence’ as lying at the core of EJE’s vision (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016, p.64). Secondly, EJE stresses that these issues should be addressed in educational contexts through the curriculum and educators (Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2005; Martusewicz et al., 2014; Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016; Foster & Martusewicz, 2019; Lowenstein et al., 2010).

To provide a historical context of the EJE theory, it was jointly created by EJE scholars and educators, emphasising Martusewicz and Edmundson and informed by Berry (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016; Edmundson & Martusewicz, 2013) over the past twenty years (Martusewicz, 2018). EJE was inspired by the related frameworks of ecofeminism and neo-agrarianism. Ecofeminism is focusing on the critique of modernity (Plumwood, 1993, 2002; Mies & Shiva, 2014) and the systematic marginalisation through binaries in which one is superior to the other. Neo-agrarianism stresses that the same forces that are jeopardising the community are destroying ecosystems which are needed for life (Berry, 2015). Therefore, EJE combines these two approaches and applies them to an educational context.

The focus on education in EJE has two tenets. The first is to educate students to find and understand the embedded beliefs and structures and expose the dualist vision leading to unjust worldviews as well as social and environmental degradation. The second is to educate students to identify and develop socially and environmentally just patterns, beliefs, and behaviours of present knowledge systems and policies (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). That is, EJE scholars think that students first have to know, be aware of, and understand the existing social and environmental issues and their interconnection to then be able to change them. This education can happen in various contexts ranging from primary, secondary school, and university to business, non-profit, and community education but not limited to those (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). Bringing the discourses into education is crucial because educators have a powerful position, opportunity, and thus responsibility since they are educating community members and future generations (Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2005). Providing knowledge is important because EJE scholars share the belief that members of the dominant culture are inheriting the logic of some human superiority over others in

everyday thinking (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016) This thinking is present in policies, daily interactions, and other practices and transferred from generation to generation (Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2005).

2.2. Domination of the Western Industrial Culture and Marginalisation

In the following, I will provide an understanding of the term dominant Western industrial culture as it is referred to by EJE scholars and therefore applied in this thesis (Foster & Martusewicz, 2019; Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). Since the thesis deals with transforming assumptions of the dominant Western industrial culture it is crucial to start with establishing what is meant by this term. The term 'Western' indicates the geographical historical roots of the culture and its assumptions, starting with the 'value hierarchies woven through the western philosophical traditions beginning with Plato, Rene Descartes' (Martusewicz, 2018, p.23) but especially arising in the 18th century with the industrial revolution which 'marks the onset of large-scale human modification of the Earth System' (Malm & Hornborg, 2014, p.63; Marks, 2015). Since the assumptions spread, now other places are also westernised and the culture and assumptions exist and are dominating outside historical Western roots (Morrison, 2016) and causing a loss of 'cultural diversity across the planet' (Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2005, p.3). That is why they are referred to as dominant. EJE uses those terms because it criticises and tries to counter the assumptions arising mainly during the time of the industrial revolution.

The dominant culture is characterised by practising human-nature dualism. This dualism can be traced back to the alienation of humans from nature over history which resulted in the perceived superiority of humans over nature (Plumwood, 1993). That means that humans are assuming and perceive themselves as if they are dominant over all non-human life and see nature from a mechanistic view and that the purpose of non-human life is to serve the humans' consumption. This shows how nature and the environment are treated by the dominant culture. The same patterns can also be translated to inequality, power, and domination of some humans over others (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). That is, the culture practising human-nature dualism also reinforces power and patterns of the superiority of humans over other humans which is experienced for instance in 'social violence such as racism, sexism, heteronormativity' (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016, p.68) resulting in marginalisation.

Since the thesis strives to reduce marginalisation for social justice by transforming dominant cultural assumptions, it is important to understand what marginalisation means in this context. Marginalisation can be understood through ‘binaries of unequal power dynamics’ such as ‘men/women, white/Other, European/Other, culture/nature, reason/emotion, science/local, or indigenous, knowledges. In each of these pairs, the term on the left is defined as superior to the term on the right’ (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016, p.59; Plumwood, 2002). Plumwood (2002, p.101) further clarifies that ‘a hegemonic centrism is a primary-secondary pattern of attribution that sets up one term (the One) as primary or as centre and defines marginal Others as secondary or derivative in relation to it, for example, as deficient in relations to the centre [...] this kind of structure is common to the different forms of centrism which underlie racism, sexism and colonialism which therefore support and confirm one another’.

Hence, domination results from the assumption that certain ways of valuing and behaving in the world are superior and reproduced through deeply embedded everyday practices (Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2005). Those dominating cultural assumptions become visible through power and authority. That means that inequality and hierarchical domination is culturally marginalising humans as well as non-human others. However, it is difficult to measure peoples' experience of marginalisation through oppression due to various aspects such as 'cultural, gender, race, religious, social and other factors' (Vettraino et al., 2017, p.89). Hence, people can experience friction and not being part of the dominant culture in many different ways and degrees depending on their identity so marginalisation can be considered a spectrum.

Marginalisation happens when some groups of people perceive themselves as superior to others (Martusewicz, 2018). That means that voices of certain groups of people are heard less, have less influence, are less acknowledged, and feel less included and confirmed in their identity, compared to other groups rooted in dominant cultural assumptions. If people from less dominant groups want to get their voice heard, have influence, and want to participate, participation has to happen within a certain structure with certain norms, values, behaviours, and codes of conduct abiding and adapting to the system. Looking at the surrounding literature of EJE about how marginalisation is defined and referred to, the concept of marginalisation is referred to in ecofeminism as the ‘interconnections among all systems of unjustified human domination’ (Warren, 2000, p.2) which ‘collectively marginalize human and nonhuman Others’ (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016, p.59).

As ecofeminism has a ‘longstanding commitment to intersectional analysis’ (Kings, 2017, p.63), the scholars Robards et al. (2020, p.1) writing about intersectionality provide the definition which will be used in this thesis that ‘marginalisation is both a process and an experience, consequent upon unequal power relationships where dominant groups within society are privileged over other groups. Those who become “othered” are pushed to the peripheries or the “margins” of mainstream society. This process can involve multiple forms of exclusion [such as] lowering participation in education [...]. Marginalisation is a socio-cultural lens for understanding why some groups experience disadvantage and some groups within society are privileged over other groups’.

2.3. Assumptions of the Dominant Western Industrial Culture

To understand the main underlying assumptions of the dominant culture which will be referred to in this research, they will be elaborated on in the following. The term assumption is applied because that is how it is referred to in the EJE framework (Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2005).

- **Scientism** — seeing ‘reason and rationalization as the one true and superior way of knowing and therefore disregarding all [local and] indigenous knowledge’ (Lowenstein, et al., 2010, p.102) ‘prompted by natural reason’ over time (Bruchac, 2014, p.8), superior to emotion (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016), and ‘objective and culture free’ (Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2005, p.17),
- **Ethnocentrism** — the ‘belief that some "races" or cultures are morally or intellectually superior to others and therefore hold the right to exploit and oppress the "lesser" ethnicities’ (Lowenstein, et al., 2010, p.102).
- **Individualism** — ‘human self-centeredness to the point of detriment to the community fostered by the belief that competition is a natural human characteristic’ (Lowenstein, et al., 2010, p.102).
- **Top-down** — ‘top-down traditional teaching practices, or even liberal/progressive teaching practices that steer students toward the “right” answer, one that is often decontextualized from the students’ own natural, social, and cultural communities’ (Love et al., 2010, p.83).

- Progress — the ‘belief that "change [and process] is linear and good" and that progress requires tossing out the old and bringing in the new’ (Lowenstein, et al., 2010, p.102) while assuming that the purpose is to reach a result.
- Anthropocentrism — ‘the belief that humans are superior to everything else on earth and have unchecked dominion over it’ (Lowenstein, et al., 2010, p.102).

2.4. The Educational System of the Dominant Culture in Europe

These assumptions of the dominant culture are present in the modern educational system and accordingly, there is marginalisation present (Martusewicz et al., 2014). Thus, it can be critiqued that diverse educational tools are missing and that the education is not adapted to youth not fitting in the dominant cultural concept of education. For instance, some disciplines, such as science, technology, and business, are rated as superior to others’ (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). That superiority is also represented in the discourses present in education such as that progress, especially technological progress, and individual success are prioritised over community and care values in the dominant culture. Receiving education in ‘this modern context is to lose the capacity to recognize the interconnected nature of the world and to fail to locate one’s position within it or claim responsibility in protecting it’ (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016, p.65). That is, ‘every day children are schooled in the ways of a system that prioritizes competition and profit over life, in many ways at the expense of life’ (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016, p.57).

‘Widespread educational reform initiatives based on these principles deplete communities of possibilities to recognize an embodied connection to the earth and to respond with relationships of care and mutuality above competition and accumulation’ (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016, p.57). That is also why the educational system leads to marginalising some groups of people. Certain ‘structures of schooling can contribute to circumstances in which those with privilege have access to further privilege, or vice versa, and stereotypes or expectations can be reinforced over time’ (Miller et al., 2021, p.3). Therefore, EJE tries ‘to interrupt ecological and social disintegration by emphasizing essential responsibilities to our communities and the larger world’ (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016, p.65). That means that the goal is to educate students about the interconnectedness of the world, the responsibility that they have to care for it, to make them aware of the mutual dependence in the world, and elicit students’ intrinsic motivation to internalise and share these assumptions of interconnectedness, responsibility, care, and mutual dependence (Martusewicz & Edmundson,

2005; Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). These practices in connection to the marginalisation of youth show that currently these assumptions are not present, however by integrating those youth marginalisation could get reduced.

In this thesis the focus is on education for sustainability which can happen in many contexts, as touched upon earlier, ranging from school education, via non-formal education through NGOs to non-formal education in art classes. To understand what sustainability education implies, scholars are referring to it in many different ways such as environmental education and education for sustainable development since the concept of sustainability is often vague and has many different definitions (Meisert & Böttcher, 2019). However, this thesis focuses not on the differences between them but on the idea of educating about sustainability knowledge in general.

The concept of sustainability broadly includes economic, social, and educational sustainability and can be criticised for having conflicting agendas regarding justice, development etc. Additionally, sometimes it is also referred to as sustainable development, however, that is an anthropocentric view and often refers to sustaining growth which has to be seen critically (Lélé, 1991) since the world is finite. Furthermore, the term sustainability has been hijacked, and often implies technical solutions (Steffen et al., 2018) and does not address the root issues which is crucial to counteract degradation (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). Therefore, scholars of the EJE theory ‘recommend moving away from the concept of “sustainability” as it is emphasized by UNESCO and other influential institutions’ (Mueller, 2008, p.1032). Hence, from an EJE lens, sustainability is understood as a balance between human and nature and thus refers to social as well as ecological sustainability and tries to reduce the human-nature dichotomy by showing its interdependence (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). Despite criticism of sustainability, EJE scholars stress that the ‘Ecojustice philosophy and pedagogy [can still] use effectively the term of ‘sustainability’ for exploring ‘right relationships’ with others and the Earth’s ecosystems’ concerning ‘questions of environmental theory, ethics, and justice’ (Mueller, 2008, p.1032).

2.5. EcoJustice Education and Art

This sub-section will establish how art is defined and applied in this thesis from an EJE perspective and its assumptions contrary to the dominant culture. Providing an understanding of art is important since the thesis explores the role of art to change dominant assumptions. Art, including creativity, is closely connected to culture and expressed in

different forms but in this thesis, it is referred to as an abstract concept and does not specifically focus on different art forms. That is based on the reasoning that one has to be aware that ‘by dividing different art forms into specific categories, we reinforce the same mechanistic worldview’ (Foster & Martusewicz, 2019, p.5). The EJE perspective also critiques the ‘Western idea of creativity as a commodity in arts and education created by consumerism’ (Foster, 2012, p.8). Furthermore, Foster & Martusewicz (2019) established in their publication how art can be used to change dominant cultural assumptions through passively interacting with art such as going to the theatre, reading a book, and other societal art practices. However, EJE scholars highlight that everyone can create art. This is important to establish since the dominant culture often perceives that ‘the aesthetic values of an artwork are linked to modernist ideas of art as a medium-specific demonstration of the artist’s technical skills’ (Foster & Martusewicz, 2019, p.5). The EJE perspective criticises and provides an alternative to understanding art as elitist as done in the dominant culture. That is, EJE considers art as the ‘holistic expressions of stories, images, sounds, and movements’ (Foster & Martusewicz, 2019, p.5).

This extends to seeing the process of doing art as part of it and not merely focusing on the artistic result. Foster & Martusewicz (2019, p.7-8) claim that ‘we need art as well, both as makers and receivers, which touches our hearts and moves our hands for [a] better future’ since ‘art is a multidimensional way to push us beyond the competitive, individualistic, and mechanistic logics that continue to dominate and do violence in the world.’ To provide some context for the existing connection between art and sustainability in education, scholars such as Papavasileiou et al. (2020, p.60) have established that ‘the pedagogical use of art in educational programs for enhancing [youth] contact with the environment helps [youth] deepen their knowledge and strengthen their relationship with it’. In the following, I will explore which role art plays in youth sustainability education and how art can push for a transformation of dominant cultural assumptions through artistic practices in an educational setting based on the EJE framework.

3. Methodology

To answer the research questions, I chose to conduct interviews and focus groups. Carrying out interviews and focus groups with different actors helps to develop a deeper understanding from different perspectives and enhances data richness to answer the research questions (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). In the following, it will be elaborated on the applied philosophical lens, the researcher’s positionality, and ethical considerations. Then the data

collection method including the interviews and focus groups as well as an introduction of the participants will be described followed by method limitations and the applied data analysis method.

3.1. Philosophy of Science

The philosophical lens in this thesis is connected to the EJE framework which is based on ecofeminism (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). Ecofeminism is ranging from constructionism that everything in the world is constructed to postpositivism that there is a real world but it is also subjective (Hekman, 2010; Haraway, 1988). Firstly, I will focus on the ontology which is about the existence of being (Ismail et al., 2016; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). I argue that the constructionist ontology that everything is relative has to be seen as critical because it is important to realise that the oppression and inferior status of some humans and nature has real material consequences (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016).

To understand why and how assumptions and worldviews change material conditions such as marginalisation in the real world, I will briefly outline the mechanisms. That is crucial in this context as the philosophical assumption that ideas determine history aligns with the EJE philosophy and is also a key concern in the field of human ecology. It suggests that subjective positions, including the ways of thinking, acting, speaking, and teaching, 'are created within a complex discursive system [which is] [...] historically embedded' (Martusewicz, 2018, p.25). Those positions result in effects in the real material world contributing to social and ecological problems. EJE understands changing those damaging positions and assumptions 'as a form of self-work as much as curricular and pedagogical work or policy reform' (Martusewicz, 2018, p.25) since they also manifest in 'historical, political, economic policies' (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016, p.58). Thus, people dealing with the issues are causing the problems themselves. Then again, people are growing up in this system with existing cultural assumptions about the world. However, to reach needed changes to reduce domination and to create diverse, just, and sustainable human-human and human-nature relationships, it is people's responsibility to unlearn those taught assumptions (Martusewicz, 2018).

Therefore, this thesis applies the postpositivist ontology of critical realism because it is built on the two crucial pillars of realism where the reality is shaped by history and society as well as subjectivism which refers to individuals' reality (Fryer, 2020). Secondly,

epistemology is about how we acquire knowledge (Ismail et al., 2016; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The postpositivist epistemology relating to critical realism is modified dualist, objectivist and probably true but recognises that it might 'always be subject to falsification' (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p110). The ecofeminists Shiva and Gebara 'provide an epistemology that privileges the paradox of unity through diversity and difference as a solution to society's current ecological crises' (Garrity-Bond, 2018, p. 185).

3.2. Reflexivity and Positionality

Chambers and Loubere (2017, p.44) highlight the importance of reflexivity in saying that 'we also need to be critically reflexive in thinking about how our backgrounds influence the ways in which we interpret things'. This is supported by other scholars such as Haraway (1988) who claims that critical positioning is crucial to form objectivity in research. Acknowledging the importance of the researcher's position concerning the research which will influence the action, besides the previous philosophical and theoretical positioning (Creswell, 2013b), I have reflected upon my positionality.

To position me, I am a young, female, white, upper middle class, educated student growing up in Germany and having lived in different European countries which represents a privileged life in the Global North. Thus, I grew up in the dominant culture with the elaborated dominating assumptions (Lowenstein, et al., 2010; Love et al., 2010) which might subconsciously have affected my approach in the interviews and focus groups as well as in the analysis, discussion, and coding process. That is, even if I strive to criticise and argue to transform those dominant cultural assumptions, I might still have a subconsciously indoctrinated view of approaching the research from a perspective which sees e.g. scientism as superior. However, being aware of the subconscious and having a critical subjectivity as a basis reduces the potential that it could affect the research (Creswell, 2013c). Furthermore, I am also writing about reducing marginalisation while not having experienced it myself. Hence, I am not a life-experienced expert since no matter how much information gathering I carried out, some perspectives will be missing compared to researchers who experienced marginalisation themselves.

Due to the partnership project, I was familiar with most participants already which might have influenced participants' responses due to the established relationship and trust basis allowing for deeper insights and openness and was thus beneficial for the study (Creswell, 2013a). Regarding the youth focus group, me being in my mid-20s and missing

Danish skills might have changed the process since youth might relate more to me than an older researcher and it shows that it is a space to accept imperfection which can lead to greater openness and honesty. However, it is not merely about the participants' responses but I am also aware that I construct a certain reality due to my questions and how I pose them, and accordingly there is an interviewer bias present which is why writing up one's position is crucial (Creswell, 2013d).

3.3. Ethical Considerations

Prior to the interviews and focus groups, all participants have been informed about data protection and their anonymity and consent has been given orally to record the sessions (Creswell, 2013b). In addition, only people above 18 years of age were interviewed, to avoid potential legal issues regarding research on minors (Kodish & Nelson, 2018; Swedish Research Council, 2017). Thus, participants were provided with all information needed to ensure their free, prior, and informed consent (Creswell, 2013b).

3.4. Data Collection Method: Interviews and Focus Groups

To explore the research questions, a qualitative inductive research method approach was applied combining interviews and focus groups to acquire in-depth data and not generalise beyond the population (Harrell & Bradley, 2009) and 'seek to develop an understanding of the patterns observed' (Steinberg & Steinberg, 2015, p.66). The research was based on participants of a European partnership project as a frame with social and environmental sustainability organisations and institutions from Austria, Italy, Scotland, and Denmark. However, the frame is only used for the participant sampling serving to answer the abstract research questions and is not used as a method or focus in this thesis.

In-depth semi-structured interviews were chosen to gather participants' knowledge and experiences. The semi-structured method was chosen as its strength is to be able to ask prepared questions to have 'some degree of predetermined order' while still ensuring flexibility (Dunn, 2005, p.80). It is also beneficial to let the interviews 'unfold in a conversation manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important' (Longhurst, 2016, p.143). This method is specifically useful to explore and interview participants with different fields of expertise regarding art, youth sustainability education, and marginalisation with the 'goals [of] exploration, discovery, and interpretation of complex [...] processes' (Blee & Taylor, 2002, p.93). Compared to focus groups, semi-

structured interviews are advantageous to let participants choose what to focus on and have more time for in-depth answers and insights from every interviewee (Longhurst, 2016).

Conducting focus groups is a method used in Social Science and aims to have ‘a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher’ (Morgan, 1996, p. 130). It seeks to give people a voice and asks about their multifaceted opinions, thoughts, and lived experiences (Morgan, 1996). The purpose is not to achieve agreement among participants, but to get a deeper understanding of a topic through different perspectives and dynamic group discussions (Schulz, 2012; Nyumba et al., 2018; Morgan, 1996). ‘Focus groups and interviews are also the best methods to resolve seemingly conflicting information, because the researcher has the direct opportunity to ask about the apparent conflict’ (Harrell & Bradley, 2009, p.10). However, focus groups are advantageous to get a greater variety of answers due to the discursive aspect. They are especially beneficial when happening in familiar contexts and participants know each other since individuals might be more committed since it resembles more everyday experiences compared to isolated one-on-one interviews (Longhurst, 2016). Additionally, participants can switch between participating actively and passively during the focus group which is more natural compared to an interview situation providing participants with a feeling of control regarding their participation (Schulz, 2012).

3.4.1. Sampling, Recruitment, and Profile of Interview and Focus Group Participants

Participants of the in-depth semi-structured interviews were from three different groups to provide multiple perspectives to create a holistic and critical frame (Creswell, 2013a). They consist of seven social and environmental sustainability educators, four artists connected to those environmental educators, and a diversity consultant who is also a school teacher. The diverse participant groups provided different expertise in education about sustainability, artistic methods and experiences, and deeper insights into marginalisation in education and the reasons behind it. The sampling was connected to participating NGOs, universities, and ecovillages of the European partnership project and participants collaborating with those organisations to ensure a sustainability connection. The number of participants was considered appropriate because it reached saturation by exhausting all main project partners and adding a limited amount of collaborating partners to keep it feasible (Morse, 2000).

The focus group participants were divided into two. The first focus group consisted of six (art) teachers, three from a Danish school that specialised in integrating art in the educational context, and three collaborating. The second focus group included five young people from the same art-specialised school. The school focuses on art education as a preparatory basic education and training institution with the ambition to reduce ‘the percentage of youths who are not in association to either education or labour market’ (Ministry of Children and Education, 2018). The teachers’ group consisted of one male and five female people teaching textile, music, and theatre and dance whereas the youth were between 18 and 21 years of age and specialising in one of those three areas. The teachers were chosen to provide insight to understand the educational context and everyday experiences with youth. That is, despite teachers varying expertise about students and their experience of marginalisation, ‘the teachers they know their students [...] know their wishes, and hopes and dreams’ (Kearns, 2011, p.120). As for the sampling strategy, teachers, working in the artistic, creative, and social innovative fields in education, and youth from this school participating in art classes were chosen since they are collaborating with the European partnership project which was chosen as a frame. The number of participants was justified and based on teachers’ availability and the voluntary participation of youth to facilitate self-determination (Hanna & Vanclay, 2013).

Additionally, the requirements for youth participating were being above 18 for legal reasons and speaking English which limited the number of people participating. Due to the voluntary participation and the requirements, the youth participants do not represent all youth from the school, however, for coherence, I decided to not expand to other schools. Furthermore, since a recommended focus group consists of five to ten people (Krueger, 2002) the number of participants seemed adequate. The two focus groups were split to prevent having dominant and less dominant voices which would potentially not be heard between the youth and their teachers. Additionally, it was assumed that the young people might be willing to speak more openly when their teachers are not listening.

Participant Groups (Number of Participants)	Research Method
Sustainability Educators (7)	Interviews
Artists (4)	Interviews
Diversity Consultant (1)	Interview
Art Teachers (6)	Focus Group
Youth (5)	Focus Group

Table 1: Overview of participant groups and research method.

3.4.2. Procedure of Interviews and Focus Groups

The interviews and focus groups were conducted in English and online since participants were spread over different European countries (Carter et al., 2021). They had a similar structure and lasted between 45 to 90 minutes, as is common for qualitative interviews, depending on participants' extensive answers and discussions (Jamshed, 2014; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The questions were limited to 17 and of open-ended nature (Blee & Taylor, 2002) touching upon youth education concerning marginalisation, sustainability, art, and the societal level. In advance, a small pilot study with two youths and one artist was conducted to test and improve the questions (Creswell, 2013b; Jamshed, 2014). Definitions for art, youth sustainability education, and marginalisation were not provided to avoid participants focusing on specific aspects mentioned in the definition. However, participants were asked to provide their own definitions to get a sense of their understanding and make them reflect on the terms and experiences before the start but they were not further used. All interviews and focus groups were recorded to simplify the transcription and coding and to avoid having to write along which was beneficial to merely focus on the content and to avoid unreliability due to missing key points (Longhurst, 2016; Jamshed, 2014).

Regarding the focus groups, both participant groups took place at the school to gather everyone more easily. For coherence with the interviews being online due to the European research scope, I as the researcher was joining online. However, the differences between online and in-person group research 'with respect to group interaction and the ability to obtain information, are being eroded as technology provides greater opportunities to create social presence in an online environment' (Stewart and Shamdasani, 2016, p.48). Thus, the acquired data should not vary due to the online setting. In addition to providing the questions as a basis for the discussion, I was also the moderator to facilitate, support guiding, encourage the discussion, and create the atmosphere (Krueger, 2002). This was supported by two younger

Danish project-related assistant moderators with whom I coordinated beforehand. They were at the school in person to set up the screen and the audio recording, and helped out with language difficulties as is common as assistant moderators in research (Canning, 2004). As previously discussed with the teachers, the younger age of us moderators was considered adequate to make the young people feel comfortable, in a safe space of similarity, and to eliminate the feeling of power differences between the participants and the moderator (Creswell, 2013b; Smithson, 2008).

3.5. Method Limitations

A limitation could have been that the interviews were conducted in English and for the Austrian, Italian, and Danish non-native English participants, especially the youth, implied a greater language barrier. That might have influenced the quality of the data since participants might not have been able to express their thoughts as well compared to communicating in their native language. However, most people were used to working in English and as for the Danish youth participants, there were assistant moderators present who could help with translating (Squires, 2009). Furthermore, a setback regarding the youth interviews might be that only Danish youth got interviewed who were able to speak English. That means that there might be a bias because people who speak English fluently as non-native speakers are maybe experiencing less marginalisation on the spectrum than others (Bradby et al., 2020).

Another potential limitation could be that the participant sample is rather broad since it includes five different groups with a geographical delimitation of the European context. However, due to the interdisciplinary character of the research questions, having several participant groups was crucial to explore the topic from different angles and generate new knowledge (Creswell, 2013a). Moreover, as previously described, the sampling was related to the European partnership project and thus limiting the participant population.

A further limitation might be that more and different youth voices should have been included. For instance, shyer people might not have volunteered to participate, and in the focus group interaction, as a central element (Smithson, 2008; Morgan, 1996), some people were more outspoken than others. However, I tried to give everyone space and asked the youth individually while still letting the discussion develop in a natural way to avoid making them feel forced to speak. Additionally, focus group participants might influence each other's responses so that results might have varied in individual interviews (Nyumba et al., 2018).

Lastly, as for the extractive part of conducting research, I am trying to do justice to the participants sharing of knowledge by providing information regarding reducing marginalisation through this thesis. In addition, especially for the youth focus groups, the interviewing can be empowering since they get the feeling that their opinion is heard (Flynn, 2018; ActionAid International & OECD Development Communication Network, 2015). Including youth voices also strived for intergenerational equity (Goodwin et al., 2019) so while conducting the research I was trying to provide a space for their voices to give something back already at the same time. Furthermore, all participants indicated that they also enjoyed the session because it made them reflect on the topics which they usually rather subconsciously deal with.

3.6. Data Analysis Method: Coding and Thematic Analysis

Following the data collection and transcription, a thematic analysis was applied to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is a process in which emerging codes will be grouped into themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). ‘During the data analysis, the researcher follows a path of analyzing the data to develop an increasingly detailed knowledge of the topic being studied’ (Creswell, 2013b, p.22). Furthermore, ‘through its theoretical freedom, the thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.5). The coding process of categorising and qualifying data was conducted with the Nvivo software. The thematic analysis was chosen since it aimed to identify emerging themes that arrived from participants’ responses and to discuss how these themes are interrelated (Creswell, 2013a). The different methods of interviews and focus groups were used to acquire the deepest and most diverse knowledge possible as elaborated but the data from the different methods will not be further differentiated in the analysis.

4. Analysis

Based on the research questions and the theoretical framework, the following analysis section will focus on the first research question by describing the identified themes to answer which role art plays in youth sustainability education. Later those results will be used to answer how art plays a role in transforming dominant cultural assumptions leading to marginalisation in youth education for sustainability. The six themes, which is a common number of themes in a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), including 13 codes will be illustrated and they will be related to existing research. The themes show how art can be a tool

for embodiment, diversity, collectivity, empowerment, process-oriented space, and lastly nature connection. In presenting the themes, I will also highlight the connection between the different themes and codes. In the following, the various participant groups will be mentioned so that potential differences can be referred to.

4.1. Art as a Tool for Embodiment

This section will show how art can be a tool for embodiment in youth sustainability education and helpful for the transformation elaborated on later. The theme of embodiment was mentioned by all participants and describes how art can make youth focus on emotions, freeing the mind, and body and senses.

4.1.1. Emotions

The potential of art to elicit, navigate, and change emotions was addressed by the majority of the participants and especially highlighted by the artists. Eliciting emotions through art creates interest in sustainability and is helpful in the learning process.

'You can see all these numbers, [...] facts [about sustainability] but that might not make you want to do something about it [...]. But if you see a piece of art, a play, hear a song or you see a strange sculpture made of old textiles [...] you might start feeling, I got to do something.' (Participant 12, Art Teacher)

The first excerpt shows that art has the potential to elicit feelings in youth through creating and being exposed to art. Participants elaborated that evoking emotions such as care and love for nature but also anger and anxiety through art is crucial to creating interest in sustainability. However, a sustainability educator added that due to the power of art methods to also elicit negative emotions the process has to be facilitated by experts.

'Make [sustainability] more fun, [...] fill it with pleasure [...] instead of being punished and let it carry us a burden.' (Participant 22, Artist)

'You play with [the theatre roles] [...]. And then it becomes fun and you can deal with more complicated issues.' (Participant 10, Art Teacher)

These quotes highlight that evoking positive emotions in the learning process is helpful to deal with complicated and burden-laden issues of sustainability and participants mentioned that it keeps youth's attention. Such positive emotions were described to be for

instance fun, passion, freedom, empathy, and connection. These findings align with the EJE theory which emphasises the importance of striving for care and connection (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016).

4.1.2. Free the Mind

This code describes participants' responses that it is crucial to free the mind and shift the focus from merely cognitive and intellectual thinking to also the subconscious and intuition.

'I feel like my art is affected very subconsciously. [...] It also gives me the peace to make something [...] the same way nature does [...]. You create something out of nothing.' (Participant 16, Youth)

'You can do art out of nature's own resources in a creative way [...] that it [includes] other aspects than just your intellectual mind.' (Participant 6, Sustainability Educator)

Participants highlighted that to free the mind, youth need the space and freedom to actively do art themselves. Such properties are often not present in formal education as participants further explained. The excerpt of a youth participant confirms that the process of doing art gives her the possibility to act subconsciously, in peace, and not influenced by external educational structures. She adds that it is comparable to nature where things emerge from nothing. The second quote, representing many participants' impressions, raises the importance to reduce the intellectual aspect of sustainability by creating art with nature to make it more accessible for a diversity of youth. That is in line with Turner (2015) who also highlights the importance to offer space for combining emotional and intellectual work in education. Additionally, an artist pointed out that it is easier for youth to be receptive to artistic approaches compared to adults since she explains that from experience it is often more difficult for adults to free their minds from analytical and intellectual thinking.

4.1.3. Body and Senses

The majority of the participants also expressed that getting into the body and experiencing the senses through art is crucial in sustainability education.

'It's important to combine [embodied learning] if you want to catch the attention of people who are not so intellectually minded but work more through the senses. [...] By

adding the creative art field, some people will participate who before were not.'
(Participant 6, Sustainability Educator)

The quote shows that to experience learning physically through senses such as smell and touch by creating art with for example organic material increases the participation and curiosity of less intellectually minded people. An artist further elaborated that it also adds an educational aspect in questioning where the material comes from and why by giving the example of using wool for art which is usually burned and wasted in Denmark. That increases the fun in learning and thus content can be remembered better as pointed out by participants.

'Movement can play a huge part in this worldview of how you culturally see sustainability and how you embody it. [...] Our body is an extension of our consciousness [which] [...] helps seeing that we are part of nature.' (Participant 7, Sustainability Educator)

The excerpt shows that expressing oneself through movement can show and help understand different worldviews, cultures, and relations to nature and sustainability. Participants also elaborated that movement through art, such as dance and theatre, can help express different perspectives, feelings, and experiences, and realise that humans are part of nature. Those findings are in line with the existing literature which advocates an approach of movement and sensory experiences to build relations to nature (Foster & Turkki, 2021).

4.2. Art as a Tool for Diversity

The theme of diversity was stated by all participants and encompasses how art in youth sustainability education recognises and incorporates youths' diverse personal interests and cultural differences.

4.2.1. Personal Interests

This code stresses integrating the young people's interests in sustainability education.

'If you go from what their dreams are and involve them, then you can reach [...] a feeling that they can engage in something meaningful to them, but also that they can maybe have success in.' (Participant 8, Art Teacher)

'We are here to make music or dance. [...] The school is allowing me to be creative, to take my interest into consideration.' (Participant 18, Youth)

'We also teach very differently towards each student because they all need something different.' (Participant 12, Art Teacher)

The excerpts show that teachers and students agree that including youth interests, dreams, and worries increases their engagement and motivation in the educational setting which corresponds with Love et al. (2010). Participants elaborated that young people feel seen, listened to, and experience success if their personal interests are included. Frequently mentioned examples of personal interests were being socially included, earning money, and having freedom. However, the third excerpt shows that it is also crucial to specifically consider individual youth interests in the teaching and not generalise them.

4.2.2. Cultural Differences

The code of cultural differences is closely related to personal interest. Considering and including cultural differences and cultural exchange of art and ideas is crucial in education, sustainability, and for nature relations to reduce marginalisation.

'Be aware of the culture you're working in, because cultural norms are very different. [...] You [as the facilitator] have to understand them and tune in. That's emergent design.' (Participant 1, Sustainability Educator)

'There was a lot of cultural exchange, like singing, dancing, music. [...] I think that created some levelling out of differences somehow.' (Participant 6, Sustainability Educator)

According to participants, it is crucial to consider different cultural norms and values as the educational facilitator by being adaptive and flexible in the process to improve youths' comfort. Participants also described the presence of different cultural perspectives on and connections to nature and sustainability, especially when working with migrant youth. Linking it back to EJE literature, research highlights that it is crucial 'to conserve and sustain cultural diversity [...] which [is] threatened and vulnerable' (Mueller, 2008, p.1031).

4.3. Art as a Tool for Collectivity

Collectivity was mentioned by many participants and shows how art can strengthen a collective feeling and supports building interpersonal connections in youth education for sustainability. The two codes which emerged are collective learning and peer to peer teaching.

4.3.1. Collective Learning

Collective learning in education through artistic methods helps to create stronger bonds between youth. Art teachers and sustainability educators mentioned that a collective feeling in educational settings is important to connect people and learn to accept each other whereas different art forms have different strengths in building connections.

'[The young people] are so different. The acceptance of that is important. To be able to accept, people who are not all like me [as a young person].' (Participant 10, Art Teacher)

'It's very much about a project delivery together and [...] that they experience some success.' (Participant 12, Art Teacher)

The quotes show that collective learning and working together helps youth to accept each other's individual differences strengthened through experiencing success together. Participants considered as problematic that the current formal education system is based on competition which keeps widening the gap between the young people. This finding is in line with the EJE literature which values 'care and mutuality above competition' (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016, p.57). Participants added that establishing collective feelings through learning together is one of the first steps to changing society towards collectivity. Additionally, participants urged that more cooperation between different actors involving educational institutions, artists, and generally people in power is needed to stop perpetuating the existing system with the dominant cultural assumptions and to strive for an equal, diverse, and artistic educational system.

'[Theatre is] not just on an individual basis such as making a drawing [...] The aim is not to make the most beautiful piece of art but through using art, getting a better understanding of the topic [...] and to connect several people.' (Participant 19, Artist)

'I [as youth] don't have to lift [sustainability issues] all myself. [...] I am together with a group and I can lean into it.' (Participant 8, Teacher)

'They want to protect themselves, like, 'I'm environment friendly' and then they fly to Paris. [...] It's more to be like cool because it's trendy.' (Participant 16, Youth)

The first excerpt shows that different art forms have different influences on creating collectivity. Some group-oriented art forms such as theatre have a different strength to

connect people than individual-oriented art forms such as drawing. Participants added that group-oriented art forms for learning are beneficial to making youth feel that everyone's presence is needed for the artwork. That strengthens youth's view of themselves as being valuable which is important for youth experiencing marginalisation. In addition, the second quote highlights that collective learning helps deal with sustainability issues to not feel alone and to support each other. However, youth also mentioned that acting sustainably is currently seen as being cool and popular leading to moral inconsistency. Hence, some youth are blaming others for not acting sustainably in one area while not acting sustainably in other areas themselves weakening the collective feeling.

4.3.2. Peer to Peer Teaching

Peer to peer teaching empowers youth knowledge through art while reducing marginalisation. Sustainability educators, art teachers, and artists highlighted the importance of starting an educational setting with existing youth knowledge.

'One guy said that at home he has learned from his grandfather how to keep bees and make honey [...]. He ended up teaching his peers about this. [...] Try to acknowledge the qualities, skills, dreams, and aspirations that [the youth] brought themselves and let that take space and focus in the classes.' (Participant 6, Sustainability Educator)

The excerpt shows and other participants also emphasised that the focus should be on the youths' skills, interests, knowledge, and experiences regarding nature and sustainability through peer to peer teaching while being facilitated by teachers. That is not only empowering the youth individually but also strengthens the group feeling. Furthermore, this example also highlights how valuable intergenerational knowledge can be spread and exchanged between youth.

4.4. Art as a Tool for Empowerment

The theme of youth empowerment through artistic methods was also mentioned often by the participants. It includes the codes of active participation, focusing on competences, understanding agency and applicability, and reducing power dynamics through facilitation.

4.4.1. Active Participation

Active participation emerged as a code for more sustainable learning and youth empowerment. It is also related to peer to peer teaching.

'We don't differentiate between artistic method and sustainability discussion. [...] But we try to use the art methods to gain some insights and felt experiences that we can then talk about [...] in connection to some concepts.' (Participant 20, Artist)

The quote shows that combining action through doing art and reflection afterwards can help break down and discuss complex sustainability topics. Thus, focusing not only on intellectual reflections but also on applying embodied actions, previously identified as helpful already, leads to more active youth participation. In contrast, participants mentioned that in formal educational settings there is often passive learning. Through actively participating youth can influence and co-create the educational setting which also increases learning efficiency. This finding is in line with the learning pyramid that active learning is more effective than passive (Miskovic & Mackenzie, 2015) because young people are integrated into the learning process through interactive methods (Mahmood et al., 2011) such as art. However, participants pointed out that there are also limitations to art methods such as theatre to discuss sustainability due to the complexity of the issues.

'Because with art [you can][...] express yourself through communication [...] not related to languages, but related to [...] paint, drawing, pencils, everything.' (Participant 3, Sustainability Educator)

This excerpt adds that active participation in education can increase because of the possibility to communicate non-verbally through art, especially for youth with language difficulties. Hence, art is a tool for visualising and not only communicating in words or verbal concepts.

4.4.2. Focus on Competences

This code emphasises that through providing artistic tools in education the focus can be on young peoples' competences to find their strengths, talents, and acceptance of themselves through art.

'There're a lot of people who think they're not creative, but I think everyone is creative if you just give them the right platform and tools where they can discover that and find their strengths.' (Participant 7, Sustainability Educator)

This first excerpt explains that everyone is artistic if the educational setting provides the space to be creative and explore. Additionally, participants mentioned that implementing

art and creativity is an empowering approach because it has the potential to change youths' views on themselves, accept and believe in them, make them feel good enough, and have success through finding their creative competences and strength. Participants added that artistic approaches are often missing in the current educational system which is built on assumptions making youth feel unsuccessful, worthless, and wrong which leads to feeling marginalised.

'If you ask [youth] what do you think is sustainability? They will say: We don't care about that. It's the word. But I was very astonished that many of them really think and care about it. [...] Since they can't handle topics like microplastic, they just put it aside because they don't have the tools to discuss it. [...] I think the big challenge is to help them ask questions.' (Participant 4, Sustainability Educator)

'I try not to be as morally inconsistent as possible. [...] I try to be as vegan as I can. I'm not that active [in protesting], because I really don't fucking care. [...] But I care about it. I think I'm trying to do my part and I can be happy with that.' (Participant 18, Youth)

The upper quote highlights that youth have to be provided with tools to be able to discuss sustainability issues. Participants assumed that young people express disinterest because they are missing tools. That is in line with Meisert & Böttcher (2019, p.8) emphasising that 'existing models of sustainability education [...] offer complex decision-making strategies to learners' which are often too difficult to grasp. That is important to acknowledge because as the second quote of a young person shows, youth voice their disinterest while simultaneously expressing their caring. This seemingly contradictory expression might only be due to the described missing tools.

4.4.3. Understanding Agency and Applicability

This code stresses that it is crucial and empowering that youth understand their influence and agency regarding sustainability issues and the applicability of sustainability knowledge.

'Many young people are already aware of these issues. But there are others who don't care so much or don't care at all. [...] you need to make them understand their influence in all this.' (Participant 19, Artist)

This excerpt adds to the previous code and stresses that it is important to make youth aware of their existing knowledge and make them realise that their thoughts and actions have an influence. Participants added that this realisation increases youth's educational involvement because they understand the relevance which is the first step to getting a sense of agency for making a change which is in line with Love et al. (2010). Additionally, participants emphasised the importance to explain youth the usefulness and applicability of acquired art and sustainability knowledge in their lives such as finding creative solutions, making sustainable decisions, and increasing job opportunities.

4.4.4. Reduce Power Dynamics through Facilitation

This code refers to the potential of art to reduce power dynamics between different youth, teachers and youth, but also institutions and youth in an educational setting.

'Singing, dancing, music, together. [...] I think that created some levelling out of differences.' (Participant 6, Sustainability Educator)

This excerpt highlights the relevance of art in sustainability education because it decreases the power dynamics present between different youth.

'Use participatory facilitation skills where you level out the playing field between facilitator and participant as much as possible, you get them engaged in the decision making.' (Participant 1, Sustainability Educator)

'I don't feel like I've been told that I have to do this in a scene. [...] We hear each other's ideas [...] both students and teachers.' (Participant 14, Youth)

These excerpts challenge the existing top-down approach and power differences between teachers and students present in most education. They emphasise facilitation approaches to incorporate youth voices, make youth feel empowered, value ideas equally, and thus decrease marginalisation. According to participants, facilitators play a crucial role in providing input and facilitating the youth educational process so that they get a 'sense of freedom from the top-down' as stressed by EJE supporters (Sperling & Bencze, 2015, p.263).

'Within more formal institutions like educational institutions, workplaces, or political parties, you have certain norms, but also different codes of conduct that you have to abide by. Those processes or structures oftentimes prioritise some groups of people over others. [...] [The latter] cannot go through their set outlets for having their voice

heard or creating the things that they want to see.’ (Diversity Consultant and Teacher, Participant 23)

Participants explained that art provides space for different norms and codes of conduct and thus reduces prioritising some qualities over others which is crucial to reducing institutionalised power on youth as the excerpt shows. The diversity consultant and teacher participant added that teachers are in a position of power allowing them to implement initiatives to make changes effortlessly if they want to.

4.5. Art as a Tool for Process-Oriented Space

This theme will focus on the participants’ responses that art is a tool to create a non-formal space, change the space’s atmosphere, and create a safe space and feeling of home.

4.5.1. Non-formal Space

This code refers to the aspect that art can create a non-formal space.

‘Art is making non-formal space. It’s the main tool which establishes a safe environment to express yourself. [...] I experience the power of non-formal education. [...] Listen to [the youth], [...] their stories, needs.’ (Participant 3, Sustainability Educator)

This excerpt shows how art can create a non-formal educational setting which also provides the opportunity to combine it with listening to youths’ stories and needs. Hence, non-formal education has the potential to provide a space to establish different norms and codes of conduct which supports learning for youths currently experiencing marginalisation. That is in line with findings from EJE literature (Sperling & Bencze, 2015). Another sustainability educator explains how facilitators play a crucial role in building trust and educating non-formally about sustainability by acting sustainable and setting an example. By doing so, the youth is often even repeating the facilitators’ sustainability explanatory words to explain to others.

4.5.2. Create Safe Space and Atmosphere

A further code is that art can create a safe space, a feeling of home, and change the atmosphere.

'You start moving around, doing some funny things. And something in the atmosphere and the vibe in the room changes. [...] I think that's because it integrates us as humans and with each other in a more holistic way.' (Participant 20, Artist)

This excerpt shows that integrating art such as theatre can change the atmosphere and vibe in an educational setting by including human and interpersonal aspects which is a more holistic approach. Additionally, participants added that it provides the possibility to co-create the space and not have a pre-established atmosphere which would potentially include elements of marginalisation.

'First of all, you have to give a safe space to be without any restriction and without starting with speculation about environment and sustainability.' (Participant 3, Sustainability Educator)

'Music, it's the link with my [the youth migrant's] land. Music makes me feel as if I could be at home.' (Participant 3, Sustainability Educator)

These quotes add that integrating art can create a safe, trustful space, and a feeling of home which is crucial before content-related actions are taken. For instance, listening to their music makes them feel at home. Participants stressed that facilitators play a crucial role in creating the atmosphere. In addition, participants emphasised that including youths' different cultural perspectives on nature and sustainability through art makes youth, especially migrant youth, feel safe and at home. Foster and Turkki (2021) agree that creating an atmosphere through artistic methods which is safe and accepting is crucial to recognise all individuals. Furthermore, as established in the theoretical framework a nurturing space and relationships are important especially for sustainability education to strive for human's and nature's well-being (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016).

4.6. Art as a Tool to Connect to Nature

This theme focuses on the potential of art to build a connection to nature and sustainability. Especially artists emphasised that it is not only about educating about sustainability theoretically but also empathising with nature.

'It can be created so much understanding [...] [through] art or dance. Things are connected very naturally. That's what sustainability is about. It's about the interconnection.' (Participant 19, Artist)

This quote shows that art helps understand interconnections between different elements such as art and nature and highlights that youth can learn the relevance of interconnections through art.

'You can make something which is beautiful, expressing your emotions, and also what you are proud of. We made this land art and then afterwards, we went from one station to the other and every group explained and showed us around. [...]Combining it with nature [...] I think the chance is a little higher to remember things in the next lesson.' (Participant 4, Sustainability Educator)

Participants also pointed out that emotional connections to nature and the natural surrounding can be built through creating art outside with natural materials and techniques such as in land art. Accordingly, participants stressed that using second-hand, recycled, or organic material to create art builds a connection to the topic of sustainability. That can also be related to the theme of embodiment and its code of senses to experience the material used for artistic expression. This is in line with EJE's approach which highlights that natural spaces and materials to create 'art offers another interesting opportunity for students to consider different types of human relationships with the natural world' (Turner, 2015, p.9). To provide a visual overview and summary of the analysis, Figure 1 shows the six identified themes with their codes arranged in a thematic map.

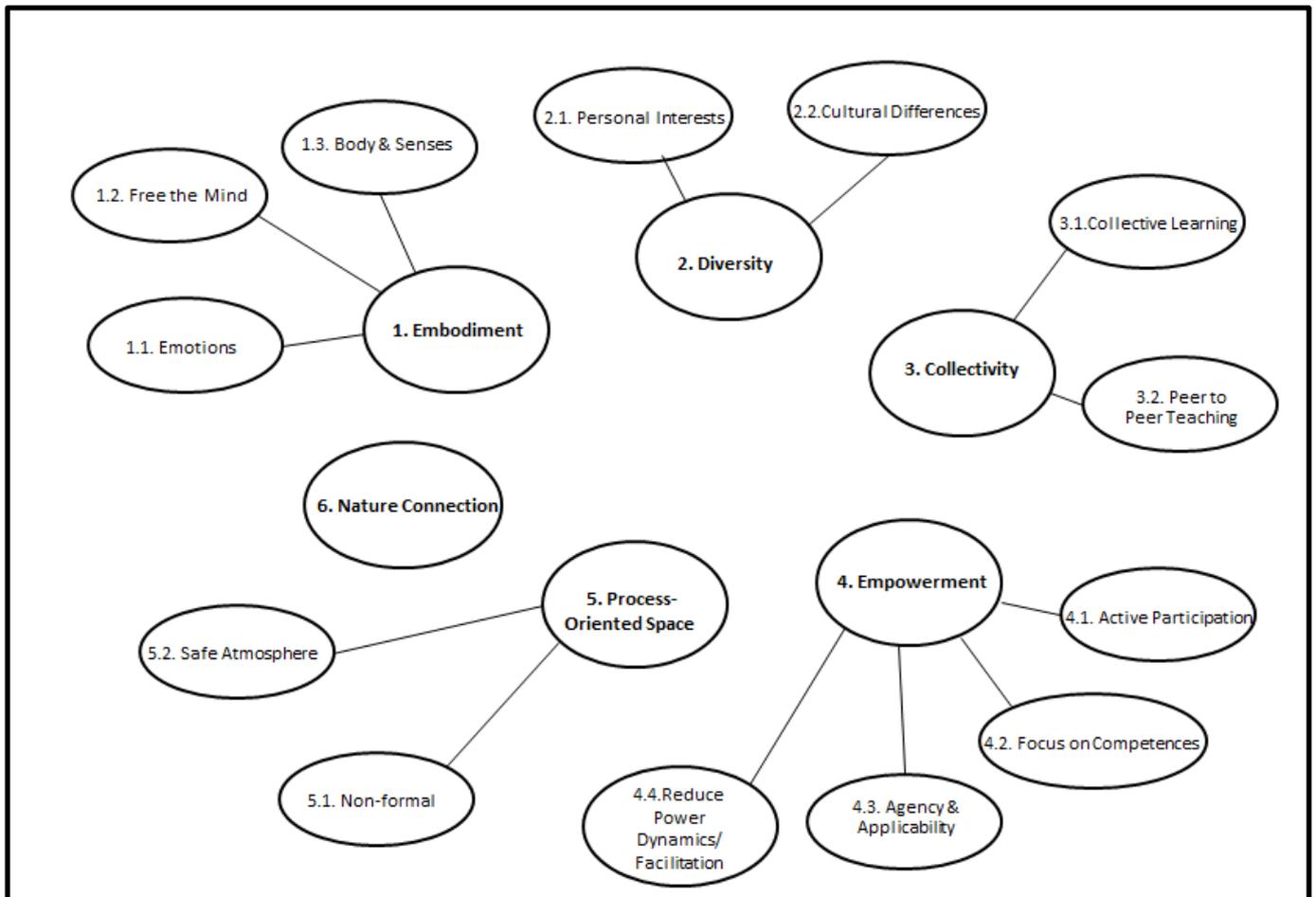


Figure 1: Thematic map, showing the six themes and their codes regarding which role art plays in youth sustainability education.

5. Discussion

The present study set out to firstly research which role art plays in European youth education for sustainability and those results from the analysis will be discussed in the following. Based on the first research question, I will continue by answering and discussing the second research question of how art can transform dominant cultural assumptions in youth education for sustainability to reduce marginalisation by taking in the theoretical framework. Limitations, reflections, and future research will be discussed at the end of the discussion section.

5.1. Discussing the Role of Art in Youth Sustainability Education

The first discussion section deals with discussing the findings of the analysis regarding the first research question. I will start with a summary of the key findings, elaborate on the

different participants' perspectives on themes, discuss the relevance of art specifically for sustainability education, and finish with the interconnectedness of the explored themes.

5.1.1. Summary of Key Findings

The analysis revealed that there were six themes regarding the role of art in European youth sustainability education. The six themes consist of embodiment, diversity, collectivity, empowerment, process-oriented space, and nature connection. Consequently, to answer the first research question these findings revealed that art has multiple important roles and is a beneficial approach for establishing non-dominant cultural assumptions in youth sustainability education.

5.1.2. Different Perspectives on Themes

The themes and codes of the analysis were emphasised differently by different participant groups. That is, participant groups such as sustainability educators, artists, youth etc. had different approaches to which role art plays in youth sustainability education. For instance, artists highlighted more than other participants that art can elicit emotions which might be due to their extensive practical artistic work experience and emotional sensibilities (Foster & Martusewicz, 2019). Another example is the similarities and differences between how youth described their relation to art, nature and sustainability compared to how teachers described the youths' relation to it. For instance, while teachers indicated that young people rarely have any relation to nature, the youth themselves described that they do feel connections. However, despite differences, there were also similar responses such as that both teacher and youth indicated that making art gives youth some peace. Thus, it became evident in the analysis that there were sometimes different opinions and perspectives between the artists, sustainability educators, art teachers, and youth. The different participants' perspectives and knowledge on the role of art show that cooperation between the different groups is crucial to understanding the diverse role of art and combining that knowledge to improve sustainability education, as is also emphasised by Foster & Martusewicz (2019).

5.1.3. Relevance of Art for Sustainability Education

Art is specifically relevant for sustainability education since it can provide relations to the topics of nature and sustainability. For instance, focusing on the theme of embodiment, participants mentioned that comparing the process of creating art from scratch with how nature also develops from nothing brings nature closer to them. That shows that by switching

from cognitive thinking to subconscious and embodied acting connections to nature can be built (Martin, 2005). Additionally, elaborating on diversity, art helps youth to express themselves and their cultural background which increases the variety and understanding of cultural perspectives on sustainability and nature in education. Furthermore, the results showed that a collective feeling through art helps deal with burdensome sustainability issues and makes it more approachable for youth. Consequently, themes such as embodiment, diversity, and collectivity elicited through art are helpful for education about sustainability and nature.

5.1.4. Interconnectedness of Themes

The findings suggest that the explored themes and codes are all interconnected. That means that one theme also connects to another theme and this entanglement highlights the importance of all of them and how they strengthen each other. For instance, as elaborated in the analysis, the theme of collectivity also includes aspects of the code emotions needed to create a group feeling, the code active participation as part of peer to peer teaching, and the theme of diversity in collective learning. The interconnectedness of themes is significant since the interconnectedness of all human-human and human-nature relations and dynamics is one of the main points EJE emphasises (Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2005; Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). Figure 2 visualises all interconnections described in the analysis to provide an overview. However, even if the themes and codes are interlinked, it is important to discuss them individually to relate them more clearly to the dominant cultural assumptions in the following.

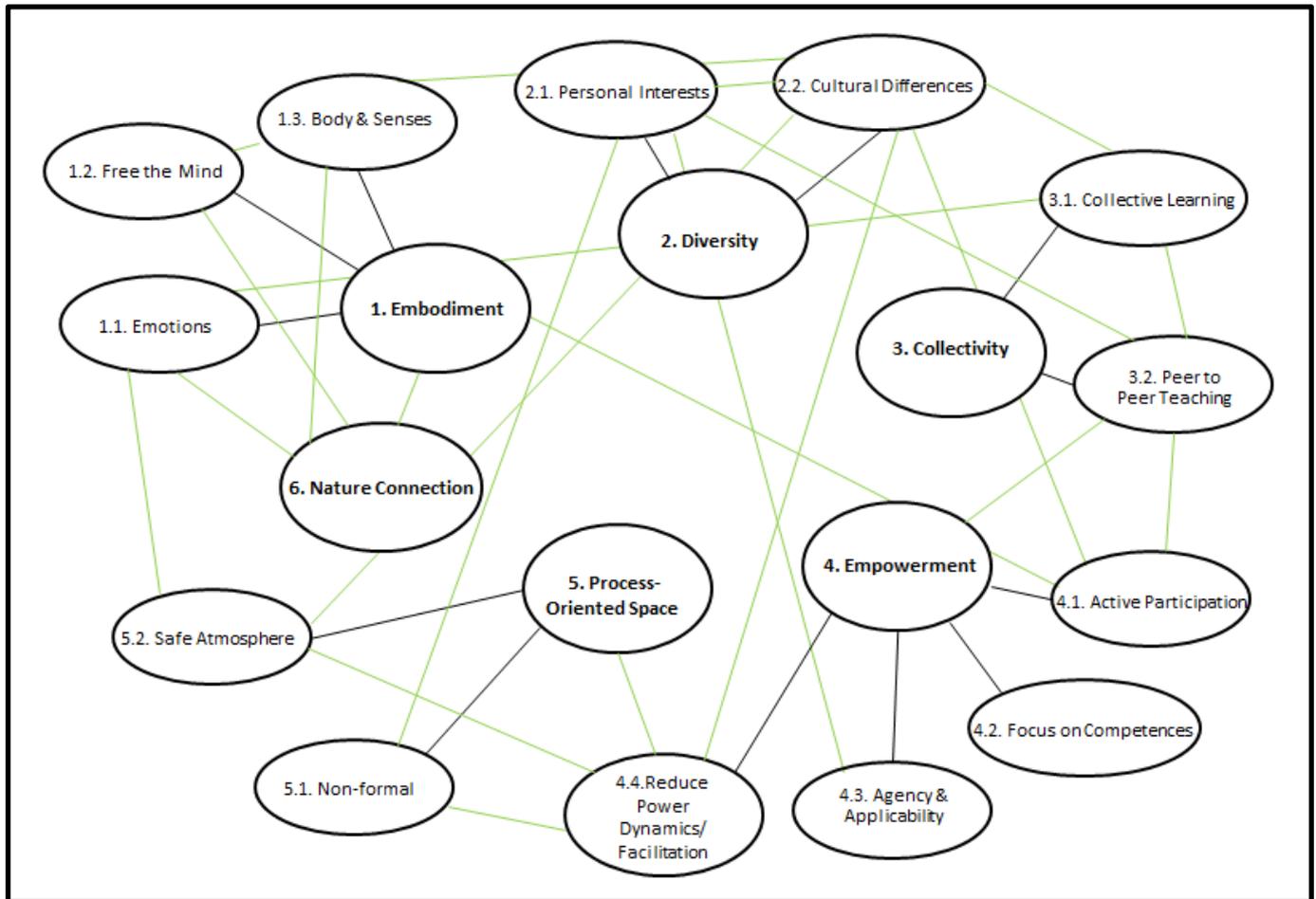


Figure 2: Thematic map, showing the described interconnectedness between the different themes and codes. (Black lines are theme and code connections; green lines are additional interconnections.)

5.2. Discussing the Role of Art in Transforming Dominant Cultural Assumptions to Reduce Marginalisation in Youth Sustainability Education

In the following, the second research question of how the role of art can transform assumptions of the dominant culture adding to marginalisation in youth sustainability education will be answered and implications will be discussed. Hence, it will be explored how incorporating the identified themes from the first question aligning with the assumptions of EJE (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016; Martusewicz et al., 2014) can transform dominant cultural assumptions introduced in the theoretical framework to reduce marginalisation. The dominant cultural assumptions discussed in this thesis are scientism, ethnocentrism, individualism, top-down approach, progress and result-oriented space, as well as anthropocentrism and human-nature superiority. Answering the second research question is based on the results from the first research question. Thus, art is defined by its role of the

identified six themes. In the following, not every code but the overall themes will be discussed in relation to the dominant cultural assumptions to elevate the discussion to an abstract level.

5.2.1. Embodiment vs. Scientism

Art can transform the dominant cultural assumption of scientism through embodiment. That is, scientism is prevailing in education in the dominant culture which is problematic because only people who are thinking through this scientism assumption are acknowledged. People who are thinking, living, and having easier access through an embodiment approach or are less intellectually minded are disadvantaged and marginalised. As established in the theoretical framework, scientism implies that one sees ‘reason and rationalization as the one true and superior way of knowing’ (Lowenstein et al., 2010, p.102). Hence, incorporating embodiment in education through art can elicit emotions, free the mind, and feel senses which contrasts and challenges the reason and rational thinking in education. Involving embodiment through art helps counteract the currently dominant pattern in society that ‘mind (reason) [is] dominant over body (emotions)’ (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). Thus, the findings are in line with the existing literature which advocates an approach of including embodiment (Foster & Turkki, 2021).

On the other hand, one could point out that some rational thinking for direction and structure is needed in education to organise embodied learning. As highlighted in the analysis, embodied learning through art can also be combined with intellectual reflections and are not mutually exclusive. However, even if parts of reason and rationalisation might be helpful, they should not dominate and be superior to the embodiment approach (Martusewicz, 2018). Additionally, it could also be questioned why people have different intellectual styles (Sternberg, 1990) so that some are less intellectually minded and whether it is naturally given or constructed through societies systems such as access to education. However, despite its importance, it would exceed the scope of the thesis to explore this aspect further. To conclude, adding an embodiment approach through art equalises the assumptions of scientism and embodiment which transforms the superiority of scientism over embodiment and thus diminishes marginalisation.

5.2.2. Diversity vs. Ethnocentrism

Art can transform the dominant cultural assumption of ethnocentrism through diversity. That is, ethnocentrism is dominating in education which is problematic because

peoples' ethnicities which are part of the dominant culture are recognised whereas other peoples' ethnicities are less recognised and hence experience marginalisation. To provide a reminder, ethnocentrism implies the 'belief that some "races" or cultures are morally or intellectually superior to others and therefore hold the right to exploit and oppress the "lesser" ethnicities' (Lowenstein, 2010, p.102). Thus, as established in the analysis, to acknowledge and appreciate diversity in education through art by expressing different cultural perspectives and personal interests freely avoids that one culture is superior to others. That contrasts and challenges the current state that some cultures can be oppressed in education (Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2005).

On the contrary, increased diversity means that due to existing differences it can be difficult to achieve common ground to act and hence accomplishments because of potential miscommunication (Dewi et al., 2014). However, the superiority of one culture over others to avoid issues such as miscommunication is not a solution. Therefore, cultures should be valued equally and communication has to be facilitated constructively. Additionally, learning conflict-resolution skills because of conflicts through differences in shared and community-based learning can be an opportunity for a helpful learning experience (Lowenstein et al., 2010). Consequently, adding a diversity approach through art reduces the superiority of ethnocentrism over diversity and thus diminishes marginalisation. That means that the domination can be transformed by bringing in diversity and thereby trying to acknowledge all cultures equally.

5.2.3. Collectivity vs. Individualism

Art can transform the dominant cultural assumption of individualism through collectivity. That is, individualism is dominating in education which is problematic because centralising the individual and its success through competition can be destructive to the community feeling in education. Hence, people experiencing less or no success are marginalised and do not have the chance to experience success and bonding. To repeat, individualism is referred to as 'human self-centeredness to the point of detriment to the community fostered by the belief that competition is a natural human characteristic' (Lowenstein et al., 2010, p.102). Accordingly, in nowadays society 'competition [is] more highly valued than cooperation and where cooperation is valued, little time or resources devoted to developing skills in how to cooperate' (Jones & Okun, 2001, p.6). Thus, collectivity through art counteracts individualism by fostering a community feeling with mutual acceptance, support, and joint success through artistic group work. The goal is to

create less competition-based and more reciprocal communities in an educational environment which challenges the individual's success and competition focus.

In contrast, one could argue that only focusing on collectivity is also not beneficial because it puts the individual and its diversity in the background. However, individualism and competition are only helpful to some degree and stop being beneficial when it gets detrimental to the community. That is, competition should not be prioritised over life and 'relationships of care and mutuality' as it is emphasised in the EJE (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016, p.57). Additionally, the value of intergenerational knowledge exchange through peer to peer teaching can also support reducing scientism and ethnocentrism. That happens because it equally values exchanging traditional knowledge of different cultures such as European locals and migrant youth having indigenous heritage (Lowenstein, et al., 2010). Furthermore, 'all of the [intergenerational] expertise [is] required to sustain healthy relationships with local environments' which is crucial to counteract the human-nature dichotomy (Kulnieks & Young, 2014, p.191). Consequently, adding a collectivity approach through art balances the assumptions of individualism and collectivity which reduces the superiority of individualism over collectivity and thus diminishes marginalisation. That means that the domination can be transformed by bringing in collectivity.

5.2.4. Empowerment vs. Top-Down Approach

Art can transform top-down approaches of the dominant culture through empowerment. That is, a top-down approach is prevalent in education which is problematic because some people are dominating and have power over others whereas people who have less power, influence, participation etc. are marginalised (Love et al., 2010). As previously established, the top-down approach refers to 'top-down traditional teaching practices, or even liberal/progressive teaching practices that steer students toward the "right" answer, one that is often decontextualized from the students' own natural, social, and cultural communities' (Love et al., 2010, p.83). Hence, integrating empowerment through art strives for an approach where students can actively participate and co-create the educational setting with a focus on their skills, personal strengths, competences, agency, and knowledge level (Meisert & Böttcher, 2019). That makes youth feel competent and confident which is crucial because often they experience that they do not fit the dominant cultural assumptions of the educational system, making them feel uncomfortable and not confirmed in their identity (McCarthy et al., 2004). Thus, an empowerment approach reduces power dynamics which contrasts dominantly

steering youth and not focusing on their strengths as it is often practised in mainstream education (Mahmood et al., 2011).

On the other hand, one could argue that some students might still be dominating others in co-creating the educational setting. Hence, some youth could be empowered who might have a negative influence and maybe marginalise others since students are not a homogenous group (Bovill, 2020). Therefore, some degree of a top-down approach where the teacher is facilitating and guiding to avoid detrimental directions in co-creating is still helpful. However, the facilitation should be based on the students' contexts to empower those (Foster & Turkki, 2021). Consequently, adding an empowerment approach through art balances out the assumptions which reduces the superiority of the top-down approach over empowerment and thus decreases marginalisation. That means that the domination can be transformed by bringing in empowerment and thereby combining some top-down facilitation with bottom-up empowerment.

5.2.5. Process-Oriented Space vs. Progress and Result-Oriented Space

Art can transform progress and result-oriented spaces of the dominant culture through process-oriented spaces. That is, being result-oriented and focused on progress is dominating in education which is problematic because only the result is acknowledged and valued whereas people who are less skilled in producing results but still valuably contribute to the process, to finding different pathways (Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2005), and to the general space atmosphere, are marginalised. As previously defined, progress refers to the 'belief that "change [and process] is linear and good" and that progress requires tossing out the old and bringing in the new' (Lowenstein, et al., 2010, p.102) while assuming that the only purpose is to reach a goal. Thus, a process-oriented focus through art emphasises the process and can create a non-formal, safe space, and feeling of home, as well as change the educational atmosphere supported by the facilitator (Foster & Turkki, 2021) which contrasts and challenges an only result-oriented approach. That is, especially in doing art 'the emphasis is always on the process and in the immediate perceptions, rather than in the final artistic result' (Foster & Turkki, 2021, p.8). Additionally, it is not only about the process-oriented space but also about the process to create such a space. EJE highlights 'a process of creating spaces, where the questions of identity and mutuality can exist side by side' and which can 'provide opportunities for informal learning and personal transformation' (Foster, 2012, p. 13-14). Consequently, adding a process-oriented focus in the educational setting through art equalises the result-oriented and process-oriented approaches which reduces the superiority of result-

oriented over process-oriented and thus lowers marginalisation. That means that the domination can be transformed by focusing also on the process and not merely the result.

5.2.6. Nature Connection vs. Anthropocentrism and Human-Nature Superiority

Art can transform anthropocentrism and human-nature superiority present in the dominant culture through building human-nature connections. Human-nature superiority and anthropocentrism are also dominating in the educational setting which is problematic because it practices injustice between humans and nature whereas the valuing and importance of nature are left out (Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2005). As a reminder, anthropocentrism is the 'belief that humans are superior to everything else on earth and have unchecked dominion over it' (Lowenstein, et al., 2010, p.102). Building human-nature connection in education through art can elicit feelings of empathising with nature, understanding of interconnections and interdependencies, and building connections to the natural surroundings, as the thesis findings suggest. That contrasts and challenges seeing human beings as central and superior. However, different to the previous five themes, the theme of nature connection tackles marginalisation indirectly. That is, people can learn and feel more about the importance and need for human-nature connection. Thus, they can transfer the need for care, empathy, and interconnections of human-nature relations to human-human relations to strive for a greater sense of unity to decrease peoples' experiences of marginalisation.

On the other hand, one could argue that the transfer from learning through human-nature dynamics to human-human dynamics is unlikely because in modern thought humans and nature are divided due to their different and opposing dimensions (Plumwood, 1993) and cannot be compared. However, sometimes it helps to think about something in an abstract, externalised way, e.g. through human-nature relation and then transfers can be made to other situations, such as human-human relations to understand it more easily (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). Consequently, adding a nature connection approach through art equalises the assumptions of anthropocentrism which reduces the superiority of nature over humans. That logic can be transferred to the superiority of some humans over other humans which reduces marginalisation. That means that the domination can be transformed by bringing in nature connection and thus equalising nature and humans as well as humans and humans.

In sum, in the previous paragraphs, it has been established that the main takeaway of the study and the discussion is that art can transform sustainability education through integrating assumptions which challenge and transform dominant cultural assumptions,

namely embodiment vs. scientism, collectivity vs. individualism, diversity vs. ethnocentrism, empowerment vs. top-down approach, process-oriented space vs. progress and result-oriented space, and nature connection vs. anthropocentrism and human-nature superiority to reduce marginalisation. Additionally, the analysis and discussion revealed that the role of art mainly challenges the dominant cultural assumptions by balancing them out and should not completely transform them into the opposite assumption. That shows that dominant cultural assumptions are not necessarily destructive but that their dominance is problematic. Different and diverse assumptions are needed to create just solutions in education.

5.2.7. Effects of Themes on Multiple Dominant Cultural Assumptions

One theme has also influences on multiple described dominant cultural assumptions in addition to challenging a single dominant assumption directly as previously discussed. For instance, codes of the theme embodiment counter multiple dominant cultural assumptions such as scientism and result-oriented space. Another example is collectivity which counteracts individualism as well as scientism and ethnocentrism as elaborated in the analysis earlier and also in line with previous research (Rafiqi & Thomsen, 2020). Thus, the findings show that the themes do not only challenge one dominant cultural assumption but they can each have effects on multiple assumptions. That shows that not only are the themes interconnected as established in the first discussion section but the assumptions of the dominant culture are also connected since they are part of a complex system creating marginalisation (Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2005). Hence, when one dominant assumption gets challenged then it will also influence other dominant assumptions with new and unique connections. The Figure 3 below is taken from the analysis and added with the dominant cultural assumptions to visualise some examples of how every identified theme has transformative potential for several dominant cultural assumptions.

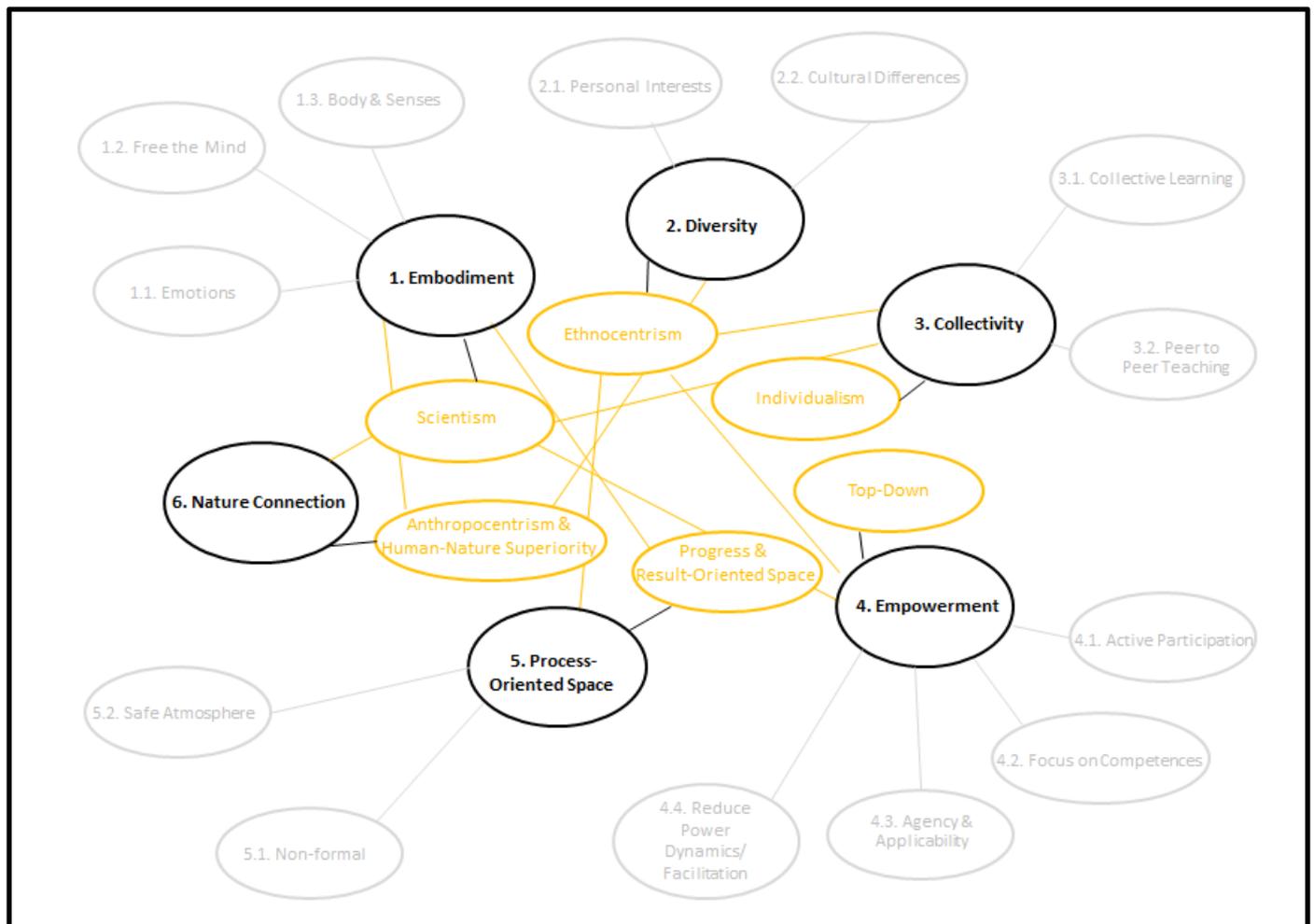


Figure 3: Thematic Map: Themes with connections to multiple dominant cultural assumptions. (Black lines are the main binaries; orange lines are additional transformative influences.)

5.2.8. Interdependencies - Individual and System Change

There are interdependencies between the individual and the system regarding transforming youth education for sustainability. Coming from a political and meta-level need for a system change, the analysis reveals that it often starts with a rather small-scale individual level to undo dominant cultural assumptions to reduce marginalisation. That is because participants also mentioned that the system is upheld by people, meaning that the people are reproducing the system. Relating that to the educational system, the hierarchical forms of thought are being reproduced by teachers and students (Martusewicz, 2018; Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). System-related critique is complex and teachers are at the intersection of politics and youth through developing for instance curricula (Martusewicz, 2018) and thus are people of power. People in positions of power are responsible for upholding the current system built on dominant cultural assumptions. This explains why

‘EcoJustice scholars seek to educate teachers across a broad spectrum of contexts, who can [then] help their own students’ to firstly, understand the social and environmental structural problems and secondly, develop socially and environmentally just patterns’ (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016, p.58). That is because ‘educators have a powerful responsibility and opportunity to prepare our communities’ (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016, p.66). In doing so, also youth and other individuals in the sustainability education field can make small-scale changes based on what they learned from the teachers. Consequently, people in power, such as teachers in schools, should use their power to make small changes in the educational system and their interaction with youth because it has the potential to lead to wider structural changes.

This discussion is related to the structure-agency debate which is ‘a critique of the past structuralist approaches [...] [as they] deny individuals the capacity to affect societal structures [patterns limiting the available possibilities]. The structure-agency approaches acknowledge people’s reflexivity and (active) agency’ (Lacroix, 2012, p.4). The EJE theory agrees with the debate in emphasising the importance of individuals and the communities’ agency to change existing dominant cultural assumptions (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016). However, it is also crucial to keep in mind that there are people who are not in positions of power due to for instance material poverty or oppression and they should not be blamed for acting less from a Western and privileged point of view since they often have their way of fighting the system (Scott, 1987). However, to go more in-depth regarding their way of acting would exceed the scope of the thesis. To conclude, it is crucial that people who are in power positions use them and take on their responsibility due to their resource benefits. Overall, it is important to have a mix of individuals’ changes, especially by people in positions of power, as well as system and community-based acting and thinking (Fullan, 2006). This mix also emphasises the chosen philosophy of science of critical realism as a research lens since it considers both, the individual and the system (Lawani, 2020).

5.2.3. Implications

Talking about the implications, the results of the study mean that art should be more integrated into youth sustainability education due to its transformative power regarding dominant cultural assumptions. However, the issue might be that art in education is often not adequately and consistently funded (Knight, 2017; Barnett, 2016) since the investments are mostly focused on supporting the dominant cultural assumptions dominating the educational system including technology and business (Martusewicz & Johnson, 2016) as previously

mentioned and not artistic approaches. The lacking financial support makes the educational transition difficult despite its importance. That is a systematic problem since it involves the complex role of the state which involves many actors and policy forms (Knight, 2017). Therefore, a possible solution could be to rely less on the state for a system change, but rather on individuals such as teachers and educators and their positions of power as mentioned in the analysis and previous discussion already to initiate the system change.

5.3. Limitations, Reflections, and Future Research

In the following, I will address limitations, reflections, and suggest future research regarding the first and second research questions to gain more detailed insight.

A limitation could be that the study did not focus on one specific art form but art more generally. That is, the results revealed that different kinds of art have different effects. That can be specifically seen in the theme of collectivity and empowerment where participants mentioned that some art forms, such as theatre, invite for more active participation and group interaction strengthening the feeling of belonging and participation in society compared to for instance individually drawing. Furthermore, developing awareness to realise when group interactions are discriminating is crucial (Rafiqi & Thomsen, 2020) to avoid that participation is again happening in certain assumptions rooted in the dominant culture. For example, in theatre, it should be avoided that some individuals are dominating others. However, the focus was to explore the role of art more generally and not to examine differences of art forms specifically to reduce marginalisation as explained in the theoretical framework. Therefore, future research could pick up on that and explore the different art forms and their different potential to transform dominant cultural assumptions further.

For future research, it would be interesting to explore whether some themes are more important than others since they might have more effects on different dominant cultural assumptions. Additionally, one could argue that art might also play other roles in youth sustainability education if other participants or participant groups would have been interviewed since outcomes might differ depending on chosen participant groups. Thus, future research could also investigate whether the results would also hold for another population belonging to the five described participant groups who are not related to the sampling frame. Furthermore, it could also be investigated in the future whether the results are also applicable to other non-European and non-Western contexts.

In addition, future research could also investigate whether the results for youth sustainability education could also be applied to adult sustainability education. One of the participants mentioned in the analysis that adults are not as receptive to art as youth supported by the research finding of the National Endowment for the Arts (2019, p.12) report that 'young adults were more likely to create or perform art than were adults of other age groups'. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore whether the results that art is a tool to incorporate embodiment, collectivity etc. in sustainability education could also apply to adults. Furthermore, it could be explored whether art has only a transformative power regarding dominant cultural assumptions in sustainability education due relevance of art specifically for nature and sustainability as previously elaborated. Or whether the transformative power could also be transferred to other types of education to reduce marginalisation?

Additionally, it could also be investigated whether there are tools and activities other than art, for instance, sports as educational tools (Di Palma et al., 2018), which could have transformative power. That is, the question would be whether another tool or activity could be integrated into the educational setting to elicit the same explored six themes to transform dominant cultural assumptions.

Lastly referring to the implications, future research could specifically focus on teachers' position of power, their awareness of their power, the degree to which they are using it already, and techniques to elicit a transformation. Additionally, potential fears and reluctance regarding initiating transformation such as losing their jobs if they use their power due to existing restrictive curricula and inflexible teaching policies even when morally disagreeing (Cooper Gibson Research, 2018) could be explored. Moreover, solutions to avoid potential fears such as several jobs or shared income in collective living (Hall, 2015) could be investigated. Why are teachers and facilitators not using the cracks in the system to do something and use their position of power? And if it's because of economic reasons which solutions are there to make facilitators independent of their financial situation? Additionally, since cooperation between different actors was highlighted, further research could be conducted on how to increase cooperation between different art, sustainability etc. actors. If sustainability education is not always part of a mandatory educational setting for youth, another question could be how to access youth physically to invite them to participate. That also refers to the overall question to find out how to systematically increase implementation of those art sustainability projects. Those aspects got mentioned by participants but could not be dived in deeper due to the scope of the thesis.

6. Conclusion

Based on qualitative interviews and focus groups with youths and practitioners, this research concluded that art plays several important roles in youth sustainability education and also has a transformative power to counteract dominant Western industrial cultural assumptions to reduce marginalisation.

Firstly, through a thematic analysis, it became clear that art is a tool for embodiment, diversity, collectivity, empowerment, process-oriented space, and nature connection. Due to the different participant groups, various perspectives regarding the themes became evident which highlighted the importance of practitioners' cooperation to create art-based youth education for sustainability. Furthermore, the relevance of art especially for sustainability education was established. It also revealed that the interconnectedness of the six themes as well as recognising the themes individually is important to understand the power of art and that there are interdependencies between the individual and system change when it comes to the transformative power of art. Secondly, through applying the theoretical framework of EcoJustice Education which criticises the dominant cultural assumptions (Lowenstein et al., 2010) the six identified themes challenge and balance the assumptions of scientism, ethnocentrism, individualism, top-down approach, progress and result-oriented space, and anthropocentrism and human-nature superiority and thus reduce marginalisation in youth sustainability education. Moreover, not only can one theme transform one dominant cultural assumption, but some themes can also challenge multiple dominant assumptions.

To conclude, the study showed that art has a transformative power and challenges existing dominant cultural assumptions to reduce marginalisation in youth sustainability education. The study also showed that there are people in positions of power such as teachers to integrate art into the educational context leading to transforming existing assumptions. Based on these conclusions, people working in the artistic, educational, and/or sustainability sectors should consider integrating such interdisciplinary educational approaches. These approaches strive for social justice by reducing marginalisation as well as environmental justice through the interconnectedness of human-human and human-nature. To get a more nuanced understanding of the implications of these findings, future research could address how implementing art can be improved in the educational context of sustainability.

In sum, challenging the dominant cultural assumptions can lead to more equality and youth experiencing less marginalisation. That is crucial specifically for sustainability education. Following the EJE framework, social justice is the basis to talk about environmental justice in sustainability education since the two are connected. Zooming out, these findings were concluded from a study conducted in a European context and can be further explored globally in other contexts. Consequently, integrating art is an important approach to reducing the interdependent problems of environmental degradation as well as social suffering, and in this way enabling a more sustainable and just future so that life can keep thriving on the planet.

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