LAUREA

AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

University of Applied Sciences

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Multisensory Space Handbook

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Foreword

THE HISTORY OR story of the Multisensory Space goes back about fifteen years to time when in our organization we applied Snoezelen multisensory method and planned to further develop the method also for immigrants. One day a good friend of mine, a young man from Somalia, came to me with a cup of sand and said: "Look, feel this sand.... so soft and white sand we have there on the beaches of Mogadishu." Although it was a rainy and cold day, one could see how my friend travelled in his mind to Somalia, to visit his family and warm memories. From that point onwards, an idea started to grow in my mind: to create a multisensory possibility to travel back in memories, providing a safe and pleasant atmosphere for encounters, for sharing memories and life experiences.

For the last fifteen years, the idea has grown and expanded – different kinds of local and global partners have been inspired by the method and they have participated in its development and further application. Universities have used it for learning, schools for promoting intercultural encounters, and associations for increasing the sense of belonging, and hundreds of students and volunteers have built Multisensory Spaces together with immigrants.

For me, still the best moment is to visit a Multisensory Space, to just sit there, listen and share stories, forgetting time and the world outside. To have time for encounters and building understanding between individuals. I wish to be able to provide those moments for as many people as possible.

One might think that it could be quite easy for any organisation to build such a Space but that is maybe not always the case. So, I hope this Multisensory Space Handbook can inspire both the people who are working at grassroots level and also those who plan and build the public spaces. To be able to modify a public space is very empowering, and in these times, we also need cozy and safe places for encounters.

The "Aistien" Multisensory Space method is something very simple – it is not a big technical innovation or a method that is only meant for professionals. With this handbook, we like to encourage you to use the method for those purposes that are important to you. By providing different theoretical backgrounds, we also like to show that you can justify this method in different ways.

In Helsinki, 2.2.2022
Minttu Räty
Senior Lecturer
Project Manager

Picture 1. DISC kick-off in Multisensory Space of Laurea UAS. Picture credit: Tiina Wikström. CC BY-SA 4.0.

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Picture 2. *Stones and "snowballs" used as touching materials in a Multisensory Space. Picture credit: Minttu Räty. CC BY-SA 4.0.*

Introduction

This handbook is meant to be a practical handbook about the "Aistien" Multisensory Space method. It is compiled for all those teachers, facilitators, social workers, students and volunteers who would like to use multisensory elements in their work and activities. In the handbook, there are also chapters targeting different decision makers and those who plan different public places, giving for example ideas of how an organisation could build or create their own Multisensory space. The handbook is providing both practical tips and some theoretical background and justification for how and why to use the method. The materials in this handbook are partly based on "Aistien" webpage as well as some of the earlier published articles and presentations.

The idea about the "Aistien" Multisensory Space method was created to meet the needs for a place where individuals from different cultures and backgrounds could come together and learn to know each other and each other´s background and culture. The method refers, on the one hand, to a space where all the senses are engaged, but also to a process whereby the actors can construct or modify the Multisensory space according to their own thoughts to tell or describe a thing or a theme that is important to them. The first steps in developing this method were taken at Laurea University of Applied Sciences already back in 2007. Since then, the method has been further developed in different ways, in local and international projects.

This handbook was compiled as part of the EU-funded project DISC – Digital skills for integration and active citizenship (2019-March 2022). The purpose of the project was to disseminate good practices and to promote the integration and digital skills of young immigrants. In the DISC project, the "Aistien" Multisensory Space method was further developed and observed as a tool for learning digital skills and promoting intercultural understanding, and some of the earlier research and other materials related to the Multisensory Space were updated and summarised for this handbook.

Picture 3. At the summer cottage. Students modified the "Aistien" room at Laurea UAS as a multisensory space for sharing their summer holiday memories. Picture credit: Minttu Räty. CC BY-SA 4.0.

The Multisensory Space can be modified to meet the needs of different communities, associations, schools, libraries, both groups and individuals. It can be used when working with refugees, immigrants, multicultural schools and day cares as well as different NGOs promoting multicultural dialogue and intercultural understanding. Also, universities can use it to make visible immigrant and incoming exchange students' own cultures. Additionally, the Multisensory Space can serve, for example, as an open learning environment for holistic wellness and wellbeing at work or as a space for language and ICT learning.

In Finland and at Laurea, the Multisensory Space method is called the "Aistien" method, thus indicating a method "with all the senses." Multisensory methods are of course used and developed in social work and education in general, like the Snoezelen method. As a word, "multisensory" is generally defined in different dictionaries as something that refers to sense-based experiences or information gained simultaneously via multiple physiological senses or different sensory modalities. In the "Aistien" Multisensory Space, although the different senses are important, the focus is on creating together a cosy atmosphere and unique environment by the users. When developing the method at Laurea and in co-operation with different project partners, there was a need to underline the uniqueness of this method: The "Aistien" method focuses especially on the collective building process and emphasises the importance of encounters in the different phases when using this methodology.

This handbook starts with practical description of the "Aistien" Multisensory Space method in part I. First it is described how the "Aistien" Multisensory Space can be used in two different ways: as a "readymade"

space, which is cosy, safe and inspiring and can be used for learning, different encounters, and promoting welfare, and as the "Aistien" process, where a group plans and builds the space. Also there are descriptions of the different ways organizations can build an "Aistien" Multisensory Room or Space, thus providing "the frames" that enable the usage of the method. The Multisensory Space can be implemented as a permanent solution or one can also use lighter and movable solutions, like a hut or tent.

In part II, the theoretical background for the Multisensory Space method is presented. As there are numerous different purposes and ways of how to use the method, there are also many different theoretical perspectives to justify the method. The theoretical background is divided into three main sections. First, the method is developed to promote interculturalism and multicultural encounters. The culture is seen here as a very complex concept and constantly changing by nature. Hence, the Multisensory Space can be used both for intercultural encounters but also for identity negotiation and for reminiscence. The next part discusses communities and how the "Aistien" method can promote a sense of belonging and community building. The "Aistien" method, which has partly its roots in the Snoezelen method, is also used as an innovative, open learning environment for different learning purposes and additionally, it addresses the importance of emotions in learning.

Finally, a summary of the different national and international projects where the Multisensory Space method has been further developed.

"Aistien" Room = an empty onsite room/space or a mobile space, such as a tent, which enables the building of the Multisensory Space.

"Aistien" Multisensory Space = an environment where all the sense are engaged, and the Space is made and created by the users and/or a facilitator/teacher.

"Aistien" Multisensory Space method or "Aistien" method = a process whereby the actors can construct or modify the Multisensory Space.

"Aistien" Online Space = online platform, which enables to share memories or stories and facilitates the shared online communication and dialogue of the Space.

Chinese Zodiac 2020
Year of the RAT

New Yea

Part 1

What is the "Aistien" Multisensory Space and Method?

In this first part of the handbook, you can read more about the practical implementation of the "Aistien" Multisensory Space and what it means, how it can be created, and what is required from an organisation creating a Multisensory Space.

1 How to Apply the Multisensory Space Method?

1.1 THE MULTISENSORY SPACE AS AN INSPIRING ENVIRONMENT

The core of the "Aistien" Multisensory Space method is a Multisensory Space, where all the senses are engaged by different elements. The Space can be used as an inspirational learning environment but also as a meeting point for different people. The teacher can build a Multisensory Space to create an inspiring learning environment to learn languages, or the immigrant can talk about her/his culture in a familiar multisensory environment. Also, the Space can be constructed to an interesting historical or geographical environment. The Space can also promote wellness by being a peaceful and relaxing oasis – or maybe bring the visitors for a short visit to another part of the world. For example, there can be organized activities that support the culture of the aging and second-generation immigrants.

The Multisensory Space method can make a phenomenon visible, more concrete and to be experienced by all the senses. The Space and the multisensory materials provoke thoughts and memories that inspire dialogue among visitors. The Space is not supposed to be an exact copy of any particular real-life environment but rather it provides hints that promote dialogue.

In the Aistien Multisensory Space, there is:
- something to see (visual effects, photographs, landscapes created with projectors and lighting, videos)
- something to touch (objects, fabrics, items)
- something to hear (music or other sounds, birdsong, speech)
- something to smell and taste (drinks, finger foods, spices, herbs, fragrances).

Picture 4. *Presentation about raising children in Somalia – a lecture for the day care workers, the presenter has also chosen the pictures for the environment. Picture credit: Minttu Räty. CC BY-SA 4.0.*

The Multisensory Space method enables the modification of public space, making it cosy and accessible. It can also make the often invisible minorities or less addressed themes visible and more concrete. Common to all the different kinds of Spaces is that they should act as a relaxing and comfortable environment, encouraging interaction and communication between individuals who visit the Space.

How to then create a Multisensory Space or a Multisensory Room enabling these multisensory experiences? A more detailed description of the needed technology and materials is presented in Chapter 2.

THE IMPORTANT THING WITH THE MULTISENSORY SPACE IS THAT:

- It is relaxing and comfortable.
- It feels safe for anyone to bring up their thoughts and talk about their feelings.
- It encourages communication and interaction between individuals and groups.
- It uses different senses to create a feeling of being somewhere else.
- It is not a copy of reality but a subjective view of a culture/theme/subject.

1.2 CREATING A MULTISENSORY SPACE AS A SHARED LEARNING PROCESS

When talking about the "Aistien" Multisensory method, we mean the process where the Multisensory Space is created by a group of people. By creating a Space, the group can make a subject or theme, which is important for them, visible for others. The whole process of planning and building the Multisensory Space is made together. When the group has the power to decide the theme, the objectives, and also the practical realization of the process, it empowers the participants. In the school environment, creating the Space with self-organised teams, promotes a shared learning as well as project-based learning.

Picture 5. Young immigrants together with Finnish students have been learning about Finnish culture and built different environments about Finnish celebration days - here Finnish Vappu (first of May). Picture credit: Minttu Räty. CC BY-SA 4.0.

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Despite the Corona pandemic in autumn 2020, at Laurea Tikkurila campus, in connection with multicultural studies, two Social Services students together with three Chinese Nursing students, built Multisensory Spaces. Because of the corona situation, the facilities were not open to the public, but the finished facilities offered their builders a moment to personally share their stories, forget the darkness of autumn, and take a quick journey to the other side of the world – or happy memories.

"The theme of our Multisensory Space became two different aspects of Chinese culture, traditional and modern. The idea came from the fact that one of the students came from a big modern city and the other from a city or village where people live more according to old traditions [...] We projected on the walls changing images related to either modern or traditional China. In the background, we had relaxing Chinese music. We used many objects and materials found in the storage of the Multisensory Space, such as rugs, hats, and pillows. In addition, one of the students brought tea with her. When the Space was completed, we sat down and talked a lot about Chinese and Finnish culture and tasted some Chinese tea."

–Seppo and Iiris, Laurea

The "Aistien" method is very flexible in terms of the group size and planning and building process. The process of creating a Multisensory Space begins by putting together a project group. Usually, the groups creating the Spaces include about 4-6 persons, but the process can also be done individually or with an even larger group. The group work enables interaction during the planning and building process. On the other hand, for a big group, it can be challenging to create a Space that represents equally every single idea and thought, so when working with a larger group, it is good to share the tasks.

The actual realization of the Space can vary according to the needs of the group building the Space. The project may take several months or just one day. The most common building process includes 4-6 joint meetings about once a week.

| Starting | • Task distribution and group formation
• Learning to know each other
• Definition of the phenomen and the approach |

| 1. The planning phase 1 | • The purpose of the Space: Why? For Whom? Where?
• The detailed project plan
• Sharing the tasks |

| 2. The planning phase 2 | • How to make the phenomen multisensory
• The plan of the Space: who are the visitors, the objectives of the space, activities in the space
• The practical plan |

| 3.Building the space | • The tent and the items to tent
• Visual effects: pictures on the wall, videos
• Audiovisual materials: editing |

| 4. The tent open for visitors | • Guiding and fasilitating the visitors
• Open learning element |

| 5. Closing the process | • Feedback from the visitors
• Taking down the tent, returning the items
• Feedback discussions |

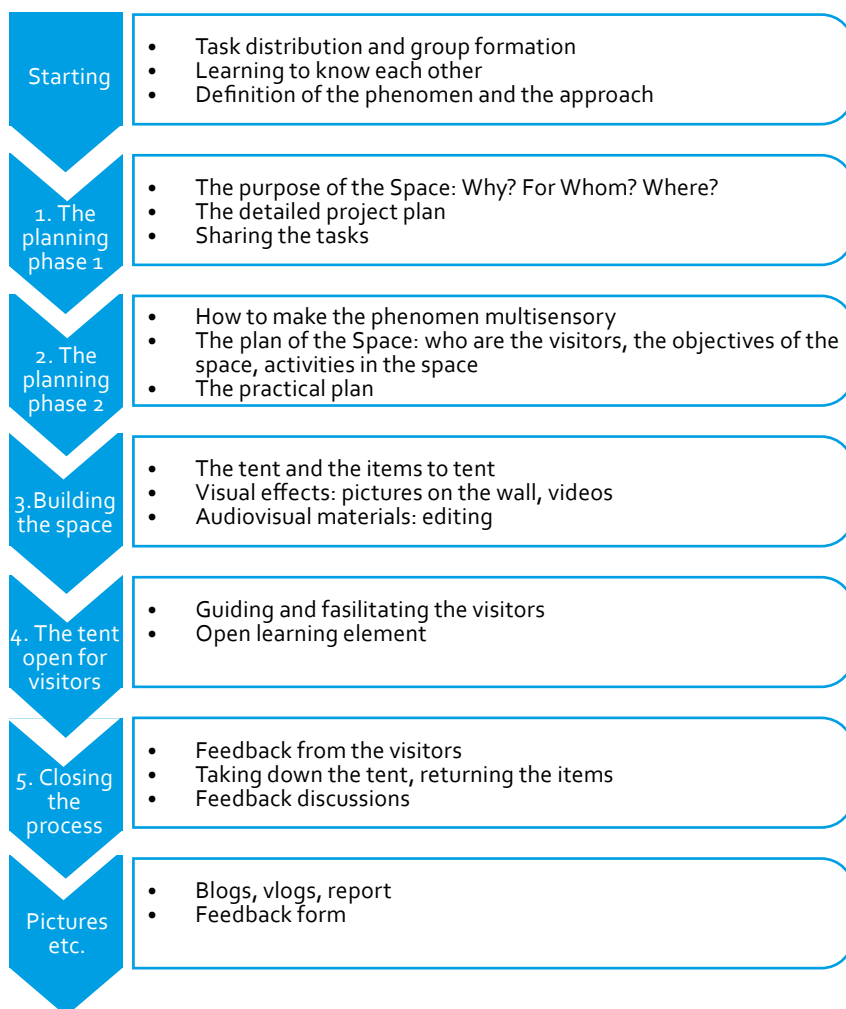| Pictures etc. | • Blogs, vlogs, report
• Feedback form |

Figure 1. The process of creating a Multisensory Space. Picture credit: Minttu Räty.

The group process begins by choosing a theme for the Multisensory Space. Sometimes the purpose is very clear, such as telling about one's culture, but at times one needs some ideas to get the discussion going, so below are listed some possible themes for different (intercultural) groups:

- "Sharing happy memories": childhood/last summer
- "My favourite place"
- Local history, my hometown 100 years ago
- "Grandma's home"
- Celebrations: New Year, birthday, wedding, national holidays
- Geography: Forest, sea, mountains etc.
- Life stories: Biography (e.g. 50-year celebration), a refugee story

In addition to the theme, the group also decides the more detailed goals for the process. They share and motivate their thoughts and feelings related to the topic and what they want to achieve by creating a Multisensory Space. The group discusses the key concepts and important viewpoints of the phenomena. In this way, they choose, based on their views, a more specific topic or angle for the Multisensory Space they want to build. The Space is always a subjective and simplified picture of the reality. The process continues by planning how to make the topic multisensory and in that way visible. After the visualisation phase, the group begins to work on the Space itself by gathering the necessary materials. The materials can be for example audio-visual materials, pictures, videos, sounds and also curtains, pillows, even light furniture. Important part is also to make something to taste in the Space. For the scents, sealable glass jars are the best.

The group also needs to plan the audience for the Space and what kind of activities there will be available in the ready-made Space. The group might build it only for themselves, allowing them to continue the group process. Or they can invite a certain group as audience, such as their children, their classmates, or members of some association. Or they can decide that the Space is open to the public, for example in a public library. The Space can be used for different kinds of activities, such as reminiscence, future projection, studying, encounters between different people and so on.

Sometimes the planning and visualisation process of the Space is the most important part of the whole process for the individuals working on it. On the other hand, sometimes the planning and building of the Space can be done quite quickly, and the active part begins when the physical Space is ready and the people can use the Space for encounters, dialogue, reminiscence and so on. The building process empowers the individuals connected to the process and serves as a means for learning. It can promote a sense of togetherness between different people and communities.

Building the Space concretises abstract matters and makes them easier to process, for example the meaning of different habits and cultural practices can be made visible and understandable. The Space also serves as a way to discuss identities and values and to share memories. In the finished Space, it is possible to present for example different cultures and ways of living. The environment can positively reinforce personal experiences and memories or help others in visualising their shared aspects of life.

First meeting in Laurea's multisensory Space, 1 hour

"Finnish forest" to give the experience of g the multisensory space

Learn to know each other Groups: brain storming

Plan for theme for the space

Working plan for the group: internal communication and timetable

Meeting in Laurea's computer class room, 2 hours

Working as pairs/groups,

Pictures, videos, voices

Dividing the tasks

Working individually: preaparing the audiovisual material

Meeting in Laurea 2 hours,

Planning the activities,

Planning the space (décor)

Shopping

Baking

The Activity day, 6 hours in the multisensory space

Before lunch building the space

After noon the space is open for the visitors

Feedback session

With the group and teacher

Reporting

Figure 2. *The Multisensory Space building process with Laurea students and the young immigrants from the integration course. A group had 4 students from Laurea and 4-6 students from the integration course. Picture credit: Minttu Räty. CC BY-SA 4.0.*

As earlier mentioned, to build the Multisensory Space together or to use a ready-made space as an inspiring learning environment has many benefits to different actors. These points are summarised below in Table 1.

Table 1. Why to apply the method? Why to build an intercultural Multisensory Space?

TARGET GROUP/ PARTICIPANTS	VOLUNTEERS/ STUDENTS	COMMUNITY
To talk about identity/identities	To understand immigrants' background	To make interculturalism visible
To cooperate with the majority	Encounters with "the others"	To promote intercultural encounters
To promote language learning and story sharing	Emotions in learning	To have an open and peace-promoting learning environment
To tell about one's own background and culture	To learn to know the individuals instead of the cultural groups	To give the possibility to modify public space
To share memories with the second generation	To share the common memories with people from different backgrounds	The Space is a simple and inexpensive way to have a modern and inclusive learning environment
To learn digital skills	To learn digital skills	To share learning and best practices

Multisensory Spaces can be created with different kinds of groups. The activities include the practical mission of creating the Space. However, the group process has also another level of purpose. When working with immigrants or with some vulnerable group, the purpose is also to empower the group members and to promote a sense of belonging. In that process, the facilitator has an important role to make sure that the group can fulfil the process and also learn from it. Yet, at the same time, all the group members are autonomous and self-guided.

HOW TO BRING THE AUDIO VISUAL (AV) MATERIALS IN THE SPACE

- Participants can use their own pictures/videos OR take pictures from open sources, like picture banks available online.
- If using pictures from the internet, check the copyrights, and the quality of the pictures.
- Pictures/videos should be in a landscape format to give you the feeling that you truly are in a landscape, also the right perspective is important (keep it eye level).
- When using self-recorded films, the video should be recorded without any zoom, on a tripod to stabilize video recording.
- Pictures can be presented for example with a PowerPoint presentation: set the pictures so that they cover the whole dia, use timing (or remote control) and set the presentation to loop.
- To search, download and edit the AV materials is a good opportunity to learn digital skills. Take into consideration the target group and their skills level.

2 Models of the "Aistien" Multisensory Space: From a More Permanent Solution to Different Lighter Versions

THE MULTISENSORY SPACE is meant to be an easily modified space that can be used for different purposes and built in different environments. The core idea is that the different users of the Space can easily modify it and the Space enables the activation of all the senses. Modern technology allows for highly experiential replicas of reality, but the "Aistien" Multisensory Spaces can be realized with inexpensive technology. The purpose is not to make a copy of reality but to create a comfortable, cosy and emotions evoking space; to provide an experience that you are actually visiting a place "somewhere else." The experiences and feelings provided via different senses are important, so when planning the "Aistien" Multisensory Space, there should be facilities to provide experiences for all the senses.

The "Aistien" Multisensory Space can be set up as a permanent solution, for example, in a classroom or library, or a temporary mobile version of the Space can be used. The different options are introduced below.

2.1 THE MULTISENSORY SPACE AS A PERMANENT SOLUTION

For everyday use, it is easiest for an organisation to build a permanent Multisensory Space. Of course, the planning of the Space starts with the available premises and financial resources. The first question to consider is how the Space will be used and by how many persons. A smaller Space is more intimate and cosy but for example in schools there is often a need for a whole class to visit the Space. The Space should be easy to access but also in a quiet place. To enable the presence of all the senses, it is preferable to have a kitchen and some storage facilities close to the Space for multisensory materials.

It is also important that the technology used in the Space is such that the users find it easy to use. The landscape should be projected at least on one wall, preferable on two or three. At Laurea, one projector is also behind the curtain, projecting rear, creating more space in the area used. In addition, a good audio system and
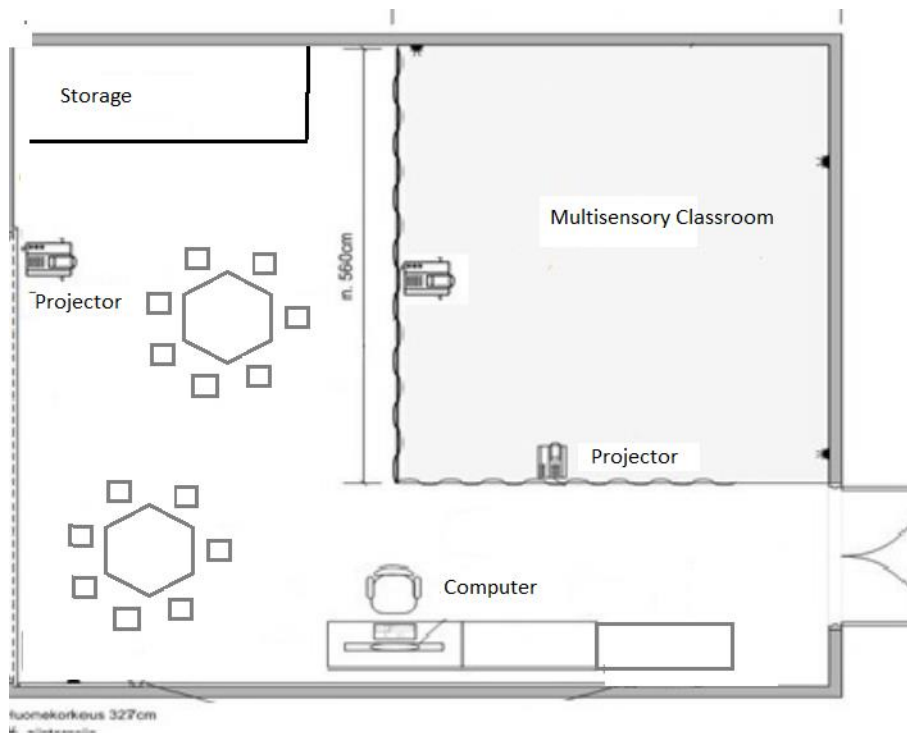
Figure 3. *The floor plan of the permanent Multisensory Space/Room at Laurea UAS. Picture credit: Satu Taipale and Minttu Räty.*

neutral/changeable furniture enables quick modifications of the atmosphere and ambiance. The list below contains some important points to consider when designing your Space.

At Laurea, the Multisensory Space was built in one classroom. The floor plan shows its current implementation. There are three data projectors in the room: two of them project onto two walls and one rear projector to the curtain dividing the Space. About twenty people can visit the Space at the same time.

The Multisensory Space at Laurea
- the total size of the class room is 9,4 m x 8,6 m and the size of the Multisensory space is 5 m x 5,6 m
- room height: 3,3 m
- three data projectors under the sealing
- a white side curtain (for projecting an image)
- a curtain wall (curtains are changeable)
- a carpet covering the floor
- four speakers connected in each corner of the room

WHEN PLANNING TO BUILD A MULTISENSORY SPACE AS A PERMANENT SOLUTION, THERE ARE DIFFERENT ASPECTS TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION, SUCH AS:

- What is the main purpose of the Space?
- Who and how many people are going to use it at one time?

ABOUT THE SPACE

- Location: Is it easy to access?
- Size: Is it big enough for its intended purpose?
- Lights: Is it possible to dim the lights in the Space?
- Sounds: Is the Space quiet when needed?
- Data projection on the walls: Would it be possible to project on one, two or three walls? Can the walls be used for the projection? Are the wall surfaces intact? Do you need painting or curtains?
- Facilities: Is there a kitchen available nearby?
- Storage: Is there a sufficient storage space nearby?
- Curtains / floor: how much do you want to do with the interior and, for example, change the curtains, fabrics or carpets?
- The furniture should be neutral – or how much is it possible to change the furnishing?

AUDIO VISUAL TECHNOLOGY

- 1-3 data projectors
- A sound system of sufficient quality
- What software can the users use? Can the data projectors be connected to each other or are they separate?

PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVE

- How is the Space maintenance organised? Booking system, user training, room cleaning and so on.

Picture 6. *Picture of the permanent Multisensory Room at Laurea UAS which is easy to modify for different multisensory spaces. Picture credit: Markku Pajunen, all rights reserved.*

2.2 THE MOBILE VERSION OF THE MULTISENSORY SPACE

If the organisation does not have a possibility to build a permanent room or prefers to bring the Space to different locations, it is preferable to use a mobile version of the Space. This is also a more inexpensive option. However, there are no ready-made mobile versions on the market, so different organisations have been creative when creating their mobile Spaces by using for example different tent solutions.

Laurea has piloted different solutions and constructions for the mobile Multisensory Space. One example of the mobile Space (structure 2.4 m x 2.4 m) is in the picture below. Currently at Laurea, we use a standard market tent (3 m x 3 m) where one wall is changed to be a reflective screen for the rear projection. In addition, velcro strips have been added to the inside of the tent at the top of the walls, allowing for an easy attachment of various curtains.

Picture 7. A mobile Multisensory Space/tent at Laurea as a Somali/Arabic living room. Picture credit: Jaakko Antikainen, CC BY-SA 4.0

All in all, the same technical requirements are applied to the mobile Space as with the more permanent solution. With the mobile version, a laptop and a portable projector are used to project a large image onto the canvas wall. If possible, the projector is situated outside the Multisensory Space, so that the picture can be seen from inside. The size of the mobile version is relatively small, but it creates a cosy meeting space. However, if the Multisensory Space does not need to be so intimate, the structure allows a more open space by moving a few canvas walls. For an even lighter set-up, one can use portable tech and movable curtain arrangements.

For a successful event, please carefully plan the location of the Multisensory Space and take into account the surrounding sound and light conditions.

Picture 8. *The mobile multisensory space/tent of Laurea UAS (same as in picture 7) modified as "forest" and built in a public library. Picture credit: Minttu Räty.* CC BY-SA 4.0.

2.3 THE MULTISENSORY SPACE AS A DIGITAL VERSION

During the Corona pandemic, Multisensory Space elements have also been added to different online activities to facilitate a more creative co-operation between teachers and students in different parts of the world. Even if the digital version of the Multisensory Space might not be able to fully realise all the multisensory elements, the process of sharing memories, hopes and wishes, the reminiscence activities as well as the concepts of multisensory dialogue and storytelling have still promoted intercultural communication amongst different groups and also made possible to meet people from all over the world.

Such activities have been realised for example in Erasmus+ projects DISC and UNICAC, in different pilots, where students from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, China, Spain, Belgium, Slovenia, Italy, Japan and many other countries have been able to experience together different digital Multisensory Spaces online. Also, even during the lockdowns, Laurea students have created several digital Multisensory Spaces featuring for example different cultural and traditional elements. Some students also created hybrid Multisensory Spaces at their homes, sharing then their stories digitally, as videos.

The digital approach to the Multisensory Space can facilitate multicultural international cooperation, both in the creation phase of the Space or when visiting it, and these activities can also promote the digital skills development of the target groups.

On the next page there is a short presentation of the 3-phase model of the digital Multisensory Space creation (slightly modified from the original version created in the Erasmus+ project DISC by E. Romero from INCOMA, Spain in 2020).

Picture 9. The Multisensory Space perceived through the computer screen. Picture credit: Minttu Räty, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Table 2. 3-phase model of the digital Multisensory Space (Modified from Romero 2020).

3-PHASES OF THE DIGITAL MULTISENSORY SPACE

Phase 1- Creating the Working Groups

In the first phase, the participants create smaller working groups, so that about 4-6 people can collaborate together online / digital Multisensory Space, to share a common experience and/or ideas. It is also possible to work in pairs or even one individual can create an online Space to be shared with other participants.

Phase 2 – Creative Group Process

The online collaboration platform for the group process could be Slack, Trello, Canvas, Padlet or alternatively Whatsapp and/or Facebook groups or some other suitable platforms. Here, the target groups can prepare their online / digital Multisensory Space.

Essentially, the process would be the same as with the creation of an onsite Multisensory Space, except for two main aspects:
• The collaboration will be carried out online, using an online platform
• The materials the groups collect to build the experience have to be adapted to an online context. For audio-visual materials, this means no change to the traditional Multisensory Space building process, but for touch, smell and taste, some alternatives are presented below.

The theme for the Multisensory Space is chosen by the participants in the beginning of the process. Sometimes the purpose is very clear, such as telling about one's culture, but at times one needs some ideas to get the discussion going. The possible themes are similar to those of the traditional onsite Spaces mentioned earlier, such as happy summer or childhood memories, my favourite place, different celebrations, life stories or stories related to local history, geography and so on.

When these themes and stories are carried out in an online Multisensory Space, the group can give a specific name to their Space and they also need to allocate different roles to each group member.

When creating an online Multisensory Space together, the group needs to provide the following:
• Something to see – this refers to videos, photos, or other visual materials that the group collects and/or produces.
• Something to hear (music or other sounds) – as with the visual resources, audio resources are easy to share online.
• Something to touch (objects, fabrics) – since we are here talking about online interaction with online visitors, the working group would have to think for example of such objects or fabrics that are easy to find in most houses/environments around the world and that at the same time would help them to explain what they want to express. Or if the Multisensory Space for example features growing up at the beachside, the visitors of the Space could have sand available while the Space creators are describing their beach experience.
• Something to smell and taste (food, drinks etc.) – to facilitate taste and smell, the working group could find relevant resources of smell and taste that are available at most households. For example, a spice that is used in your local cuisine, if you are describing the experience of growing up in your town. Or the Space creators could provide for example some recipes for the participants before-hand, and during the online event, all could share some food and drinks together and discuss their cultural meaning, memories interlinked with them and so on.

Phase 3 – Sharing the Online Multisensory Space with the World

Once the online Multisensory Space is created, it is time to share it with a wider audience. This can be done:
• By temporary means, as an online presentation, using platforms like Zoom, Teams, or Google Meet.
• By permanent or semi-permanent means, using for example an online Multisensory Space allocated in a website or other multimedia group platform, such as Canvas or Trello.
• The latter option would require some kind of log-in process to ensure the security principle of the Multisensory Space.

As with the onsite Multisensory Space, also the online Space requires sensitive and dialogue-focused planning and execution, and it is always good to collect feedback for further improvements.

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Due to the corona situation, one group tested virtual experience sharing: "We believed we got everything we needed that way too. We were able to bring out the client's/co-worker´s culture in a virtual performance, show music performances as well as video of a traditional carnival. We thought we could create exactly the atmosphere we wanted. The only thing we thought was missing was the food our client/ co-worker would have wanted to offer in the room.

-Anastacia and Jenna, Laurea

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN APPLYING THE MULTISENSORY SPACE DIGITALLY:

- One can work in online groups and create different shared stories in different digital workspaces, such as Padlet, applying the materials for different senses in creative ways.
- The topics can vary from cultural traditions to personal experiences and favourite places or memories and so on.
- Individuals or groups can also create videos about their Multisensory Spaces and then share online with each other their stories and memories, hopes, wishes, important values and so on.
- One can also create online meetings where everyone can for example taste the earlier prepared cultural foods and drinks and then share the meanings of such traditions.

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PART 2

THEORETICAL ASPECTS BEHIND THE MULTISENSORY SPACE METHOD

In this second part of the handbook, the focus lies in those theoretical approaches that support the Multisensory Space concept, and it gives the reader an idea of the different ways and incoming points of how this method can promote learning, intercultural communication, peace-promoting dialogue, and holistic wellbeing for individuals, groups and society at large.

3 The Multisensory Space: Culture and identity

I**N THE RECENT** decades, the notions of culture and identity have become more and more varied, fluid and flexible and thus also less easy to define in an exhaustive manner. This part of the handbook discusses the different features of the concept of culture, the meaning of identity negotiation, and also the different possibilities that the Multisensory Space method can offer in terms of reminiscence and storytelling.

3.1 CULTURE AS A COMPLEX PHENOMENON

Today's world is more and more intercultural, and there is an increased need for spaces of dialogue between individuals representing different cultures. Internationalisation and the breakdown of local cohesive cultures are part of the reason why people and communities now need to contemplate and readdress their own identity and find new ways for cultural exchange and peaceful dialogue.

Culture is a complex phenomenon having many definitions based on different theoretical perspectives. Matusov & Marjanovic-Shane (2017) present four perspectives how culture can be defined. First, culture can be seen as "pattern:" a stable way of acting, behaving, knowing and communicating with other people. The culture is shared by a group of people, based on for example geography (national or regional culture), profession, or ethnicity. Although culture is recognized as stable, the ways of acting, behaving and communicating may change over time. The cultural patterns are not always visible or noticeable for the members of the cultural group but act more as a natural way of acting and thinking.

Secondly, culture can be defined as "boundary" that focuses on the relationship between cultures. From this point of view, the cultural patterns become visible in the interaction of individuals representing different cultures. Cultures are relevant as alternative patterns of other cultures. Based on this view, cultures are equal, alternative ways of thinking and acting, and this leads also to cultural relativism: cultural diversity and tolerance are recognized and valued. This approach can lead to keeping cultural boundaries clear.

In contrast to these two previous approaches, where culture is more or less stable by nature, the third perspective focuses on culture making, or "authorship." Individuals are constantly producing culture: culture is recognized and valued by others in dialogue. From this perspective, education focuses on creativity – not reproducing the given readymade culture. The last perspective reminds us about the need for dialogue. "Critical dialogue" promotes testing ready-made and emerging ideas, opinions, beliefs, and authorship. Ideas have to be tested not only intellectually but also ontologically and ethically.

According to Giddens (1995), the postmodern society is the first truly global society where the everyday life of each individual has become globalized. The communal tradition breaks and adapts under the influence of the global world. In post-modern world, culture can be seen as a production of meanings and ways in which people understand and articulate the world and other people (Martikainen et al 2006).

In this handbook, the concept of multiculturalism is used as a synonym for interculturalism, which in our point of view refers to viewing cultures from the perspective of "authorship" or even "critical dialogue." This is to underline the notion of equality and the active policy for promoting such equality between the individuals representing different backgrounds. When talking about multiculturalism, there is a risk that cultures are understood more unchangeable and permanent than they are, as "pattern". In reality, ethnicity or culture and communities based on them are changing entities. They are shaped by interacting with each other. To belong to a social group is produced in an ongoing process of negotiations of meaning. (Martikainen et al 2006.) Ethnicity, identity, and culture are therefore built, over and over again, in people's minds, deeds, and social interaction (Saukkonen 2007).

When using the Multisensory Space with multicultural clients, people can share their own experiences from home countries as well as their knowledge of their own culture. People can also use the Space to share their experiences in their new home country and how their life has changed and how their old culture has been mixed with the new one, creating a so-called third space (see for example Bhabha 1994, Matusov & Marja-novic-Shane 2017). When the Multisensory Space is created as a safe and comfortable environment, it is also possible to share one's own, personal life stories.

According to research (for example Pettigrew & Tropp 2008), encounters between individuals are needed for intercultural learning. When working together and planning and building the Space in a multicultural group, people learn to know each other and their background and culture. The ready-made Multisensory Space allows the participants to meet each other in an informal environment and discuss culture-related topics, such as identity and cultural differences and similarities.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER ABOUT CULTURE IN THE MULTISENSORY SPACE:

- Cultural awareness – the Multisensory Space is an intimate Space so pay attention to cultural requirements.
- Culture is constantly changing.
- There are also generational differences and many other individual differences in terms of cultural interpretation.
- Individual's and group's point of view need to be in dialogue (discussions in a ready-made Space; what we have in common and what are the possible differences).
- To avoid rigid preconceptions what the Space should look or be like (people may have very different ideas about their culture).
- Respect also non-verbal communication when creating Multisensory Spaces; e.g. flags or religious symbols or other items may have different meaning or value for different people.
- Sensitivity in terms of at times very traumatic experiences such as refugee stories etc.
- Even happy memories can at times be traumatic if they involve the aspect of loss.
- Some hints of culture are enough instead of creating full replicas of cultural contexts.
- Deep and holistic client awareness is needed at all times (avoid topics that are not suitable from the clients' point of view and so on).
- Give time and space for the stories or narratives that naturally unfold.
- Have a positive respect towards the Multisensory Space as a visitor since the creators put their heart and soul into the building process.
- Switching the power balance – I am "the Other" for a change (I must ask since I do not know culture, language, symbols, food, meanings and so on.)

Picture 10. Laurea's student Tai invites immigrant mothers to share stories from their home country. A happening for the mothers and their children at an open day care. Picture credit: Minttu Räty. CC BY-SA 4.0.

3.2 A PLACE FOR IDENTITY NEGOTIATIONS

"Who am I" – this very simple question young people – and also immigrants – may ask themselves, and maybe without actually having any simple answers. In modern society, identity negotiation is an increasingly individual process. Identities consist of a combination of "external" i.e. social definitions and "internal" i.e. one's own definitions (Jenkins 2004). Identity deals with the individual's experience of self and belonging to a community or a cultural group. The self-interpretation is shaped by interaction with the surroundings or community. (Schuff 2016; Simon 2004.) Thus, identity is not just defined by individuals themselves but is grounded in social interaction and depends on verification by others. The people around not only are able to accept or reject an identity that a person opts to present, but they can also give an identity that the person does not him/herself claim. (Deaux & Verkuyten 2014.) Defining an individual's or group's identity is a life-long process of interaction (Jenkins 2004).

Identity negotiation belongs to the process of becoming an adult. All young people need to negotiate their identity, but the immigrant youth often have to negotiate the identity as a member of two different societal groups, the minority where their families belong and also the majority, the surrounding society.

Identity negotiation is also a process that all immigrants must go through, as they reassess their life in their new home country or the country of residence. Cultural identity means a sense of membership in a group or groups defined by ethnicity and country of origin or of residence, or some combination of these. In many cases, these concepts overlap. (Vedder & Phinney 2014.) Nowadays, identity rebuilding happens in interaction with the environment both locally and globally. Increasing daily use of new media allows activities across multiple national and transitional spaces. The usage of new media can provide immigrants with the necessary tools in the process of developing bicultural identity and knowledge by encouraging them to engage with varied cultural contexts in meaningful ways. (Lucic 2016.)

Immigrants are involved in a wide range of groups and communities, so identity construction is not a straight-forward process, especially not for young people. Iskanius (2002) compares the young immigrant's identity formulation to an adventure labyrinth, where the search for one's own multiple identities takes many turns. Identity construction is particularly problematic if the environment has a negative attitude towards the minority culture (see Hautaniemi 2004).

"

I worked with Sheida who is already my co-worker. The intention was to build a Space that would present her memories, a place where she would drink tea with her family when she was younger. Everything necessary was found in the storage of the Multisensory Space. Spices, rugs, pillows, projectors and even teacups were perfect for that reminiscence. Sheida was really happy and taken on the project and told me a lot about the history of her home country and what she misses from there, but also why she does not want to live there anymore.

–Marita, Laurea

When a group builds the Multisensory Space together, the idea is that the process works as a tool for identity negotiation, to discuss individual or group identity. By building the Multisensory Space, one can discuss what is important and relevant, to be preserved and, on the other hand, what might change or be adopted or adapted. It is not only about the identity of the immigrants but also this shared creative project could be understood as forming a common ingroup identity (see Schuff 2016).

KEY POINTS ABOUT IDENTITY NEGOTIATIONS IN THE MULTISENSORY SPACE:

- The Multisensory Space method can be used to reflect individual's or a group's identity. Identities are born as a combination of "external" i.e. social definitions and "internal" i.e. one's own definitions.
- To work together can be used as a tool to build shared identity of a school, community, municipality and so on.
- Nowadays identity rebuilding happens in interaction with the environment both locally and globally. Social media allows activities across multiple national, transitional and transnational spaces.

3.3 MULTISENSORY REMINISCENCE AND STORYTELLING

When starting to develop the "Aistien" Multisensory Method at Laurea, the idea of the first projects was to give elderly immigrants a possibility to visit for a moment their home country, to build a Multisensory Space of their happy memories. This idea was based on the reminiscence work which is widely applied as a social work method with elderly people. Reminiscence is the act of recalling and sharing one's memories and a process of thinking and speaking that links the past and the present, highlighting a life already lived. The multisensory elements are extensively used when reminiscence is applied as a social work method. The method is nowadays not only a method employed with the elderly, but also when working with people from different age groups.

Reminiscence allows people to see their life experiences in a new light, whereupon separate experiences add up into a meaningful whole. This allows a person to get new perspectives on their own experiences and to gain the energy to process even the more painful memories. Sharing memories allows us to build social relations, and it can bring up things we have already forgotten. Therefore, as reminiscence is a powerful method, one needs to be also sensitive when using it with for example refugees and immigrants. It is advisable to focus on positive and empowering memories.

People of all ages can take part in reminiscence, as it empowers everyone when well applied. The process of building a Multisensory Space can be a group reminiscence process during which the Multisensory Space is built from the results of the reminiscence work. A completed Space can also inspire reminiscence and sharing of experiences.

It should be noted that a Multisensory Space is not only built on memories and past time. A Space can also be built on future visions. When we wish to project our shared future, we can have a meeting and a dialogue with a community in a Multisensory Space and talk about a desirable future – how would I like my neighbourhood to be in 5 years? This type of future projection work can be a great way to activate different members of community in planning a shared future and it can give a chance for the more silent members of a community to voice their thoughts.

Picture 11. "*Happy memories from childhood" – at a street food kiosk in a 90s shopping centre. Picture credit: Minttu Räty. CC BY-SA 4.0.*

In Table 3. there are some reasons for doing reminiscence work by Pam Schweizer (2022). These ideas can be applied when building a Multisensory Space for reminiscence and storytelling.

Table 3. *Reasons for doing reminiscence work (Pam Schweizer 2022).*

REASONS FOR DOING REMINISCENCE WORK	
Community building	Sharing memories with others from a similar background generates a strong sense of belonging to a community and having a valued role within it.
Cultural integration	Reminiscence is also a means of celebrating difference, bringing communities with different cultural and religious backgrounds together to exchange life experience.
Combating isolation	Loss of partners and close friends in later life can lead to isolation and withdrawal. Reminiscence offers a means of inclusion in a desirable social group which shares a common life experience.
Friendship	Pleasurable contact through sharing common memories can become the basis for new friendships between participants in the present.
A sense of history	Sharing stories with people of the same generation or with much younger people helps to develop a sense of oneself as a participant in the great social and historical upheavals of the last century. In reminiscence everyone is the expert on his or her own life and is recognised as an individual with unique experience to impart.
Stimulation	Being in a group where the memories are shared can stimulate the recall of long-forgotten experiences and put participants back in touch with parts of their lives which are pleasurable to remember.
Creativity	Encouraging people to explore their memories through creative activities is pleasurable for participants and entertaining for anyone with whom they may wish to share their results.
Empowerment	Reminiscence work with people with special needs, and especially older people with dementia, can help to build self-confidence and independence by concentrating on strengths and creating opportunities for success.
Finding perspective	Having an opportunity to share and reflect on one's experience of life in a supportive atmosphere increases people's sense of identity, their sense of who they are. It helps people to integrate the different parts of their life into a more meaningful whole.
Psychological support	When memories are painful, it can be helpful to find others who can relate to one's own past struggles, so one does not have to feel so alone in suffering.
Respect	In reminiscence everyone is the expert on his or her own life and is recognised as an individual with unique experience to impart.

These aspects of storytelling and reminiscence can be realized in the Multisensory Space by different means. Below are listed some examples and ideas for such Spaces.

EXAMPLES AND IDEAS FOR MULTISENSORY SPACE

Creating:
a Multisensory Space together with different groups of elderly a celebratory Multisensory Space together with members of different cultural and religious groups
- together for peer support, sharing and empowerment, based on happy memories or favourite places – reminiscence suits all ages and you can share memories of last summer, childhood and so on
- together with participants who share common happy memories for example about art, culture, music, an era, or an environment
- together with the elderly and younger members of society to promote intergenerational understanding; the Multisensory Space can give young people the opportunity to "visit parents' or grandparents' childhood places"
- together with members of a village or city neighbourhood to promote and strengthen the local identity and sense of belonging.

It is important to get familiar with the narratives of immigration. When we face the news about migration, the stories told by media, it is vital to understand who is telling the story and from what perspective. Different themes and narratives about migration have taken hold in different countries and media plays here a strong role (McNeil 2019). In the Multisensory Space, the narrative voice is given to the migrants themselves, enabling them to create their own version of the story and to share it in the way they wish to be seen, heard and sensed.

Our world is made of shared stories, and the Multisensory Space is also inspired by such stories. With the Multisensory Space method, the participants can increase their awareness of their own narrative and share their stories and thoughts with others. Also, the Multisensory Space offers an opportunity to demonstrate and have a practical look at different cultures and their values, habits and traditions.

Picture 12. Students building a forest themed Multisensory Space in an event. Picture credit: Minttu Räty. CC BY-SA 4.0.

Picture 13. A Finnish Multisensory Space, spring 2017. Picture credit: Tiina Wikström. CC BY-SA 4.0.

4 The Need for Community

THIS PART OF the handbook focuses on the importance of community building and our inherent need to belong and to be an active part of different social groups and society. In today's world and especially in the field of social work, it is essential to find different creative and innovative ways of empowering people and promoting peaceful dialogue that can also reduce stereotypical thinking and racism.

4.1 COMMUNITY BUILDING AND A SENSE OF BELONGING

For human wellbeing, it is essential to belong to a community or a group, whether in society, urban neighbourhood, or educational institution.

Saukkonen (2013) notes that at political and legislation level Finland is one of the most multicultural societies in Europe, but the theory and the practice do not fully correspond or meet. For example, in the school the immigrant children are taught multiculturalism, but children with the Finnish background are not – only the immigrant children have the duty of integration (Holm & Londen 2010, Saukkonen 2013).

The universities and all other learning institutions have an important role in promoting the sense of community at local level (Banks 2005). Many researchers emphasize that society must have a team spirit, to make it work fairly, so that peaceful coexistence and individual freedom can be realized (for example Hautaniemi 2004; Parekh 2000). To find the common values, there is a need to have continuous dialogue between different groups of society – the fundamental values cannot be dictated by the majority culture (Kamali 2002; Parekh 2000).

For the member of ethnic minorities, it is important that the local community and society convey that different cultures are equal, and different combination of identities are possible and accepted (Nieto & Bode,

2008). To express such a message, there is a need for active constructions of multicultural operational models at societal level and in the different communities, such as neighbourhood, kindergartens, schools, and workplaces (cf. Bjurström 2001).

On the other hand, immigration is no longer seen as a clean, more or less permanent, break with the country of origin. Immigrants today are defined by mobility. Today's migrants are able to maintain a bicultural and transnational virtual presence. (Lucic 2016.) International interaction is nowadays very easy and part of everyday life for immigrants, and different communities may not be connected to the geographical areas but virtually.

The core of the Multisensory Space method is to promote the sense of belonging and inclusion and diminish the unwanted state of otherness. This work can be done in different communities like in schools, neighbourhoods and so on. The core is to promote the dialogue of different people in a good team spirit. Also, people with different backgrounds can use the Multisensory Space method to find connecting factors, things that are important to both or experiences of which they have same type of memories. This is a way to learn to know and understand each other and to promote a sense of belonging.

The Multisensory Space method has been used also as an instrument for determining and strengthening local identity in village planning (see for example Räty & Laurikainen VUOSILUKU PUUTTUU).

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER IN THE MULTISENSORY SPACE:

- sharing and creating opportunities for dialogue between people or communities with different backgrounds
- making immigrant community skills, talents and cultural know-how visible
- common activities, such as creating the Spaces together, as a way to build the community and enhance sense of belonging.

4.2 PROMOTING SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

Empowering as a theory has its roots in different fields of sciences, such as psychology, sociology, social politics, and religion. Empowerment can be defined as a process of people, organisations and communities increasing or gaining control over their lives and becoming active participants in efforts to influence their environment (Rappaport 1987, Dierckx & Van Dam 2014). Empowerment does not come just from the individual's acts but also from the output of environment and community (Teater 2014).

The aim of the empowerment work is to empower both the target group as a group and at the same time each individual member of the group. It is targeting to make lasting changes in the social reality of individuals, groups, and communities. The empowering process should give everyone a chance to find themselves and participate fully in the group and inspire people find different channels for interaction and common understanding. In empowering process, the dialogue is essential: it encourages participants to have horizontal and vertical dialogue. The horizontal dialogue means the dialogue between the peergroup and vertical dialogue is to intermediate message and have discussion also with the decision makers and those in power. (Hämäläinen& Kurki 1997.)

Empowerment is not only about reaching one's goal but to gain trust for the future and create a sense of belonging in society.

The use of the "Aistien" Multisensory Space method has many intersections with empowerment work. First, the construction of the Space is the actor group's own process, facilitated by the facilitator. On the other hand, dialogue and the generation of dialogue both within and outside the group are important. The Multisensory Space method can create a safe environment for its users to explore, share, learn, or try out new things. By building a Space and inviting and meeting visitors in such Space, the actor group can share their thoughts, values, hopes and wishes and influence the society around them.

Picture 14. "*Aisten" class room is a place for encounters. Picture credit: Olli-Pekka Lehtinen, Laurea University of Applied Sciences. All rights reserved.*

4.3 AWAY FROM RACISM AND STEREOTYPES

In recent years, anti-racism has come to fore with, among other things, the Black Lives Matter movement. Racism can be observed in many ways, both as everyday racism experienced by minorities and, on the other hand, as institutional practices, structural racism, which means looking at the practices of society and its various organisations (for example Keskinen, Seikkula & Mkwesha 2021).

International organisations have globally taken a stand to reduce racism and intolerance. As stated by the EU (Justice and Fundamental Rights, Combatting Racism and Xenophobia), the EU rejects and condemns all forms of racism and intolerance as these are against the values and principles of the basis of the EU. Still, as claimed by the EU, many people in Europe face racism, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance because of their background, race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation or gender identity, disability, social status and so on. This is something that the EU and also many Erasmus+ projects want to change.

The Multisensory Space concept strives to create a safe environment where everyday racism experienced by individuals can be brought up and safely discussed. At best, the Multisensory Space can make visible some of our cultural misunderstandings, misinterpretations and narrow thinking in the form of different stereotypes. Meeting people from different cultures face-to-face can create new understanding and promote peaceful dialogues and deeper understanding.

When an organisation builds a Multisensory Space for intercultural and diverse encounters, it is a way to show that the organisation wants to work against racism and appreciates diversity. The Multisensory Space facilitates a place where diversity and equality are valued and made visible and that way the Space by its very existence acts as a symbol of anti-racism and peace promotion.

Picture 15. A Multisensory Nepalese Space 2019 at Nazareth College, USA. Picture credit: Tiina Wikström. CC BY-SA 4.0.

5 The Multisensory Space Method in Learning

MULTISENSORY SPACES ARE natural innovative learning environments that engage all senses and also facilitate emotions in learning, supporting different learners and their personal needs. Such Spaces can also promote digital skills and other important working life competences that are also needed for active citizenship and can support social inclusion.

5.1 MULTISENSORY SPACE AS AN OPEN LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Multisensory Space method also serves as a great example of an open and innovative learning environment that can meet the needs of varied learners. This section of the handbook, which elaborates such possibilities, is partly based on T. Wikström's article "Chai and Sauna – the Multisensory Space as an Open Learning Environment" (2014).

Interest in client- and student-centeredness has steadily increased during the past years or even decades in different fields of service and education development. Constructivism-based open learning environments (OLEs) with their enabling and inspiring contexts and a variety of resources, tools and interactive learning processes are part of this development. The Multisensory Space is an example of such open learning environments, thus emphasizing the real-life spaces instead of the more common technology-enhanced or -based OLEs, even if the Multisensory Space can also be realized in its hybrid or online form, as earlier described. Hence, also the constructivism as a background theory is more of that of socio-constructivism in the case of the Multisensory Space research, where the process of shared peer learning is in focus.

In the constructivist classroom setting, the focus is already turned from the teacher to the students who no longer are passive receivers of knowledge but rather have an active and dynamic role in their own learning process. The notion of expertise is shifted towards the student, and the knowledge is something that

is negotiated between them and the teachers. Also, the prior knowledge, experiences and expertise of the students are appreciated, and the students are seen as individuals whose learning process is active by nature and consists of the personal learning history with personal motivation, personal meanings, and personal ways of problem-solving. (Watson 2001.)

When we talk about socio-constructivism in a classroom or open learning environment, we add and emphasize, in addition to all the above-mentioned facts, the element of social interaction and dialogue with peers plus the importance of cultural background that provides us with the cognitive tools needed for holistic development. These tools include for example language skills, knowledge of cultural history, different social contexts, and different types and levels of electronic information access.

The roles of the teacher and the students in a (socio)constructivist setting are also quite radically different from the earlier models of learning where the student silently received the knowledge as poured into him or her by the superior teacher. As it is often said, constructivist teachers do not take the role of the "sage on the stage but as a guide on the side". In this way, they act as facilitators, meaning that they need to take into consideration the already existing knowledge, skills and experiences owned by the students and allowing them to test these actively and creatively, making thus new learning discoveries possible. Flexibility, assistance, sense of safety, real-world case-based and authentic learning environments and dialogue and collaboration instead of competition are some of the key words and key ideas relevant for constructivist learning settings, and this is so also when we talk about open learning environments. (Palincsar 1998.)

Students, in their turn, receive an active role of participation where they need to utilize their prior skills, experiences and knowledge and accommodate and assimilate new information, thus being in charge of their own learning process. At times, they need to be ready to change their angle and even let go of the earlier learned knowledge and patterns of information. Open learning environments, such as the Multisensory Space, give many opportunities for testing and readjusting one's views, unlearning so to speak, which might be sometimes otherwise a hard task to do. So at times, unlearning needs to take place as well as testing old and new ideas within a community, with one's peer learners. Thus, the teachers or tutors are not the only actor but the students and their peers form the forum of co-operative and community-based learning. Open learning environments can be created for external or internal purposes and needs by an individual or a group.

The OLE learners have always the possibility to process and monitor their learning needs and resources that include, for example, the different types of media, both electronic and printed, as well human resources from peers to teachers. At best, both peers and teachers and other professionals can provide with conceptual, metacognitive, process related and strategic support for co-learners and students when needed, thus increasing the Vygotskyan zone of proximal development, ZPD, and in this way helping the learner to achieve and master more (Palincsar 1998; Hannafin, Land and Oliver 1999).

All in all, in open learning environments, unlike in more traditional learning settings where the surroundings do much on behalf of the learner and the learning is seen as knowledge transfer only, the learner is the active creator of his or her whole learning process, inspired by his or her own motivation. At all points and phases, the learners are in dialogue with their own learning process and with other learners – what kind of person I am and how I want to do things, what I have learnt so far, where I want to go now and by what means I want to attain my goal.

Open learning environments are characterized by multiple foundations, values and such components as enabling contexts, resources and tools, and scaffolds. In connection with the Multisensory Space, some of the key elements of the OLEs that become visible are authenticity, learner-centred thinking and the importance of prior knowledge and experiences. Other key aspects are different tools for communication and IT resources

Picture 16. *Japanese Multisensory Space. Picture credit: Tiina Wikström. CC BY-SA 4.0.*

supporting the creation of the Multisensory Space, facilitating learning by supporting the participants and their cultural depth and critical thinking. Also, the Multisensory Space makes it possible to emphasize the individual learning efforts and individually generated learning needs, metacognitive skills development, and encouraging self-regulation and self-evaluation and peer-tutoring. (Hannafin, Land and Oliver K. 1999.)

In today's world and for school 2050, immersive visualization technology, big data visualizations and augmented or enhanced reality present the next level of open learning environments (see e.g. *https://www.xplorationstation.com/*; *https://www.techviz.net/immersiveroom*). Yet, there will also always be the need for face-to-face dialogue and interaction.

5.2 MULTISENSORY LEARNING AND DIFFERENT SENSES

A person forms an image of the world through their senses, and the experiences a person has via their different senses promote wellbeing and learning. In the context of social work, multisensory activities are often linked with work with the disabled, which incorporates a lot of teaching, rehabilitation and therapy based on the senses and one's experiences. For example, the earlier mentioned Snoezelen method, which was developed in the Netherlands for working with the developmentally disabled, has spread over the decades and is now used worldwide (Pagliano 1998; Sirkkola 2014).

The history of the "Aistien" Multisensory Space at Laurea is also linked with the multisensory spaces of the Snoezelen method. However, the difference is that the idea of the Multisensory Space is to build the Spaces as a shared (or individual) process and also that the Spaces are based on memories or "really life" places. Pagliano (1998, 107) defined the multisensory space method as follows:

"... where stimulation can be controlled, manipulated, intensified, reduced, presented in isolati-on or combination, packaged for active or passive interaction, and temporally matched to fit the perceived motivation, interests, leisure, relaxation, therapeutic and/or educational needs of the user. It can take a variety of physical, psychological and sociological forms."

Multisensory processes are also utilised and researched in other ways in learning: stimuli perceived through two different senses have been utilised in learning of mathematics and languages. Also, sounds and smells activate the learner's memory to connect events to what he/she has previously learned, which is why music is also incorporated into teaching.

The purpose of an "Aistien" Multisensory Space is not de facto to support learning through the combined impact of senses, but rather to utilise multisensory processes as an experience-rich learning environment, which means that positive experiences motivate students to learn. Therefore, the multisensory approach stri-ves to offer an alternative to cognitive and behavioural learning concepts as it incorporates experience-based, hands-on, social and project learning.

Picture 17. *Something to touch, something to eat – bread and herring on a plate. Picture Credit: Minttu Räty, CC BY-SA 4.0.*

5.3 EMOTIONS IN LEARNING

Previously, the emotional dimensions of learning at school have been less recognized and mentioned mostly within theories of motivation. However, lately, a change in learning research has become evident (see for example Pekrun and Plutchik).

Emotional intelligence and the different aspects of emotions have become more and more relevant research topics, and emotions are globally studied from different points of views. Therefore, it is also important for teachers and educators to understand how to support different learners' overall emotional wellbeing when navigating through the comforts and discomforts of learning. Especially young people experience many physical, mental and emotional changes and challenges that affect their academic and social life, and this is even more so when we talk about immigrant children and youth who need to adjust to new cultures and new educational systems.

At best, educators can design inspiring and emotionally safe learning environments, learning and teaching methods and strategies that promote all types of learning, RDI and problem-solving for versatile learners, immigrant children and youth included. The Multisensory Space method can support both students and teachers by providing a deeper understanding of emotions, emotional intelligence, motivation, and mentalization abilities. Pekrun (2014) emphasizes the importance of all students' emotional wellbeing as an educational goal in itself, and by supporting students' identity development educators can also enhance their learning and overall development.

By promoting and facilitating an emotionally wholesome, safe and nourishing environment, the Multisensory Space offers different possibilities for different learners to become emotionally empowered in their learning process, independent of their present cognitive skills – all types of learners are given tools and chances to expand their skills and knowledge for active citizenship and better understanding of their own identities and their role in today's society.

> *For Laurea´s students, building the Multisensory Space has been a significant learning experience.*
>
> *The process has been interesting, immersive, instructive, practical and inspiring .... For myself, the whole process has been a unique learning process where most of my own learning has taken place by other means than reading. Through working together, our interaction has deepened, things have been raised and connected through a common space.*
> *-Tarja, Laurea*
>
> *"Learning like this, and meeting the client, we think is more relevant than reading the books."*
> *-Anastacia and Jenna, Laurea*

5.4 DIGITAL SKILLS PROMOTION AND MULTISENSORY SPACE

In today's world, to be an active member of society, all people need digital skills. Therefore, there is a great need to promote these skills globally, leaving no one behind. For example, the EU Commission has proposed a series of policy actions in the past to address key challenges and issues regarding skills, including for example "New Skills for New Jobs" and "Rethinking Education". In 2016, the Commission adopted a new and comprehensive Skills Agenda for Europe, proposing ten actions to help equip people in Europe with better skills.

The common values are set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and include democracy, respect for human dignity, equality, the rule of law, and human rights. These values are reaffirmed in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which brings together both civil and political rights and economic and social rights.

In the EU programmes (DIGITALEUROPE), the following points are emphasized: all citizens have right to digital inclusion that supports their successful employability, and they need possibilities for continuous updating of their skills to secure employability also in the future. Similarly, teachers, educators and trainers need to be provided with up-to-date training, coaching and additional education to ensure required skills proliferation.

The Digital Competence Framework 2.0 (DigComp 2.0), a reference for many digital competence initiatives within the EU, offers a tool to improve citizens' digital competence, and it identifies the digital key components in five areas which can be summarised as below:

1. **Information and data literacy**: To articulate information needs, to locate and retrieve digital data, information and content. To judge the relevance of the source and its content. To store, manage, and organise digital data, information and content.

2. **Communication and collaboration:** To interact, communicate and collaborate through digital technologies while being aware of cultural and generational diversity. To participate in society through public and private digital services and participatory citizenship. To manage one's digital identity and reputation.

3. **Digital content creation:** To create and edit digital content. To improve and integrate information and content into an existing body of knowledge while understanding how copyright and licences are to be applied. To know how to give understandable instructions for a computer system.

4. **Safety:** To protect devices, content, personal data and privacy in digital environments. To protect physical and psychological health, and to be aware of digital technologies for social well-being and social inclusion. To be aware of the environmental impact of digital technologies and their use.

5. **Problem solving:** To identify needs and problems, and to resolve conceptual problems and problem situations in digital environments. To use digital tools to innovate processes and products. To keep up-to-date with the digital evolution.

The Multisensory Space projects, such as Erasmus+ project DISC, have tried to address these points by integrating the Multisensory Space methodology with the digital skills promotion and thus responding to the above-mentioned needs. The Multisensory Space method provides a safe environment that allows people from different (digital) backgrounds to practice and improve their skills. Building the Space with its audiovisual environment supports the participants' digital competences, from basic digital knowledge to creating for example an audio-visual curriculum vitae (AV CV) and learning media criticism and so on. The DigComp 2.0 can also serve as a useful frame of reference when planning the digital activities in the Multisensory Space.

When planning and creating one's Multisensory Space and its activities, one can focus on all the above-mentioned five different competence dimensions or study more deeply only one or two of them, based on one's goals and target group's needs.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER IN THE MULTISENSORY SPACE:

- The Multisensory Space, digital Multisensory Spaces included, provides an environment where also digital skills can be promoted and integrated into the different learning and sharing processes, especially when the Space is being planned and created.
- Also, the skills related to media criticism and copyright issues as well as video and other editing can be promoted and enhanced during the Multisensory Space creation process.
- Also, public spaces such as libraries can use the Multisensory Space concept when promoting for example different digital skills related workshops.
- Digital materials used need to be of good quality and serving the purpose of the Space in question, whether onsite or online.

6 The Multisensory Space Projects

THE MULTISENSORY SPACE method has been developed since 2007 in several national and international projects.

After the very first steps in developing the "Aistien" Multisensory Space Method were taken at Laurea University of Applied Sciences in 2007, the Multisensory Space method was applied and promoted in a project called Encounters in Multisensory Space (2009-2010), partially funded by the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals. Multisensory Spaces were built at Laurea Tikkurila and Laurea Hyvinkää campuses, and the first version of the mobile space was introduced.

The next project With All Senses – Developing Open Learning Environments (2011-2015) was launched to continue the development and promotion of the method. Laurea University of Applied Sciences coordinated the project with such national partners as the Provincial Museum of Lapland, Heinolan kansalaisopisto (Heinola Adult Education), Hämeen Kylät ry, City of Vantaa, the Päivälehti Museum, and Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. With All Senses promoted the creation of multisensory learning environments for different target groups, for collecting local memories and history and for creating a model of an open multisensory learning environment for different organizations, such as learning institutions, libraries, and museums.

During the With All Senses project, the official website was developed for the "Aistien" Multisensory Space method (*www.aistienmenetelma.net*) and it was then further developed in the Building Skills and Communities Together project (2017-2019), where the aim of the project was to learn Finnish language and get acquainted with the Finnish society, to make the cultural diversity visible, and to promote the sense of community and inclusion. Volunteers and student groups organised different activities where immigrants and natives worked together.

During the Erasmus+ DISC project (2019-2022), DISC partners have had a chance to apply the Multisensory Space method in different ways to promote especially immigrants' digital skills learning, enhance active

citizenship and further participants' competencies in terms of integration. In this way, the Multisensory Space has provided an opportunity for the more vulnerable members of society to become empowered and find their strengths, competencies, and place in society.

These projects and some additional pilots are listed in table 4.

All the published materials of the "Aistien" Multisensory Space method are freely available here:

Aistien-menetelmä - Sosiaaliala - Laurea LibGuides at Laurea University of Applied Sciences
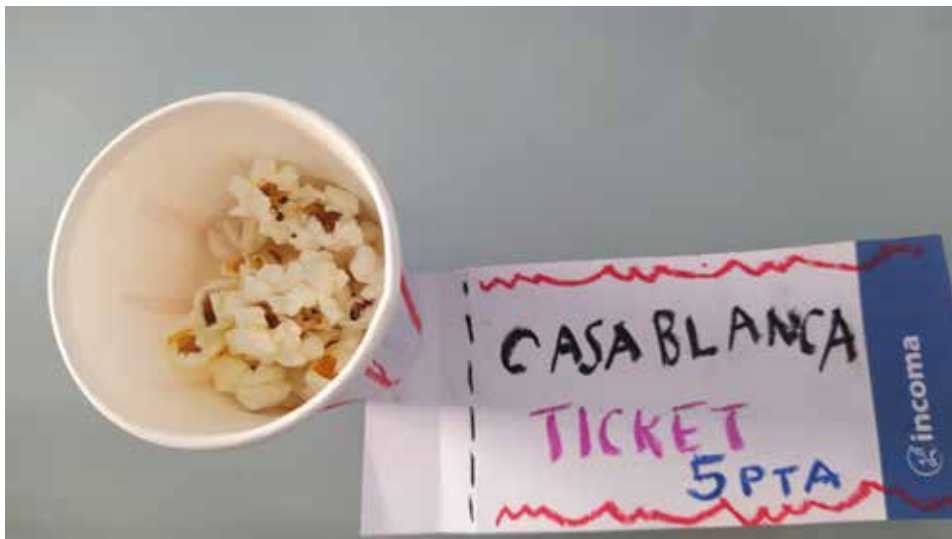
Picture 18. *In Spain, one of the DISC partners built a Multisensory Space with teachers. Picture credit: Marin Camanho. All rights reserved.*

Table 4. *Multisensory Space projects and pilots.*

PROJECT TITLE	YEARS	FUNDING	PARTNERS	PURPOSE	RESULTS
DISC	2019-2022	Erasmus+ KA3	Leuven-Limburg UCLL. Belgium,- Maribor University, Slovenia, Incoma, Spain Cesie,Italy.	Multisensory Space method promoting in different ways especially immigrants' digital skills learning, enhancing active citizenship and furthering participants' competencies in terms of integration.	*www.discproject.eu*
ELO Building Skills and Communities Together	2016-2018	ESF	Espoo Library, Finnish Red Cross.	Applying the method for learning basic Finnish and for integration activities.	*Suomea elämyksellisesti - Aistien Menetelmä (www.aistienmenetelma.net)*
AISTIEN With All Senses – Developing Open Learning Environments	2011-2015	ESF	Provincial Museum of Lapland, Heinolan kansalaiso-pisto (Heinola Adult Education), Hämeen Kylät ry, City of Vantaa, Päivälehti Museum, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences.	Applying the method as an open learning environment.	*www.aistienmenetelma.net*
Encounters in Vantaa	2016		Vantaa Municipality, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Vantaa.	Using the multisensory tent for promoting multicultural encounters in different institutions in Vantaa.	
Pilot experiences in Espoo Schools	2017	ESF		Applying the method in problem-based learning /project learning in the primary schools.	
Encounters in Multisensory Space	2009-2010	AMIF		Promoting the encounters and multiculturalism at Laurea.	

FINAL WORDS

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How to use multisensory elements in teaching, training and learning? How to empower teachers, students and clients? How to enable encounters and dialogue as well as a sense of belonging? Find answers and much more in Multisensory Space Handbook.

This handbook illustrates how to create the "Aistien" Multisensory Space and how to use the "Aistien" method. It is aimed at all teachers, trainers, facilitators, social workers, students and volunteers who would like to use multisensory elements in their work and activities.

The "Aistien" Multisensory Space method refers to a space where all the senses are engaged, but also to a process whereby the actors can construct or modify the "Aistien" Space according to their own thoughts to tell or describe a thing or a theme that is important to them. The "Aistien" method focuses especially on the collective building process and emphasizes the importance of encounters in the different phases when using this methodology.

The method was developed to promote interculturalism and multicultural encounters. This handbook was compiled as part of the EU-funded project DISC – Digital skills for integration and active citizenship (January 2019-March 2022).