

COLARNING

Colearning Framework

Self-learning in community

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Readable version and updates www.colearning.org/en/framework/

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1. Vision

A New Social Architecture of Learning

Colearning brings learning back into the midst of life: into workshops, cafés and coworking spaces where people of all generations work on real tasks. This chapter describes the vision behind it – and the community that grows from it.

1.1 Learning Where Life Happens



Imagine a lively marketplace or an open workshop. People come and go, projects are underway, conversations spark. A teenager practices latte art at the espresso machine, an older woman does the bookkeeping, a group cooks, someone repairs a bike. No walls divide these activities – just areas that spill naturally into one another. **Colearning is learning in the world as it is, with people as they are.**

In the morning you arrive and connect. Through the day you pick up projects, play, pause, reflect, and look things up. There's no one timetable for everyone. **The community and the environment are the curriculum.** What pulls you in is the visible everyday life of others – their passions, their hacks, their ways through a problem. The path is playful, and the fuel is real: the chance to contribute and make a difference.

1.2 Colearning: Self-Learning in Community



Colearning is self-learning in community.

We create convivial places of learning in the midst of life.

Places for encounters across generations and differences.

Free spaces where people can flourish.

We shape the world and make our experiences visible.

And so people learn from people – incidentally, playfully, with real joy.

(Colearning vision)

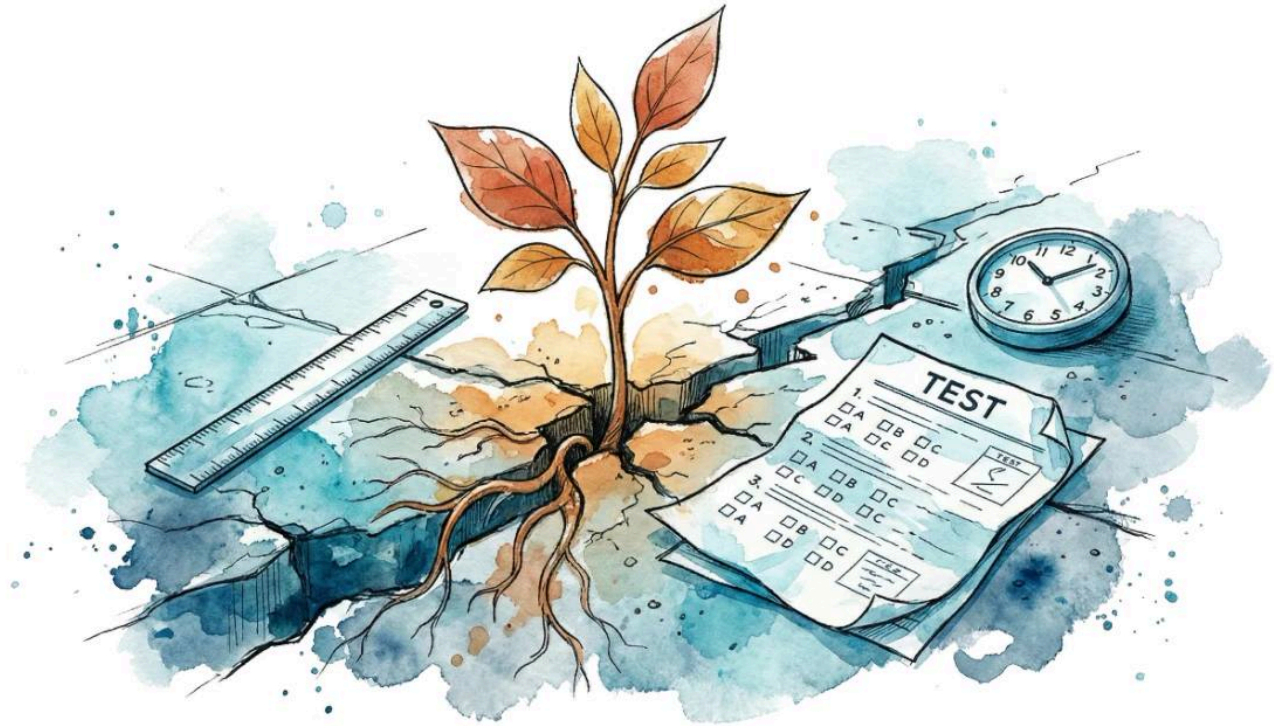
We stand at a historic turning point that calls for a fundamental rethinking of education, work, and community. Colearning is not a pedagogical instruction manual, and it's not another reform paper for existing institutions. It is the **design of a new social architecture.**

Colearning breaks with the industrial logic that treats learning as a separate, time-boxed phase of instruction – something you “finish” before real life begins. Instead, it reconnects us with how humans have learned for millennia: right in the middle of what's happening, driven by the needs of life, embedded in a community.

People aren't split up by age; they learn, work, and grow together. Education here is neither a consumer product nor prescribed medicine, but a commons – something we shape together and share with one another.

2. Diagnosis

Why School No Longer Fits



Why Colearning now? Because today's education system works against the human blueprint and, at the same time, no longer fits the dynamics of the world. This chapter names both mismatches.

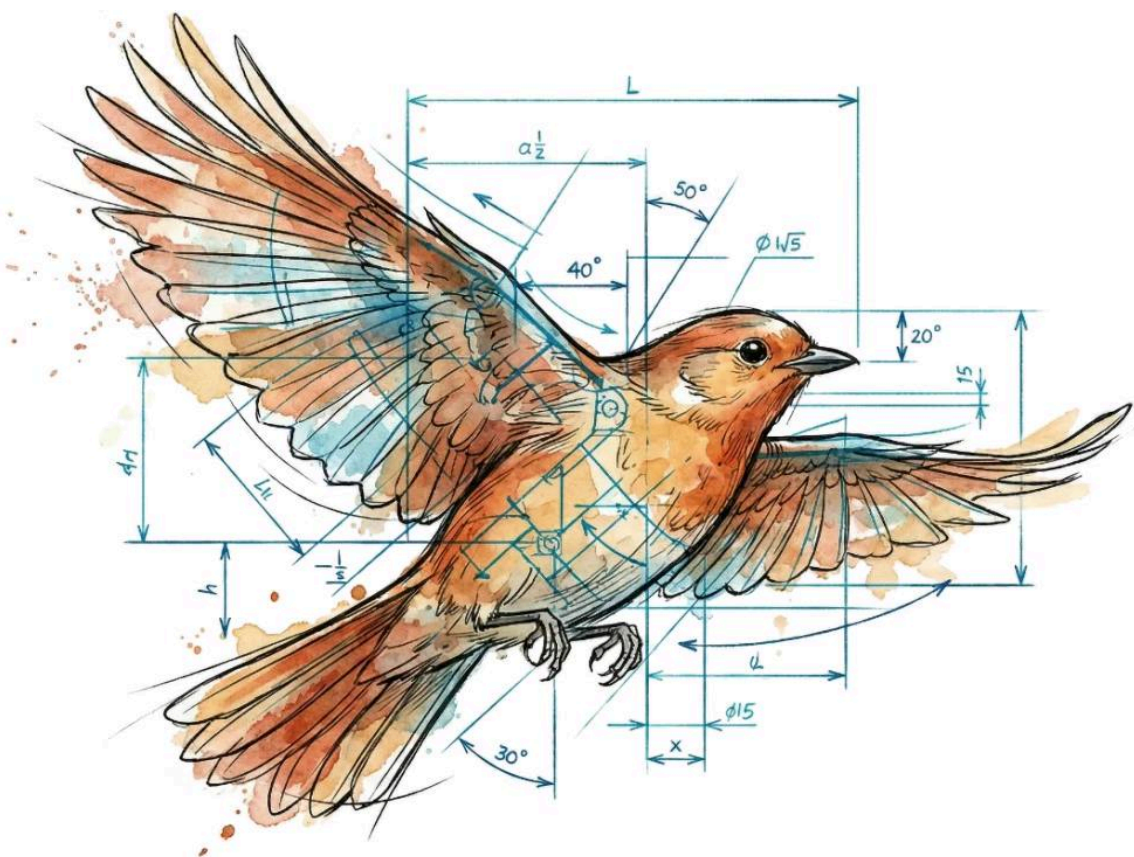
2.1 The Double Mismatch



The urgency of Colearning does not come from an idealistic desire for “nicer learning,” but from a systemic analysis of the status quo. Today's education systems suffer under a double mismatch: an **inner conflict with the human blueprint**, and an **outer, systemic conflict with the dynamics of today's world**. The result is stress, alienation, and rising costs. The system has to keep repairing what its own structure keeps producing.

Let's first look inward at the human blueprint. Then we'll look outward at a world that has changed.

2.2 Inner Mismatch: Learning Against Our Own Nature



Our Nervous System Says No

Learning is like breathing. We need to stop treating it as an activity you can switch on and off. Learning isn't a skill that first has to be "installed" in us – it's a life-sustaining function we master from the start. Humans learn all the time. We can't not learn.

During **99% of our developmental history**, this "breathing" followed a natural rhythm: people didn't learn isolated in closed rooms, but in mixed-age groups, right in the midst of life. They learned through attentive observation, imitation, and genuine participation.

Our brain still expects these conditions today. Our nervous system is wired for **belonging, autonomy, and agency** – and inseparably linked to that is our biological **play instinct**. Free play isn't "just fun" or a break from "real learning." It's the evolutionary core mechanism through which humans have always rehearsed risks, negotiated social rules, and built emotional stability.

Many learning settings today work **against our biology**: isolation from real life, rigid scheduling, suppression of play, replacing free exploration with instruction, age segregation, just-in-case knowledge, and constant evaluation. No wonder so many people are diagnosed with learning or attention disorders. Often they're simply showing a **healthy reaction to an unhealthy environment**.



Colearning flips the logic: **we don't treat the people, we treat the environment.** We resolve the inner mismatch by creating learning spaces that fit the human blueprint.



Further Reading & Sources

- **Christoph Schmitt:** *Please Let Them Learn. Thank You.* (Blog post on learnflow.city from 23.12.2018).
- **Ryan & Deci (2000):** *Self-Determination Theory* (The psychological basic needs: belonging/relatedness, autonomy, competence).
- **Peter Gray:** *Free to Learn* (Evolutionary perspective: Why our genetic heritage requires free play and age-mixing and how schools often work against this).
- **Remo Largo:** *Schülerjahre* (The "Fit Principle": The child is not wrong, the environment often doesn't match the child's unique development).
- **Gerald Hüther:** *Rescue Play!* (Neurobiological foundations of why the brain needs freedom, not training).

2.3 Outer Mismatch: From the Blue to the Red World

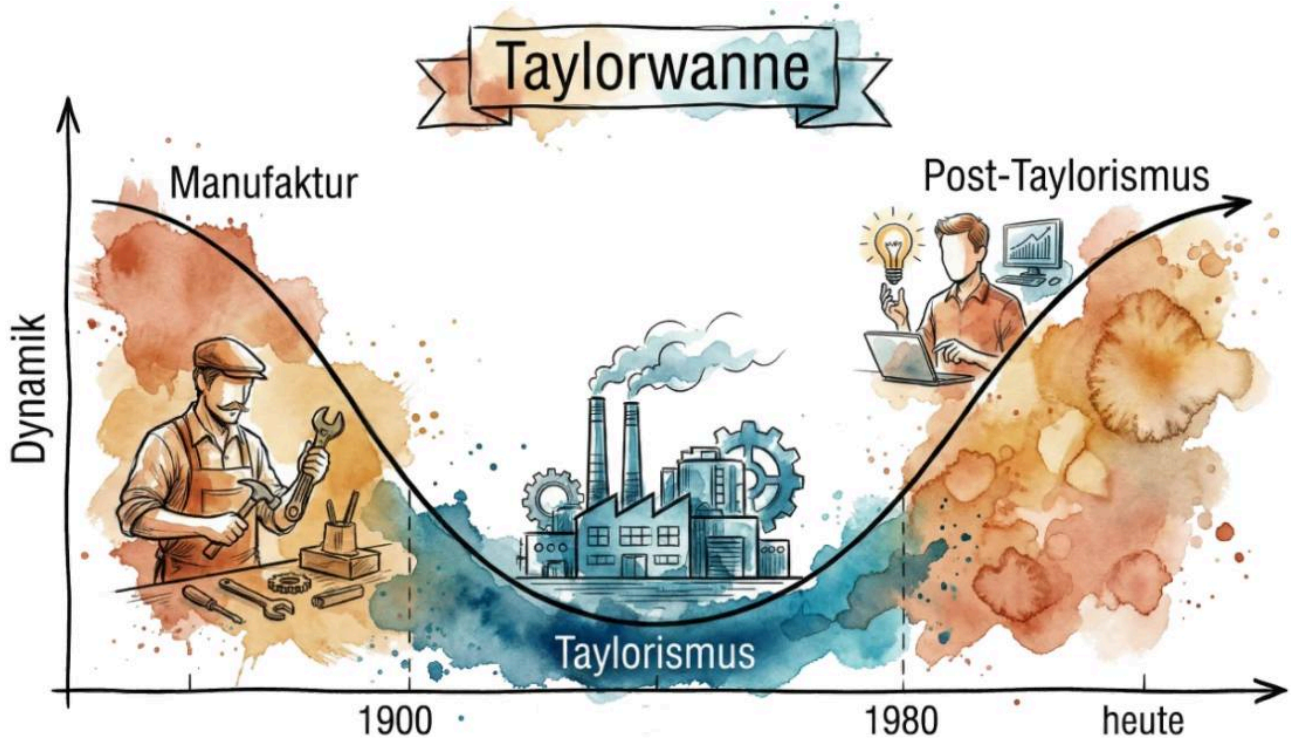


The Rules of the Game Have Changed

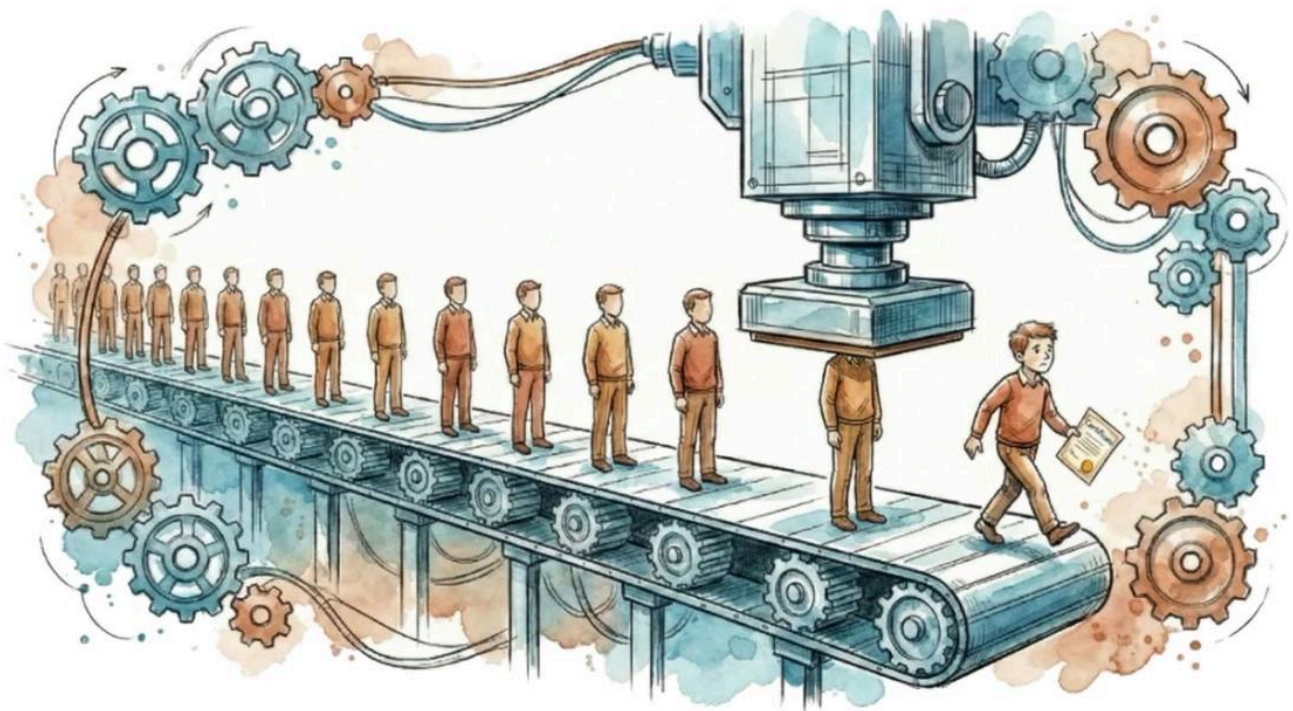
The inner mismatch isn't new – it has been part of the industrial model for about 200 years. For a long time, however, it was masked by a high external fit: the system delivered exactly the standardized behaviors an industrial economy demanded.

The education system was built for a so-called “**blue world**.” It was the era of industrial stability and predictability. To understand this world, we must examine its architectural core: **Taylorism**.

The Old Logic (Taylorism)



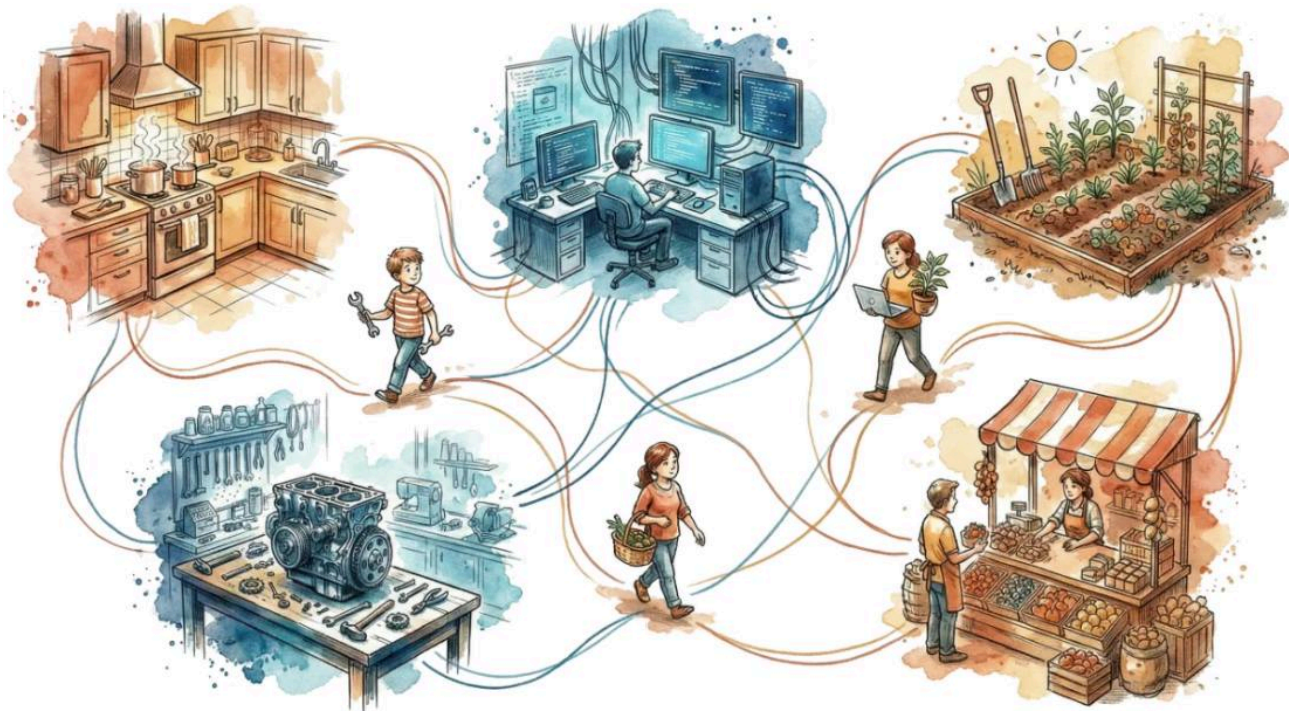
Frederick Winslow Taylor revolutionized industry around 1900 with "Scientific Management." His goal was maximum efficiency in mass production. His method was radical: the strict **separation of thinking** (planning/management) **and doing** (execution/workers). Complex craft processes were broken down into tiny, standardized steps that almost anyone could perform without much prior training. **The person at the machine didn't need to be creative or solve problems; they needed to function reliably.**



The factory's winning formula became the blueprint for education: students as raw material, the curriculum as assembly line, exams as quality control. It was about efficiency and repeatability. The goal was to produce a **normed human** – someone who follows instructions and functions smoothly in hierarchical structures. The inner mismatch (unfreedom, alienation) was masked by external promises (security, career, stability).

This arrangement still shapes education today, but under changed conditions it's becoming a **problem for everyone involved:** it overwhelms, makes people sick, renders them powerless, and grinds them down. So we try to patch and modernize the model without noticing that the model itself is outdated.

The New World



We now mostly live in a **"red world"**: volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA). Markets, technologies like AI, and geopolitical conditions change far faster than standardized curricula. Here, a fundamental law of systems theory applies (Ashby's Law): **Only variety can master variety**. The old logic fails because it replaces diversity and creativity with control and conformity. This makes people lose exactly the capabilities they need in a complex world.

In the red world, rigid just-in-case knowledge becomes a burden. The only viable strategy is **"just-in-time" learning**: accessing knowledge at the moment of need.

Colearning – through *self-learning in community* and its decentralized structure – cultivates the capabilities needed to respond to change (**dynamic robustness**). It replaces a central plan with an adaptive network that can respond to unpredictable challenges. At the same time, Colearners develop high adaptability and agency.

System Comparison – Education and Learning in the Blue World vs. the Red World

Dimension	Industrial Education (Blue World)	Colearning (Red World)
Goal	Standardization & Norm Fulfillment	Dynamic Robustness & Resilience
Knowledge Form	Just-in-Case (Stockpile Knowledge)	Just-in-Time (On-Demand Knowledge)
Structure	Hierarchical	Networked
Error Culture	Error Avoidance & Punishment	Errors as Data Points & Learning Opportunities
Social Form	Homogeneous Age-Grouped Classes	Heterogeneous, Mixed-Age Teams
Control	Push Principle (Curriculum Pushes)	Pull Principle (Interest and Need Pull)
Economy	Certificates & Grades	Reputation & Artifacts



Further Reading & Sources

To deepen the systemic backgrounds of these topics, we recommend the following concepts and authors:

- **Gerhard Wohland:** *Thinking Tools for High Performers*. (Introduction of the terms "dynamic robustness" and the distinction between blue/static and red/dynamic worlds, Taylor Basin).
- **Marco Jakob:** *School in the Taylor Basin*. (Transfer of the economic model of the Taylor Basin to education).
- **Ivan Illich:** *Deschooling Society*. (Classic critique of the institutionalization of learning and plea for self-determined educational networks).
- **W. Ross Ashby:** *Introduction to Cybernetics*. (The "Law of Requisite Variety," which explains why only variety can meet a complex environment).
- **Hartmut Rosa:** *Acceleration and Resonance*. (Sociological analysis of modern time dynamics and the search for vital ways of relating to the world).
- **Nassim Nicholas Taleb:** *Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder*. (About systems that benefit from volatility and disorder – a core principle of the "Hunt" in Colearning).
- **Barbara Rogoff:** *The Cultural Nature of Human Development*. (Scientific foundation for learning through observation and genuine participation/LOPI).
- **Stefan Bauschard:** *Education Disrupted: Teaching and Learning in An AI World* (Examination of radical AI acceleration challenging traditional educational paths and demanding a reorientation toward volatile job markets and craft resilience).
- **Christoph Schmitt:** *Expedition, Not Safari. When School Development Becomes a Shared Departure*. (Blog post on learnflow.city from 15.07.2025).

3. Foundation

How Humans Have Always Learned



The answer to the diagnosis is a step back to move forward: learning as part of life, by observing and pitching in. This chapter lays the foundations – LOPI, futurability, civic resilience and robustness of purpose.

3.1 Back to the Future of Learning



This chapter is the answer to the diagnosis: If today's system simultaneously works against our human blueprint and no longer fits a dynamic world, what resolves this internal and external mismatch?

The solution lies in an apparent paradox: **We go back to become future-ready.** We uncover a robust, deeply human learning pattern that was covered over in industrialized contexts: **Learning as an inseparable part of life** – in community, on real tasks, with growing responsibility.

This is not a romanticization of the past and not an escape from the modern world. On the contrary: we transfer humanity's most fundamental biological operating system into our high-tech, highly fragmented present – right into a world shaped by Artificial Intelligence, global interconnectedness, and conflicting life models. The goal is a society sustained by **civic resilience** (capable of action externally) and **robustness of purpose** (stable internally).

3.2 LOPI: Observing & Pitching In



Learning is Living

Before learning became its own system, it was simply part of life. People didn't learn **in order to live later** – they learned **because they were living**. They grew into what was happening around them.

Learning research calls this original pattern **LOPI** (Learning by Observing and Pitching In). Humans learn by **watching closely** and **contributing meaningfully**: not as a simulation, but as a contribution to a real activity.

- **Observing**: Instead of being passively instructed, learners actively scan their surroundings. They perceive processes, movements, tones of voice, and priorities, essentially “stealing” know-how through precise observation.
- **Pitching In**: Learners don't stop at watching; they step in and make themselves useful. The driver isn't a grade, but the desire to be a valuable part of the community.

With this type of learning, we defuse the two tensions from the previous chapter:

- **Inner Mismatch**: By embedding learning back into everyday life and community, the brain no longer has to fight against its environment. The stress of artificial testing situations gives way to the deep satisfaction of being effective. Curiosity is no longer perceived as a disturbance, but as an engine. We heal the rift between who we are and how we learn.
- **Outer Mismatch**: Hunter-gatherers lived in a highly uncertain and dynamic environment. Their survival strategy was not rigid planning, but agile networking and decentralized autonomy. LOPI is a learning that is adaptable and constantly calibrates itself against real problems (instead of a curriculum). Thus, it handles complexity and dynamics far better.

LOPI is thus both at once: humanly coherent and future-ready.



Scientific Evidence

Empirically, this approach holds up: research on cognitive load and expertise shows that in complex environments (VUCA), knowledge can't simply be stockpiled “just in case.” Much in learning and motivation research suggests that learning in real contexts drastically improves

transfer, while motivation research (Self-Determination Theory) confirms that agency and social belonging are among the strongest drivers of sustained skill growth. LOPI is thus not a pedagogical choice, but the neurobiological answer to the complexity of the present and future.



Colearning is LOPI for the 21st Century

Colearning is LOPI applied to the 21st century: an environment where observing is natural, and pitching in is possible and welcome at any age.

But this biological foundation is only half the battle. When we bring this ancient learning pattern into a world full of AI and algorithms, something new emerges that we urgently need: **Futurability**.

Further Reading & Sources

- **Barbara Rogoff:** *The Cultural Nature of Human Development* (LOPI as a learning principle, scientific basis for learning through observing and pitching in).
- **Sheina Lew-Levy et al.:** *Research on Learning in Hunter-Gatherer Cultures* (Contribution, autonomy, knowledge transfer)
- **Peter Gray:** *Free to Learn* (Evolutionary foundations of play and learning).
- **Noa Lavi:** *Hunter-Gatherer Childhoods* (Research on autonomy of children in hunter-gatherer cultures).
- **Jean Lave & Etienne Wenger:** *Situated Learning* (Legitimate Peripheral Participation as a bridging concept)

3.3 Futurability & Heutagogy



The Bridge to the New Era

It may sound like a contradiction: we reactivate humanity's most primordial biological learning pattern ([LOPI](#)), while the world outside is being remapped by Artificial Intelligence, algorithms, and global interconnectedness. Is turning back toward our most fundamental human needs a romantic retreat? An escape from complexity?

The opposite is true.

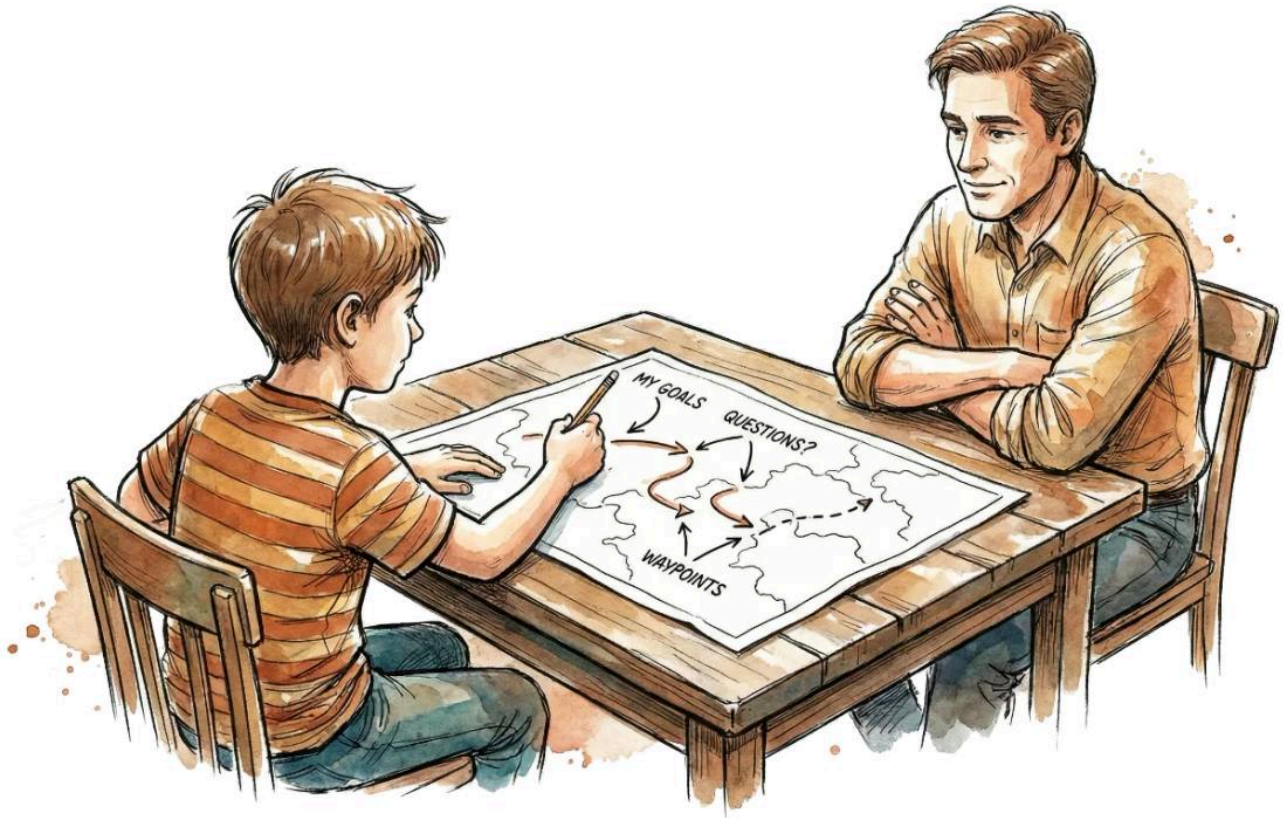
We do not use these archetypes out of nostalgia, but because they are **the most effective operating system for an unpredictable future**. We call this **Futurability** – the ability not to suffer the future as fate, but to shape it humanly, as humans. Here, the Colearning Framework aligns precisely with the findings of modern futures research: **The more technological the world becomes, the more human our competencies must be.**

Human Digitality



We live in an era of *Human Digitality*. That means: We use technology, but we don't let it use us. In Colearning, AI is not a substitute for thinking – it's our digital accomplice. When we tackle real, complex tasks (the LOPI sense of “pitching in”), we use neural networks and generative AI to solve problems that would overwhelm any one person. But direction, ethics, and the question of purpose (“What are we doing this for?”) stay deeply human. We don't train machine operators; we grow people who can lead technology, rather than be algorithmically managed by it.

Heutagogy: Taking the Wheel Yourself



The old industrial model was **pedagogy** – the instruction of those not yet autonomous. The future demands **heutagogy** – radically self-determined learning. In Colearning, this is the default. We are not preparing for a working world where one waits for orders. We train directly inside the world, for an economy where people create meaning, identify problems, and solve them autonomously. Those who have learned to curate their own learning path are less startled by change.

Playfulness: The Seriousness of Play



Finally, we break with a fatal lie of the industrial age: the separation of “serious life” and “play.” Innovation and resilience emerge where people dare to experiment without knowing the outcome. Whether we design a business model, cook for a group, or start a social initiative – we do it in the mode of playfulness: try, fail, learn, try again. Only those who can play can lose without breaking.

From Futurability to Resilience

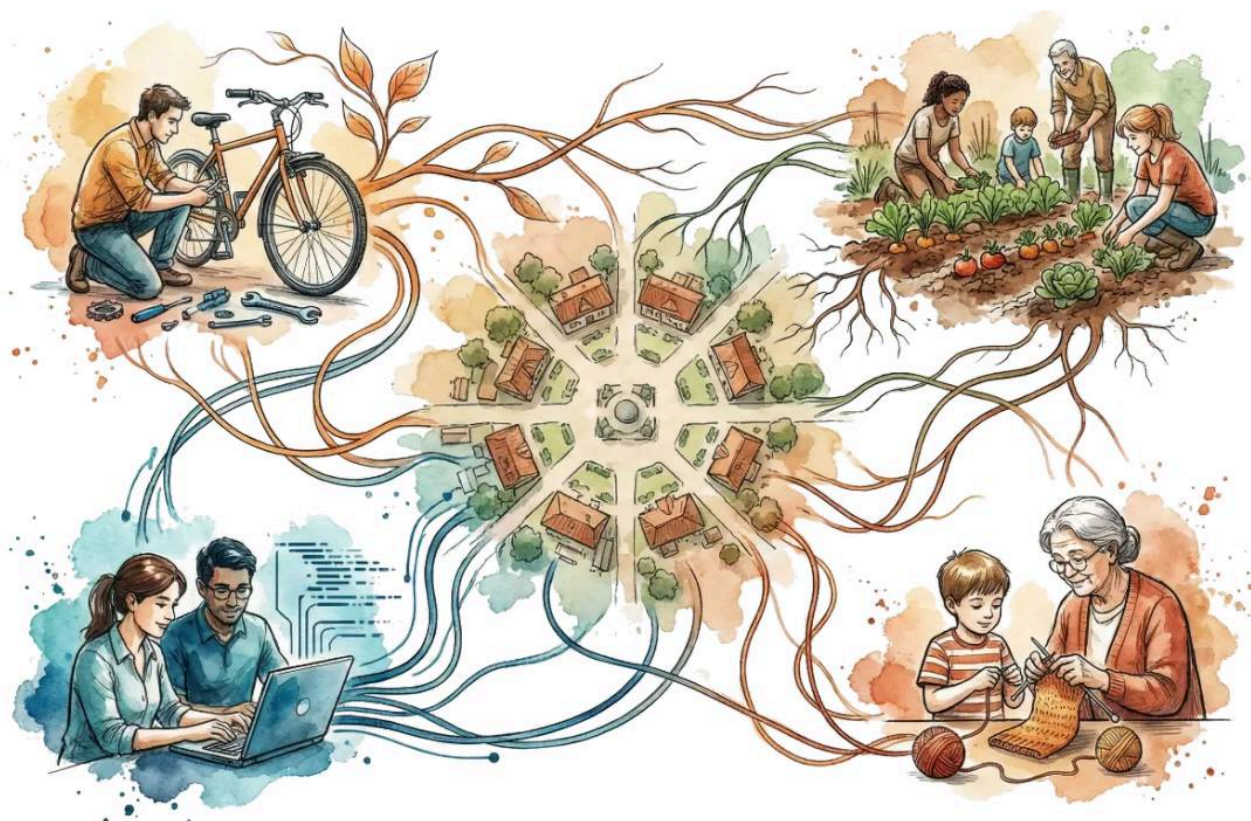
This Futurability, the combination of high-tech competence and deep human anchoring, is the prerequisite for the next step. Only those who are internally steady and technologically mature can keep acting when the systems around us wobble. That takes us straight to the question of collective safety: **Civic Resilience**.



Further Reading & Sources

- **The Future:Project:** *Future Guide Bildung* (Concepts on Human Digitality, Mindshift Revolution, and Playfulness).
- **Inner Development Goals (IDGs):** *Transformational Skills for Sustainable Development* (Framework for inner growth goals as a complement to the SDGs).
- **Jane McGonigal:** *Reality is Broken / Superbetter* (Why games make us more resilient and how we can transfer game design to real life).
- **Lisa Marie Blaschke:** *Heutagogy and Lifelong Learning* (The concept of self-determined learning as a response to complexity).

3.4 Civic Resilience



Colearning as the Cultural Backup of the Community

When we allow learning in the middle of life, more than just individual knowledge emerges. **Civic resilience** emerges – the ability of a community to deal with difficult situations and crises.

In a time of unstable global systems, Colearning functions as an essential social immune system (or as a social and cognitive operating system). It builds the civic resilience that steps in where industrial infrastructures fail by empowering people to remain autonomous and capable of collective action through local knowledge and craftsmanship.

This is specifically about physical and local independence:

- **Repair & Crafts:** Maintaining and repairing things instead of throwing them away (Circular Economy).
- **Provision:** Growing, processing, cooking, and distributing food locally.
- **Tech Sovereignty:** Understanding and controlling digital tools instead of passive consumer dependency.
- **Care & Culture:** Moderating conflicts, providing care, building community.

Through Colearning, neighborhoods become modern villages of knowledge. **Children and young people** are not passive not-yet-adults in a holding pattern, but **active co-creators, co-providers, and cultural backups**. Learning and contributing concerns everyone. **Adults and**

seniors find new roles as masters and mentors. They, too, pitch in on local value creation and keep learning continuously. The principle "**Access before Efficiency**" allows people of all ages to join in at any time.



So the circle closes: **because we learn in ways that correspond to our nature, we become capable of mastering the complexity of our time.** We do not train consumers, but people who shape their environment effectively.

Resilience can't be crammed in once the shock has already arrived. It has to be lived beforehand – as a daily routine. That's why Colearning isn't a pedagogical niche, but central to the safety and quality of life of the whole community.

Colearning is social cohesion in action. When people work together, share, and care for each other across generations, more than competence emerges: **Trust – the real foundation of civic resilience.** Values aren't preached; they're practiced: in cooperation, conflict, repairing, cooking, deciding, and making things right again. In that friction, people grow – through encounters with themselves, with others, and with the challenge of discovering and shaping their surroundings. Democratic practice is a core part of this: the ability to hold differences, integrate perspectives, and make decisions that can carry.



Further Reading & Sources

- **Marco Jakob:** *Back to the Future of Learning* (Concept: Children as cultural backup, Ballenberg Principle, AI as tool).
- **Ivan Illich:** *Tools for Conviviality / Deschooling Society* (Convivial tools, learning networks, convivial places).
- **Sheina Lew-Levy et al.:** *Research on Hunter-Gatherer Cultures* (Children as co-providers and knowledge repositories).
- **Aladin El-Mafaalani et al.:** *Children, Minorities Without Protection* (Critique of the "pedagogical special environment").
- **Nassim Nicholas Taleb:** *Antifragile* (Systems that become stronger through stress – a characteristic of the "Hunt" in Colearning).
- **Elinor Ostrom** (Commons logic as a bridge to local value creation).

3.5 Robustness of Purpose



From Why to What For

[Civic resilience](#) builds the net that carries us on the outside. **Robustness of Purpose** is what carries people on the inside so they don't just use the net, but help weave it. This doesn't mean "always being strong," but **staying oriented**: through transitions, learning phases, new beginnings, and moments when roles shift and old labels fall away.

Because our blueprint seeks not only security, but also significance – and participation in something larger. Robustness of Purpose isn't a private matter. It's a cultural technique. People who find their place tend to be easier in relationships, braver in action, and more generous in giving. Communities with widespread robustness of purpose have a special quality: they feel like a field that holds you, even when individuals stumble or a crisis hits.

Colearning trains the ability not only to search for meaning, but to **create** it. The question “Why am I here?” can stay big. Colearning doesn't answer it as dogma. But Colearning offers a bridge that holds in everyday life: the **What For**.

- **What for** do I get up in the morning?
- **What for** is it worth learning, practicing, persisting?
- **What for** do I need this community – and what for does it need me?

The What For isn't smaller than the Why. It's the form in which **meaning becomes actionable**: as contribution, as service, as work, as care, as idea, as project.

Calling Through Impact



In Colearning, calling is demystified. It isn't “the one perfect job.” It's what calls you because you notice: Here I'm needed. Here I can grow. Here I can contribute without losing myself.

Meaning often arises not in brooding, but in resonance:

- I do something real, create something beautiful.
- It affects others or helps someone.
- I am seen.
- I grow.

So meaning isn't assigned – it's cultivated, like a garden: through care, repetition, and honest sharing of success and failure.

Who Am I in the Whole?



In many industrialized biographies, identity sticks to title, status, and function. Colearning invites you to take off that armor for a moment and show up as a human with questions.

And here Colearning also touches the spiritual dimension – quietly, but genuinely: as the experience of being part of a greater whole. As lived belonging: to the community, to the chain of generations, to the spiritual and physical world we co-create.

Meaning Emerges in Rhythm

With this, the **foundation is complete**: [LOPI](#) gives us the learning pattern. [Futurability](#) gives us future-readiness. [Civic resilience](#) gives us capability for action on the outside. Robustness of Purpose gives us resilience on the inside.

How this culture is built in practice is shown next by the [Rhythm of Tribe, Hunt, and Campfire](#).



Further Reading & Sources

- **Viktor Frankl:** *Man's Search for Meaning* (Meaning as a carrying force).
- **Aaron Antonovsky:** *Salutogenesis / Sense of Coherence* (Meaningfulness, manageability, comprehensibility).
- **Ryan & Deci:** *Self-Determination Theory: Autonomy, Competence/Effectiveness, Relatedness* (psychological foundation).
- **Inner Development Goals (IDGs):** *Being, Relating, Acting*

4. Rhythm

Tribe, Hunt, and Campfire

How do we organise learning in everyday life? In three zones that form a daily rhythm: Tribe, Hunt and Campfire.

4.1 The Heartbeat



We have seen that people learn best by observing and pitching in (LOPI). But how do we organize this in today's world?

In Colearning, we use a model that maps the flow of life and learning into **three zones**:

1. **The Tribe (Being & Safety):** "I am seen." The foundation is belonging and psychological safety. Without this ground, no one dares to step out of cover. Here we recharge, here we find our role.
2. **The Hunt (Doing & Responsibility):** "I am needed." This is where "pitching in" happens. We simulate nothing. We work on real projects with real risk. Learning here is the inevitable consequence of doing.
3. **The Campfire (Understanding & Distilling):** "I pass it on." We don't hoard knowledge. We return, reflect on our experiences, and share them as commons with the community.

The Heartbeat: These zones are not a linear program to work through. They form a daily rhythm. Colearning is healthy when this movement flows: We observe (Tribe), we set out (Hunt), we return (Campfire), we rest (Tribe).

4.2 Tribe: Being & Safety



✦ Core statement: “I am seen.”

Before we can perform, we must be allowed to be. The Tribe is the social ground of learning. At its core, it's about the deep need for **belonging**. Those who feel safe and secure in the Tribe have the courage to make mistakes and try new things.

Community: The Foundation of Resonance

It's about **community**, about **seeing and being perceived**. We use the greeting of the Na'vi: “Oel ngati kameie” – I see you. This means more than a glance; it is a recognition and appreciation of the other in their wholeness. Self-learning is a shy animal: It only comes when it's safe, and only stays when it experiences resonance.

Rhythms & Rituals

Culture emerges through what we do regularly. Rhythms are the invisible infrastructure that provides safety when external constraints fall away. They give togetherness structure without constraining individual freedom.

A healthy Tribe cultivates simple but powerful rituals: check-ins, breaks, games, and meals. Shared meals are humanity's oldest community-building ritual; they break down hierarchies and create space for informal exchange.



Typical Tools in the Tribe

- **The Space:** We design the [Colearning Space](#) so that encounter is inevitable (e.g., through central coffee machines or open zones), but retreat remains possible. The architecture itself must signal "Tribe."
- **Mentoring:** Mentoring often begins in the Tribe. It is the safe harbor where personal orientation takes place ("Where do I stand?") before setting out on the Hunt.

Anti-Patterns: When the Tribe Ails

For the Tribe to remain a productive ground and not end up in social dead ends, we need regular "culture checks."

Anti-Pattern	Description	Check / Remedy
Cuddle Club	It's very cozy, everyone loves each other, but nobody leaves the comfort zone or takes real responsibility.	Check: Are there tangible results weekly? Action: Share results, e.g., in " Treasure Sharing ."
Exclusive Circle	A tight-knit group dominates; newcomers remain eternal spectators.	Check: Do newcomers have an active role after 2 weeks? Action: Buddy system for newcomers.
Harmony Compulsion	Conflicts are swept under the rug ("Good Vibes only"); tensions poison the atmosphere underground.	Check: Are there containers explicitly for tensions? Action: Regular retrospectives for "elephants in the room."



Further Reading & Sources

- **Baumeister & Leary** (1995): *The Need to Belong*.
- **Ryan & Deci** (2000): *Self-Determination Theory* (Relatedness).
- **Amy Edmondson** (1999): *Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior*.
- **James Cameron** (2009): *Avatar* (Na'vi with the concept of "I see you").
- **Caspar Henderson**: *A New Map of Wonders* (On the power of rituals).

4.3 Hunt: Doing & Responsibility



✦ Core statement: “I am needed.”

The Hunt is the **heart of competence development**. During the Hunt, we leave the protected space of the Tribe and expose ourselves to reality. We simulate nothing. We work on real challenges, with real risk and real results.

We don't distinguish between **work and play**. The Hunt is “serious play” (Deep Play). Whether a child builds a dam for hours or an adult opens a painting business: Both are in a state of highest concentration. Both take risks. Both want to achieve a result.

Learning is the inevitable consequence of doing.

Reality as Feedback

In artificial learning environments, mistakes are an abstract evaluation. In the Hunt, failure is a broken dam, an unsatisfied customer, or oversalted food. This feedback from reality is immediate and incorruptible. The Hunt produces two things:

- **Bounty** (success, yield, benefit) and
- **Learning Treasures** (insights from succeeding and failing).

Both are essential to becoming sovereign shapers. We don't learn here “just in case,” but because the situation demands it (just-in-time).



The End of the Backpack Metaphor: We must say goodbye to the idea that we can pack a “backpack full of knowledge” for children for life's journey. Knowledge is not provisions to be stored. In a digital world, the backpack is empty, because knowledge only emerges at the moment of application – as action, as networking, as access to information exactly when you need it. Those who try to carry supplies for an unpredictable journey only become slow and inflexible. We travel with light luggage and the ability to provide for ourselves on site.

Access before Efficiency

In the professional world, optimization often focuses on efficiency and maximum speed. This excludes learners. In Colearning, we reverse the logic: **We consciously invest in accessibility.** We don't pay experts to “play teacher,” but to design their real work so that it becomes accessible to others. They make their processes and considerations visible and slow their pace where necessary so others can connect.

Legitimate Eavesdropping & Incidental Learning

Important actions and conversations often happen behind closed doors. In Colearning, we use the principle of **legitimate eavesdropping**: We conduct professional discussions, crisis conversations, or negotiations in open zones, and we enable “being nearby” when professionals are at work. This isn't always possible, or sometimes too dangerous. But when possible, we open the doors.

Learners pick up technical terms, tones, procedures, and problem-solving strategies from the air without being directly taught. This **incidental learning** transfers the implicit knowledge of a profession – that which cannot be explained, only experienced.

AI as Digital Accomplice

On the Hunt, AI is an active accomplice. It takes on roles currently missing in the project team: It's a sparring partner for strategies, supports rapid prototyping of code, or generates drafts. Colearners learn a new cultural technique: Leading AI so that it creates real value for the team.

The goal is not to outsource thinking, but to expand one's own capacity for action in the real situation. In an era with AI agents at the push of a button, confrontation with complex problems becomes an important resource for learning. There's little of that in standardized learning settings, and fortunately an abundance out there on the Hunt or during play in the real, wild world.



Typical Tools in the Hunt

- **Learning Enterprise:** This is our most important vehicle for the Hunt. We found real companies or start projects to link learning with economic reality. The Learning Enterprise provides the context for "seriousness."
- **AI as Accomplice:** We use generative AI tools directly in the work process to expand our capacity for action (see [Futurability](#)).

Anti-Patterns: When the Hunt Becomes an End in Itself

The Hunt needs real friction, but not destructive pressure.

Anti-Pattern	Description	Check / Remedy
Sandbox	We only play "business." The money is play money and failure has no real consequences.	Check: Are there real consequences for failure? Action: Win external customers ("Accomplices") who make no allowances for "protected spaces."
Order Factory	Economic pressure becomes too great. Only efficiency and output count. Questions and learning are perceived as "disruptions" to operations.	Check: Are there weekly time windows for reflection? Does play happen? Action: Slow the pace and renegotiate the principle "Access before Efficiency."
Hero Mode	An experienced person (usually founders) takes over everything and secretly rescues projects before they fail.	Check: Are projects allowed to "crash against the wall" sometimes? Action: Practice consciously withholding rescue so learners can run their own projects.



Further Reading & Sources

- **Christoph Schmitt:** *Knowledge Doesn't Carry. And We Should Stop Lugging It.* (Blog post on learnflow.city from 29.07.2025).
- **Peter Gray:** *Free to Learn* (The evolutionary perspective on why hunter-gatherers made no distinction between work and play, and why play is the serious case of learning for children).
- **Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi:** *Flow* (On the state of highest concentration and complete absorption in doing, which connects work and play).
- **Diane Ackerman:** *Deep Play* (An investigation of the human ability to connect playfully and intensely with the world – as a source of creativity and meaning).
- **Nassim Nicholas Taleb:** *Antifragile & Skin in the Game* (The concept that systems and people only learn when they take real risks and feel the consequences of their actions).
- **Marco Jakob:** *School in the Taylor Basin.*
- **Gerhard Wohland:** *Thinking Tools for High Performers* (Dynamic Robustness).
- **Barbara Rogoff:** *The Cultural Nature of Human Development* (Scientific foundation for LOPI – Learning by Observing and Pitching In – and how children learn through genuine participation).
- **Paradise & Rogoff:** *Side by Side: Learning by Observing and Pitching In* (Origins of the concept in hunter-gatherer cultures; they describe how in Peru or Mexico, adults deliberately tell stories when children are seemingly asleep or present).
- **Jean Lave & Etienne Wenger:** *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (The concept of learning by simply being present at the edge of a community).
- **Ethan Mollick:** *Co-Intelligence* (How artificial intelligence can be used as an active partner and accomplice in the work process).
- **Marc Watkins:** *What Agency Means in the Era of Automation* (A plea for human agency in a world of frictionless automation).
- **Stefan Bauschard:** *Education Disrupted: Teaching and Learning in An AI World* (Examination of radical AI acceleration challenging traditional educational paths and demanding reorientation toward volatile job markets and craft resilience).
- **Nassim Nicholas Taleb:** *Antifragile* (Skin in the Game and the necessity of stressors).

4.4 Campfire: Understanding & Distilling



✦ Core statement: “I pass it on.”

At the Campfire, the often wild, chaotic experience of the Hunt becomes something that holds: Patterns, stories, tools. We are social beings – therefore learning is never just private. Those who learn change the Tribe: by making visible what worked and what hurt (Bounty and Learning Treasures), by naming, asking, organizing, documenting, and passing on. Thus the circle closes: From individual effort comes collective competence – a commons that makes the next Hunt easier, braver, and wiser.

Pull Principle: Theory on Demand

Learning along a curriculum is often learning in advance – hoping to need it later (just-in-case). We reverse this: **At the Campfire, we learn “just-in-time.”** A problem in the Hunt creates an emotional and cognitive pull: We need a solution *now*. Theory here is not an end in itself, but the missing tool to save the project. Knowledge absorbed at the moment of necessity anchors deeper because it's immediately applied.

But at the Campfire, you never learn alone. When someone “pulls” a solution, those sitting around benefit through **legitimate eavesdropping** (Legitimate Peripheral Participation). Knowledge diffuses incidentally into the group – like warmth that reaches everyone, even those who didn't just add wood. Thus the individual solution becomes a collective treasure.

What we live digitally and on-site in Colearning today, Ivan Illich already sketched in 1971 as “Learning Webs.” Instead of a curriculum that makes everyone the same, he called for networks that connect learners with the resources (things, peers, mentors) they need right now for their current challenge. The Campfire is where this matching happens.

AI as Reflector

At the Campfire, AI changes its role. Where it was an accomplice during the Hunt, here it becomes reflector and archivist. It helps structure chaotic experiences, recognize patterns, and prepare reports for the Digital Garden. It doesn't replace thinking, but accelerates the distillation of experience into insight.



Typical Tools at the Campfire

- **Treasure Sharing:** This is the central community ritual. We come together physically to share yields (money, products) and insights (mistakes, learnings). Without Treasure Sharing, the Hunt remains private; with it, it becomes a commons.
- **Digital Garden:** What is told at the Campfire fades. In the Digital Garden, we write it down. We make learning permanently visible (“Show your work”) so others can benefit from it asynchronously.
- **Mentoring:** Mentoring also plays a role here, this time retrospectively: “What did you learn from that situation?”

Anti-Patterns: When the Fire Goes Out

Knowledge must flow. The Campfire must not become a place of vanity or information overload.

Anti-Pattern	Description	Check / Remedy
Bulimic Learning	Knowledge is crammed in “just-in-case” (lectures, workshops) without an acute application in the Hunt.	Check: What do we need this for this week? Action: Cut input if no pull moment exists.
Showcase Without Substance	Only highlights are presented (“Instagram reality”). Mistakes are hidden.	Check: Do we also show difficulties, dead ends, and defeats? Action: Model sharing failures. Introduce playful elements like “Failure of the Month.”
Bounty as Possession	Insights, (financial) yields, or project results are hoarded or privatized.	Check: Is the bounty (or at least parts of it) shared with the community (transfer to the commons)? Action: Apply transparency ritual (e.g., “lifting the veil”).



Further Reading & Sources

- **Ivan Illich:** *Deschooling Society* (Concept of "Learning Webs": Self-directed access to things, skills, and like-minded people).
- **Gerhard Wohland:** *Thinking Tools for High Performers* (Knowledge vs. Capability).
- **Jean Lave & Etienne Wenger:** *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (The concept of learning by simply being present at the edge of a community).
- **Taiichi Ohno:** *Toyota Production System* (Origin of the Pull Principle).

5. Toolbox

Instruments & Rituals



This chapter is the reference for concrete formats, instruments, and recurring rituals that make Colearning sustainable in everyday life.

5.1 Colearning Spaces



Convivial Places of Learning

The physical space fosters encounter. In our vision, we speak of **convivial places**. Here we draw on a term from Ivan Illich. Illich distinguishes between manipulative institutions (like traditional schools), which turn people into passive consumers of curricula, and **convivial places**.

A convivial place of learning is an open workshop, a library, a marketplace in a neighborhood center, or a park: The place doesn't prescribe what you should do. It empowers you.

A good Colearning Space is characterized by three properties:

- **Accessibility:** No barriers through certificates or age. The place is open to everyone who wants to do and learn something ("Access before Efficiency").
- **Configurability:** The space is not statically finished. The Colearners can change it, move furniture, paint walls, use tools. We are not inmates of the space, but its shapers. Everywhere there are materials that have no fixed function, but invite play and creativity (affordance).
- **Encounters:** The architecture fosters community: It creates permeable zones that make random encounters and exchange between generations and fields of activity inevitable.

Such places become **greenhouses for autonomy**, inviting the step from consumption to one's own creation.

Fertile Ground: Docking Instead of Building New



We don't have to build new "cathedrals of learning." An isolated Colearning Space that must produce everything itself has a hard time. But our cities and villages are full of places where life is already pulsing – we call this **fertile ground**.

Colearning's strategy is not *isolation*, but **docking**. We go to places that produce "waste heat." By "waste heat," we mean real life, real work, and real problems that are happening there anyway. Colearning inserts itself incidentally into these processes: We use the existing infrastructure, machines, and experts to enable learning as a *byproduct*.

Learning Landscape Map: Opening Up Villages and Cities



The path begins with what we already have in the environment. It's best to embark on a curious **treasure hunt** ("Asset Mapping") with very different people of all ages:

Where is something interesting happening? Where are curiosities and peculiarities? Where is there waste heat? Where is there unused infrastructure? Where are gaps, where is the local community missing something? Where are exciting people you could accompany in their profession ("Observing")? Where could we contribute something ("Pitching in")?

The architect Danish Kurani calls this process the identification of "**Community Assets.**" For him, physical space is only effective when it activates the already existing, often hidden treasures – talents, tools, or unused spaces – of a neighborhood, rather than ignoring them.

Ideal docking points for this treasure hunt are:

- **Coworking Spaces:** Here the infrastructure and working world are already on site. We can bring in radical age-mixing and conscious learning.
- **Museums & Libraries:** Places of knowledge that can transform from archives to living third places.
- **Multigenerational Houses & Clubs:** Here experience and time await the curiosity of youth. Existing social networks that can be enlivened through new learning formats.
- **SMEs & Workshops:** Real machines and real professionals are the best learning environment.
- **Market in the Village or Neighborhood:** At the market, you can offer something yourself or find people you'd like to learn from.

From this emerge **Learning Landscape Maps** (a term coined in the “Urban Villages” initiative). We create a physical or digital map that makes these places visible and connects them. Thus the village or neighborhood transforms from a collection of isolated buildings into a coherent ecosystem where learning is possible everywhere.

We bring Colearning to all possible and unexpected places. Colearning shouldn't create separate islands, but connect worlds and open doors for a new culture of living, working, and learning.



Further Reading & Sources

- **Ivan Illich:** *Tools for Conviviality* (on the difference between industrial and convivial tools).
- **Ivan Illich:** *Deschooling Society* (Critique of the institutionalization of learning).
- **Urban Villages:** *Learning Landscape Maps* (Concept for visualizing learning places in the neighborhood).
- **Danish Kurani:** *Community-Driven Design and the Concept of Asset Mapping* (on designing learning spaces that activate local resources instead of isolating them; cf. kurani.us).
- **Loris Malaguzzi:** The concept of “space as the third educator” from Reggio pedagogy.
- **James J. Gibson:** *The Theory of Affordances* (Environmental psychology).

5.2 Mentoring



Mentoring is a partnership among equals. Mentors serve as benevolent mirrors. They raise questions that were still missing in one's own inner dialogue and help filter the essential signals from the noise of everyday life.

To prevent mentoring sessions from fading into non-commitment, we use a rhythmic structure. Usually weekly, no longer than 30 minutes, and following five steps:

1. Gratitude

What have you experienced?

What are you grateful *for*?

Whom are you grateful *for*? → Can you express this gratitude?

2. Challenges

What are you currently working on?

Where are you challenged?

→ What do you want to tackle yourself?

→ Who could support you from your or my network?

→ What would you like to look at more deeply with me?

3. Inspiration

Who has inspired you since our last meeting?

Where could you be present and learn in the near future? → Access to network

Mentors can also bring in inspiring elements (story, text, poem, music, art, etc.). Both say what it triggers in them.

4. Visibility

What of your journey have you made visible since last time for yourself and for others (text/image/audio/video)?

What would you like to learn and make visible next?

5. Passing On

What could you pass on recently?

What would you like to apply or pass on next (learnings, things from mentoring, or quite practical help to others)?

Closing + optional extension

Review notes and summarize.

Is there something you'd like to look at more deeply?

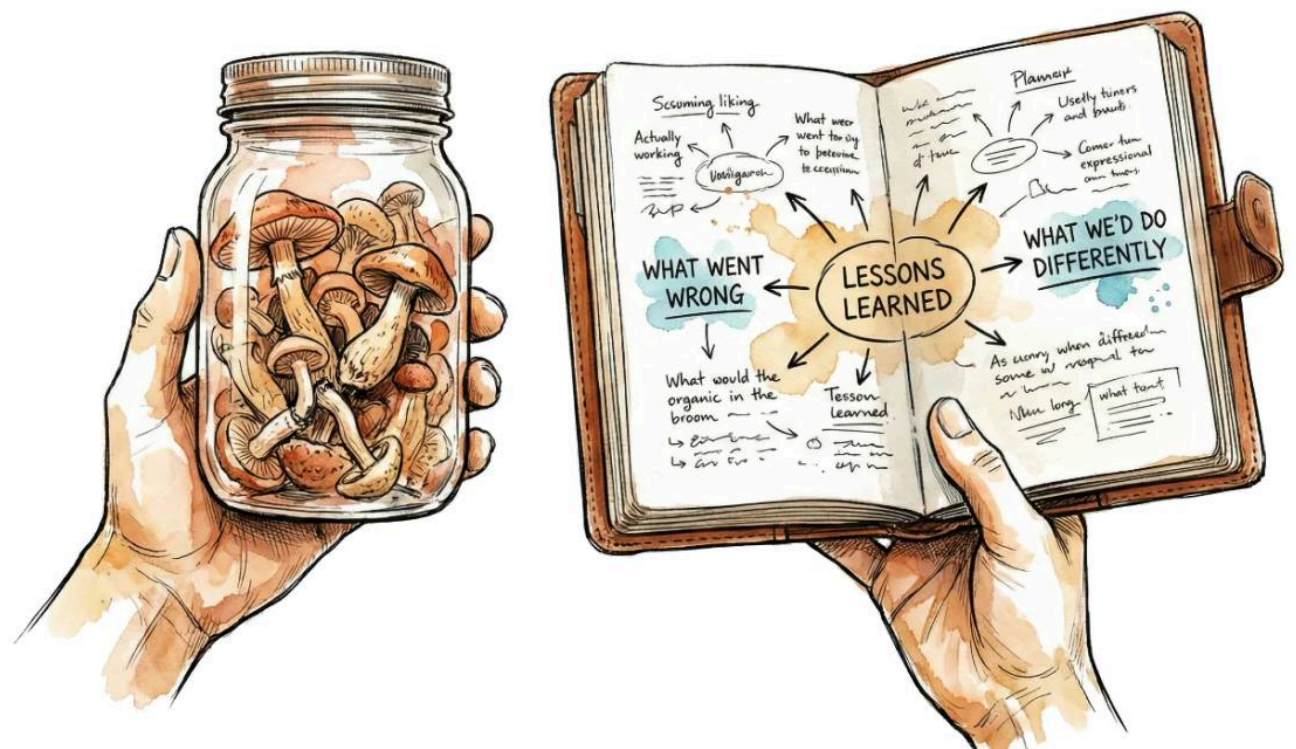
→ Either add time now or arrange an additional meeting

→ Schedule the next mentoring appointment

5.3 Treasure Sharing



Treasure Sharing is a regular ritual to **make learning and results visible**. The community comes together to share **Bounty and Learning Treasures**.



Bounty includes everything won during the Hunt: These are not only insights and experiences, but also **actual yields, financial gains, and tangible results** (e.g., revenues from sales, finished infrastructure, or prototypes). In Treasure Sharing, this bounty is not only presented but made

available to the community. While sharing the material yields nourishes the Tribe, sharing the insights strengthens it intellectually.

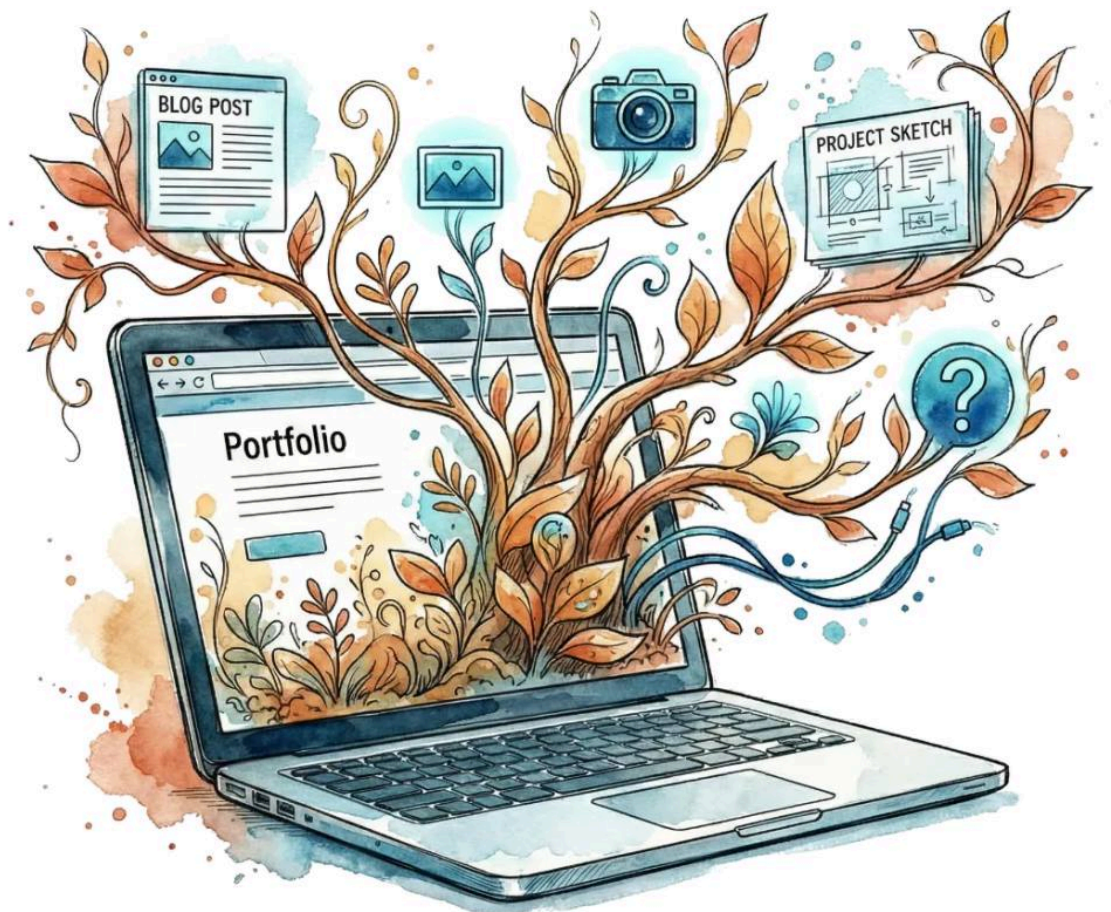
Learning Treasures also include the mistakes, detours, and failed attempts. By applauding failure just as we applaud success, we normalize mistakes. Treasure Sharing transforms individual experiences into collective stories from which everyone can benefit – it is the **festival of effectiveness**.



Further Reading & Sources

- **Brené Brown:** *Daring Greatly* (Vulnerability as strength).

5.4 Digital Garden



Agency and mastery are not proven by grades in Colearning, but witnessed through **visibility** ("Show your work"). We cultivate a "Digital Garden" as a portfolio for this (e.g., with a  [Lilo.page](https://lilo.page)).

In the digital garden, thoughts and projects develop, are linked and revised. This "garden" is public. It serves as external storage for one's own journey through life and learning – more valuable than any formal paper certificate.

Traditional certificates often say little about the actual path to a solution. The “Digital Garden” makes this process visible and offers valuable orientation in a technological world to authentically show one's own creative power and personality. Furthermore, making visible promotes relationships, connection points, and collaboration in the community (“seeing and being perceived”).



Further Reading & Sources

- [Lilo.page](#): Portfolio and platform to make learning visible
- **Austin Kleon**: *Show Your Work!*.
- **Maggie Appleton**: *A Brief History & Ethos of the Digital Garden* (has compiled the history of “Digital Gardens” and made it accessible to many)
- **Elinor Ostrom**: *Governing the Commons*.

5.5 Learning Enterprise



On the Hunt for Double Gain

As strong as the [Tribe](#) is, Colearning doesn't exist in a vacuum. We all need resources to live: a place to learn, tools, food on the table.

But Colearning doesn't want to depend on donations or permanent subsidies. We want freedom, not external dependency. Our central vehicle for autonomy and skill acquisition is the **Learning Enterprise**.

Hunt: Learning Through Entrepreneurial Action

In the language of our Framework, the **Learning Enterprise** is the tool with which we leave the protected Tribe and go on the **Hunt**. "Hunt" here doesn't mean aggression, but real projects and real value for customers.

The market is an incorruptible feedback provider. This immediate resonance – the success of the bounty or the pain of failure – creates enormous learning intensity.

Of course, Learning Enterprises need business plans, often smaller or larger investments. Usually a mixed-age team with various skills makes sense. Around the team, accomplices and customers must be found. Often the knowledge of experts is tapped. Research, experiments, and prototypes are needed, frequent trying, failing, and trying again.

Bounty: The Double Gain

Unlike the classical enterprise, profit maximization for individuals is not the focus here. We optimize for a **double value**:

- **Entrepreneurial Gain:** We create real value for others – whether a product or service that is sold, traded, or given away. This gain secures the project's economic existence.
- **Learning Gain:** Simultaneously, the competence of all involved grows. In a Learning Enterprise, everyone – teenagers and adults alike – understands themselves as learners. They venture into new territory, acquire skills, and reflect on their progress together.

From Market Revenue to Community Resource

Economically, the **Learning Enterprise** fulfills a vital function: **It transforms market revenues into community resources**.

An **entrepreneurial gain** is not kept private but brought back to the Tribe as bounty, shared and celebrated. Of course, those directly involved in the Learning Enterprise receive an appropriate share of the success. But not only successes are celebrated; defeats and losses are equally cushioned and borne by the Tribe.

The **learning gain** is also shared: The learning growth is not only experienced individually but made visible (e.g., through blogs, portfolios, or **Treasure Sharing** meetings) and shared in Colearning, so that the entire Tribe's treasure of experience grows.

The Learning Entrepreneurs train entrepreneurship: developing an offer that **convinces customers** and **benefits the community**. A third criterion is added: **regenerative effect**. Products and services should be designed so that they strengthen cycles – through durability, repairability, reusability, and careful resource use – or at least don't contradict them. With joy in making – serious in responsibility, playful in learning.

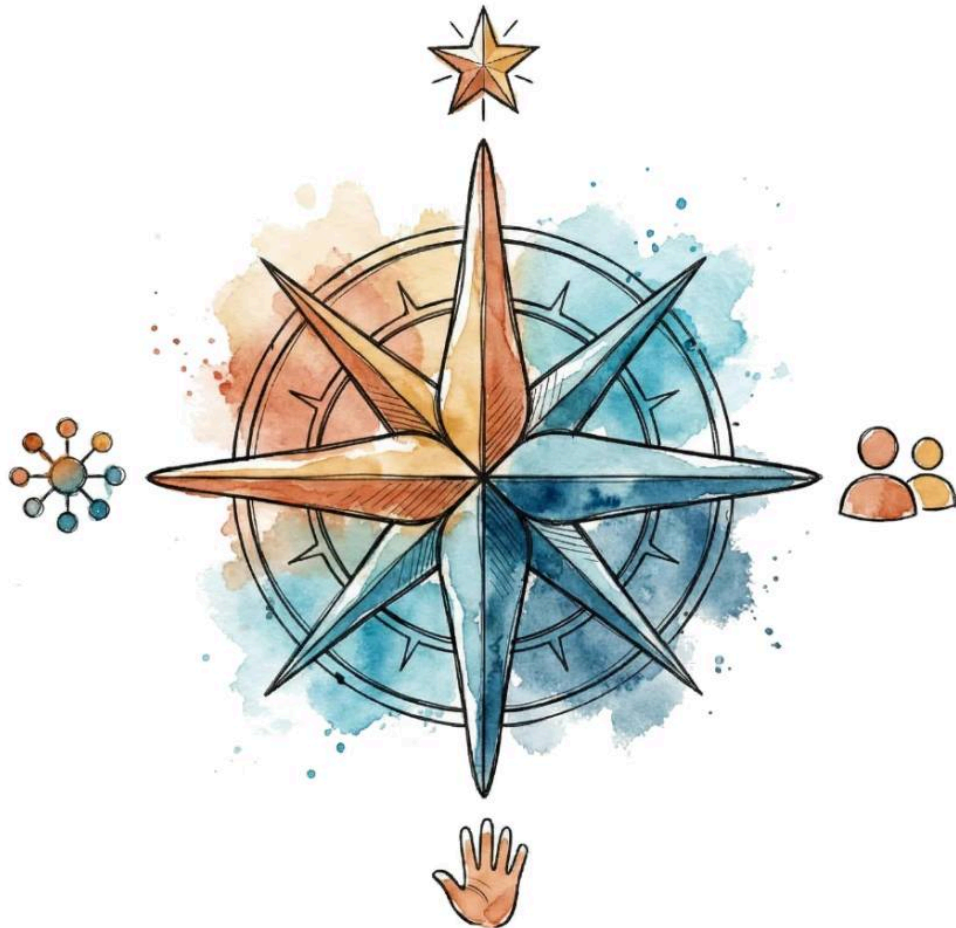


Further Reading & Sources

- **Marco Jakob:** *Learning Enterprise* (Development of the concept based on the [Mushroom Farm](#)).
- **Fredi Zumbunn:** *Learning Enterprise* (Development of the concept based on the Mushroom Farm).
- **Elinor Ostrom:** *What Grows When We Share* (Commons economy).
- **Christian Felber:** *Economy for the Common Good*.

6. Compass

Culture and Structure



Colearning doesn't work through rigid rules, but through a strong, shared culture. We replace control with principles and hierarchy with clear roles. This compass provides orientation and ensures that autonomy and community are not opposites, but mutually reinforcing.

6.1 Guiding Principles



The Mindset Behind Colearning

These principles are decision aids for everyday life. When we're uncertain, we look here:

1. **Community:** We create convivial places of encounter where learning happens right in the middle of life. The community, its diversity, and the environment are our actual curriculum.
2. **Learning is Living:** It is not an isolated preparation for later, but happens here and now, everywhere. We do not learn things to stockpile them ("Just-in-Case"), but rather when we need them for a real task ("Just-in-Time").
3. **Radical Autonomy:** We respect people of all ages as sovereign actors. We do not interfere uninvited (Non-Interference).
4. **Attentive Presence:** Autonomy does not mean being left alone. We are attentive, approachable to one another, and there when needed.
5. **Relationship before Evaluation:** Learning and taking risks require a safety net of trust. We do not judge the person, but provide resonance on the work itself.
6. **Access over Efficiency:** We consciously invest in accessibility. We make work processes visible and slow down the pace where necessary so that others can plug in and learn along.
7. **Incidental Learning:** Learning is a byproduct of work. The essential parts happen through observing, legitimate eavesdropping, and pitching in (LOPI).
8. **Impact as Feedback:** The outcome of an action is its own test. Does the product work? Does the food taste good?

9. **Meaning over System:** We orient ourselves towards vitality, people, and genuine needs.

10. **Passing it on (Commons):** Learning is never merely private. By making our bounty and learning treasures visible and sharing them, we create points of connection, spark resonance, and actively continue to build the community.

6.2 The New Role Models

In the industrial model, there are senders (teachers) and receivers (students). In Colearning, these binary hierarchies dissolve. But that doesn't mean everyone does the same thing.

We replace static positions with three dynamic roles. These are not fixed job titles, but attitudes that all of us – whether 6 or 96 years old – can adopt.

Learning Cultivator

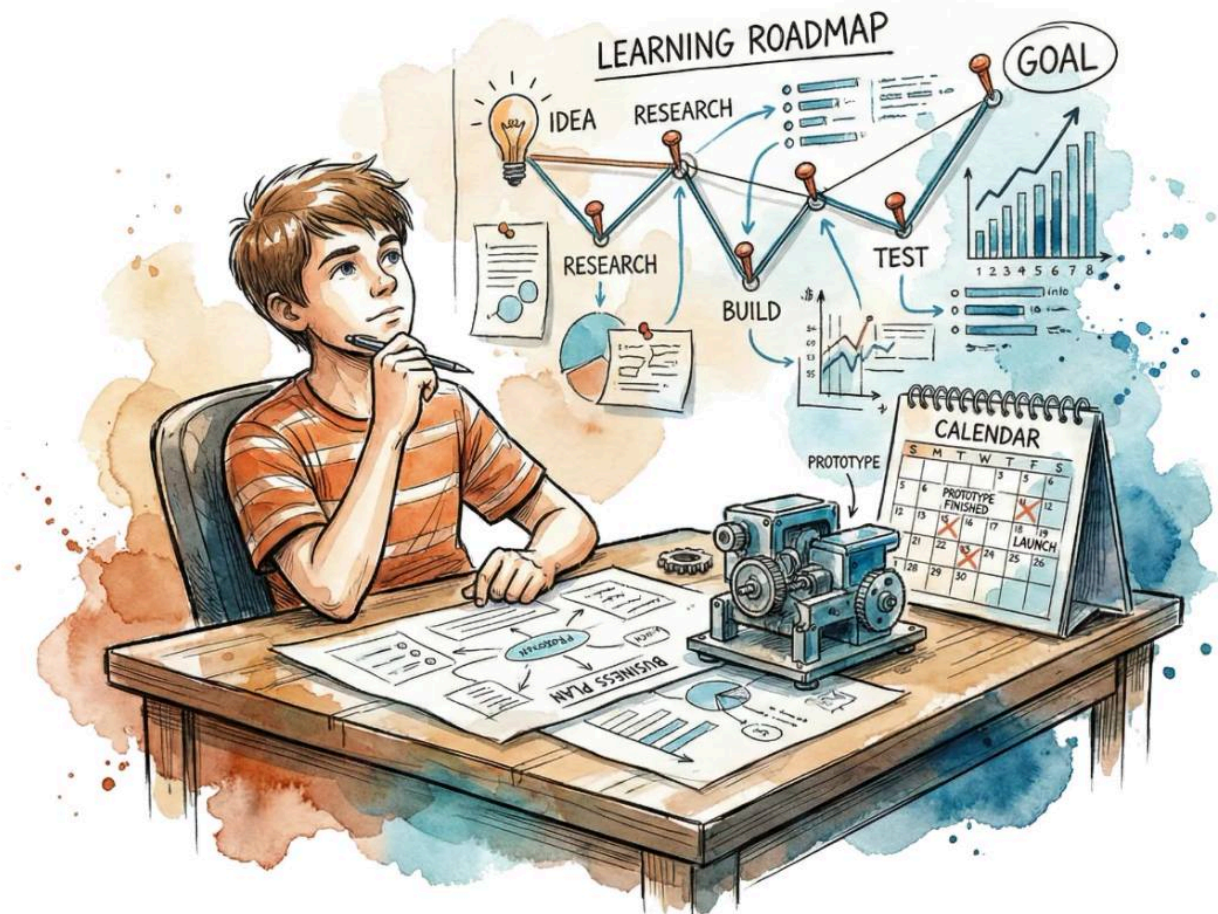


Learning Cultivators are **gardeners of curiosity**. They know that growth cannot be ordered. We can only prepare the ground for it. Their work is often invisible: They observe the energy in the room and recognize when someone is stuck.

- **Networking:** When questions arise, Cultivators open spaces for one's own exploration. Through clarifying questions, they strengthen initiative and create connections to new resources – to experts, tools, or projects where the answer becomes experienceable through one's own doing.
- **Guarding Culture:** They protect psychological safety and ensure that the flame of enthusiasm is not extinguished by evaluation or cynicism. They model that learning is an integral part of life.

- **Cultivating Resonance Spaces:** We value the depth and intensity of shared processes as a precious good. As Colearners, we take on a moderating or space-holding role when invited to do so by the community or individual participants. We understand emerging resistances or disruptions not as interruptions to be avoided, but as living learning occasions that invite us to widen perspectives and deepen our understanding of the situation together.
- **Meta-Learning:** They are experts in learning itself. They help others understand how they learn and support them in developing their own learning strategies.

Learning Entrepreneur



This is all of us. In Colearning, nobody is a passenger waiting for worksheets. As Learning Entrepreneurs, we take radical responsibility for our path. This archetype inseparably connects work and learning.

- **Bounty:** In every project, there are two currencies. The profit margin (the product, the money, the success) and the learning margin (the insight, the skill, the growth). Learning Entrepreneurs optimize for both.
- **From Consumption to Creation:** We don't ask: "What do I have to do?" but: "What problem do I want to solve?". We don't learn accounting for the exam, but so that our project becomes a success.
- **Visibility:** Learning Entrepreneurs don't document their journey for the drawer, but make it public in the "[Digital Garden](#)." On one hand for their own portfolio, and so that others can

connect and co-learn.

Accomplice



Accomplices are partners from life practice who contribute to the success of an endeavor with full personal responsibility ("Skin in the Game"). They bring in the resonance of application and meet us as like-minded people in the shared search for effective solutions:

- **Real Impact:** Accomplices are customers, clients, or local partners who really need our results.
- **Incorruptible Feedback:** Their feedback is validation through reality. Does the website work? Does the coffee taste good? Does the repair solve the problem? This feedback validates competence better than any grade because it has consequences in the real world.
- **Supporters:** Accomplices can also be people who support Colearning financially, ideologically, or with their skills.

6.3 Radical Autonomy



The Taboo of Interference

In original human communities, autonomy is not a privilege for adults, but a non-negotiable basic right for everyone. Even toddlers are treated as **sovereign actors** whose will one doesn't break. This means for our attitude:

- **Non-Interference:** It is considered intrusive to give another person – regardless of age – unsolicited instructions. We refrain from directing the will of others.
- **No Manipulation:** We regard people as “complete beings” who develop themselves. We don't manipulate them in a desired direction, but protect their space for unfolding.
- **Trust, Not Laissez-faire:** Radical autonomy is not neglect, but the highest form of respect. The message is not “I don't care about you,” but: “I trust you to find your way – and I'm here when you need me.”

The Path Out of Dependency

Since many people have been conditioned to instruction and obedience through the industrial school system, sudden freedom often triggers stress. Inclusion in Colearning means meeting people where they are and accompanying them into self-responsibility.

At the beginning, people receive more orientation through the community. The goal is “unlearning” trained helplessness. Through low barriers and permission to observe and pitch in, we enable safe docking until the muscle of autonomy is strong enough.



Further Reading & Sources

- **Noa Lavi:** Hunter-Gatherer Childhoods. (Research on radical autonomy in hunter-gatherer cultures).
- **Peter Gray:** Free to Learn. (The evolutionary necessity of giving children control over their play and learning).
- **Jean Briggs:** Inuit Morality Play. (How Inuit upbringing works without reprimand and interference).
- **William Stixrud & Ned Johnson:** The Self-Driven Child. (Neuropsychological evidence that autonomy – “Sense of Control” – is the strongest remedy against stress and releases intrinsic motivation).
- **Ivan Illich:** *Deschooling Society* (On regaining autonomy).

6.4 Self-Organization & Decisions



Organizing the Tribe and Distributing Responsibility

Colearning needs a structure that protects autonomy while guaranteeing agency and participation. We don't replace rigid hierarchies with chaos, but with decentralized self-organization. In doing so, we view our Tribe as a commons of knowledge, spaces, relationships, culture, and other resources. We nurture and manage this treasure together.

For the commons to thrive, we use Elinor Ostrom's design principles as guardrails:

1. **Clear Boundaries (Belonging):** We clarify belonging to the Tribe through onboarding rituals and membership models. Whoever is part of the Tribe bears co-responsibility for the common whole.
2. **Adaptation to Local Conditions:** Every Colearning is different. Rules are not dictated centrally but developed locally.
3. **Participation (We Make the Rules Ourselves):** Those affected by the rules can change them. We use **Sociocracy and consent decision-making** for this:
 - A decision is considered made when there is no serious, substantiated objection ("Good enough for now, safe enough to try").
 - This differs radically from majority decision (where minorities are outvoted) or from consensus (where one person can block everything).
4. **Monitoring (Social Visibility):** Visibility and transparency are central. Compliance with agreements is ensured by the community itself. Since we work and learn "incidentally," we see each other. Violations are noticed.
5. **Graduated Resonance (Conflict Culture):** When rules are violated, we respond early and with low threshold: perceive, address, clarify. When violations are repeated and serious, transparent, fair, and proportionate consequences apply. Conflicts are learning opportunities for us, not disruptions.

Democratic Co-Determination



We let ourselves be inspired by original human social forms: Hunter-gatherer bands were mostly egalitarian, without chiefs ruling over the group. Decisions concerning the tribe were not dictated "from above," but discussed together until a solution was found that everyone could support. Anthropologists report that in these circles, every voice had weight – men and women, and often

the children too. This participation of all is not a nostalgic ritual, but our operating system for effective cooperation: It ensures that no one is overlooked and that we find solutions together that actually work in everyday life and are supported by everyone.

In Colearning, we bring this principle into the modern era. Since we can't always discuss for days by the fire in a dynamic world, we use **modern tools like Sociocracy**. It preserves the spirit of direct participation: Every voice is heard, and decisions are made among equals. But instead of seeking the laborious consensus (everyone must agree), we ask for consent (does anyone have a serious objection that endangers the tribe's survival?). Thus we combine the wisdom of hunter-gatherers with the agency of modern organizations. As Peter Gray shows using the example of Sudbury Valley School, people learn responsibility not through obedience, but when their voice truly counts from the beginning.



Further Reading & Sources

- **Elinor Ostrom:** *Governing the Commons* (Logic of the commons).
- **James Priest / Bernhard Bockelbrink:** *Sociocracy 3.0* (Decision-making by consent).
- **Frederic Laloux:** *Reinventing Organizations* (Concepts of self-management and wholeness).
- **Peter Gray:** *Free to Learn*. (Why genuine democracy is the natural social form of learning).
- **Daniel Greenberg:** *Sudbury Valley School* (a new view of learning).

6.5 Minimum Standards



When Is It Colearning?

Colearning is not a rigid franchise. It may be colorful and look different everywhere, adapted to local conditions. But so that the term doesn't become an empty label, we orient ourselves by five minimum standards. Only when these are met do we speak of Colearning:

- 1. Genuine Age-Mixing (instead of segregation):** At least two generations work and learn actively in the same space. Different professions, cultures, and abilities meet. Adults are not supervisors or knowledge transmitters, but pursue their own work and immerse themselves in learning. Children and teenagers learn through their own projects and through [observing and pitching in](#).
- 2. Real Responsibility (instead of simulation):** There are projects ("[Hunt](#)") that have consequences in the real world – real money, real customers, real benefit. We replace learning

in advance ("Just-in-Case") with learning on demand ("Just-in-Time").

3. **Sharing Bounty and Learning Treasures (instead of hoarding):** Learning is documented and made visible ("[Campfire](#)"). We make **Bounty** (success, yield, benefit) and **Learning Treasures** (insights from success and failure) available to the community as a common good.
4. **Autonomy (instead of coercion):** The glue of the community is not attendance requirement, but free choice. We practice [radical Autonomy](#) and respect people of all ages as sovereign actors. The principle of non-interference applies: We don't manipulate, we invite.
5. **Reflective Community (instead of mere presence):** Colearning requires active reflection on one's own path ([Digital Garden](#), [mentoring](#)) and sociocratic participation in the organization. It is a "Community of Practice" where one doesn't just exist side by side, but grows together through exchange and visibility.

7. Economy

Gifting, Sharing & Learning Enterprises

Colearning needs an economic operating system of its own: gifting on the inside, market on the outside, regeneration instead of extraction. This chapter shows how learning becomes part of local value creation again.

7.1 New Economy of Learning



One of the most expensive inventions of the modern age was tearing learning out of its natural context. We have outsourced education into specialized pedagogical environments and replaced the real world there with simulations. To this day, this causes enormous costs for infrastructure, administration, and supervision. Moreover, this system requires a lot of energy for artificial motivation, for example in the form of grades. The higher the “red”, complex share in the world becomes, the more inefficient this model of segregation proves to be. An isolated system becomes more expensive with every degree of external complexity in order to maintain the illusion of control.

Colearning radically reverses this logic. We no longer ask: “Who pays for the supervision?”. Instead, our central question is: **“How do we design an environment in which supervision as a separate service becomes obsolete?”**. By bringing learning back into the center of society and everyday life, we solve the artificially created cost problem of separation.

For Colearning to thrive, we need a suitable **economic operating system**. The classical education system often works **extractively**: It draws time, attention, and curiosity away to deliver standardized output – similar to the classical economy, which transforms raw materials and energy into output.

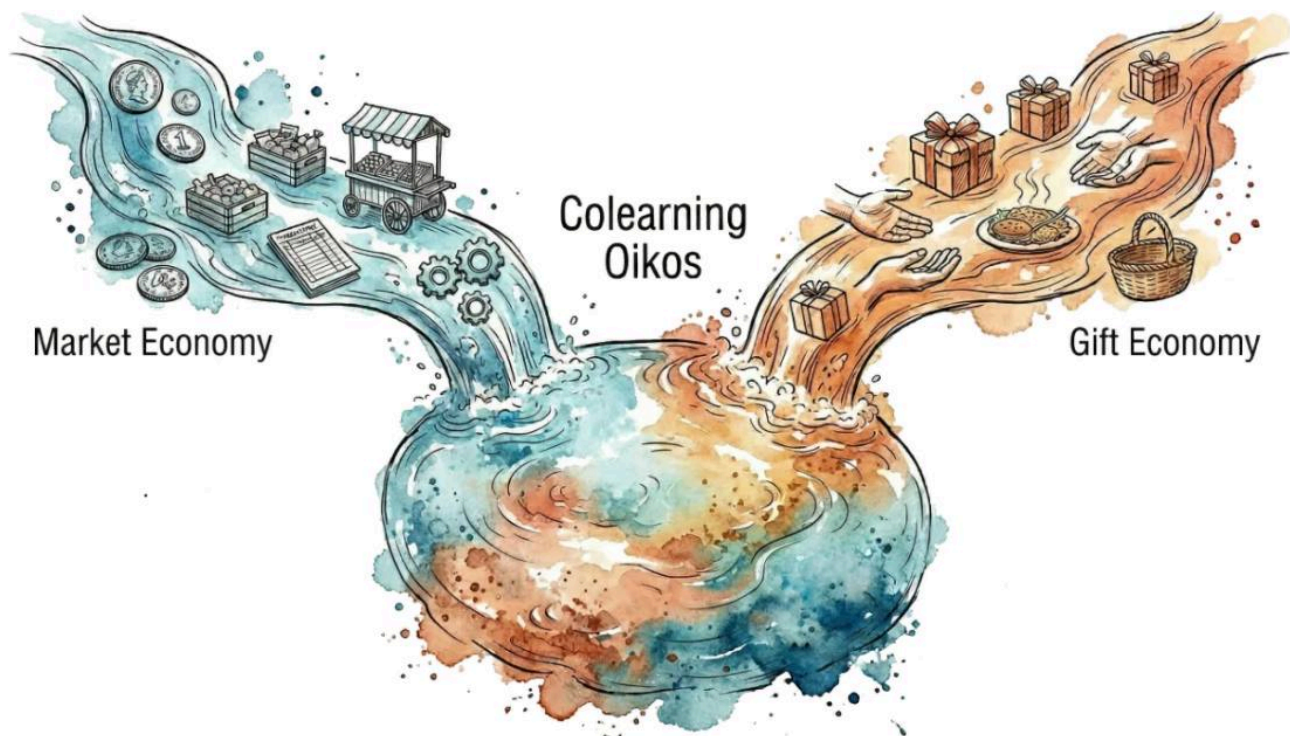
The Colearning economy, on the other hand, is based on **regeneration**. This means we want to leave systems and relationships more vibrant than we found them. A central lever for this is the **clever use of resources** that others consider “waste” or disruptive – be it the unused infrastructure in neighborhoods, the “waste heat” of real work processes, or supposedly unproductive free play. In this regenerative operating system, education transforms from an isolated cost factor into an integral component of local value creation.

Economic Anti-Patterns

A healthy Colearning economy must endure the tension between gift economy and market economy. If we blur these boundaries, either social sellout or financial ruin threatens.

Anti-Pattern	Description	Check / Remedy
Mercenary	Uses the Tribe's resources (spaces, tools, expertise, network), but privatizes the gains and gives nothing back.	Check: Does “Bounty” (money/knowledge/etc.) flow back? Action: Look at the Tribe's psychological safety, live the culture of sharing and giving, “lift the veil.”
Hobby Project	A project calls itself “Learning Enterprise,” but has no customers and only burns the Tribe's resources without market reality.	Check: Is there an external invoice that someone pays? Action: Provide “end-of-life assistance” for the project or transfer it and stop calling it “Learning Enterprise.”
Exploitation	Learning serves as a pretext for free labor, without those affected having a say or share in the success.	Check: Is radical autonomy preserved? Can those affected change the rules? Action: Participation according to Ostrom principles and transparent and fair sharing.
Speculator	A Learning Enterprise grows, but is ultimately sold for private gain (“Exit”).	Check: Clarify ownership structure. Is a sale for private advantage possible? Action: Anchor Steward Ownership (Asset Lock): The company belongs to itself.
Patriarch	Power and voting rights stick to people who are no longer operationally active (remote control).	Check: Do the active or the owning decide? Action: Anchor Steward Ownership (Self-Determination): Tie voting rights to active roles.

7.2 The Tribe as Oikos



❖ **Core statement: “I have enough.”**

To anchor this new, regenerative operating system in everyday life, we must clarify who is actually managing this economy. We have defined the **Tribe** as the social ground of learning, based on belonging and trust. Now we expand the view: A Tribe is more than a group that likes each other – it is a community of shared destiny that runs its economy together. It is an **Oikos**.

The term economy comes from the Greek *oikos* (house, household, community) and *nomos* (law, teaching). It is the teaching of careful management of the common house.

The modern market economy has forgotten that we inhabit a common house. We often act like strangers conducting mere transactions. In Colearning, we return to the original meaning. We view our community as an extended household. Money is like water or electricity: It must flow for the system to live, but nobody builds a house just to pump as much water as possible through the pipes.

We distinguish two logics of the Oikos, which we consciously balance:

- **In the Tribe (Inside), gift economy applies:** Knowledge, tools, and care are shared. We don't account for every helping hand. The principle of reciprocity applies: “I give because I am part of the Tribe and because I know that the Tribe will carry me tomorrow if I need help.”
- **On the Hunt (Outside), market economy applies:** The Tribe must survive. Therefore we leave the house to go on the “Hunt.” There, at the interface with the outside world, we act (not only, but also) in market-economic terms. We found **Learning Enterprises** and sell goods and

services. But the “Bounty” (the profit) flows back into the Tribe and strengthens its substance, instead of being privatized.

Security Through Sharing and Giving

Within the Tribe, security emerges not through individual accumulation of money or certificates, but through the dense web of mutual support. This approach connects to millennia-old traditions: In villages and tribal communities, surpluses were typically **passed on**, not sold. Anthropologists report that in such communities, goods circulate freely as gifts to strengthen social cohesion. Those who contribute and share gain respect, not those who hoard.

In Colearning, we don't measure success by the individual's bank balance, but by the **quality of our relationships** and by the **resilience and beauty of the shared living space**. A community that manages its own Oikos – that is capable of circulating food, energy, knowledge, and care locally – is incomparably more resilient in a volatile world (“Red World”) than a collection of isolated consumers (“antifragile”).

The Tribe gives us **psychological safety**. The Oikos of the Tribe gives us the **economic basis** (“I have enough”). Both belong inseparably together.



Further Reading & Sources

- **Robin Wall Kimmerer:** *The Serviceberry* (natural gift and exchange cycles).
- **David Graeber:** *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (Gift economies / debt logic).
- **Charles Eisenstein:** *Sacred Economics* (Return to values of gift economy).
- **Elinor Ostrom:** *What Grows When We Share* (Commons economy).
- **Marco Jakob:** *Insurance and Barn Raising of the Amish* (Security through community).

7.3 The Economy of the Incidental



Why education becomes cheaper when it happens in the midst of life.

Colearning radically reduces education costs because learning is no longer produced as an isolated product, but emerges as a byproduct of real activity. Instead of building a learning world, we dock onto the world.

We thus use the “waste heat of real life”: With every real activity (cooking, repairing, programming, selling, caring), knowledge, experience, and problem-solving competence arise. In the segregated world, this “waste heat” often dissipates behind closed doors.

Colearning plugs into these processes like a heat exchanger, thereby saving energy and costs:

- **Age-Mixing (instead of supervision):** In segregated age-grouped classes, paid supervision is needed. In a radically age-mixed community, the biological principle of allomothering (allo-parenting) kicks in: Older ones take responsibility for younger ones; knowledge and care flow organically in all directions. The need for professional entertainment and supervision decreases drastically the more mixed and stronger the community is.
- **Incidental Learning (instead of simulation):** In school, learning is the main product that must be laboriously produced with ever-greater effort. In Colearning, learning is an incidental byproduct of real activity. When we implement a project – whether cooking, repairing, or programming – learning happens along the way. We don't finance the simulation, but enable learning in reality.
- **Infrastructure Sharing (instead of learning factories):** We don't build monofunctional learning buildings. We dock onto places that already exist and where life is pulsing: workshops, offices, neighborhood centers, kitchens, coworking spaces. We use resources that often lie fallow, instead of building something isolated anew.

The Result: Traditional education systems become more expensive the higher the supervision ratio and the greater the mismatch to human nature and the complex world. Colearning becomes cheaper and more stable the denser and more diverse the relationships in the Tribe become. Colearning also doesn't suffer from the complexity of the world because it doesn't try to replicate the world, but goes into it and opens it up for learning.

And Colearning can also be categorized this way:

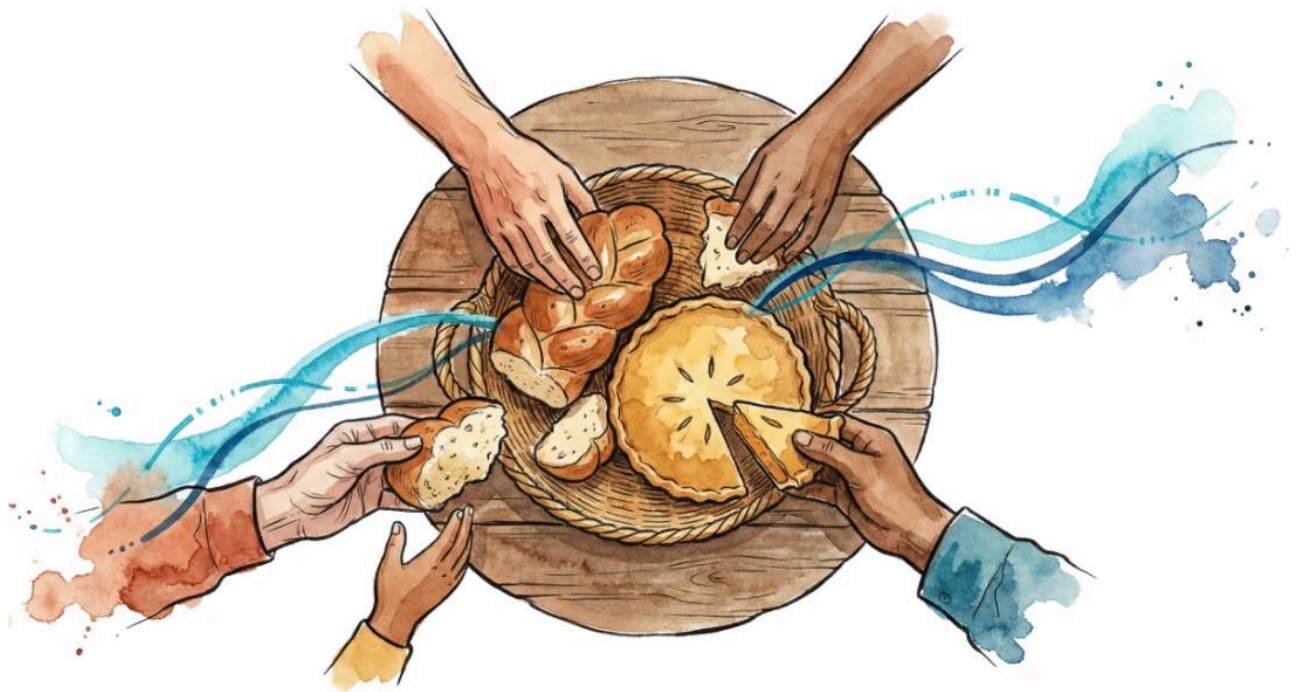
- **Extractive (The Exhaustion of the Self):** The subject views their talents as raw material that must be “mined” for degrees and careers. Learning feels like exploitation of one's own curiosity to meet expectations. In the end stands the certificate, but the inner enthusiasm is burned out.
- **Sustainable (Self-Assertion):** The subject learns resource-efficiently and tries to keep their own motivation stable. One learns only the minimum (“Just-in-Case”) to not lose connection, while protecting one's own energy for “real life” outside of education.
- **Regenerative (Resonance & Gift):** The subject understands their own learning as a contribution to the viability of the whole. By making visible their own “Bounty” and “Learning Treasures” ([Digital Garden](#), [Treasure Sharing](#)), they feed valuable insights back into the communal pool of experience. The subject grows *by* making the ecosystem (the Tribe) more fertile. Learning here is an act of generosity that multiplies the community's resources (knowledge, courage, inspiration) instead of just consuming them.



Further Reading & Sources

- **Ivan Illich:** *Deschooling Society* (Critique of the costs of institutionalization).
- **Sarah Blaffer Hrdy:** *Mothers and Others* (Concept of allomothering and cooperative breeding).
- **Jean Lave & Etienne Wenger:** *Situated Learning* (Learning as social practice, “Legitimate Peripheral Participation,” “Communities of Practice”).
- **Marco Jakob:** *School in the Taylor Basin* (Dynamic robustness / complexity).

7.4 Lifting the Veil



Fairness and Balance in Distributing the Bounty

When [Learning Enterprises](#) are financially successful ("making bounty"), the Tribe faces the difficult question: How do we distribute the money ("the bounty")? In a collaborative environment, success is never the result of an individual achievement. That a project succeeds is due to the atmosphere in the Space, the Tribe's network, the cleaned coffee machine, and the crucial knowledge someone just shared.

Fundamentally, the Tribe as [Oikos](#) has the task of ensuring everyone is provided for and can say: "I have enough."

However, "enough" is not a stable state. Participation in the Tribe and on the Hunt and the share of success must be repeatedly renegotiated and balanced. We use the sociocultural tool of the "Veil of Participation" for this.

Ritual: Lifting and Closing the Veil



1. **Lifting the Veil (Transparency):** At regular intervals (e.g., monthly or after project completion), we make finances radically transparent ("Open Books"). We sit at the Campfire and look together: Who contributed what? Who needs what? We negotiate the distribution openly. This is often uncomfortable, but it trains our economic maturity. We seek fairness, knowing that perfect justice doesn't exist. It's worth listening to experienced and wise people in dealing with work, money, and fairness.
2. **Closing the Veil (Focus):** Once an agreement is found (e.g., a distribution formula, wages, or reserves for the Tribe), we consciously cover the topic of money again. In everyday life, we should focus on the work, the passion, and the meaning, not on the monetary value of every hand movement. We protect our "flow" from constant quantification – whether through money or other numbers.

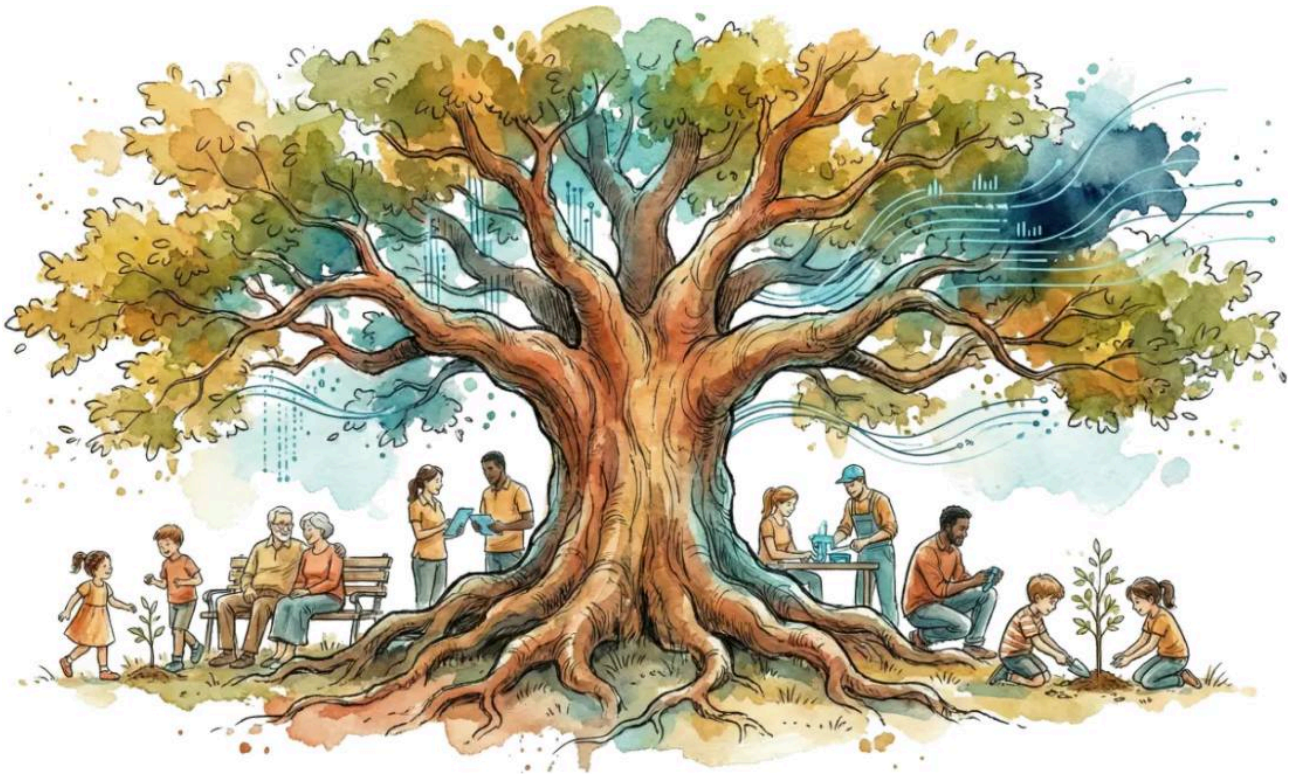
This ritual regulates the **flow of funds in everyday life**. But what happens when a small project suddenly becomes a **growing enterprise**? Then it's important that the intended values are anchored in the **ownership of the legal form** from the very beginning.



Further Reading & Sources

- **John Rawls:** *Veil of Ignorance* (in Rawls: thought experiment for choosing justice principles in advance; here: as metaphor for hard-to-attribute contributions in ongoing collaboration)
- **Dark Horse Innovation:** *Thank God it's Monday!* (Veil of Ignorance as principle for fair compensation rules despite role/contribution uncertainty).
- **Marco Jakob:** *The Veil of Participation* (Adaptation of Rawls' Veil of Ignorance and the Dark Horse compensation debate).

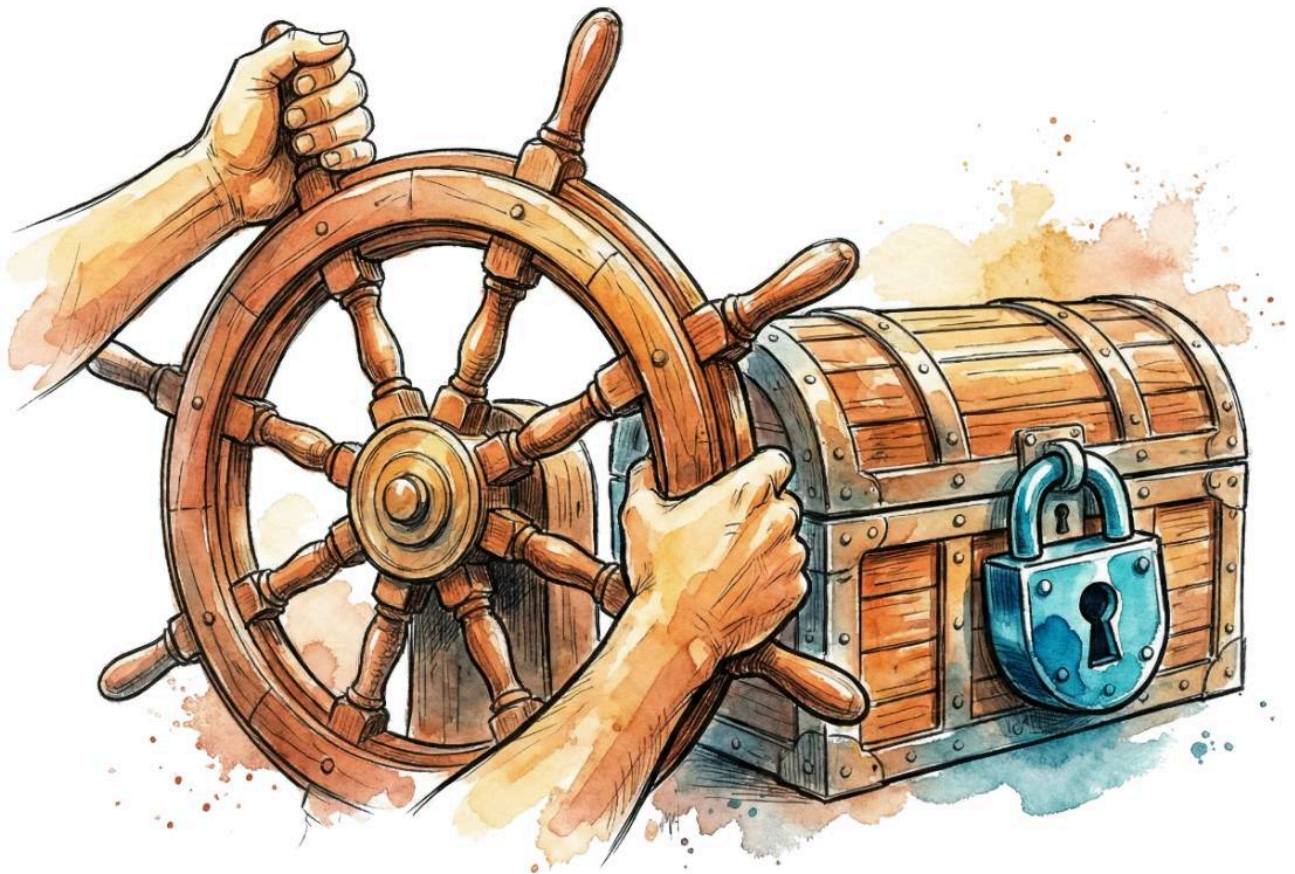
7.5 Steward Ownership: Committed to Purpose Long-Term



Meaningful Ownership Structures for Learning Enterprises

When Learning Enterprises grow, they change their character. A small initiative might become an organization with employees and valuable assets. Here the risk grows that priorities shift unintentionally and gradually. Often this begins with the economic self-preservation instinct, or desires for the successful enterprise emerge.

For a Learning Enterprise, whether small or large, to stay true to its mission – even when the founding generation changes – we must set up the ownership structure correctly. This is achieved through the principle of Steward Ownership in the company's DNA.



This means: **The company belongs to itself and to the purpose it serves.** It cannot suddenly be used for profit maximization for individuals or as a speculation object. Regardless of the legal form (association, LLC, corporation, cooperative), Steward Ownership anchors two principles:

1. **Self-Determination (The Steering Wheel):** Power always lies with those actively working in the company. Voting rights are tied to the role, not to money. They cannot be inherited or sold to outside investors. Those who take on responsibility receive a voice; those who leave, give it up. The company remains a place for the active.
2. **Asset Lock:** Profits are means to an end. They serve to strengthen the company, pay wages, invest in learning, or support the Tribe. Profits cannot be privatized or withdrawn from the company for pure wealth accumulation by individuals.

The topic sounds somewhat technical, but belongs to one of the most important questions to answer in entrepreneurial action. Because of the long-term or late-appearing effects, it's not something one should simply learn by trial and error. Here, experienced Accomplices can help lay the foundation solidly.

Example YOLU: The Learning Enterprise [YOLU](#) (see Case Studies), which emerged from Coworking & Colearning in Bern and has grown up, uses this principle. It is legally secured that nobody can buy the company or skim off the profit. Today's "owners" are merely stewards, meaning responsible temporary custodians. They hold the steering wheel as long as they are active, share it with newcomers who join, and eventually pass it on to the next generation of Learning Entrepreneurs.

When Learning Enterprises are built on “Steward Ownership” and become successful, they can secure the long-term existence of a Tribe and preserve the commons created.



Further Reading & Sources

- **Purpose Foundation:** *Steward Ownership* (The standard work for understanding how to structure companies so they belong to themselves).
- **Marco Jakob:** *Be a Zebra, Not a Unicorn!* (Companies that are not only profit-oriented but also have a positive impact on society).

7.6 Regenerative Action



Beyond Sustainability

For a long time, “Sustainability” was the measure of all things. But the term is static. It literally means “to sustain.” In a world where ecological and social systems are already deeply damaged, it's not enough to maintain the status quo or “do no further harm” (Net Zero). We strive for a **regenerative economy**.

- **Extractive (Old Economy):** We take resources and leave waste. The profit is private, the costs are borne by the public.
- **Sustainable (Transition):** We only take as much as regrows (“Net Zero”). We minimize our footprint.
- **Regenerative (Colearning):** We act as part of the ecosystem so that it becomes more fertile, resilient, and alive afterward (“Net Positive”). We leave a **positive handprint**.

The Serviceberry Economy



We learn from nature, inspired by the work of biologist Robin Wall Kimmerer on the Serviceberry. A tree doesn't hoard its fruits to increase their "value" through artificial scarcity. It gives them lavishly to the birds. This is not charity, but a survival strategy. The birds spread the seeds. The gift secures the tree's future better than keeping.

"Gifts consolidate the mystical recognition of participation in something greater than oneself."
(Charles Eisenstein)



Further Reading & Sources

- **Robin Wall Kimmerer:** *The Serviceberry* (natural gift and exchange cycles).
- **Charles Eisenstein:** *Sacred Economics* (Return to values of gift economy).
- **Elinor Ostrom:** *What Grows When We Share* (Commons economy).
- **Kate Raworth:** *Doughnut Economics*. (The concept of the safe and just space for humanity).

Stories of Success

Proof-of-Concepts from Practice



The Colearning Framework is not just a theory but a social architecture that already exists for real: convivial places of learning in the midst of life, where people meet, make their learning visible, and pass it on – incidentally, playfully, and effectively. In the framework we have described the scaffolding for this: learning emerges where people come together, where real tasks are waiting, where observing and pitching in are possible, and where theory is brought in when it is needed.

Models remain speculative as long as they have not proven themselves in reality. This chapter therefore delivers **proof-of-concepts** – no glossy stories, but honest accounts of real hunts, real loot, and real challenges. They are case studies that show, as “stories of success”, how abstract-sounding concepts such as learning enterprises, shared value creation, and incidental learning have taken root, grown, and borne fruit in concrete socio-cultural biotopes.

It is important to redefine the term “**success**”. Success here does not mean the absence of mistakes. On the contrary: “**ongoing failure**” is an indispensable element of real success. Success means that the learning processes are resilient, that the community grows through its challenges (antifragility), and that learning is not simulated but embedded in real value creation.

How to Read the Stories

To look at each case through the Colearning lens, the following guiding questions help:

- **Tribe:** Where is the “fertile ground”? Where could the project dock onto something existing (life, work, community, infrastructure)?
- **Hunt:** Which real task was pursued, with real feedback from customers, nature, or community?
- **Campfire:** How were experiences distilled – through rituals, mentoring, reflection, or by making learning treasures visible and sharing them?
- **LOPI:** Where could those involved observe and pitch in (LOPI – Learning by Observing and Pitching In)?
- **Loot:** What emerged as value for others? How was this loot shared with the community (commons principle)?
- **Learning treasures:** Where did it work and where did something go wrong? How was this learned from or readjusted (culture of mistakes)?
- **Replication:** What of this can be tried out or started in your own context?

Overview of the Stories

Now we step onto the ground of reality and look at various Colearning case studies from practice. Each story illuminates a slightly different aspect – from the urban coworking space to the forest camp – yet in their DNA we will recognise shared patterns:

Story	Focus & Setting	Core (How?)	Impact (What for?)
Colearning Bern	Coworking – integration into the working world	“Fertile ground”: an existing community as the tribe; permeability between generations.	Diversity: individual career paths beyond the norm; emergence of a learning “perpetuum mobile”.
The Mushroom Farm	Learning enterprise – circular economy	Just-in-time learning: a real crisis (harvest failure) creates pull for scientific learning.	Competence boost: scientific work and entrepreneurial action under real pressure.
Barista Corner	Micro-business – hospitality	Skin in the game: real responsibility and leadership by young people; direct feedback from customers.	Contribution: young people experience self-efficacy; revenues flow back into the tribe (commons).
Repair Workshop	Tinkering & repairing	LOPI & getting in through the hands: learning by watching and doing directly; meaning through repair.	Civic resilience: tech sovereignty (understanding instead of discarding) and connecting young and old.
YOLU	Vocational training – mediamatics	Network instead of a single master: learners as entrepreneurs.	Dynamic robustness: people who can solve problems instead of merely meeting standards.
Urban Village Webergut	Living & learning	Built commons: semi-public zones (workshop, kitchen) make learning part of everyday life.	Neighbourhood: revival of the “village principle”; knowledge as commons in the neighbourhood.
Academy & Kulturlabor	Adults – visibility & culture	Inversion of the curriculum: the plan follows the person; “CAS Machen” as legitimization for wild learning.	Connectivity: informally acquired competences become visible (“digital garden”) and usable.

Story	Focus & Setting	Core (How?)	Impact (What for?)
Learning Place Töss Valley	Nature & resilience – neo-indigenous learning	Co-regulation: leading by example (instead of instructing); nature as an incorruptible teacher.	Connection: deep resilience; combination of high-tech (plotter) and archaic craft (fire).

The complete stories of success – with pictures, loot and scars – live on the website:
<https://www.colearning.org/en/stories/>

Getting Started

Path into Practice

Colearning begins with no longer handing over responsibility for learning, but bringing it back to where it belongs: right into your life.

1. Become a Colearner

Colearning begins with an attitude. Noticing learning and making it visible.

- **You live, therefore you learn:** Notice the learning moments in your everyday life and consciously make room for them.
- **Make learning visible:** Document your projects, questions, small successes, and detours in a portfolio. Use a public [Digital Garden](#) for this (e.g. [Lilo.page](#)).

2. Find Your Community

Look for people who share your longing. That is the beginning of your tribe.

- **Online:** Join our [online community](#). There you will find existing initiatives and can connect with like-minded people.
- **Local:** Look for allies nearby – a café, a library, or a living room is enough as a first meeting place.

3. Start the Rhythm

You don't need a finished building. Start establishing this rhythm:

- **Tribe:** Meet regularly (e.g. Thursday mornings) in a public place.
- **Hunt:** Work on real projects. Move on “fertile ground” – workshops, coworking spaces, clubs – where life already is. Use incidental learning and legitimate eavesdropping (observing) and make yourselves useful (pitching in).
- **Campfire:** Share your questions, insights, and yields. Celebrate loot and learning treasures.

Path for Young People

Don't Wait for Permission

The system tells you: “Wait until you're finished.” Colearning tells you: “You are ready now.”

Take your path and your learning into your own hands. Follow your curiosity and look for places where real life happens – workshops, clubs, coworking spaces, or companies. And above all, look for people who fascinate you.

- **Pitching in:** Go to a space or a company. Observe and make yourself useful by pitching in where something is needed; that is how you earn respect and access to the world of professionals.
- **Digital Garden:** Document everything. Make your path, your competences, and your projects visible. Your loot (success, yield, benefit) and learning treasures (insights from succeeding and failing) become the true ticket to the future, more valuable than any standardised certificate.
- **Find accomplices:** Find adults who take you seriously and peers who also want more than just school. Take responsibility for younger ones.

Path for Adults

Unlearning School

For adults, Colearning is often the greatest challenge. We have spent years functioning, meeting other people's expectations, being experts, and making no mistakes. Colearning demands the opposite: curiosity, playing like a child, a beginner's mind, and the vulnerability of not knowing.

For adults, the path into Colearning does not begin with new learning but with **unlearning**.

- **From expert to explorer:** Take off the armour of your job title and educational career. When you enter a Colearning Space or connect with younger people, you are a human being with questions. Dare to ask those questions, go exploring, and connect with others.
- **Allow yourself to play:** We often strictly separate serious work here from the (slightly ridiculed) hobby there. In Colearning this boundary does not exist. Use your free spaces to pursue play and projects that have no immediate economic purpose. Often that is exactly where you find the "loot" you were looking for. Share it with others.
- **Start with mentoring:** Find mentors, who may well be considerably younger than you. Offer yourself as a mentor.
- **Make yourself visible:** Stop learning for certificates on your CV. Make your learning visible in the "Digital Garden". Write, podcast, or sketch your thoughts. That attracts people who tick like you and may then unexpectedly open up new professional options.

Path for Founders

Keeping the Economic Balance

As the founder of a Colearning project you are less a manager than a **gardener of culture**. One important task is to hold the tension between the two economic logics:

- **Protect the tribe (gift economy):** Make sure that trust and help flow on the inside without every minute being billed.
- **Enable the hunt (market economy):** Help to found learning enterprises that create real value for the world and earn real money, to make the space independent in the long run.

Start by **becoming a colearner yourself**: document your path and seek mentoring. Establish strong rituals early on, such as Treasure Sharing, to consolidate the rhythm of doing and understanding. Use the principle of “lifting the veil” to create transparency about resources and thus steer financial sustainability together with the community.

Path for Companies

Opening Doors for Colearning

Companies benefit from Colearning when they **open their doors to real observing and pitching in (LOPI)** and **become a Colearning Space themselves**.

- **Create access** so that “waste heat” in the form of **incidental learning** can be used.
- **Identify “low risk, real value” tasks**: Where can external adults or young people make real contributions without endangering the business or themselves?
- **Become an accomplice**: Share knowledge and feedback from practice.
- **Reverse mentoring**: Bring external colearners into the company – not (only) as interns to make coffee, but as experts in new or old cultural and learning techniques that fit a complex world.

Path for Villages and Neighbourhoods

Building Civic Resilience

Villages and neighbourhoods use Colearning to strengthen their local capacity to act and to weave a network of mutual support. In a time of multiple crises, Colearning becomes critical infrastructure for **civic resilience**: a community becomes able to raise its quality of life and, when necessary, to absorb shocks by anchoring essential competences such as food production, repair, and conflict moderation locally. At the same time a **caring community** emerges, in which people take responsibility and care for one another across generations.

Paths to implementation:

- **Map of competences**: Who can do what in the neighbourhood? Identify places where people already work, repair, grow, or care for one another (clubs, craft businesses, neighbourhood help).
- **Establish learning islands in the neighbourhood**: Connect the school and other institutions with these real places to give young people and seniors real tasks in the community.

- **Lower hurdles through design:** Use the principle of “access before efficiency” so that people of all ages can dock on at any time, observe, and become part of the solution by pitching in (LOPI).
- **Children as cultural backup:** Integrate young people as active co-creators who learn to understand technical systems and local value creation and to build community, instead of isolating them.
- **Pragmatic networking:** Clarify insurance and supervision questions without bureaucracy to enable learning enterprises in the neighbourhood that create both economic value and social cohesion.



Further Reading & Sources

- **Marco Jakob:** *Zurück in die Zukunft des Lernens* (children as cultural backup, Ballenberg principle, AI as a tool).
- **Netzwerk Caring Communities Schweiz:** *Wissensplattform und Toolbox für sorgende Gemeinschaften* (caringcommunities.ch).
- **Sempach, R. / Steinebach, C. / Zängl, P.:** *Care schafft Community – Community braucht Care.*
- **Zängl, P. (2020):** *Das 7E-Modell der Caring Community* (values, care, community, responsibility, participation, organisation, exchange).
- **Nassim Nicholas Taleb:** *Antifragile* (systems that grow stronger through stressors).

Commons

Share, Develop, Contribute

Licence and Sharing

Colearning is **open** by design: take what fits your context, build on it, and share what you develop. We use the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike licence ([CC BY-SA 4.0](#)) so that this knowledge remains freely accessible.

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Connect with others and feel free to **let something flow back** (for example through donations, other contributions, or your own involvement). This is not a licence obligation but an invitation. If you are unsure how to use Colearning or how to support the Colearning movement, [get in touch with us](#).

The People Behind the Framework

Editing & main text: The framework was brought into its present form, structured, and written by **Marco Jakob**. Text contributions over many years, conceptual design, and critical feedback came from **Fredi Zumbunn**. His contributions and ideas have decisively shaped the DNA of this framework.

Impulses, practice & strategy: Important strategic decisions, ever new impulses, and hands-on engagement came from **Paula Duwan, Christoph Schmitt, Sibille Tschanz, Tom Bucher, Hermann Flükiger, Joris Schwarzenbach, Ben Zaugg**.

Colearning community: Many more people carried, enabled, moderated, repaired, planted, cooked, and organised on site – and thereby made Colearning into what this framework describes in the first place.

Our **thanks** go to the contributors of the first hour, the coworkers at the Effinger, the Colearning pioneers and accomplices. Here is a (far from complete) list:

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Note: If a name is missing, please let us know – we will gladly add it.

And Now It's Your Turn

We shape the world by moving through it differently. **Build a tribe. Dare the adventure. Share at the campfire.**

See you on the way.