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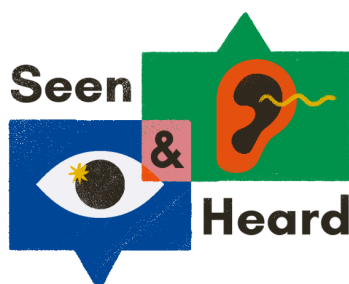


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# ***Seen and Heard: Young People's Voices and Freedom of Expression***

An Interdisciplinary and Cross—sectoral Conference



***Valletta Campus,***

***University of Malta***



***5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> February 2026***

## **Programme overview**

*Only the sessions that are marked on the programme as “online”  
will be offered in hybrid format.*



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## Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2026

9.00	Registration and Coffee
9.30	Conference Opening (Aula Prima/Online)
10.00	<b>Keynote 1</b> (Aula Prima/Online) <b>Researching and Co—creating Children’s Rights Activism through the Seen and Heard Project</b> — Dr Giuliana Fenech (University of Malta), Dr Justyna Deszcz—Tryhubczak (University of Wroclaw), Dr Farriba Schulz (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) Chair: Sarah Farrugia Online Host: Rebecca Ganado
11.00	<b>Roundtable 1</b> (Aula Prima/Online) <b>Human Rights and Children’s Publishing</b> — Gvantsa Jobava (International Publishers’ Association), Shannon Cullen (Walker Books), Nicky Parker (Amnesty International Poland), Dr Sandra Hili Vassallo (Malta National Book Council), Dr Chris Gruppetta (Merlin Publishers), Sita Brahmachari (Author), Matt Stroud (Illustrator) Chair: Dr Giuliana Fenech Online Host: Rebecca Ganado
12.00	Lunch (Optional cultural tour to St John’s Co—Cathedral with Ruby Peresso)
13.00	<b>Panel 1</b> (Aula Prima/Online) and <b>Panel 2</b> (Room 103/Online)
15.00	Coffee Break
15.30	<b>Panel 3</b> (Aula Prima/Online) and <b>Workshop A</b> (Room 103)
17.30	<b>Panel 4</b> (Room 103/Online) and <b>Workshop B</b> (Aula Prima)
19.30	Welcome Reception

**Panel 1**  
**Children, Participation, Art**  
(Aula Prima/Online)  
**Chair:** Daniel Cini  
**Online Host:** Juliette Roux

**Mediating Freedom: Participatory Reading and Creative Protest in Ecuadorian Children's Literature (12)** — María Alejandra Zambrano Murillo (Independent Researcher)

**Care Is Key: Exploring Inclusive Child Participation in Patience Agbabi's Leap Cycle Series (23/Online)** — Kayra Maes (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium)

**The Walks: Familiarising Strange City through Memory of Reading Children's Book (15/Online)** — Chrysogonus Siddha Malilang (Malmö Universitet, Sweden)

**The Forces: A/r/tographic Encounters with Students, Plants, and the Classics of Children's Literature (15)** — Marnie Campagnaro (Università degli Studi di Padova, Italy)

**Panel 2**  
**Law and Policy 1**  
(Room 103/Online)  
**Chair:** Prof. Anna Kérchy  
**Online Host:** Amy Calleja/Cornell Raab

**A Voice, Not an Echo: Children's Participation, Legal Representation and the Ethic of Care in EU Justice Systems (7)** — Dominika Kuna (SWPS University, Poland)

**Kid—testing Books for Children: The Experience of Aklat Alamid (14/Online)** — M.J. Cagumbay Tumamac (Independent Researcher, Philippines)

**Young Voices against Gentrification: Multiliteracies, Creative Protest, and the Right to the City (26/Online)** — Margarida Castellano (University of Valencia, Spain) & Helena Moros (Universitat Jaume I, Spain)

**Participation with Limits: When Children's Rights Meet Adult Control (19)** — Shana Vanderveken (Ghent University, Belgium)

**Panel 3**  
**Literature, Children, Justice**  
(Aula Prima/Online)  
**Chair:** Dr Farriba Schulz  
**Online Host:** Ruby Peresso

**Workshop A**  
(Room 103)

**Am I a Voice or a Traitor? Dialogues with Youth from Aggressor States – Using Picturebooks to Navigate Political Identity (17)** – Chang Hasheminezhad—Li (University of Padova, Italy)

**Missing Mirrors: Arab in Children's Literature and the Pursuit of Equitable Representation for Global Citizens (18/Online)** – Dalia Mostafa Abdulrahman (Cairo University, Egypt)

**Hearing Young Voices: How Children Respond to Palestinian Stories of Displacement (49/Online)** – Oguzhan Yilmaz (Erzincan Binali Yildirim University, Turkiye) & Tugba Okumus Arslan (Erzincan Binali Yildirim University, Turkiye)

**Seen but Not Heard: Children's Awareness of Social Justice and their Critical Responses to a Challenging and Thought—provoking Picturebook (32)** – Janet Evans (Independent Researcher, England)

**Artography and Activism Workshop**

Prof. Kate Coleman  
(University of Melbourne, Australia)

Student Assistants:  
Juliette Roux  
Cornell Raab

## **Workshop B (Aula Prima)**

### **Voices that Matter: Human Rights Education with and for Children**

Katarzyna Salejko (Amnesty International Poland),  
Dominika Sokołowska (Amnesty International Poland), Sita Brahmachari (Amnesty International Author)

Student Assistants:  
Sarah Farrugia  
Ruby Peresso  
Cornell Raab

## **Panel 4**

### **Storied Citizenship: Reimagining Civic Encounters among Children and Youth in the Post—digital Age**

(Room 103/Online)

**Chair:** Prof. Teresa Rogers, Dr Elizabeth Nelson, Prof. Harini Rajagopal, Prof. Amber Moore

**Online Host:** Amy Calleja

**Transformative Testimonies: Latinx Youth's Poetic Resistance through an Anti—citizenship Lens (33/Online) —** Colin Cole (Independent Researcher, USA)

**Mud and Monsters in the Early Years: Making Kin as Citizen Becoming (33/Online) —** Kim Lenters (University of Calgary, Canada), Ronna Mosher (University of Calgary, Canada)

**Storied Citizenship in the Post—Digital Age: The Seen and Heard Project as a Case Study in Children's Social Movement Praxis (33) —** Justyna Deszcz —Tryhubczak (University of Wroclaw, Poland), Farriba Schulz (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Germany)

## Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026

9.00	Registration and Coffee
9.30	<b>Keynote 2</b> (Aula Magna/Online) <b>Freedom to Read and Be Read</b> — Nicky Parker (Amnesty International Poland), Gvantsa Jobava (International Publishers' Association) Chair: Dr Farriba Schulz Online Host: Rebecca Ganado
10.30	<b>Panels 6</b> (Room 103) and <b>Panel 7</b> (Aula Magna) and <b>Panel 8</b> (Room 102/Online)
12.30	Coffee Break
13.00	<b>Keynote 3</b> (Aula Magna/Online) <b>Pedagogies of Critical Protest Across Borders and Generations</b> — Prof. Tanu Biswas (University of Stavanger) Chair: Dr Justyna Deszcz—Tryhubczak Online Host: Rebecca Ganado
14.00	Lunch (Optional cultural tours to Heritage Malta Grand Master's Palace with Leanne Ellul and Victor Pasmore Gallery with Amy Calleja)
15.00	<b>Panel 9</b> (Room 103/Online) and <b>Panel 10</b> (Aula Magna) and <b>Panel 11</b> (Room 102/Online)
17.00	Coffee break
17.30	<b>Panel 12</b> (Aula Prima/Online) and <b>Panel 13</b> (Room 103/Online)
19.30	Conference Dinner (Reservation is necessary)

**Panel 6**  
**Equitable Social Spaces**  
 (Room 103)  
**Chair:** Sarah Farrugia

**Everyday Politics of Movement: A Longitudinal Study with Girls in El Salvador and Dominican Republic (28)** — Belen Garcia Gavilanes (Cardiff University, Wales)

**Fostering Expression through Dialogic Reading of Disability Narratives in Picturebooks (41)** — Mei Kee Chan (University of Edinburgh, Scotland)

**Deconstructing Digital Inclusion: Rethinking Children's Rights Through Disability Studies (51)** — Stine Liv Johansen (Aarhus University, Denmark)

**My DNA My Say: Exploring Children's Beliefs and Attitudes towards Biobanking for Genomic Research (45)** — Gillian Martin (University of Malta, Malta)

**Panel 7**  
**Law and Policy 2**  
 (Aula Magna)  
**Chair:** Nicky Parker

**Why does Poland Establish Pupil Rights Ombudspersons When There Already is the Ombudsperson for Children? (29)** — Mikotaj Wolanin (University of Warsaw, Poland)

**From Symbolic to Meaningful Participation: Youth Voices and Adults' Willingness to Share Decision—Making (52)** — Sabīne Ozola, Laura Brutāne (Latvian Academy of Culture, Latvia)

**Building Stronger Child Protection Systems through Child—Led Research (55)** — Holly Doel—Mackaway (Macquarie University Law School, Australia)

**(Non—)Childness and (Non—) Inclusivity of Children's Book Awards: The Polish Case (30)** — Marta Niewieczerzał (Warsaw Public Library – Central Library of Mazovia Province, Poland), Maciej Skowera (University of Warsaw & Warsaw Public Library – Central Library of Mazovia Province, Poland)

**Panel 8**  
**Child—centered Research**  
 (Room 102/Online)  
**Chair:** Dr Mar Sanchez  
**Online Host:** Juliette Roux

**Between Academic Freedom and Institutional Constraint: Student Perspectives on Human Rights and Palestine (40/Online)** — Huria Jalalzai (University of Calgary, Canada), Yayha El—Lahib (University of Calgary, Canada)

**Youthful Urban Natures in the Arrival City: The Youthful Making of New Political Ecologies in the Anthropocene (35/Online)** — Philip Roth (University of Bremen, Germany)

**Art Created by Children at Terezín Concentration Camp as a Path to Understanding Human Rights (3/Online)** — Milan Mašát (Palacký University, Czech Republic)

**Indian Child—authors' Representation of Human & More-than-human Rights & (In)justice (4/Online)** — Aneesa Jamal (Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Malaysia)

**Panel 9**  
**Symbolism and Representation**  
 (Room 103/Online)  
**Chair:** Prof. Melanie Ramdarshan Bold  
**Online Host:** Cornell Raab

**Freedom of Expression in the Classroom: Creative Writing as a Space for Children's Voices (25/Online)** — Tereza Parizkova (Palacký University, Czech Republic)

**In Search of a New Migration Identity: Contemporary Polish Narratives for Young Adults in Transnational Families and Spaces (46/Online)** — Dorota Milchuka (University of Wrocław, Poland)

**Fostering Authentic Youth Participation through Contemporary Art Practices (54/Online)** — Anda Lake, Valts Valters Kronbergs, Anete Liepiņa (Latvian Academy of Culture)

**From Silence to Symbols: Visual Literacy Projects as Pathways to Youth Expression and Civic Engagement (48/Online)** — Laima Lisauskienė (Vilnius County Adomas Mickevicius Public Library, Lithuania)

**Panel 10**  
**Digital Co—Creation and the Right to Learn**  
 (Aula Magna)  
**Chair:** Sarah Farrugia

**Aesthetic Bridges: Uncovering the Creative Pedagogical Potentials of Children's Literature and Digital Informal Learning (13)** — Hooria Rezaei (Ruhr—University Bochum, Germany)

**More-Than-Human Sex Education: Young People, Online Sexually Explicit Content and the Right to Learn (37)** — Deevia Bhana (University of KwaZulu—Natal, South Africa)

**South African Teenage Girls' Responses to Unsolicited Violent and Sexually Explicit Content Shared on Social Media (47)** — Raksha Janak (University of Pretoria, South Africa)

**Panel 11**  
**Freedom of Expression in Educational Contexts**  
 (Room 102/Online)  
**Chair:** Rebecca Ganado  
**Online Host:** Ruby Peresso

**Transmedia Activism and/in Children's Literature: From the Harry Potter Alliance to Hungarian Ecofiction's Green Readers (43)** — Anna Kérchy (University of Szeged, Hungary)

**The Dos and Don'ts of Practicing Artivism: Pedagogical Insights for Embedding Child Rights and Addressing Social Issues in Early Childhood Education (5/Online)** — Carolyn Bjartveit (Mount Royal University, Canada), Emmie Henderson Dekort (Mount Royal University, Canada)

**A Science of Freedom: Reconciling Educational Professionalism with Children's Playfulness Using Self—Determination Theory (36)** — Don Berg (Independent Researcher, USA)

**Collaboratively Designing Child Rights Education Curricula with Educators and Children through a Participatory Action Research Study in Uganda and Canada (39)** — Kathleen Manion (Royal Roads University, Canada)



## Panel 12

### **Tracing Echoes of Childhood in Highly Vulnerable Contexts through the Symbolic Bond of Literature**

(Aula Prima/Online)

**Chair:** Prof. Evelyn Arizpe

**Online Hosts:** Rebecca Ganado

#### **The Poetic and Political Act of Opening Doors in Migrant Shelters for Children to Reclaim their Voice**

**(16/Online)** — Manuela Cantú Mendivil (Reading Mediator and UN Peace Ambassador, Mexico)

#### **Imagining Other Worlds with Milo**

**(16)** — Brenda Denisse Renteria Cervantes (Autonomous University of the State of Morelos, Mexico)

#### **Narrative Moons: Symbolic Resistance against Hostile Worlds**

**(16/Online)** — Juan Felipe Torres Barrios (Educator and Cultural Mediator, Colombia)

#### **Children's Literature as a Human Rights Laboratory: War Witnessing and Youth Voices from Syria and Palestine**

**(31)** — Alperen Avcı (Muş Alparslan University, Türkiye), Duygu Yalman Polatla (Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University, Türkiye)

## Panel 13

### **Elevating Children's Voices: Critical Attention as Method**

(Room 103/Online)

**Chair:** Dr Farriba Schulz

**Online Host:** Juliette Roux

#### **Critical Attention as Method: SWISP in a Science Gallery Living Lab (50)**

— Kate Coleman (University of Melbourne, Australia)

#### **More Than a Seat at the Table: Who is Actually Listening? A Comparative Study of Adult Engagement with National Youth Councils in Europe**

**(24/Online)** — Amy Calleja, Matthew Baldacchino, Cherise Sultana, Alexandra Tabone (Kunsill Nazzjonali taż-Żgħażaġh/National Youth Council of Malta, Malta)

#### **Hum Hindustani: Listening to Children's Voices on Citizenship**

**(42/Online)** — Samina Mishra (Independent Arts Practitioner, India), Vivek Vellanki (Indiana University, USA), Renae Lesser (Indiana University, USA)

#### **The Role of Children's Literature in Human Rights Education: A Case Study of Eswatini Schools (53/Online)**

— Novuyo Nkomo (University of Eswatini), S'lungile K. Thwala (University of Eswatini, Eswatini)

# Saturday 7th February 2026

9.00	Registration and Coffee
9.30	Welcome addresses
10.00	<p><b>Keynote 4</b> (Aula Magna/Online)  <b>A Festival of Children's Rights and Communal Writing with Children –</b>  Seen and Heard Child Authors, Sita Brahmachari (Amnesty International Author), Leanne Ellul (Author and Translator), Chris Riddell (Amnesty International Illustrator/Online)  Online Host: Amy Calleja  Visual Artist Online: Julia Bakay</p>
11.00	<p><b>Us Children Have Questions!</b> (Aula Magna/Online)  Seen and Heard Child Interviewers, Gvantsa Jobava (International Publishers Association), Shannon Cullen (Walker Books), Dr Sandra Hili Vassallo (Malta National Book Council), Dr Chris Gruppeta (Merlin Publishers), Sita Brahmachari (Amnesty International Author), Claudia Aloisio (Author), Matt Stroud (Illustrator)  Chairs: Dr Giuliana Fenech (University of Malta) and Sandy Calleja Portelli (Seen and Heard Research Support Officer)  Online Host: Amy Calleja  Visual Artist Online: Julia Bakay</p>
12.00	Lunch (Snacks provided)
13.00	<b>Panel 14</b> (Aula Magna/Online) and <b>Workshop C</b> (Room 103) and <b>Cultural Tour</b> (Optional cultural tour to Casa Rocca Piccola with Sarah Farrugia)
15.00	Farewell to Seen and Heard Children
15.30	Coffee break
16.00	<p><b>Screening: The Seen and Heard Docu—narrative and Experience Sharing</b> (Aula Magna/Online)  Discussants: Charlie Cauchi (Independent Artist and Filmmaker), Nicky Parker (Amnesty International Poland), Sita Brahmachari (Amnesty International Author), Sandy Calleja Portelli (Seen and Heard Research Support Officer), Amy Calleja (Student Assistant)  Chair: Dr Justyna Deszcz—Tryhubczak  Online Host: Ruby Peresso</p> <p><b>Workshop D</b> (Room 103)</p>
17.00	<p><b>Roundtable 2</b> (Aula Magna/Online)  <b>Children's Literature and Children's Rights: Intersections of Research, Ethics, Agency, and Advocacy –</b> Prof. Evelyn Arizpe (University of Glasgow), Dr Cristina Corroero Iglesias (Nantes University), Prof. Mel Ramdarshan Bold (University of Glasgow), Dr Stine Liv Johanson (Aarhus University), Dr Elizabeth Nelson (University of Glasgow), Dr Sara Van den Bossche (Tilburg University)  Chair: Dr Justyna Deszcz—Tryhubczak  Online Host: Rebecca Ganado</p>
18.30	Closing plenary (Aula Magna/Online)
19.00	Drinks

## **Panel 14**

### **Digital systems and systems of care**

(Aula Magna/Online)

**Chair:** Prof. Kate Coleman

**Online Hosts:** Rebecca Ganado,  
Cornell Raab

## **Workshop C**

(Room 103)

**Success, Hope and Adulthood: A Participatory Action Research Study with Young People with Experience of Care (27)**  
— Elle Scott (University of Glasgow, Scotland)

**Co—production and Inclusion at the Margins (2/Online)** — Melissa Stepney (University of Oxford, England), Kanwal Mand (University of Birmingham, England), Roisin Mooney (University of Oxford, England), Anna Lavis (University of Birmingham, England), Kam Bhui (University of Oxford, England)

**Navigating Adversity and Enhancing Resilience through Digital Mental Health Resources: A Co—production Study with Marginalised Young People in Ireland (6)** — Carmen Kealy (University of Galway, Ireland)

**From Passive Viewers to Active Choosers? Children’s Autonomy in Consumption Across TV and Digital Platforms in Jordan (56)** - Kholod Saleh Mohd Huneiti (Umm Al Quwain University, UAE)

### **LOUD & CLEAR: Zine—Making as Protest, Voice, and Participation**

Dr Mar Sanchez  
(University of Surrey),  
Prof. Melanie  
Ramdarshan Bold  
(University of Glasgow)

Student Assistants:  
Amy Calleja  
Ruby Peresso  
Juliette Roux  
& Sandy Calleja Portelli  
(RSO)

Visual Artist Online:  
Julia Bakay

**Screening:**  
**The Seen and Heard**  
**Docu—narrative and**  
**Experience Sharing**  
(Aula Magna/Online)  
**Chair:** Dr Justyna Deszcz—  
Tryhubczak  
**Online Host:** Ruby Peresso

**Workshop D**  
(Room 103)

Discussants: Charlie Cauchi  
(Independent Artist and  
Filmmaker), Nicky Parker  
(Amnesty Poland International),  
Sita Brahmachari (Amnesty  
International Author)

**From the Perspective of**  
**Educators: Human Rights**  
**Education in Schools**

Prof. Kate Coleman (University  
of Melbourne), Dr Farriba Schulz  
(Humboldt Universität zu Berlin)

**Student Assistants:**

Sarah Farrugia  
Cornell Raab  
Rebecca Ganado  
Juliette Roux

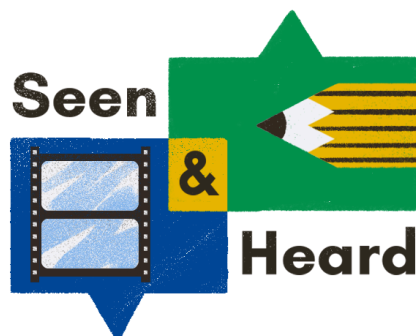
Visual Artist Online: Julia Bakay



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Project Ref no.: 2023-1-MT01-KA220-HED-000154169

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