

Wisdom Well

“ Wisdom Well is a care-centered guide for deepening wisdom and knowledge with diverse groups in arts and culture.

Context

Wisdom Well is a community-based approach to research that focuses on making the process more respectful, fair, and open to everyone. It includes five responsibilities or streams: knowledge seeking, sensemaking, shaping, stewarding, and sharing. These streams each help ensure that the legacies of knowledge and wisdom are valued, protected, and shared in meaningful ways. While they will each ideally happen all at once, beginners can go through them one at a time to better understand how they work together.

Knowledge seeking (grounding wisdom)

Curiosity-driven exploration, seeking information, insights, and experiences to lay foundations for deeper understanding and appreciation.

Knowledge sensemaking (contextualizing wisdom)

Making sense of knowledge to contextualize it within various worldviews and experiences.

Knowledge shaping (evolving wisdom)

Actively evolving, deepening, and adapting knowledge to contribute to the emergence of wise practices in the future.

Knowledge sharing (disseminating wisdom)

Disseminating wisdom, knowledge, and insights with others to enrich community dialogue and cultivate connections.

Knowledge stewarding (respecting wisdom)

Safeguarding, respecting, and protecting the cultural heritage of wisdom and knowledge for future generations.

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How to use Wisdom Well? To apply the practice, follow these steps:

Knowledge seeking (grounding wisdom)

- **What:** Begin by exploring and gathering information, stories, or insights related to the topic of interest. Approach this stage with curiosity and openness.
- **How:** Conduct interviews, research archives, document personal experiences, or observe community practices. Focus on understanding the diverse sources of knowledge that form the foundation of your inquiry.

Knowledge sensemaking (contextualizing wisdom)

- **What:** Analyze and interpret the information gathered into contextualized knowledge, placing the information within broader cultural, social, and historical frameworks.
- **How:** Engage in group discussions, collaborative analysis, or reflective practices to make sense of the knowledge. Seek to understand different perspectives and how they connect to the broader community or global challenges.

Knowledge shaping (evolving wisdom)

- **What:** Transform the information and knowledge gathered into actionable insights, creative expressions, or wise and innovative practices.
- **How:** Bring forward wise practices with respect and care while developing new art forms, methodologies, or frameworks that adapt and expand the wisdom in new and deepened ways. Collaborate with others to ensure the wisdom evolves in meaningful and inclusive ways.

Knowledge stewarding (respecting wisdom)

- **What:** Protect and honor the knowledge for future generations.
- **How:** Create archives, establish guidelines for ethical use, or collaborate with cultural institutions to ensure the wisdom is preserved and respected. Emphasize the importance of sustainability and cultural sensitivity in this stage. Ensure both younger and elder generations have opportunities to be acknowledged and have ownership over their contributions to the knowledge.

Knowledge sharing (disseminating wisdom)

- **What:** Share the knowledge and insights with your community or a wider audience, ensuring all contributors and sources of inspiration are properly acknowledged and consent given.
- **How:** Use exhibitions, workshops, publications, or digital platforms to present your findings and engage others in dialogue. Focus on creating accessible and inclusive ways

to disseminate the knowledge.

Examples in arts and culture

1. Newcomers

A collective of immigrant and refugee artists comes together to explore the intersection of their cultural heritage and the contemporary challenges of displacement and identity. Using the Wisdom Well framework, they aim to deepen understanding, share collective knowledge, and create a platform for cultural preservation and innovation in the arts.

- **Knowledge seeking (grounding wisdom)**

The collective begins by gathering stories, artifacts, and traditions from their diverse cultural backgrounds. Through interviews with elders, archival research, and personal storytelling, they seek to understand their shared experiences of migration, resilience, and creativity. This stage grounds their exploration in curiosity and respect for their origins.

- **Knowledge sensemaking (contextualizing wisdom)**

The artists contextualize their findings within broader themes of displacement, belonging, and the impact of global migration on artistic practices. They engage in discussions about how colonial histories and geopolitical forces have shaped their identities and experiences. This helps them frame their insights within both personal and universal narratives.

- **Knowledge shaping (evolving wisdom)**

Building on their research and reflections, the collective collaborates to create new art forms that blend traditional and contemporary practices. For example, they may merge traditional music or visual motifs with digital media to express their evolving identities. This stage is about transforming knowledge into innovative and meaningful artistic expressions.

- **Knowledge stewarding (respecting wisdom)**

To safeguard their cultural heritage, the artists establish a digital archive where their stories, art, and insights are preserved for future generations. They collaborate with cultural organizations to ensure their work is respected and used ethically. This stage emphasizes the responsibility to protect and honor their wisdom as a legacy for others to learn from and build upon.

- **Knowledge sharing (disseminating wisdom)**

The group organizes exhibitions, workshops, and performances to share their work with wider audiences. By presenting their art in community spaces, they foster dialogue about the challenges and beauty of cultural hybridity. They also use social media and online platforms to amplify their message globally, ensuring their stories reach diverse communities

