

An Example Of An Irreverent Art School In The Middle Of The Sea

José Paiva ; Rita Rainho – Hungria. ECER 2015

1. To speak of education always means to speak of the future. Through education we contribute to determine "what's coming" or we can try to open the future for the indeterminate, as an unknown. We want to go beyond the philosophical and pedagogical dimensions of education, to focus on education from a political perspective, in the sense of building an unpredictable reality of what is to come. Education in a political perspective opens up to building the future in a non deterministic way, where we free ourselves to allow multiple possibilities of a latent future.

We are aware that this vision of building the indeterminate conflicts with the traditional vision of the teacher as the provider of knowledge, promoting order and what is already established. With this in mind, the starting point for our discussion are these central questions:

What are the possibilities of a political educational and artistic project, in which we can create reality from an utopian point of view? And how to promote the indeterminate from a real context?

Let's be realistic and let's put this idea:

Have we become powerless to create other possibilities in which we do not fall in the already predetermined path? Is the teaching imprisoned in their own impossibilities of radical transformation? Is the West the Global?

In this presentation we would like to debate these possibilities in the concrete case of M_EIA Institute of Art, Technology and Culture. Make clear, only like a possibility, not like a salvation! Being clear, just looking for a Possibility, not the solution, never as a salvation!

M_EIA is an artistic higher education school located in the Atlantic Ocean in the islands of Cape Verde, in Africa.

Cape Verde became independent from the Portuguese colonial regime in nineteen seventy five (1975). Cape Verdians have been insisting on earning their lives fighting the difficulties of a wild territory with winding mountain. Cape Verdians face several post-colonial problems in defining a clear autonomous national project, and keep confronting the aggressive politics of markets' globalization and the associated hegemonic narratives.

Cape Verde's decision to assume itself as an independent country, contradicted the analysis of The World Bank, who considered Cape Verd as inviable country. Was a strong decision of resistance and stubbornness.

Such is the context where M_EIA was created. This school came out of the irreverence and the

utopia of civil society who was insubordinate to vicious trends of western thinking such as determinism, rationalism, productivity and the logics of rankings and hierarchies applied to education. M_EIA's goal is to overcome an education which castrates, imprisons and formats the individual. The mission of this school is not to create another colony of knowledge, another geographical epistemology. M_EIA does not determine its realization, but places its own realization in the indeterminate realm.

It is a civil adventure anchored to a long program, lead by a Cape Verdean NGO deeply rooted in the struggle for development of populations.

2. For this discussion we present a critical view on hegemonic discourses marked by Western modernism and on post-colonial relations in higher Artistic Education. We assume ourselves as the subjects or political bodies of this research, that is, the 'intercultural movement IDENTIDADES' from Oporto University, Portugal, and the M_EIA Institute of Art , Technology and Culture from Cape Verde. These are experienced issues over about 20 years, in Cape Verde, in Mozambique and in Brazil. These questions result from a search of the others possibilities, and discovery of the dimension of our own powerlessness to counter the power of the hegemonic.

Our aim is to discuss the challenges of the political and pedagogical project of M_EIA. We will look at the tensions and conflicts between M_EIA's recent definition of its policies and educational, cultural and curricular practices and the tendency to import and appropriate Western hegemonic models of thought and practices. This implies to also look at M_EIA as a resistance movement. Ask ourselves, if are possible participatory practices of non-colonial educational nature, where the teacher is a non-teacher and student is also the whole person that behaves?

3. These are rare issues in European forums and therefore it is relevant to bring them here and to open a discussion promoting more critical understandings. In fact, the discourses that permeate the practices of arts higher education are mostly conservative and anchored in salvation models promoted since the late nineteenth century in the West.

This analysis is the result of ongoing research processes, which develop the reflections of M_EIA questioning the possibilities of connections between art and development. And, in that sense understanding the art in its own field, in the assumed confrontation with the political.

The experience of the conflictualities of a very small art school in a small island, in the middle of the sea, brings a marked irreverence and complexity to our debate. We want to make visible the dialogues, the conflicts, and the resistances of this artistic higher education school in Africa, a commitment to poverty that mark the context in which it arose.

Methodologically speaking, we start from the anthropological approach of ethnography and also make use of sensorial ethnography, and multimedia. In this sense, the presentation is

accompanied by a group of images that carry the reality under study, as well as the landscape that gives it its meaning.

Ethnography is here understood as an intercultural space, which means that we aim not only at using participative methodologies but rather we insist in a permanent dialogue, confrontation and plural construction of the meanings of the realities in which we are involved.

As such, we aim to map the points, positions and relations of the questions in two different fields: subjects or political bodies, and arts education in contemporaneity. More than analysing these relations as efforts of post-colonial cooperation, we want to reflect about the implications of these relations within local initiatives. Our horizon is epistemological decolonization and, above all, its contribution to a cognitive justice, determinant in social justice.

4. The first point is where we draw ourselves as subjects or political bodies. As such we carry the power relations of the context. The idea of an intellectual and critical displacement, as Maxine Green has suggested, makes us face the teacher as a foreigner, that is, the one who arrives and becomes aware that it is possible to go beyond the conventional and the repeated, opening the space for the body that wishes, the mind that becomes insubordinate. However, we add to this idea the challenges of displacing oneself from any mental and geopolitical place of our thought, that is, the teacher as the one who opens to the indeterminate, conscious of his or her own limits to see it.

In this point, we have to say that it is needed to deep in crioula language, chew the corn of cachupa, to listen the freshness of the ocean, to look eyes on the eyes the weight of the aridity of the land, to feel in the lips the weight of water scarcity. Only in this attentive and intensive game, the knowledge of this reality assumes the dimension of the volcano necessary to dark the clarity of the hegemonic. It allows to think in other alternative ways and to assume the challenge that promisses nothing.

5. The second point is to question the supremacy of hegemonic educational models in artistic higher education, identifying their own inadequacies in the post colonial South. Therefore it is essential to build a critical view of the historical trajectory of the institutionalization of art as a knowledge subjected to the rules of university and its logics of scientificity. Examples of such a critical view are the contemporary critical movements of artistic education whose principles manifest the production of social and cognitive justice.

We can cope with the emerging inexperience of young students from M_EIA, residents in the land of Sodad, away from the streams of contemporary art, and understand its potential, not as reproducers of the already known and thought, but in the ways they can know their own reality, to

be part of it, and within it, to act educationally and artistically. From here, to wait of what may come,, without pre-set that.

This means that conceptual complexity develops by relating a series of contextual factors:

- a) the current controversial policies in their global dimension and their need in the local,
- b) the conflictuality of art and culture in a context where visual culture is unbalanced between informative isolation and weak access,
- and c) the individualistic and communitarian movement towards better life conditions.

M_EIA has recently implemented its “political educational and artistical project” to recreate the founding utopias of the school, that is, an art school impregnated with the challenges of the historical and cultural reality of Cape Verde in a constant tension with the contemporary global world.

6. To illustrate our approach we present you one recent project at M_EIA: The Fishing Museum. This museum is situated at Tarrafal, S. Nicolau island, another island at 5 hours by bote. The Fishing Museum is a public-private partnership between the Institute for Research and Cultural Heritage, M_EIA and SUCLA a local fish cannery. M_EIA integrated the scientific project of the Fishing Museum into its school activities, creating a unique opportunity to involve the teachers and the students in a long term interdisciplinary activity with real implications to the island and the country. Specifically, since 2012 (two thousand twelve), students and teachers have been working in the different phases of the project: discussing the challenges of new museology, cleaning buildings, elaborating catalogues, branding design, signage design. This project exemplifies a way for the students and the teachers to experience the responsibility of facing the multiple action possibilities of the designer and the necessary transformations in new museum typologies.

In the present case, in the experimental process in M_EIA, all educational activity is structured as 'areas of work', mobilizing all teachers and students, even from the different courses (plastic arts, design and architecture), for a transdisciplinary involvement around the elected project. It is not intend to determine a model, but a search of educational processes that allow other ways of understanding the artistic education.

7.CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have the main objective of confronting the hegemonic narratives through the study of a singular case outside Europe. We talk about an artistic higher education school and we work

through the daily life of this school, through its fights and obstacles in constructing a proper narrative that is able to disrupt the common and naturalized senses of what is an art school or an academia. In the links between the subjects and their political bodies we find the terrain to explore the possibilities of disruption and questioning. However, to talk about this school without knowing the context and without imagining the lives and the landscapes is to lose the details that really matter. We tried to talk close to these details and, through the image, make present those that are far away of this northern perspectives of knowledge.

To understand what is presented, we invite you to visit Cape Verde, to share with us this experience.

In March, there will happen the 4th International Encounter in Artistic Education, come, and participate.

ABSTRACT

The paper that will be presented has as its focus an artistic higher education school, located in the middle of the Atlantic ocean, in the islands of Cape Verde. This is a young country in which the inhabitants insist in gaining their lives in a fight against the hardships of a wild territory of winding mountains, in parallel with their own onflictualities of a people which became independent (1975) for the fight against the Portuguese colonial regime, and facing the aggressive policies of globalization of markets and the hegemonic narratives associated.

The authors of this paper belong to this space. It is here that the possibilities of distinct dynamics of arts education are promoted. These are different from the academic models that discipline and confine to compartments the knowledge and separate the artistic production from the reflection on the problems experienced by communities.

It is presented for discussion a critical discourse of hegemonic discourses - marked by Western modernism - and post-colonial relations in the higher education space in the area of Arts Education. We take ourselves as the subjects/political bodies of this research, the 'intercultural movement IDENTIDADES' and the M_EIA Institute of Art , Technology and Culture (Cape Verde). Our aim is to discuss the challenges of the political and pedagogical project M_EIA , - taking into account the recent definition of its policies and educational, cultural and curricular practices - from a confrontation that seek to take advantage of the tensions and conflicts in the models of thought, import and appropriation of Western hegemonic costumes, but also in resistance movements that define them .

As such, we aim to map the points, positions and relations of the questions in three different fields: subjects/political bodies,critical hstory of arts education in Cape Verde and arts education in contemporaneity. More than to analyse these

relations as efforts of post-colonial cooperation, to reflect about the implications of these relations within local initiatives, in the epistemological decolonization and, above all, about their contributes to a cognitive justice, determinant in a social justice.

METHODS

Considering the issues which are to discuss rare in European forums, it is considered to be relevant before the difficulties to meet critical understandings. The discourses that permeate the practices of arts education are mostly conservative and anchored in salvation models promoted since the late nineteenth century in the West.

The presentation of the conflictualities of a small art school, lost in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, transports within its experience a marked irreverence for our debate. The analysis that results of the ongoing research, processes, develop the reflections in relation to M_EIA, questioning the possibilities of connections between art and development. This research wants to make visible the dialogues, de conflicts, the discussions and the resistances of this artistic higher education school in Africa.

Methodologically speaking, we start from anthropology but we also make use of sensorial ethnography, and the use of multimedia. In this sense, the presentation will be accompanied by a group of images/documents that transport the reality under study, as well as the landscape that give meaning to it.

Ethnography is here understood as an intercultural space, which means that we aim not only make participative the methodologies used but rather to insist in a permanent dialogue, of confrontation and plural construction of the meanings of the realities in which we are involved.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have the main objective of confronting the hegemonic narratives through the study of a singular case outside Europe. We talk about an artistic higher education school and we work through the daily live of this school, through its fights and obstacles in constructing a proper narrative that is able to disrupt the common and naturalized senses of what is an art school or an academia. In the links between the subjects and their political bodies we find the terrain to explore the possibilities of disruption and questioning. However, to talk about this school without knowing the context and without imagining the lives and the landscapes is to loose the details that really matter. We will try to talk close to these details and, through the image, make present those that are far away of this north perspectives of knowledge.

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