

# **REVERSIBLE**

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# **ACTIONS**

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**ART**  
**EDUCATION**  
**TERRITORY**

**REVERSIBLE ACTIONS**

**A project by ACVIC. Centre d'Arts Contemporànies**  
[2008 - 2009]

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Ramon Parramon

**Coordinator**

Maite Palomo

**REVERSIBLE ACTIONS**

**Art, Education and Territory Seminar**

[November 2008]

**Direction**

Ramon Parramon / Javier Rodrigo

Wanda Wieczorek. *Documenta 12 Advisory Board.*

Lilian Amaral. *Mediations, contemporary art and social*

*construction. Experiences in specific contexts in Brazil.*

Ailbhe Murphy. *Tower Songs at Fatima Mansions: critical*

*coordinates for a community based on cultural production.*

Herman Labro / Rika Colpaert. *Stories from What>, a meeting*

*space for visual culture.*

Fernando Hernández. *What do artists and educators mean*

*when we say that we carry out artistic projects for educational*

*purposes?*

Loraine Leeson. *Return creativity. Cascade project.*

Santiago Barber. *Between practices of social cooperation and*

*creative production.*

Jesús Carrillo. *Old and new models of public interpretation*

*at contemporary art and cultural institutions. Ideological*

*frameworks and critical possibilities.*

AulAbierta. *Self-management of educational programmes for*

*close-at-hand sociocultural contents, between the university and*

*neighbourhood.*

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**Documentary space and projects**

**Curated by Ramon Parramon**

[November 2008 - December 2008]

*Documenta 12 Advisory Board, Kassel, Germany, 2007 / Wanda*

*Wieczorek.*

*Casa da Memória, Paranaipacaba, Brazil / Lilian Amaral.*

*Tower Songs, Dublin, Ireland, 2003 / Ailbhe Murphy.*

*De Kunstbank What>, Brussels, Belgium, project in progress /*

*Herman Labro and Rika Colpaert.*

*Docklands Community Poster Project, London, UK, 1981-1985 /*

*Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn.*

*Cascade, London, UK, 1999 - 2008 / Loraine Leeson.*

*El Gran Pollo de la Alameda, Seville, Spain, 1991-2006 /*

*Santiago Barber.*

*AulAbierta, Granada, Spain, project in progress / José Daniel*

*Campos and Pablo Pérez.*

*Quinzena d'Art de Montesquiú, Vic, Spain, project in progress /*

*H. Associació per a les Arts Contemporànies.*

*Identitat #5, Calaf, Manresa, Mataró, Priorat, El Prat del*

*Llobregat, Sondika, Spain, 2008-2010 / Identitat.*

**REVERSIBLE ACTIONS**

**Project production**

[November 2008 - December 2009]

**PLATONIQ. El Goog**

**REVERSIBLE ACTIONS**

**Exhibition**

**Curated by Ramon Parramon**

[July 2009 - October 2009]

**CATALYSTS**

*I'm Almost 18. Dinamik(tt)ak, 2006, project in progress /*

*Amasté*

*1021 days. Market and Memory \_ Sant Antoni Market, 2007,*

*project in progress / Jordi Canudas*

*Rehabilitation of Substandard Housing (gypsy shantytown in As*

*Raïas), 2007, project in progress / Santiago Cirugeda-Recetas*

*Urbanas*

*Negotiation House, 2003-2004 / Josep-Maria Martín in*

*collaboration with Alain Fidanza*

*Trans\_art\_lab (?) In the area of Healthcare, 2007, project*

*in progress / Sinapsis with Laia Solé, Tanit Plana, Javier*

*Rodrigo, Rachel Fendler and Mariola Bernal*

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APGCC. Associació de Professionals de la Gestió Cultural

de Catalunya

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Generalitat de Catalunya  
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Associació per a les  
Arts Contemporànies

ACVIC - EUMO EDITORIAL

# REVERSIBLE ACTIONS

## **A SERIES OF ACTIVITIES INCLUDED IN THIS PUBLICATION**

This publication brings together a series of different activities organised by ACVIC. Centre d'Arts Contemporànies [in progress] between November 2008 and December 2009. It contains a range of different artistic practices used in projects and by collectives and institutions.

The texts and projects presented here talk about reversible actions produced in certain local contexts and form part of the following activities:



**REVERSIBLE ACTIONS.**  
**Seminar on art, education and territory.**  
7-8 November 2008

This seminar examined contemporary art production carrying out educational activities related to specific features of the territory that require networks to carry them out and communicate them. Speakers included: AulAbierta (José Daniel Campos and Pablo Pérez), Lilian Amaral, Santiago Barber, Jesús Carrillo, Rika Colpaert, Ayse Gülec-Wanda Wieczorek, Fernando Hernández, Herman Labro, Loraine Leeson, Carmen Mörsch, Ailbhe Murphy and Rubia Salgado. Led by: Ramon Parramon and Javier Rodrigo.



**REVERSIBLE ACTIONS.**  
**Exhibition of projects and documentation space.**  
9 November 2008 to 9 February 2009

The material exhibited and documentation available were directly related to speakers at the seminar: AulAbierta (Granada), El Gran Pollo de la Alameda (Seville), Memory Museum (Paranapiacaba, Brazil), Documenta 12 Advisory Board (Kassel), Docklands Community Poster Project and Cascade (London), IDENSITAT#5 (Calaf, Manresa, El Prat de Llobregat, Mataró, Priorat, Sondika), Quinzena d'Art de Montesquiu (Vic-Montesquiu) and Tower Songs (Dublin).



**REVERSIBLE ACTIONS.**  
**Production project.**  
**El GOOG. The internet and social networks for the elderly.**  
February 2009 to December 2009

This project by Platoniq was carried out in conjunction with the Mossèn Josep Guiteras Centre for the Elderly in Vic. It examined questions such as keeping active, being self-sufficient, passing on knowledge and shared education, and considered how to rethink physical space and activate social space in the context of a centre for the elderly.



**REVERSIBLE ACTIONS.**  
**Exhibition**  
**CATALYSTS.**  
4 July to 18 October

A series of projects, either completed or in progress, presented in exhibition format. These works exemplified the three ingredients that make up the central thrust of this set of activities carried out during ACVIC's initial phase: artistic practices, educational actions and territory. All the pieces offer examples of how these elements can be combined in different proportions to adapt to different micro-sites and present very different situations, reactions and solutions. The following artists took part: Amasté, Jordi Canudas, Josep-Maria Martín, Sinapsis, Tanit Plana, Laia Solé and Santiago Cirugeda/Recetas Urbanas.

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# REVERSIBLE ACTIONS

# ACVIC. CENTRE D'ARTS CONTEMPO- RÀNIES [IN PROGRESS]

November 2008 saw the first activity at ACVIC. Centre d'Arts Contemporànies [in progress]: *Reversible Actions*, a seminar on art, education and territory. This activity was designed to reflect the interests and goals of a centre that had only recently opened its doors provisionally. This contemporary arts centre specialises in the relationship between art, education and territory and works on interdisciplinary research and innovation projects, with particular interest in processes and experimentation and special emphasis on communicating all this information through new kinds of formats and languages, particularly new forms of communication. It aims to be an arts centre that generates knowledge, questions and answers to the constant challenges posed by these concepts and practices.

The seminar offered a highly illustrative insight into both ACVIC actions and the relationship between the Centre and H. Associació per a les Arts Contemporànies, which ran the seminar. *Reversible Actions* brought together a set of actions carried out between late 2008 and 2009 and which are contained in this publication: the actions carried out at the seminar, Platoniq's research and production project *El Goog* and the exhibition *Catalysts*, with projects by different artists working on the relationship between art, education and territory. This volume also represents the start of a series of publications reflecting, promoting or accompanying ACVIC activities. To a certain extent, it reflects the goal of promoting and creating discussion and knowledge above and beyond the specific time and place of these kinds of events. It is a testimony and tool to disseminate the Centre's actions to all those to whom they might be of use.

H. Associació per a les Arts Contemporànies shares ACVIC's goals and we warmly welcome this volume in what should be a rich and fertile panorama of some of the burning artistic issues of our times.

Images from the *Reversible Actions* seminar, *Art, Education and Territory*, organised at the Centre Comunitari del Remei in Vic, in November 2008 .



Wanda Wiecezrek



Santiago Barber



Lilian Amaral



Jesús Carrillo



Oriol Picas, Josep M. Vila d'Abadal, Víctor Sunyol



Herman Labro, Rika Colpaert



Lorraine Leeson



Ailbhe Murphy



Fernando Hernández



José Daniel Campos, Pablo Pérez



Javier Rodrigo, Ramon Parramon

# REVERSIBLE ACTIONS IN PROGRESS

RAMON PARRAMON

*Reversible Actions* sets up the concept of reversibility as the condition in which all the elements playing a part are present to a different degree of reciprocal dependence. The reversible or inverse engineering consists of obtaining information on a product accessible to the public in order to determine what it is made of, to find out how it works and to be able to reorganise it with new contents. Essentially, it constitutes a process for innovation, which is often applied to the software or the design of the product. In the domain of artistic practices carried out in specific contexts and which promote educational actions, the following questions are asked: How can we separately analyse the three components – art, education and territory – and then reorganise them in meaningful sequences? How can we reconstruct them to design projects or, and why not, cultural policies?<sup>1</sup>

*Reversible Actions* is made up of a series of activities framed by the initial stage of the ACVIC. Centre d'Arts Contemporànies in Vic. Specifically, an international seminar held in November 2008 in the city of Vic, an exhibition of documentation concerning the projects presented in the domain of the seminar and a production project set up by the *Platoniq* collective. This publication includes some of these activities and a collection of texts written by participants.

This combination of activities was developed jointly with H. Associació per a les Arts Contemporànies (H.AAC). The purpose was and is to set up the bases, point out some methods and focus approaches to the future art centre, which in November 2008 was defined as *in progress*, despite not having a formulated structure, although it did have a preliminary project for which an agreement had been formalised between two public institutions, the Generalitat de Catalunya (Catalan Government) and Ajuntament de Vic (Vic Town Hall), and a citizen cultural initiative, H.AAC, a non-profit association working until that time as the engine for a major segment of the artistic activity of the city.

The process can actually be traced back to 2006, when the first project for a future centre began. At that time, the first political interest was expressed and the first steps were taken to provide these agreements and desires with infrastructure. A space existed at that time that was shaping up to be a candidate to house the software and applications that would be generated by the deployment of the artistic programme. Having defined a project adapted to it, the space would eventually be put forward for another use in short supply in the city, a hotel. These ups and downs,

1. Excerpt of the text published to disseminate the international seminar on art, education and territory, held in Vic on the 6 and 7 November 2008 and entitled *Reversible Actions*. A range of excerpts of the original contents published to disseminate the seminar will be employed in this text in order to introduce the participating projects and to provide concepts I feel are of interest with greater depth as regards the relationship between cultural production, the educational process and the territory of action in which it is carried out.



surely normal in long processes involving many different people in ever-changing public offices, have gone hand in hand with the perseverance and strong-willed attitude of H.AAC. That is why, strictly speaking, this process of defining the art centre can be seen to have its origins in 1991, the year in which the collective was founded, when it took responsibility for pedagogical activities, which in the field of Spanish art, have pioneered the organisation of workshops for artists run by artists, the QUAM. The *Quinzena d'Art de Montesquiu* has for many years now been an annual event for numerous artists, theorists and others interested in the artistic debates or in the execution of workshops run by distinguished individuals in the artistic domain. This work has slowly but surely been transferred and normalised in specialized centres, art schools and universities. The QUAM currently constitutes a specialised training activity promoted and coordinated by H.AAC and framed by the context of the University of Vic's summer courses. And throughout these years, H.AAC has continued to deploy a wide range of activities that combine the training, exhibition and publication of contents. This is doubtless the reason why an art centre has taken shape in a relatively small city, when compared with other cities already included on the map of Catalan art centres. One of the first cities on this map was Lleida with *La Panera*, followed more recently by Mataró with the *Can Xalant* and Girona with the *Bòlit Centre d'Art Contemporani*. Vic and Tarragona were added later after a tedious journey through different potential spaces (a former seminary in Vic's case and a former liqueur factory in the case of Tarragona). The *Centre d'Art Santa Mònica* in Barcelona (CASM) was one of the first in Catalonia and Spain. Major controversy reigns around this centre as a consequence of its dismantling announced halfway through 2008, which resulted in a large portion of the visual arts sector joining forces and demanding its reestablishment as an art centre in the city of Barcelona. This conflict has contributed to clearly demonstrate a reversible action, which is the impact of critical networks on cultural policies and vice versa. A range of associations and collectives have participated in this network.<sup>2</sup> Another element the importance of which has come to the fore, more laterally because work had been going on for some time, is the contribution to implanting the *Codi de Bones Pràctiques Professionals* (Code of Good Practice) in a determinant manner,<sup>3</sup> made by the As-

2. An assembly-based collective born in the context of Barcelona and from the conflict surrounding the reorientation of the *Centre d'Art Santa Mònica* is *Cultura de Base*. They define themselves on their web as follows: "*Cultura de Base* is a platform generated by a range of cultural and social agents in Barcelona that works as a meeting point for analysing and reflecting upon cultural policies and the repercussions they have had in recent years. The main common factor uniting the individuals, collectives and agents currently making up this platform is centred on the crisis occurring in the cultural policy model of Barcelona, which has for several years now been affecting this context". At <http://culturadebase.net>.

3. The Code of Good Practice in Visual Arts is a project promoted and published by the Association of Visual Artists of Catalonia, which aims to lay down the minimum bases for the relationship between artists, mediators, and production and dissemination spaces. The publication includes four documents: the first,

sociació d'Artistes Visuals de Catalunya (Association of Visual Artists of Catalonia) and agreed on by a large part of the contemporary arts sector. This code is becoming determinant for the future of all these small art centres being planned not only in Catalonia but also in Spain as a whole. It defines minimum models for management, direction and mediation applicable to the production and dissemination spaces. It describes the bases for the promotion of a contemporary vision of the presence of art in the social context and the fostering of independence in its lines of action.

Back with ACVIC, we are immersed in a long-term process maintained by a local heterogeneous collective that has looked at, connected with and participated in the global artistic context. We are standing before what has begun to be and will surely become an art centre basically focused on the relationship between art, education and territory. That is why the same underlying concepts are contained in this publication entitled *Reversible Actions*, outlined from projects, essays, direct actions and institutional or self-managed programmes that interweave and provide an idea of the current situation and possible future options. As a whole it constitutes a reflection on contemporary artistic production that develops educational activities that are connected to the specificities of the territory and which require a network connection for their execution and communication.

In order to organise the seminar we invited Javier Rodrigo, who has unequivocally placed himself in the theoretical-practical space between pedagogy and cultural production. The desire of the seminar was to bring together a group of people who could explicitly illustrate the relationship between art, education and territory in order to set out some key points for the future focus of the centre. Javier and I met at the Symposiums for Community Cultural Development held in Granollers in October 2005. The workshops combined presentations or conferences with specific activities in a variety of artistic fields. We as speakers participated by explaining the projects we were working on, which the organisers had united under the banner of "Community Cultural Development" and the subtitle "Art as a Tool for Social Transformation". On that occasion, Javier gave an effusive critical speech against the dangers involved in mixing a large quantity of practices with different and dispersed objectives under a unifying banner or prism. He boldly spoke up about what concerned us all. Firstly, an excess of backslapping and secondly, the reciprocal cannibalism occurring between artistic matters

which provides the name of the book, summarises in ten basic points professional treatment; the minimum rights and duties of professional activities; the second and third documents discuss the relationship between artists and the two major mediation groups, the non-profit spaces producing and/or programming and art galleries; the last document consists of a series of contracting models. The importance of this group of documents resides in the fact that it lays down the bases for a contemporary vision and management of the presence of art in the social context. *Associació d'Artistes Visuals de Catalunya* and Lluís Brun. *Codi de Bones Pràctiques professionals a les Arts Visuals*. Barcelona: *Associació d'Artistes Visuals de Catalunya*, 2008.

and those aimed at social empowerment. We have collaborated a couple of times more since then, once invited to debates as part of Idensitat held in the *Centre d'Art Santa Mònica* in 2005 entitled “Questioning public art: projects, processes, programmes”<sup>4</sup> and once to codirect the seminar as part of the activities set up in the framework of *Reversible Actions*. I cite this anecdote not just to frame what was the beginning of a collaboration project, but also because the seminars held in Granollers proposed the naming of a type of activity operating in a wide range of artistic contexts, which look to what is community based, in the social formulation of the neighbourhood, for a connection and a *raison d'être*. They brought together and were aimed at people who work in the area of social empowerment. Although I personally feel it is wrong to name something that is so heterogeneous and enriched by a wide range of interests, in many cases antagonistic, I do value the initiative as an attempt to construct a map of what exists in this area in which the art is sometimes diluted, and sometimes reactivated in its conjunction with social dynamics. The definition of roles adopted in this connection between the arts and socio-cultural empowerment can be confusing, since they can be viewed from diametrically opposed angles depending on which side they are operating. On the table for discussion at Vic was a version selected in a biased way, in which artistic practices, education, socio-cultural empowerment, social movements, policies for urban renewal, cultural policies, work in networks and creation centres were related to one another. The last on the list was of special interest due to the circumstances of the future art centre, *in progress* and looking to sketch out lines for its orientation in the future. All the above was compressed into the art-education-territory relationship.

## ART, EDUCATION AND TERRITORY

In order to break down some aspects concerning this three-phase relationship, I will refer here to excerpts of text employed to communicate the contents of the *Reversible Actions* seminar.

Often, from the artistic viewpoint, pedagogy has been relegated to providing complementary value to the cultural production with the danger of degrading or reducing its quality and critical positioning. From the educational and social action perspective, the work of the artist is frequently considered somewhat closed off to collaboration on educational projects or to community intervention in local contexts or institutions. These contrasting viewpoints cannot annul the possibility of defining new scenarios and demonstrating the fact that they have been surpassed by projects that act in a newly critical way towards this type of attitudes.

4. This activity and a text by Javier Rodrigo are included in: Parramon, R. (ed.). *Art, Experiences and Territories in Process*. Barcelona: Edicions Idensitat, 2008.

This paragraph lays out an on-going problem, which is the relationship between the artist and the educational domain, which on occasions look at each other and when they do, it is as if they were squinting; unavoidably connected and habitually uncoordinated. A possible solution suggested as a consequence of the seminar is to innovate from experiences in which artistic practices and educational activities are proposed as related parts of the same activity. The projects that have participated in the seminar and are published here illustrate this meeting point along these lines. In order for a new approach to take on a multi-directional shape in this dual relationship, part of the solution is for the historical stigma both spaces project on each other to be jettisoned. Traditionally education belongs to schools, in the same way as art belongs to museums. However, when questions are raised about this, displacements occur and possible new combinations beyond the standard are tested, and this is when the possibility of projects and practices investigating new directions arise. The text for the dissemination of the seminars I refer to here goes into a little greater depth as regards the type of artistic practices we are talking about and their connection with pedagogy.

If pedagogy consists in the production of experiences, knowledge and values within our reach, if these resources are transported through artistic production and related to experiences arising from the context; the production of knowledge, values and experiences can generate cultural policies and learning based on collective processes.

When this is the starting point and the art-pedagogy relationship, as the field for experimental action, does not aim to educate through art, or seek out new audiences for art, or sketch out differences between institutional space and managed space; it consists in generating situations in which experimentation is enabled with the transmission and exchange of knowledge and experience, as is research into artistic production and the use of techniques and resources that enable its communication and transport through the incorporation or revitalisation of social dynamics.

Linking artistic practice with social practice is something that can be attributed to many of the projects presented at the seminar. I will begin with the project that most conclusively exemplifies, more than a relationship, the dissolution of both practices. *El Gran Pollo de la Alameda* (A Huge Stir in La Alameda), consisting in a variety of actions or mobilisations over twelve years in the neighbourhood of La Alameda in Seville, is presented by Santiago Barber, an active member of the project and author of the text published here.<sup>5</sup> In the text he retroactively evaluates the nature of the project and the publication that went with it, through a

5. The title of the article shows the position held by the author: *In practices for social cooperation and creative production*.

process organised by, for and with the La Alameda neighbourhood.<sup>6</sup> After more than twelve years' work in the neighbourhood, the publication has become an archive and communication method that combines the project's essence and complexity. Essential because all the immaterial work is reflected by its reticulate complexity weaved by implications, struggles, battles won and lost, relationships, mobilisations, desertions and a whole host of political strategies (to use military jargon) in order to inhabit, coexist with and defend participation in the decisions affecting territory; but also to make demands for the permanent need for active social mobilisation. In order to complement and reference the complexity of the *social creativity* binomial employed in the *Gran Pollo de la Alameda*, I will use the definition proposed in an investigation undertaken by the *Equip d'Anàlisi Política* at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona: "A social movement must be viewed as a collective political player of a mobilising nature, and as a result, participation space, that pursues objectives for change through unconventional actions; to this end, it acts with a certain amount of continuity, a high degree of symbolic integration and a low level of specification of roles, at the same time as it is enriched by variable organisational methods."<sup>7</sup> This investigation analyses how the political parties have reduced their social presence, since they no longer promote socialisation places, and how long-standing social movements, neighbourhood groups, unions have quickly been transformed into a constellation of associations, bodies and groups that cover the wide variety of social and political concerns held by the public. They refer to these new social movements as *communities and networks of critical collective action*. This project consisted in providing a catalyst for collective actions of a critical nature through relations formulated in networks. Barber clearly explains it in the text included in this publication: "People have had to create physical and symbolic spaces, in which to actively set up cooperation to then analyse the urban-planning conflicts and the population expulsion processes, the problems of access to housing, the domestication of public spaces and their transformations, the precariousness of everyday life and relations with wage-earning and rents."<sup>8</sup> First, there is a transfer of knowledge between participating individuals, people learn from others through involvement in the process; second, social creativity is made visible by means of transported collective action in critical networks that act in public spaces.

6. The process includes the publishing project: Various authors. *El Gran Pollo de la Alameda* (A Huge Stir in La Alameda). *El Gran Pollo de la Alameda. Cómo nació, creció y se resiste a ser comido. Una docena de años de lucha social en el barrio de la Alameda*. Seville, 2006. At: <http://el.granpollodelaalameda.net>.

7. Pedro Ibarra, Salvador Martí, Ricard Gomà. *¿Vale la pena moverse? Movimientos sociales, redes críticas e impactos en las políticas*. Part of the research has been published as a chapter of the book: Robles, José Manuel (comp.). *El reto de la participación. Movimientos sociales y organizaciones*. Madrid: A. Machado Libros, 2002.

8. See text by Santiago Barber, *Entre la práctica de cooperación social y la producción creativa*, included in this publication.

## SOCIAL CREATIVITY, COLLECTIVE ACTION AND ARTISTIC PRACTICES

Interdisciplinary collaboration in the context of the neighbourhood enables the deployment of educational actions that result from this relationship between social creativity and collective action. This thesis is expressed in the majority of the projects presented here. An example is *Tower Songs*, initiated by the artist Ailbhe Murphy in 2003 to activate a project that could provide a response to the intense social and architectural transformation taking place in the city of Dublin. A collaborative project developed in the long term that employs music, voice and song to recall the experience of living in tall blocks of flats located in neighbourhoods immersed in this transformation. Since its beginnings, it was backed by CityArts,<sup>9</sup> an Irish organisation that promotes artistic work in specific communities and contexts in collaboration with organisations that activate local projects. The *Tower Songs* project thereby gained two new partners, Fatima Group United and the Rialto Youth Project, which contributed the confidence, credibility and background required to carry out the project with the involvement and participation of people living in the neighbourhood. They have taken testimonies that have enabled the continuity of the project. The project's purpose is to have a bearing on the renewal process in the city (specifically in the depressed areas of Fatima and Rialto in Dublin) and consequently calls for the continuity of the process from the context of the neighbourhood, with the people who live and work there.

One of the objectives of a project of this nature, in which work has been executed with the community for a long period of time, is to lay the bases so that it can continue to be promoted by people or collectives active in the area. Part of the work of the artists is therefore to devise the necessary agreements and involvement to shape the basic infrastructure required for its continuity. Ailbhe Murphy uses this experience in the text published here, to ask a relevant question: How can one transform or move beyond the values of the work itself in the long term in a specific context? This process of transmission is part of the logic of the educational process: there is knowledge and a transfer of understanding that seeks to implement creative actions in the territory it has a bearing on, in this case, in the context of urban transformation.

9. CityArts is an organisation that implements participatory art policies in contemporary society. The work program of CityArts is created in collaboration with communities in a wide range of areas of the city of Dublin (<http://www.cityarts.ie>).

*Tower Songs* is a long term project directed by CityArts working with voices, sounds and song to explore collective and personal narratives of communities living in urban renewal situations. Since 2005, *Tower Songs* has produced work with people living in Dolphin House, Fatima Mansions and Ballymun in the city of Dublin, such as several songs and three documentaries, made by Fergus Tighe, Aoibheann O'Sullivan and Terry Blake. Several artists have worked on the project including the song-writer Sean Millar, the composers Jorge Higgs and Daragh O'Toole, the artist Ailbhe Murphy and the musician Brian Fleming (<http://www.rte.ie/performinggroups/pdf/ANewDayRelease.pdf>).

In the cases of Seville and Dublin, the art carries out the job of what we might call *bridging*, consisting in designing bridges between the critical network, the social context and the artistic space. A similar approach is made by the *Docklands Community Poster Project*, executed in the eighties by Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn. The work is a forerunner in the prolific relationship between artists and activists organised for socio-political causes. The project was initiated as a response to concerns arising in East London around a huge redevelopment plan for the area. The transformation plan was at that time being promoted by Margaret Thatcher's new conservative government, which was placing the area of docks and warehouses now known as London Docklands in the hands of the private sector. The political vitality of the inhabitants of East London gave rise to a huge campaign to protect the rights of the local people and workers in the different neighbourhoods of the area from the privatisation of public space. The artists Dunn and Leeson actively collaborated in the process, at first by being contracted to produce a poster denouncing the operation. They then became definitively involved in the process, and as part of the campaign opened up a collaborative cultural process that lasted for nearly ten years.

In this case the project was born at the heart of a specific struggle, and its *raison d'être* was closely linked to the struggle. The work of the artists was inserted into the process based on a specific need and demand. It eventually turned itself into a kind of cultural department within a political and social negotiating process in a context combining several neighbourhoods. In contrast to the previous case, in which the figure of the artist acted as the engine and later disappeared, in this case it acted as a service in a time span limited by the times defined by the conflict. A few years later, between 1999 and 2008, the experience and the knowledge acquired were transferred to the *Cascade* project, a guide to the Royal Docks area for young people. This project is also presented to us by Loraine Leeson in this publication. The aim is to give a voice to young people so they can express their point of view as regards the urban renewal projects of the Royal Docks. Another long term project that works directly in educational matters with the production and presence of young people in public spaces with a view to imaginatively understanding, constructing and representing their own lives and those of the community in which they live.

## CULTURAL PRODUCTION, NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY

The word community often appears in the artistic domain that includes educational matters and deploys participation strategies in its execution. Sometimes the *neighbourhood* concept is employed to refer to a limited urban context, and sometimes we refer to the *community* concept when the social group we are working with does not necessarily correspond to a specific geographical area. Whatever the case may be, the idea of

neighbourhood has changed since the seventies and eighties, forged in struggles to obtain the minimum requirements for a better quality of life. An idea of neighbourhood that was almost identical to the idea of community. In today's world in which city mobility, between neighbourhoods and cities has greatly increased, the concept of neighbourhood has been modified and the group of people inhabiting it does not necessarily consider itself part of a compact community. Francesc Muñoz<sup>10</sup> explains this conversion of the concept of neighbourhood linked to population density into a *multiplex* space characterised by mobility and the temporary use of the space. There are neighbourhoods in which the density (inhabitants per meter squared) increases at certain times and days of the week because of, for example, the existence of a leisure centre or commercial activity. From this perspective, the neighbourhood and community concepts are brought closer together and farther apart at the same time; neither term clearly defines the social group it refers to; it is perfectly possible to perform a temporary activity with a group of people and straight away move to another space with another activity undertaken in a new community. Something similar can be perceived in what the authors of the *What>*<sup>11</sup> project pursue with their activities, which is to generate new temporary communities. Neighbourhood and community are increasingly similar and more distant from one another, because they are both increasingly *multiplex*.

The objective is not to delve further into these concepts. It is just to point out some words that are repeated or reproduced in a range of situations, and in this case in different projects, and which in many cases are inherited from an artistic tradition (which is relatively current). Workshop, neighbourhood and community are commonly used words in artistic and social dynamics. Their meanings however vary depending on their intentionality and contemporaneity.

Simplifying, if *community* is in this case understood to be the group brought together or with which work is undertaken, Fernando Hernández lists, in the text published here, the different ways he has detected in which relationships are formed between culture workers or artists and the community through pedagogical projects. By way of summary, these range from the use of the artist of a working material, through the work of the artist as a service to an existing project, to joint collaborations. He views all interventions as pedagogical because they suggest ways of seeing the world and relating to reality. Through a variety of examples, Fernando Hernández proposes existing programmes in which artistic and pedagogical work is united in the space for cultural production.

Another example dealing with questions concerning cultural production and expression understood as educational actions with and for the

10. Muñoz, Francesc. *Urbanización. Paisajes comunes, lugares globales*. Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2008.

11. See the text published here entitled, *Stories from What>*, by Herman Labro and Rika Colpaert.

community is the *Casa da Memória* (*House of Memory*) in the Brazilian municipality of Paranapiacaba, promoted by the artist and curator Lilian Amaral. Paranapiacaba is a municipality originally built for monitoring operations and as a residence for the staff of the English railway company São Paulo Railway. In the seventies the area became run down as a consequence of railway transport no longer being a priority in the area. It has now been recognised by the UNESCO as a world heritage site and as a result has acquired a new role in the current post-industrial context. The *Casa da Memória* is one of five installations comprising the cultural activity of the population developed using the ideas of participation, appropriation and collaboration, as described by Amaral. The *Casa da Memória* is defined as a hub of audiovisual memory of the human landscape in direct relation with territory, and is configured as an experimental, interdisciplinary, contemporary, exhibition, educational and local space. It is a meeting place for exhibits, courses, presentations, auditions and screenings, and a documentation and reference centre for the human landscape of the municipality of Paranapiacaba.”<sup>12</sup> The installations have given rise to myriad activities undertaken in collaboration with the local population and agents from a variety of fields and places. A lot of the work is carried out by the organisation in open workshops with and for the inhabitants.

## ON CULTURAL POLICIES, INSTITUTIONALISATION AND SELF-MANAGEMENT

The last part discussed originally at the seminar and now in the publication refers to the work of production centres as regards new methods of cultural production, collaboration and dissemination through educational actions. And in a reversible way, production by means of participatory and negotiation strategies between cultural institutions, production centres and users. Once again in reference to a fragment of text for the dissemination of the seminar on questions centred more on the relationship between self-management and institutionalisation.

The projects and proposals presented at this seminar set out relationships between art, pedagogy, institutions and cultural agents submerging in the fabric of society. Institution and cultural value are not in antagonistic positions. They increasingly struggle to conquer their own domains, and negotiate to share possible spaces. Contemporary creation centres and self-managed projects look for common spaces. This crossover is therefore presented to us as a possibility for collaboration, cooperation and work on educational projects, and not as a result of bipolar tension.

12. Amaral, Lilian. “House of Memory, Hub of audiovisual memory of the human landscape in Paranapiacaba”. In the magazine: *Malabia. Art, culture and society*. Number 36, September 2007. Barcelona, Montevideo, La Plata. Available at: <http://www.dataexpertise.com.ar/malabia/upLoad/Notas/79/pocs.pdf>.

If all political order is somehow based on exclusion, cultural policy must always accept the antagonism, as suggested by Javier Rodrigo,<sup>13</sup> in reference to Mouffe and Rancière, and understand cultural practice as citizen struggle open on several fronts. This is the essence of the public space requiring negotiation strategies to channel proposals and projects, and to become established as a space in constant conflict.

In order to tackle this question concerning spaces for production and dissemination, it is useful to discuss cultural policy and the relationship between what is political and what is social. According to Toby Millar and George Yúdice, cultural policy is a method of channelling aesthetic creativity and ways of life. “Cultural policy is embodied by guides for systematic and regulatory action adopted by the institutions in order to meet their goals. In short, it is more bureaucratic than it is creative or organic: the institutions request, instruct, distribute, finance, describe and reject actors and activities marked by the stamp of artist or art by means of the implementation of policy.”<sup>14</sup> Both authors describe culture as being linked to politics on two levels, aesthetic and anthropological. The first is linked to artistic and creative practices, the second is an indicator of the way in which we live in relation to place, language, religion, customs, time and space. The connection they refer to as anthropological is related to what Mouffe calls social: “What is political is linked to the acts of a hegemonic institution. A differentiation must be made between what is political and what is social. What is social is a domain of settled practices, or in other words, practices that conceal the originating acts of their contingent political institution, which are taken as given, as if they were self-foundational.”<sup>15</sup>

Creative practices are inevitably connected to these settled social practices, but some, specifically those outlined in this publication, look to the connection with the social side very explicitly. They begin life experiencing autonomous strategies, which seek out their essence in what is social, and their controversy in what is political; when these practices are reproduced because a value is placed on the results, they end up creating the foundations for new cultural policies. Another quote to close this connection between creative practices and what is political and social, and the tension or exclusion produced therein: “The essential task of politics is the configuration of its own space, to ensure the world of its subjects and operations is visible. The essence of politics is the expression of *dissent*, when two worlds are so clearly present in one.”<sup>16</sup>

13. See the text in this publication: Rodrigo, Javier. *Working in Networks and collective pedagogies: challenges for cultural production*.

14. Millar, Toby and Yúdice, George. *Política cultural*. Barcelona: Editorial Gedisa, 2004.

15. Mouffe, Chantal. *Prácticas artísticas y democracia agonística*. Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona and Servei de Publicacions de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2007.

16. Rancière, Jacques. *11 theses on politics*. AT: <http://aleph-arts.org/pens/11tesis.html>.

This vigorous tension at the heart of an educational institution gives rise to the work of AulAbierta, a formless group of students and ex-students from the Universidad de Granada, which defines itself as a design and construction experience of a self-managed learning community. Their goal is to become a community actively involved in the research and production of knowledge, which reintroduces the social nature of this as something constructed collectively. Their text analyses their own organisational contradictions: on the one hand they want to escape and be an alternative to established structures, and on the other they depend on these in order to carry out their activities. Through self-learning and self-training strategies they have set up major cultural projects open to the context of the city. Multiple activities that open a rift and provide a breath of fresh air in the rather impermeable institution which is the university. Collective work, the use of technologies to facilitate the participation of members, relationships with the educational institution, the group itself as a self-managed institution, are some of the more interesting elements under analysis. They have demonstrated a capacity to generate results through new organisational structures, and as is described in the text published here, that what you do is less important than how you do it. It is a demonstration of the fact that the *How* is related to the *what*, or to the results.

Another example of tension is provided by Wanda Wieczorek and Ayşe Güleç in the project *Documenta 12 Advisory Board*. They define it as an experiment inserted into the context of Documenta 12 in Kassel in an attempt to involve the city in the international event. An interesting attempt to combine what is apparently irreconcilable: the huge showcase which is documenta in the art world with a structure that has a small base linked to the local context; on one hand the ephemeral nature of the event, and on the other, the need for a long-term perspective for the work. This question coincides with the one asked by Carmen Mörsch and Rubia Salgado, who, in this publication, analyse two cases under study: Documenta 12, in which Carmen participated in the same mediation project developed by *Documenta 12 Advisory Board*, and *Maiz*, a project on which they both collaborated, and which has for more than ten years been carrying out political-cultural activities in order instigate changes to the living and working situation of immigrants in Austria. A comparative exercise between long and short terms as regards artistic institutions and local contexts. A certain amount of disenchantment and frustration emerges from the text, in reference to attempts at making changes to highly institutionalised artistic structures and the difficulty of carrying out critical actions and establishing alternative mechanisms. While in much more independent structures such as *Maiz*, it is possible to set up the dynamics to enable the deployment of work in the long term that introduces small changes in power relationships. Wieczorek and Güleç point out that long-term work enables the participants to develop flexible social relationships and allows for testing and errors.

## NEW SPACES FOR CREATION; NEW FORMS OF PRODUCTION

New forms of production are more related to an expanded idea of public space than to traditional exhibition spaces. Constant expressions located in the public space seek out what they do not normally find in the protected exhibition spaces of art centres; direct connection with the population and the need to connect with “reality”. This conciliating objective may in a first instance seem problematic, since the “peripatetic wandering of passers-by”<sup>17</sup> rarely coincides with the need for involvement in order to perceive (experiment, understand, take part in) an artistic project. The need for involvement has also been referred to by Muntadas in some of his work by means of the sign: “Warning: perception requires involvement”. This controversy gives rise to an increasing interest in the domain of creative experimentation and its difficulty when there is a need for connection between citizen collectives, agents active in the social space, to attempt to shape a new productive field in practices affecting the public space. Not to create pseudo-social practices, but rather to articulate collaborative creative processes, which are more or less complex, and which contribute innovative features that can take shape later in practices that require a more long-term working dynamic.

To mediate and enable more complex work of this nature and include these changes to production, one of the routes for their articulation is the creation centres (a wide-ranging term chosen from several I have already used). When discussing creation centres in Spain, it is necessary to do it from the perspective of public management. There are hardly any private initiatives, because neither are there mechanisms to clearly foster this option, and the tradition in Anglo-Saxon countries of incentivising certain types of private organisations whose charitable activities are awarded with major tax breaks does not exist here either. The management of culture in Spain is associated with the activity of elected politicians, who have defined models and proposals, which in many cases have not counted on the inclusion of professionals active in the field of the arts.

This is beginning to change, because the mechanisms for creation, production, management and dissemination have started to transform the previous structures and models. For example, in Catalonia, a law has been passed to enable the existence of a Consell Nacional de la Cultura i de les Arts, which will take on responsibility for part of the management and distribution of regional government funds for cultural and artistic activities. The changes this might lead to in the current context are yet

17. This phrase has often been used by Manuel Delgado in his prolific studies into public space from an anthropological point of view. In *El animal público* (Anagrama, Barcelona, 1999), he defines public space as “those surfaces that landslide resulting in an infinity of crossovers and bifurcations, and which set the stage for what could easily be referred to as choreographies. Who are the actors? Obviously no longer coherent and homogenous communities entrenched in their territorial grid, but rather ever-alternating actors: drifting passers-by, foreigners, pedestrians, workers and fortune hunters on the public highway, the naturally disguised, potential pilgrims, bus passengers awaiting their moment...” (p. 26).

to be seen, and whatever the case may be, have arrived late in comparison with the majority of countries under Anglo-Saxon influence, which had already introduced this management model more than 60 years ago. This time lag could have a positive role to play if our own model is constituted adapted to the context, to enable connections and relations on international and local levels, and with management budgets worthy of their objectives.

For the purposes of a discussion of this change in strategies and the new panorama of infrastructures taking hold, I will refer to a couple of texts by Jesús Carrillo, which are complementary. The texts are entitled *New Culture Factories: places for cultural creation and production in contemporary Spain* and *Reflections and proposals for new contemporary creation centres*.<sup>18</sup> The second text is published here in relation to the participation of Jesús Carrillo in the seminar. The first is an analysis of the current phenomenon of the conversion of former factories, industrial architecture, production spaces in the Fordist sense of term, into new spaces for culture and arts. To this end, an analysis is made of three recently-inaugurated cases on the current artistic scene: *La Laboral* in Gijón, the *Tabacalera* in San Sebastián and the *Matadero* in Madrid. He questions the common feature of their programmes characterised by the proliferation of notions such as production and creation, cultural and contemporary, visual culture replacing contemporary art, and the systematic use of “new technologies”. The production process should be made visible, since the mere exhibition of the final result is not enough; we need to see what came before, what is processual, because this is also part of the work. Another common theme linking the centres is the desire to connect what is local with what is global. The nature of projects linked to regional policies requires the skilful combination of the relationship between what is familiar and what is foreign, to put it on the contemporary map (depending on the interests involved; sometimes these will be artistic, and sometimes they will be far more ambitious, aiming to place the entire city on the map or to contribute to making this possible). Another common element is the attempt to join by a common thread a range of creative areas through the programming: design, music, visual arts, gastronomy ...

A circumstance that has clearly marked cultural policies joins this group of common features; the excessive proximity of politicians to the management of the centres. From the programming to the evaluation of results, normally involving a count of the number of users, with excessive oversight of contents, which in many cases makes the consideration of critical work impossible to the benefit of neutral contents, or to the benefit of serving partisan programmatic lines. This in turn relates to the fact that working methods somewhat impermeable to the inclusion of pre-existent dynamics are promoted; activities that could generate a

connection with what is local from an independent perspective and with critical approaches and alternative proposals to the inflexible institutional policies.

The second text by Jesús Carrillo published here is a more pragmatic complement to the previous document and proposes a series of conditions that should be taken on board by a creation centre promoted by the institutions. I summarise these below:

- Independence from macro-projects for urban renewal, to prevent the type of culture from being deterritorialising, abstracting meaning and mystifying (which is adapted to the ecosystem of the place and does not aim to swallow up everything moving in its vicinity). An intelligent proposal is made here for all projects to include a negotiation between what is local, what is foreign, and what is unfamiliar.
- The creation of structures for direction and financing in order to guarantee the independence and transparency of the centre. Constitution of a consultancy committee made up of agents from the local area and a specialized sector, of a temporary nature in order to connect with their social and cultural environment. This should be complemented by the definition of processes, channelling proposals and projecting them onto society, where the centre is seen as a catalyst.
- The third point concerns the identification of the users, collaborators or participants. The creator-spectator relationship is no longer dual, because far more interactive dynamics are established which are therefore much more complex.

It is a text that moves in the territory of praxis and lays down very specific base points for setting up a new creation centre or for analysing an existing one.

Artistic practices merge with management and are established as a way of testing new forms of production, dissemination, distribution and the reciprocal interaction of contents, by constructing a new environment for art based on the nodal points of network connections. This idea of nodes of connection and platform of services has led to the use of the “Hub” concept in relation to creation centres. The New Museum of New York adopted the concept by defining itself as “Museum as Hub”.<sup>19</sup> This enabled it to develop activities in connection with other production and exhibition centres in an international domain for activities. More recently the new Disseny Hub Barcelona (DHUB) centre still under construction as a building but with an active programme, has included the same concept.<sup>20</sup>

18. Carrillo, J. (2007). Available at: [http://medialab-prado.es/article/laboratorio\\_del\\_procomun\\_nuevos\\_centros\\_de\\_creacion\\_contemporanea](http://medialab-prado.es/article/laboratorio_del_procomun_nuevos_centros_de_creacion_contemporanea).

19. <http://www.newmuseum.org>.

20. According to their web page: “Disseny Hub Barcelona is being transformed into

This dematerialisation and network connection sums up the contemporary essence of new forms of production. A range of analogies come to mind: public space as territory, artistic project as pedagogy, political as social, social space as context ... and they can be mixed and matched: artistic practices in the public space as collective pedagogies, space for creation as a cultural political space, educational spaces as spaces for artistic creation ... Maybe this is the way to find new and more suggestive ways of understanding reality in order to position ourselves as producers of new mechanisms, rather than just consumers or mere spectators.

## CATALYST PROJECTS

This publication looks at a series of projects, institutions and art centres and analyses the different practices and reversible actions created from interactions in specific local contexts. The first phase at ACVIC included a project by the Platoniq<sup>21</sup> group, *El Goog*, which examined some of the same questions addressed here, such as policies for recycling resources and knowledge, participation strategies, activating temporary exchange networks and developing collective creative processes through individual contributions. This project focused on a group of people linked to the Mossèn Josep Guiteras Centre for the Elderly and the coordinator of the Associació Social de Jubilats i Pensionistes de Vic i Comarca (Vic County Pensioners' Social Association). Platoniq already had extensive experience with the Common Knowledge Bank project, whose methodology promotes shared knowledge and encourages self-organisation so groups can develop their own dynamics. For *El Goog*, a workshop was designed to promote the use of online social networks as tools for socialising, working together collectively and creating shared creative spaces. The goal was not merely for participants to become users of these virtual social networks, but to learn about the potential of these kinds of structures in order to apply them to the social activities carried out at the centre. The project promoted the use of tools and helped guide new activities to foster creativity. In parallel, a working group was set up between the association and Platoniq to rethink participatory dynamics above and beyond the workshop itself and lay the foundations for a reproducible model. *El Goog, the Internet and Social Networks for the Elderly* examined questions such as keeping active, being self-sufficient, passing on knowledge and shared education, and helped rethink the centre's physical space and activate its social space.

The final section includes a series of art practices grouped together

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an operational system that transcends its own physical space, by developing some of its activities in a virtual environment and setting itself up in the hub of a network of conservers, creators and consumers of the design, to share relevant information concerning the sector". <http://www.dhub-bcn.cat>. The fact that the project is in progress justifies the publication here of a former project of Platoniq. For other projects of this collective, see <http://platoniq.net>.

21. For other projects by the group and its working methodology: <http://platoniq.net>.

under the heading of *Catalysts*.<sup>22</sup> This set of projects – some completed and others still in progress – exemplifies three ingredients that have been central to the activities carried out at an initial phase at ACVIC: artistic practices, educational actions and places. When combined in different proportions and adapted to different micro-places, they offer very different solutions and reactions.

A catalyst acts to speed up or slow down a chemical reaction, whilst itself remaining unchanged. In the kinds of practices considered here, the artists, architects, creators or cultural managers act as catalysts in a situation, space, service or common place. A summer camp, a neighbourhood market, a space for negotiating conflicts, a hospital, a self-built shantytown and a space for activities for retired people are some of the places chosen by the creators taking part in this exhibition. Although such places are not usually linked to creative work, the creators identified a potential or need for reaction.

Since 2006, the groups Amasté/Casi Tengo 18<sup>23</sup> have jointly organised a summer camp for teenagers, where they try out new work methodologies based on collaborations between artists and instructors. The experience is based on learning from others and both artists and instructors work to promote this knowledge flow. The main goals are to activate teenagers' creative potential at a key time when their identity is being formed, and show them that art can be a tool for mediating and a powerful mechanism for encouraging active teaching based on designing processes, stimulating creativity and developing group skills. Each edition is a new field of work to carry out joint participatory experiences, socio-cultural actions and nonformal education from the perspective of committed social, political and cultural action.

Jordi Canudas designed the *Mercat i Memòria. Mercat de Sant Antoni* (Market and Memory. Sant Antoni Market) project to coincide with the imminent renovations scheduled to take place at this emblematic Barcelona market. The project involved many people who live or work in the neighbourhood. He himself lives nearby and is therefore both a resident and, through this artistic project, a catalyst. Here the 'reaction' takes shape in different areas at different phases of the project. He carried out a meticulous study of everyday life at the market until it closed for renovations. The project consists of mechanisms designed to spark memory, participation and representation in this public space at a unique moment in time when a period is being brought to a close by the changes to the market. This transition will see some things disappear and new ones appear. The idea behind the project is to capture, reveal and strengthen the intangible factors that run through many of the social networks in

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22. Catalysts was the title of the exhibition Ramon Parramon was the curator of the Reversible Actions cycle that was exhibited in the ACVIC space from July to October 2009.

23. For more information on the project: [www.amaste.com](http://www.amaste.com) and [www.casitengo18.com](http://www.casitengo18.com).



the neighbourhood. The market is where many of these networks converge.

Josep-Maria Martín's *Maison de la Négociation* (Negotiation House) project looks at the role of negotiation in different micro-conflicts which arise in everyday life. The goal was to create a neutral space to reduce tension and create a suitable environment for agreement and help change inflexible, opposing positions and find possible solutions. His plan was to restore a former school building in the Schönberg neighbourhood in Fribourg in Switzerland. He aimed to revamp this space and put on a programme of actions to help resolve everyday conflictive situations. To transform the space he worked with architect Alain Fidanza, and to organise the workshops and debates he was assisted by psychologist Carmen González. The project aims to promote positive coexistence, learning and finding solutions to critical situations. It was initially designed as a pilot project that would require the involvement of the community and institutions to continue. This is a common feature to several projects like this: they are designed as short-term initiatives that can then be extended through local involvement.

Another thought-provoking strategy brought together the processes of designing and communicating creative worlds linked to the field of health, based on the twin strategies of research and action. The research consisted of a study whose findings were used to compile an archive of projects, programmes, institutions, policies and a bibliography that traces an international map of artistic practices in the overlap with the field of health. This result will be formalised in a publication that aims to act as a teaching model and guide for carrying out cultural policies with this focus. The other strategy involved undertaking a work process for action in a healthcare institution, Santa Creu i Sant Pau hospital in Barcelona. Artists Laia Solé and Tanit Plana were invited to carry out a project based on fieldwork and a subsequent idea which brought together several aspects linked to the healthcare centre and the neighbourhood context.

Laia Solé's project *Grada Zero* extended the work towards the hospital environment through three different actions. First she documented the space and common codes in three neighbouring organisations: the hospital, Centre Esportiu Municipal del Guinardó (Guinardó Municipal Sports Centre) and Centre Cívic del Guinardó (Guinardó Civic Centre). Then she designed a small publication containing the narratives from the first action, combining the subjects of health, sport and belonging to a group. The third part consisted of an iconographic element made up of three flags reproducing the ground plan of each building and emulating the colours of the hospital's hemodynamics team, the Martinenc football club and the Guinardó bowling club. This final part concluded with a festive celebration of the project based on a tournament between the three teams.

Tanit Plana based her work on the fact that the hospital was moving to a new building and drew parallels with the curative process as a move to a new state. Her work consisted of setting up relationships with patients in the coronary unit and representing the climactic moment of cure, the step before their operation. It is a highly emotional project, with both hope and fear, confusion and excitement. It is presented through a large-scale video projection narrating the moment when the patient is about to cross the threshold separating them from their greatest hope, regaining their health.

The two works articulate different possible ways of representing the healthcare system and in their own way act as catalysts: one by relating different contextual elements, and the other by revealing subjective emotional states and experiences.

Another work that formed part of this collective exhibition was designed by Santiago Cirugeda and his study *Recetas Urbanas*. This programme aimed to rehabilitate 19 self-built homes in the gypsy shantytown of As Rañas on the outskirts of A Coruña. This rehabilitation programme was based on pedagogical dynamics with a twofold aim: to recognise and bring together residents' knowledge, building on the constructive experience of those who took part in building the shantytown; and to carry out a training programme and introduce new materials, strategies and building processes, using tools and following safety regulations. Self-building is seen and assessed from a reversible perceptive, by transferring knowledge of the experience to increase participants' possibilities on the job market. One of the main goals was to improve the look of the homes and increase residents' quality of life. The project is still under way and therefore cannot be fully assessed yet. However, since the very start of this highly original project, which brings together illegal and legal, self-building and planning, normalisation and deregulation, self-learning and teaching, it has acted inevitably as a catalyst. Combinations of opposites bring about innovation in these kinds of urban transformations, which often end with the arrival of mechanical diggers.

These projects all act as catalysts, albeit not in the strictest sense, since they themselves are affected by the reaction they bring about. The projects form part of the reaction, but still remain reversible actions, since none of them is unidirectional or remains unaffected at the end.

# WORK IN NETWORKS AND COLLECTIVE PEDAGOGIES: CHALLENGES FOR CULTURAL PRODUCTION

JAVIER RODRIGO

## INTRODUCTION TO THE EDUCATIONAL DIMENSION IN TODAY'S WORLD: THE NEW OLD SCHOOL?

### On the emergence of pedagogy

The educational question in cultural production is a focus for debate that has come up recently in a range of contexts and reflections in the field of contemporary culture; in both theoretical and practical terms. This emergence is a demonstration of how educational concerns have also had a significant impact on current artistic practices, and not as a supplementary element or in a secondary role, but rather as one of the keys to the production of knowledge and work on cultural politics. The situation has made education 'fashionable' in the public arena. Or more specifically, a range of debates in the world of contemporary production have begun to analyse, and place emphasis and importance on the pedagogical factor. At this time, there are already examples that show us how exhibition centres and cultural production are taking educational proposals into consideration.

In order to review the wide range of discussions and debating forums on pedagogy, we can look to the fact that pedagogy is starting to become the leitmotif for a series of exhibitions and platforms of thought such as *Radical Education*<sup>1</sup> (Gallery of Modern Art in Ljubljana, Slovenia); the previous *Manifesta* in Cyprus (cancelled in the end), with the curatorial motive of the school; the last *Documenta* in Kassel (2007), with education and the question: What to do? as one of the three guiding themes of the macro-event; the exhibition *Academy-Teaching and Learning* (Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven); and lastly the processual exhibition *Pedagogical factory. Exploring strategies for an educated city*,<sup>2</sup> organised by the Stockyard Institute of Chicago in the Hyde Park Art Centre, with a continuous series of workshops and work coordinated by AREA. There are also publications that have either echoed this movement, such as Zehar (taking up the education debate held at Documenta XII to state level), or are interdisciplinary editorial projects, such as AREA<sup>3</sup> in Chicago (describing the intersections between art, activism, research and education on a local level since 2005). Other events held in tandem were also emerging, such as the *Summit conference: non-aligned initiatives in education culture*,<sup>4</sup> from 24 to 28 May 2007 in the city of Berlin (setting up forums for debate and action on multiple fronts for action in autonomous and non-aligned practices). All the above-mentioned examples show the pedagogical factor has moved beyond a school and teaching question and has become the central theme in the discussion of relations between democracy, culture and society.

1. <http://radical.temp.si/>

2. <http://www.stockyardinstitute.org/PedagogicalFactory.html>

3. <http://www.areachicago.org>

4. <http://summit.kein.org/>

## On viewpoints and traces of what is pedagogical, my approximation

Having elucidated pedagogy as an animated and highly visible field at this moment in time, I would like to outline my purpose. In this text I aspire to the objective of also responding to this current situation, but not in order to prevent it, or to not do it justice (the more interlinking arguments and positions there are, the richer the debate on education and culture will be). Far from it, what I want to contribute is a different position to the framework of the debate. This debate has its lines and limits, which in my opinion are sometimes over encapsulated. For example, one open line of debate concerns the free production of knowledge, through debates on free software and copyleft, in which attempts are made to build bridges between the new technologies and social networks. We could cite several examples here including, the Open Knowledge Conference in London (2007 2008),<sup>5</sup> the free software congresses in Brazil sponsored by the *Pontes de Cultura* project, the UNIA meetings on copyleft<sup>6</sup> or the Pedagogical Fault lines congress of 2007 in Amsterdam, designed by the Waag Society, Sarai and the Institute of Network Cultures. These areas of reflection have also come up in debates on academia and universities and their potentialities as critical spaces (Roggof 2007); in the liberating and facilitating capacity of the arts as an educational tool opposed to the current neoliberal system<sup>7</sup> (Podesva 2008); or in projects marked by the alleged almost messianic nature of new technologies such as the concept of “edupunk”<sup>8</sup> or “connectivism” (Jim Groom 2008, Siemens 2004, respectively). On other occasions, the references are not as explicit in the framework of contemporary theoretical production, but they do show signs of referring to the need for other fields in order to understand these questions beyond the purely aesthetic or modern art history. This fact is a mild incentive to search for references in educational and participatory theories as part of the complex debate on collaborative practices (Bishop 2006a).<sup>9</sup> Moreover,

5. <http://www.okfn.org/okcon>.

6. [http://www2.unia.es/artpen/estetica/estetica02/proy\\_1\\_mal01.htm](http://www2.unia.es/artpen/estetica/estetica02/proy_1_mal01.htm).

7. I welcome this reference to the weblog of my colleagues at the *La Fundicio*: <http://www.lafundicio.net/wordpress>.

8. The debate on the “edupunk”, as thirst for technology of the web 2.0 or a truly subversive work of political ideology, can be followed in several debating forums such as David Cohen’s, “Never mind the pedagogues, here’s edupunk” (*The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/mortarboard/2008/jun/16/punkormoreprecisely>, consulted on 08-09-08). For further information on the debate, see the article by Juan Frerie: “Edupunk: What are we talking about?” ([http://www.soitu.es/soitu/2008/07/08/pieldigital/1215514331\\_951710.html](http://www.soitu.es/soitu/2008/07/08/pieldigital/1215514331_951710.html), consulted on 08-09-08).

9. Along these lines, Bishop herself in the introduction to this text (p. 11) describes how in her book on participation she has not relied on sources outside the history of art and artistic productions. Despite recognizing other sources (architecture, theatre, pedagogy), which is laudable, she does not cite sources from political science or participatory research, which seems odd. And this is even odder when viewing her tendency to refer to political scientists or the writings of political philosophers such as Mouffe or Rancière.

other approaches focus on educational work by means of dialogues and the collaborative work of groups of artists in workshops. In my view, this has been perhaps until now the most respectful and proactive position in the context of networks and education in collaborative artistic practices (Kester 2006).

All the approaches are valid in their own contexts. They sometimes however forget other educational genealogies (The New School or Critical Pedagogy). On occasions they legitimize “institutionalising” concepts for themselves as regards what “is or is not” education and as a result, their discourse on what is pedagogical. The entire field appears to somehow take on anew the political and social dimension of education, beyond the mere transmission of knowledge or the social control of the population by means of socialising rituals for masses of schoolchildren. Nevertheless, the situation runs the risk of presenting practices as new, radical or critical, when they may be innovative, but can already be found in different policies concerning popular education movements in Latin America or in the social proposals of what is known as the New School in our continent.<sup>10</sup> We refer to pedagogical proposals that were an attempt to recover a democratic and active education for everyone by means of practical learning and its direct relationship with the context at hand. That is why we should be able to have an influence on these trajectories or pedagogical footprints, and not put down the educational institution as simply a Machiavellian or hegemonic body and as the scapegoat for the neoliberal system. Anti-hegemonic practices of resistance in any type of institution are always a possibility, especially in the school system. Maybe we should look back at other movements (the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (Free Teaching Institution), the *Residencia de Estudiantes* (Students’ Residence), the popular universities of the Second Spanish Republic, popular education and social movements in Latin America, etc.) and reconsider their role as regards social movements and also as pedagogical spaces (Ivern 2007, Coté, JF Day, Peuter, 2007). Otherwise, we could fall headlong into the trap of imagining a radical “new school” without the school or of not realising the fact that the new school was already in existence and many of its premises are still effective and pragmatic.

The intention of the overview I have given above is to provide approaches to the phenomenon of cultural production and pedagogy, specifically by means of the contributions made by critical pedagogy, collective pedagogy and above all the work of sociology and political

10. Neither should we be caught in the trap of the famous phrase “there is nothing new under the sun”. It is more a question of recognising other stories, footprints and traces and not ignoring them, as if schools were a wicked, hegemonic place for social control, and the teachers had no capacity for political action or activism in the classrooms. This type of discourse wipes out any possibility for teachers by maintaining a strange dichotomy between what is educational in the school and what is liberating and emancipating outside (or between the teacher-classroom-interior of the school as opposed to the cultural artist/worker cultural-space or social-city).

science in the theory of networks, socio-praxis and participatory work. From this perspective, my aim is to cover three points or objectives that seem necessary to relocate the role of pedagogy and net working in the cultural field.

The first objective is to interweave cultural production and pedagogical production as two interrelated domains and not as two complementary or supplementary domains. The aim here is to clarify the space occupied by pedagogy with respect to culture and vice versa, and without placing them in a hierarchy. This step leads into my second objective; to formulate pedagogical positions within the cultural production and to understand the cultural production in the framework of educational work, as two formulated realities that are interlinked in multiple dimensions as a result of the transversal nature of the collective pedagogies. Lastly the intention of my third objective is to understand the highly complex nature of collective learning and the creative outbursts produced by the collective pedagogies in work in networks by means of particular approaches to the theory of networks and the political sciences of participation. This last step involves being able to understand what can be asked of current cultural policies and consequently of a cultural centre, in terms of the production and the distribution of culture in the theory of networks and collective pedagogies.

## **CULTURAL PEDAGOGIES AND POLITICS: TWO INTERLINKED AREAS OF ACTIVITY**

### **On pedagogies**

Firstly we need to point out that the pedagogical question is not subordinated to a single definition or working framework and that all the forums and areas of activity are a constant reminder of the fact that what ends up as action does not stem from a unique pedagogical model, which could bring us into conflict over the most appropriate or most critical concept or framework without resulting in real and practical proposals or analysis. What is of interest to us here is not therefore the brand of work employed (people refer to radical education, critical pedagogy, radical pedagogy, collective pedagogies, liberational education, emancipatory education, utopian pedagogy, etc.). On the contrary, we should analyse what forms of working and educational practices are undertaken, what structures are modified and how diverse political relationships are negotiated, and from what positions and discourses they are elaborated in each context and situation.

In this case it would be better to get back to a differential critical pedagogical model. The differentiability means the pedagogy put into practice always involves dissent and difference and as a result, as a political space we can never accept a central or directorial position for the liberational or emancipatory critical discourse of the student. From this point of view the pedagogy accepts the criticism and the differences

as a space constantly acting on its own discourses. Understanding this means understanding which implicit discourses, which contradictions and which models are touched on when the pedagogies are discussed, where we understand their processes and specificities as not completely controllable, just as Ellsworth points out (1997). According to this author, critical pedagogy must be rethought out through the constant differences in practices and its contradictions; we understand we are not looking for a model but rather for an understanding of the limits of the pedagogy and the contradictions of the range of discourses put into practice. As far as this is concerned, it is necessary to analyse a series of preconceptions or nuances in the use of critical pedagogy as a discourse that should be discussed, such as the “voice of the student”, “empowerment”, “emancipation” and “critical conscience”, as described in this case by Gore (1992).

This emphasis is not therefore marked by a pre-discursive distinction of a strongly held position such as “liberator”, “emancipator” or “critic”. It has more in common with the body of practices up and running that involve relationships of power, devices for work and knowledge production mechanisms, where the pedagogies are interlinked and coordinated and as a result collide in multiple ways. Consequently, a supposedly liberational model can be imparted in an oppressive manner or a critical educational project in one circumstance does not always remain the same in another. The pedagogical space emerges in a place where differences are constantly arising as tensions competing between different imaginaries and between all those involved in the pedagogical production; in other words everyone involved; mentors, teachers, artists, educators, technicians, designers, coordinators, managers, public opinion, etc. From this perspective, we are interested in understanding the relationship games and multiple negotiations as real political spaces or to describe it in another way, the space in which the politics of the different pedagogies are activated and negotiated: what type of education do we want, what limits or contradictions are there in our critical discourses and what models do we have and what political imaginaries do we think the education phenomenon is structured and formulated on?<sup>11</sup>

### **On relationships between pedagogies and cultural politics**

Having understood this plurality of viewpoints as opening up a political panorama in which education is a multiple phenomenon and in which multiple pedagogies are drawn up, we can begin to rethink the connection between pedagogy and cultural policies. It is impossible to

11. This reference was drawn up at a later date in relation to social movements and networks, but it is necessary to understand that education in democracy or approaching pedagogy as a political fact starts by asking the question of how we want knowledge to be produced and how we want to be educated. A question that is always asked in relation to notions of self-management, participatory democracies, social control or habits and cultural capital and mechanisms for social exclusion/inclusion.

take this step without recovering the multiple connections that have existed between education and culture; in this case the movements such as Popular Education and the positions of the first critical pedagogy of Freire (1974) already understood education not just as working with the material (transmitting information to the students) but rather as a transformative cultural practice and as a “cultural dialogue”. This means understanding education as a joint practice between what is symbolic, discursive and the identity. At the same time, these views called for minority cultural practices as spaces for “critical consciousness” or “consciousness raising, or as it is more commonly referred to now, “empowerment” or “critical capacitation”. The culture was, in these terms, viewed as a collection of symbolic and social exchanges that helped to relocate the position of the educator and the educated on micro/everyday and general levels.

Later on, and as a result of the contribution of the cultural studies and their crossing with the educational theories (Giroux and McLaren 1994, Grossberg 1997), we were able to understand how all forms of knowledge production always involve some sort of implicit culture by means of a mechanism/device that regulates the subjectivities and identities of the students and how at the same time the device involves forms of counter-culture resistance, which are opposed to and subvert the hegemonic forms of producing knowledge.<sup>12</sup> The important thing about this viewpoint, as we are reminded by critical pedagogues such as Giroux, is to understand that all forms of education are subject to a curriculum (2001). Critical studies on politics and curricula show this to be more than just the simple transmission and planning of values and contents. It is an area of conflict and dispute, in which diverse social meanings are constructed and produced imposed by different cultures, which bring with them a way of indicating what subjectivities, what identities and what values are to be imposed and developed in the students. This approach aids our understanding of the fact that all forms of pedagogy always constitute political-cultural spaces. Consequently the teachers are culture workers and the schools are conceived as alternative public spheres and spaces in which new approaches can be made to public democracy (Giroux 1997). This step involves understanding cultural policies as a way of producing imaginaries and subjectivities, but where the process is always in turn an open space or in conflict; in other words a continual process in which identities are negotiated and there is resistance and reaction against certain values and other cultural practices are produced.

On the basis of these contributions, it is now important to assess the relationship between culture and pedagogy in order to also understand

what notion of cultural policies we might be dealing with here. The first important thing to stress is that any notion of cultural policies could be understood through a framework of politics taken from the theories of radical democracy. According to the description of Mouffe (1999), radical democracy is always a space characterised by constant reflection and tension, which cannot define the citizenry as a pre-discursive category (i.e. set in advance with a unique identity and essence), and which requires the constant formulation of social relationships in order to struggle against complex and globally dominating relationships. This involves an activation of a “moribund pluralism” that combats domination or hegemony on several fronts in questions of justice and equality, and not from a single strategy or proposal with a unifying outlook. According to this idea, in a radical democracy the citizenry is a multiple concept. This aspect enables us to establish the citizenry as an oppositional relationship that does not accept a single centre or definition of democracy, but which always gives rise to a range of antagonisms, not as a consequence of that structural vacuum in what is democratic, but rather as its practical acceptance. Antagonistic practices are always implicit in any critical democratic composition. It is by means of their formulation and constant tension that an antagonistic and differential struggle is maintained rather than a moribund democratic struggle, which absorbs and neutralises the difference.

From this perspective, cultural policy will always have to accept antagonism as a constituent part of its practice. This means accepting that the citizen struggle for the culture is made on several and multiple fronts, which are complex and different. This perspective would actually involve decentralising cultural policies and linking them to a greater extent with a series of mediations and antagonistic relationships with other different agents. We could describe this passage in another way: the move from central cultural agents, beyond their own interests, to other agents and antagonistic fronts, whether they are actors or social movements, as mediators, educators or participants with antagonistic interests. This perspective allows us to move from production as the central axis of culture to mediation/negotiation, or even the constant appropriation of culture. To this end, we can view cultural policies no so much as a space containing centralised production (what is done) with subsequent communication to the exterior (what is “communicated” or “informed” in terms of what is social) but rather as a mediating space of constant antagonisms and new relationships (cultures that interact, cultural mediations and negotiations with different groups).

Another important nuance should be added to the antagonistic dimension: I do not understand culture here as densification, an unmovable patrimony or a hierarchical structure of layers and densities of knowledge. These factors reverberate around dominant, imperialist interpretations, and hegemonic accounts of what we consider to be culture. From another angle, the place in which the culture is being enun-

12. The ethnographic research carried out by Paul Willis, 1977, is revealing here. His study describes the different ways of operating, resisting and reacting against and in favour of school cultures by a range of collectives and above all by the children of working-class English families.

ciated would in this case be reconsidered, as we are reminded by the theorist Bhabha (1992), from a post-colonial perspective. That is, as a space in continuous negotiation or a symbolic space in which cultural knowledge can never be tackled or understood through a binary relationship such as centre/alterity or a dominator/dominated dialectic, but rather becomes something greater. Something “in-between”, that bursts into and constructs constant new spaces for negotiations between the parties involved. The important thing about cultural knowledge here is not its container, or even its fixed universal values subject to a specific morality, but rather its movement and continual capacity for hybridisation and dispersion or its constant tension and mediations.

Lastly, this outlook can lead us to consider cultural knowledge as always being mediated and dispersed and as a result always reappropriated, multiplied, and never contained or transferred one hundred percent. That is why cultural policies can never not be based on mediations and translations, on antagonistic and dissident relationships. They should also always be tackled from the point of view of their constant formulation or reappropriation, and never from their origin or primary source, since this would reduce the production of cultural knowledge to a single hegemonic source and not towards antagonistic struggles and not to subversive and hybrid relationships.

### **THE WORK OF COLLECTIVE PEDAGOGIES: MULTIPLE CULTURAL AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS**

Two relevant consequences can be perceived from the above-mentioned relationship between politics and pedagogies in our approaches to cultural policies. The first pertains to dimensions of culture and policy discussed above and the second to political dimensions of the pedagogy. I will spend more time on the second because I feel it is important to describe some discursive consequences of this movement. And at the same time I will introduce the term collective pedagogies within this outlook.

The first conclusion to be underlined is the antagonistic potentiality of the pedagogies. The pedagogical space, better described as the multiple pedagogies, could very well turn out to be a space housing direct antagonism with cultural policies, since they cast doubts over or question the mechanisms for producing and distributing the same culture because they bring in different rules and different agents who also produce culture. This “holding in check” may have the affect, always in terms of collateral resistance or work, of not involving an absorbing or inclusive relationship towards a governing centre for cultural policies, but rather a constant mediation and formulation in a range of contexts. This aspect means moving away from an idea of access and social inclusion in cultural policies where education is understood to be a compensatory, reparative or messianic practice that aims to absorb or connect with pedagogical practices or the work with collectives, an approach

that can be found in many cultural policies based on what is local and the idea of proximity. On the contrary, we should be laying down new approaches to antagonistic and differential cultural policies that are interweaved with a range of spaces for resistance and opposition, as is the case of the pedagogical spaces.<sup>13</sup> These policies would readdress spaces for enunciation, programming and activation as spaces in tension and conflict between different cultures. And this would reveal their multiple “hidden curricula” and the modern values dominating their discourse and bring them into conflict. This perspective casts clear doubts over who decides what culture is produced, how it is produced and what devices/mechanisms present and activate the culture. The intention of this approach is for cultural policies to never just evoke the absorption of capital or the movement of oppositional discourse to be absorbed institutionally. Rather it is based on the constant negotiation of the culture as a transverse territory for differential production. We cannot therefore devalue or categorise cultures and demarcate them. We must work to make them more complex through the mediation, which is precisely the base of pedagogy.

The second conclusion of the first part of this text concerns a reconsideration of the working model of pedagogy or the way in which it is handled. In this context, it is impossible to view pedagogy as a collateral or secondary effect of cultural production, which is the prevailing situation and assumed as normal. Neither can our approach be one of a working method with people on an inter-subjective level, which justifies the educational act in the presence of teachers, participating groups or formats and methods that are in appearance educational. I refer here to workshops, group dynamics or other forms of interaction between subjects that are attentive to educational matters as an intrinsic mechanism of certain methods for group relations (educational actions such as dialogues, role-playing, actions, maps, evolutions, etc.). This reductionism is precisely what would be contrary to what we are describing, when, as we mentioned above, educational matters also pertain to discourse, the power structures of a range of institutions, different emerging resistances or the silences and forms of expression of approaching education, or if you prefer, our pedagogical imaginaries. If this is not the case, consider how often an educational project is defined by one of its parts, instead of its entirety, as if it were a compulsive metonym, and the pedagogy is described in terms of the number and the type of agents

13. Although it is not the objective of this text to comment on the genealogy of critical artistic education of a post-structuralist nature, it is important to stress the idea that the education that would be carried out is not based on a reinforcement or legitimisation of the discourse produced by museums or art centres, but rather on direct resistance, formulation of the difference and complexity of the system of art, or if you prefer, a pedagogy for and against the system of art. For further information see the publication *Prácticas dialógicas* or the texts on critical museum theory by Carla Padró on the role of museums as zones of cultural conflict, or the theoretical-practical example of Carmen Morsch concerning the educational work of Documenta XII, as regards education as a “critical friend of art”.

(so many kids, young people, immigrants or students/participants) or pedagogical acts are justified in terms of workshops or participatory dynamics or even visual results determined by a series of products with a juvenile or infantile aesthetic that specify the type of work completed by children or the culture of young people. Let's make no mistake here. All these aspects, despite being part of the educational work, do not determine the political dimension of the pedagogy if we cannot see on what project, in which cultural policies, with which specific agents and how (time, spaces and relations/mediations) work is undertaken with the institutional structures, and given this, do not attempt to perceive the range of resulting negotiations that emerge.

Worthy of mention here is another important danger concerning the exploitation of pedagogy: the pedagogical relationship sometimes appears collaterally as the space for the formulation of the cultural knowledge of an institution or centre locally and as a subversive opportunity to work critically with the culture beyond the idea of containers and contents. This format for work is presented as an imperative need for an exterior to the institution that justifies the social relationship or sense of belonging to the local context (the neighbourhood or environment understood as the other side, the space outside the walls). Such a description could be made when a group of artists works on something "social" by making links with local people outside the museum or when a project works with school teachers or someone "installs" something in an extra-institutional space in order to cover the "role of social-awareness". The problem we encounter here is that what is considered social is predetermined as what is "outside the walls" of "our institution", dangerously recruited (captured and captivated we could add) and cancelled out as antagonistic. There is a danger here of movement from political work as method (in other words working with discourse, power relations and institutional structures) to social work as contents (working with collectives or elements marked as social). We are reminded by Kravagna (1998) that inherent in this step is the danger of naturalising and neutralising the political act as something antagonistic through the imposition of the moral values of "empathy" or "reconciliation", which refer to a paternalistic or pastoral model for collaboration in artistic practices. Moreover, this moralism ends up taking shape as the perfect social alibi. Holmes (2003) describes it as the effective strategy of "liar's poker", in which the institution is politically legitimized by its apparent commitment to the social issues it becomes involved in, but always in a somewhat dishonest way, because it always has that "ace" up the sleeve for the protection of their perpetuation as an institution. Another similarly perverse step, now fashionable, is to turn to practices of social interaction adapted as one's own working materials from the world of art and call them collaborative practices while at the same time denying any kind of critical participation in the institutional structures. These practices, referred to as "relational aesthetics" by Borriaud (2004), allow the artist to

present events such as talks, meals, exchanges and recreational interactions as works of social art because of their relational potentiality. This is what numerous authors have criticised about relational aesthetics since it marks a restricted pseudo-participatory domain. Foster talks of "rooms for talks" (2006), while Bishop (2004, 2006b) goes further by denouncing the appearance of fluid and open dialogue without working through the differences or contradictions of the cultural system, and the rejection this processual art makes of any kind of antagonism and exterior critical political relationships. This type of participation could be said to be set in advance and applied as if from a recipe. The type of work is normally carried out with controlled and planned structures and events directed in advance by the artist, which makes dissent or any type of opposition impossible, or strangely over-orchestrated I would say.<sup>14</sup>

When the challenges are understood from the multiplicity of the pedagogy, cultural work is formulated in constant mediation of the knowledge between all the contexts. And we understand the context here as referring to all: the institutions, the mediation devices and the different agents at work. Consequently, it is not just something exterior, or an alterity constituted simply in the eyes of a centre. It is a collection of mediations and interactions between a range of agents and elements. In view of this, we would understand knowledge as explained by social constructivism as the fruit of a socio-cultural context, interrelations between agents and devices used to produce and distribute, and not so much a neutral content that is transmitted and passed from one container to another, or from one person to another, or which just depends on a production centre. By understanding these diverse dimensions of pedagogical work, in which the politics refer to the micro-practices and their relations with the context, without hierarchies, but rather by analysing them on the same horizontal plane, we will understand the pedagogies as multiple collective processes. Pedagogies in these collaborative frameworks are therefore always, in one way or another, collective, since they emerge as work between a range of agents and institutions, between different people and discourses, between a range of pedagogical imaginaries. This fact stresses the political dimension of the pedagogy, inherent in negotiations and dimensions, which works as functioning mechanisms or systems. The political dimension is demonstrated by the network of relations and contradictions expressed and placed in action-reaction, but not as a content or adjective; in other words the pedagogy works "politically", but does not execute "political pedagogy".

These considerations mean the pedagogy must always be re-read on this institutional level of mediating and negotiating the knowledge. It is a challenge for us to make this horizontal interpretation, because

14. For greater depth on these and other questions I refer you to the doctoral thesis of Aída Sánchez de Sordio (2007), in which the levels of politics and collaborative practices are interlinked by working on a case study and specific policies for writing through collaborative-artistic video projects with young people.

it means approaching what the institutions themselves have learnt, or what the project learns and what the different agents involved learn, and which as a result can be mediated once again: here we somehow refer to an institutional pedagogy. The challenge is therefore on a political level to be able to respond to the question of how knowledge is generated, which could potentially be appropriated by the institutions/agents. And this, we should not forget is a pedagogical as well as a political question. This challenge obliges us to reconsider the emergence of the pedagogy as a transversal space; i.e. that emerges between the institutions, agents and the range of dimensions of interaction without hierarchies or separations, but by moving beyond the limits and discourses, sometimes unexpectedly, in an uncontrollable way and as evolution that generates and regenerates knowledge. The position we have laid out here aids our reconsideration of the pedagogies by joining the micro to the macro, from an understanding of the spaces for practices as political spaces, or micro-politics, where they are conceived as spaces for constant negotiation linked to other inseparable and irreducible dimensions. We could therefore, possibly reconsider the pedagogies as an opportunity to experiment and create cultural policies, not as proof of a deductive or inductive experiment, but as emerging spaces of collective cultural knowledge.

### **SOCIAL NETWORKS: PARADOXES AND OUTBURSTS AS PEDAGOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Having described the complexities of pedagogical and political work as a multiple intersection, we will now attempt to understand the location of this work in the framework of the theory of networks and above all in the framework of research into participation. This framework will serve to enable descriptions of the finer points of political and pedagogical work and at the same time, reformulate working methods and approaches to the multiplicity of pedagogy. To provide an outline of this approach, I will take as my base the theory of social networks, not from its more analytical side (Rivov 1998), but through a series of proposals sketched out by Villasante and others (2000, 2001, 2006), which can help us reconstruct the ways of working in networks as a nodal and pedagogical relation.

The first thing that must be understood about the theory of social networks is the difficulty and complexity of positioning them in a theoretical framework. The work of Villasante shows this conception of work does not occur from a theoretical-analytical sociological approach, but through a series of experiences and field work concerning citizen participation that have found expression in a political and investigative work project in which the most important thing is the working method. This proposal has come to determine what the author has called the socio-praxis (Villasante 2001, 2006), where this is explained as a group of working methods with and for what is social, which draws on sources

from the theory of systems, of complexity and also from the relation with Participation-Action-Research. I will now focus my attention not so much on clarifying the whole political-methodological program of the socio-praxis, but on underlining certain points of the work in which the change in perspective and language, in other words the discourse, could mean a paradigm change.

Firstly, worthy of mention is the fact that the socio-praxis is never determined as a single method, but rather as a collection of actions and relations on which researchers work, relate to each other and are attentive to the particularities, complexities and outbursts of the social complex (Villasante 2001, 2002). The author always reminds us that the interesting thing is being able to analyse not so much the people involved in a single field of action or network, but rather several interweaved, parallel or even paradoxical or contradictory networks (Villasante 1999). One person is a multiple being, with several dimensions and interlinking subjectivities, and is somehow also a network. It is therefore impossible to encounter a universal consistency or common denominator because of all the factors (subjectivities, emotions, for example) involved in a social relationship. The interesting thing is to find other relations and forms not centred on subjects in order to open new possibilities for the work:

In our interpretation we are not trying to find the central identities of each group. We are looking for their paradoxes and contradictions, which are the result of the criss-crossing of relationships. And by means of this puzzle of all the complex paradoxes at work, we try to find a view of some viable ways in which some of their collections can be formulated.

(Villasante, 1999:9)

This social puzzle shows us that the important thing is to understand the complex ways of working in networks and above all the emergences that occur. Oftentimes these are unexpected, they come from irregular moments or unexpected changes, from small unexpected situations or from tactical practices, when weak moments are constituted as strong elements because they unblock and are precursors of the social action. This dimension immediately leads us to another interesting consideration: the fact we can work by relating to a range of groups should be considered by means of “collections of action” (Villasante 2002:124-5). Villasante’s working proposal is to cease working with overly closed or structured frameworks such as communities or even social movements, and to base work on studies of community and movement networks.<sup>15</sup>

15. We must remember that this perspective noted by the author is based on a framework that criss-crosses theory and practice through methodological work that has led him to construct new vocabularies and discourses on what is social in practice, since it is not only based on a conceptual perspective specific to political science or sociologists as we might see in the proposals of Mouffe,



These approaches to the collections set, rather than a fixed identity, a geographical demarcation, a large and complex collection of stories, sympathies, everyday relationships, themes and contradictions that are deployed in a specific time/space (“situations”), with common objectives and themes that are discussed/worked on (“catalysts”), as described by Villasante (2002: 159-160). In this process it is important to understand that the catalysts are always complex thematic elements, that is to say, they are not simplified or simplistic; they work in the macro and micro at the same time without falling for the reductionism of what is local. Moreover, the collections of action respond to particular times and spaces, but are not determinant. This means they are also the fruit of temporal and spatial factors such as coexistence, processes and reciprocity, with their inherent sympathies and contradictions. The collection idea also involves a political capacity for action, or if you prefer, agency.

From this point of view, the situations making up the collections of action are structured, we could say, as spaces of social densities. Here we are pointing to a dynamic and complex horizontal perspective of the social fabric, which has no hierarchy (Villasante: 2001). This point should be explained further: these spaces of density involve times, agents and sympathies, along with methods and structures, capable of action or, if you like, agency. If we pay attention to these nuances, rather than discussing a community of young people, or a group identified as women, for example, we should discuss the specific action group of women in which there may well be women to begin with, but at another moment in time other social agents or complexities may join that have an affect on other groups. It is therefore important to understand how the type of people, their complex networks and feelings and the themes of the political work (situations and catalysts) are intermeshed. This aspect also involves understanding the space or the centre of interactions in which the women are united or coexist, as social densities. In other words, it is not only a perspective of the institution or social centre where they are, it is also the images, connections, sympathies, times and spaces that make up the situation; that is to say, the complex map of the relationships being weaved. This viewpoint reminds us that the identity relation or geographical or alterity relation is not as important as the capacity of the groups of action to formulate themselves in specific situations under social densities, which act as nodes with a range of formal and informal actors present: it is important to point out here that the methods and material devices as well as the people constitute the agents. In this way we can understand the complex way in which “small jumps can lead to giant leaps” determined by the formulation of networks of relationships in situations, through catalysts and also as a

result of the flows and relations that unite these nodes. They all interact in movement in the social fabric in a complex way.

Another important aspect that should be highlighted is that Villasante reminds us that the action groups are not condemned in advance by historical structures and, on the other hand, do not emerge simply as a result of spontaneity. They are the formulation of the entire framework (1997: 5) and when experiences and relationships are added, the situations and problems tackled become more complex and at the same time, more creative for the social action. In short, as the author points out in the title of a chapter, “the strength resides in the paradoxes/complexities of the networks” (Villasante 1999: 7). What is of most interest here is how we can include these outbursts in a constructive way, in such a way as for them to be complex opportunities for rethinking the networks. That is why the strength of the social networks depends on how these reactions are decentralised, worked on and made complex so they can give rise to multiple paradoxes and outbursts. This is what Villasante has called “reversible outbursts” (2000: 49-50). These are structured from ways of doing and styles of life that do not resort to the internal reformism of the systems or to the revolutionary radicalism outside them, but rather enter into the complex game of the “yes, but no” (ditto: 49). The outbursts act as reversers by displaying a new “game of cunning” (ditto: 50), in which the outburst reverts to the same institutional game of the system, without first presupposing the resolution of the problem, but helping to construct new questions/alternatives from other complexities and paradoxes. Although we might not know where these outbursts are taking us, they do on one hand display precisely the inconsistencies and limits of each system, another way of opening up possibilities, and on the other hand, collectively construct a commitment to processual work that renegotiates the interests and objectives of each case.

This aspect leads to a reconsideration of the implications of the outburst: these “creative” outbursts (Villasante 2006) are always spaces for analysis and an opportunity for collective work in the network. The socio-praxis not only aims to identify them, but also to include them in the collective action, since the outbursts are constantly reverting to the structure and the final objectives of each participatory process. They make the social complex expand and become more complex and as a result it is relativised. The important thing about this position is to understand the importance of the “creative error” (Villasante 2002:159) as a space inherent in the weakest mediations. A small crack in the system is where there is the greatest potential for the emergence of other styles of unenvisioned conducts and where, the solutions are more creative because they are more complex as a reaction to and incorporation of the chaos or turbulence. Maybe as a result of all these changes in position as regards what is social, we are referring to unlearning and relearning constantly: the outbursts could be said to increase the multiple capacity of work of the network. Definitively, maybe it is just as always a

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Negri and Hardt or Benhabib amongst others. Proposals that in fact have a lot in common when politics and work with collectives are made complex through difference and multiplicity.

question of being open to them when situations, networks and catalysts come together, and also, of finding the best transversal opportunities for learning, socially, individually and in the network in the spaces of the reversible outburst:

The fact we can contemplate the paradoxes within the social facts is precisely the greatest potential for change and transformation available to society. The fact there is not a perfect identity of things, or of persons, is what allows for the variations and choices, the innovations and the advances (and backward steps) of social processes. What may be considered shortfalls or sicknesses or errors by some, are for others or the same people (in different circumstances or with another outlook) positive elements of change and solutions to the problems being tackled.

(Villasante 2001:49)

### **WORK IN NETWORKS AS A MULTIPLE PEDAGOGICAL METHOD: FROM COMMUNICATION TO NODAL DISTRIBUTION OF CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE**

From varied perspectives of social networks, we can now describe some ideas concerning how to provide an outline of learning in networks that really takes into account the above-mentioned considerations, in other words, the collective pedagogies and the multiplicity of the pedagogy.

First is it important to point out that the constant mediation of cultural knowledge obliges us to understand the potentiality of the pedagogy as being in the dynamism and relational nature of knowledge in the network. This network knowledge flows between all the nodes (with their situations, catalysts and densities). Each agent contributes to and dynamises the network by providing their knowledge and skills, which makes the knowledge relational. The power of this nodal pedagogy is not mortgaged to property or centrality, and less so to the originality or structural depth of the knowledge. It emerges as it is dispersed and decentralized: by way of the use made of the nodes and how new and unexpected relations circulate and are made. Learning in the network is not therefore contained within people or institutions, it flows and emerges from its ability to connect and interrelate, and as a result it can only be mediated. In the terms of this connectivity, we should understand the fact that the transversality of the pedagogical work accepts all the agents. This point must be stressed: it is not just a question of contents (mixture of references or disciplines or themes aimed at “what is social”), it is a working space criss-crossed with relations and mediations, in which the multiplicity of dimensions (identity, social, cultural, network, times and spaces) are juxtaposed/outburst constantly. Once again, that is where its political potential resides.

Another nuance of great importance when tackling the pedagogies/politics of networks can be added using this viewpoint of knowledge. Work in networks on cultural knowledge does not just boil down to nodal work or work between different points of the network; it is on the contrary far more complex because it is necessary to analyse and understand the fields of situations, the outbursts and the catalysts at play as we are reminded by the social networks. This requires the construction of complex maps of relations, with conceptions of different times and spaces (relational politics, we could say<sup>16</sup>). This complexity necessitates an understanding of not only the series of mediations going on, but also the complex relations that exist in the network, the particular situations and the constant paradoxes or outbursts as elements from which we can learn and continue to learn. Neither should we assume the architecture of a network constitutes the work in networks. The outburst moment can be linked to the work of the collective pedagogies, where we learn from complexities and reversible outbursts, not just with a view to “ourselves”, but above all with a view to the “from” and the “with” of the networks.

Another important consequence to be stressed is the pedagogical work of the networks carried out by groups of action. It is a question of understanding that the pedagogy is based on complex processes of each action group, on their times, spaces and particularities and with regard to their relational networks and complexities. That is why understanding the contextual situation requires moving beyond a strict demarcation of collectives in spaces as communities or belonging to a specified centre or institution. On the contrary, we begin to understand the players through their collections of action, in the range of relationships they maintain in the social complex (a student in a school is also a young person with friends, a family member in a domestic space, maybe a teacher with certain skills and maybe an oppressor in other networks: they respond to numerous networks, densities and situations). The way in which these situations and moments of social density are negotiated/worked with all the agents involves understanding the range of mediating elements and, consequently, pedagogical elements of the work in networks, beyond our conceptions of time, identity, space and social interaction.

This entire negotiation also leads us to an understanding of reversibility as a continuous space of collective learning: first as regards the institutions and cultural systems, and second as regards the networks and complexes in which the work is formulated. This account also involves understanding the faults, errors, turbulences and frustrations as moments containing a huge pedagogical/political potential and as opportunities to make our positions more complex and for outbursts,

16. This concept is influenced by the concept of “relational politics” worked on by Aída Sánchez (2007).

rather than moments of institutional concealment or escape. The inclusion of faults, paradoxes or contradictions as pedagogical elements is not just a rhetorical game, it means we recognize a greater complexity in the situations since we understand a greater number of interests and positions in the process; and the result is the political quality of an antagonistic pedagogy as we mentioned above.

Lastly, this approach takes us to another consequence: Work on paradoxes and errors brings with it a greater complexity of information transfers and communication methods between the agents and networks. This aspect inevitably leads to the problematic of the complexities, paradoxes, contradictions and resistances of the projects in these information transfers, as differential and enriching elements of the multiplicity of the knowledge. This process involves a debate (political and pedagogical) about who (re)presents the knowledge, who narrates which stories and how or from which spaces these narrations are constituted. Consequently, we could understand the descriptions of projects and their subsequent problematic as pedagogical and political spaces between the networks and not just as legitimizing methods of discourses of particular institutions to which not all the agents/institutions of the network have access or have time/space to produce. For example, on numerous occasions the educational or social institutions do not have time to present or narrate their discourse on paper because of the urgency of the practices or the educational need of the direct action. Meanwhile, the cultural institutions base their value on this representation and have professionals devoted more to the representation of this discourse. This tension brings into play the politics of representation and narrative competencies, which is a pedagogical process concerning the production and mediation of knowledge. This relationship with the politics of institutional representation is basically a debate on cultural politics, since it helps us construct a range of translations of the projects from each node, as reciprocal mediations, which are not alienating. This proposal for intermediation involves moments of elements of shared discourse, which are not hegemonic, in which what is local and global can be dynamised horizontally, polyphonically and providing room for new outbursts. This process is effectively a pedagogical process concerning how knowledge is mediated on a political level.

## **CHALLENGES AND CONSEQUENCES FOR CULTURAL PRODUCTION FROM PEDAGOGY: TOWARDS CULTURAL PRODUCTION IN NETWORKS**

As we have seen above, the approaches described here aim to provide a change to our perspective of cultural policies in the light of collective pedagogies, their multiple dimensions of action and the

work with social networks.<sup>17</sup> By way of conclusion, I will outline some of the consequences and challenges involved in this change of approach.

The first thing I would like to emphasise is that it is necessary to understand social policies as cultural policies in that, once we are involved with the social melting pot and the framework of each group or collective, a range of ways of doing are produced, visualised and distributed symbolically when the political dimension of the networks is reconsidered. Martín-Babero (1995) explains that this step involves analysing the role of social movements (I would say social networks) in a different way as a new political dimension, in terms of references to the construction of new collective imaginaries, as a reaction to transnational processes, and the execution of constant mediations/appropriations of other imaginaries and production processes. All these processes are tackled with a view to resignifying and acting out other forms of citizenry culturally and socially. The social networks are thereby expanding, relating and mediating as emerging cultural policies, and they are also an antagonistic opportunity to review cultural democracy, precisely by means of their mediations, dissatisfactions and dissent.

It is also necessary to stress a second consequence; the multiplicity of collective pedagogies as a political factor. This leads us to view education and knowledge production in terms of work in a contextual network between diverse institutions and projects, a step beyond the idea of inter-subjective work, demarcated by particular dynamics. As a result, we can understand the collective pedagogies as a means of production/resistance of institutional knowledge within the cultural field in multiple interconnected dimensions (personal, identity, different collectives, collections of action and also a wide range of institutions and projects). This perspective involves analysing the range of pedagogical dimensions, knowledge and institutional transfers and the contradictions and tensions that also emerge in this political negotiation process.

As a third conclusion, I feel we can understand the reversible outbursts and work in networks as spaces of evolution and procurement in which the work is a transversal product that breaks down the hierar-

17. I am aware of the fact that at the end of the writing and editing of this text I have constructed a direct defence of the practices of social networks and educational and political discourses in specific spaces and contexts. And that this proposal also has similarities with, through horizontal methodological relations, with a defence of returning to practices as political spaces of relation and pedagogy, and rethinking diverse translation methods for varied agents and interlocutors, without citing any personal experience or practice. The contradiction of my proposal is based on once again falling for the theory or for a very abstract tone, which can again be linked to an illuminating or authoritarian discourse, just when I am trying to criticize those postures that pass judgement on what should be done and what is good pedagogy or cultural policy. As a result of this reflection, I feel it is necessary to understand the role of this text from its origin as a reflective framework of the *Reversible Actions* seminar. Consequently I refer here to how the other projects and processes presented at the seminar provide practical proof of discourses in which negotiations and mediations are made and another form of cultural policy is constructed.

chies imposed by modernity and champions a constant appropriation and dispersion of the culture.

Lastly, a final consideration, as a kind of epilogue, I think it is necessary to make an in-depth review of cultural politics as regards its mediators and distributors and not just its producers and planners. And therefore taking into account the outbursts and possible antagonisms. The approach described in this text would involve viewing cultural policies from a viewpoint that goes further than just illustrative dialectics and paternalistic cultural politics to search for the restorative inclusion of others. In contrast this positional change would involve moving from the cultural policies of communication and access, to participatory policies based on antagonism. Politics that take into account multiple spaces for mediation and are based on a constant practical negotiation of cultural production/distribution methods. Moreover, we understand these relational policies would never be external to the context and above all to distribution methods and future formulations. We should therefore be talking about cultural policies in networks, rather than community cultural policies, concerned with what is local and in the proximity, which reduce the question of the work to physical proximity or to the trigger for the work of a specific collective or community and cancel out the question of paradoxes and outbursts. In contrast, these cultural policies in networks involve a complex framework for political negotiation that, as described by Yúdice (2003), reach all the dimensions of the work and the cultural, social and economic production in equal measure. This approach to networks transforms the relationships through local and global interlocutors, who interlink relations with other complex networks and civil society systems and construct continuously relating spaces as “cultural brokers” since they work as “Microsystems” that are linked with larger systems like “primary forests” (ditto: 12). These policies, when viewed in this light, therefore involve work with numerous nodes, agents in action and socially intensive nuclei. That is how they avoid the dialectic demarcations of community or collective, and at the same time conceive and recognise the political capacity of each group of action and attend to their complex relationships horizontally and in a complex manner.

This position allows the pedagogies in networks to produce knowledge by means of collections of action with a capacity for procurement, in which projects, collectives and different culture workers are inserted and work horizontally, on the same level of outburst. In its final phase this position clearly involves the decentralisation of cultural production through the construction of platforms in social networks of work among different agents and with different nodes. This is a shared task that requires us to pay close attention to the complexities of the cultural, social and material dimensions while at the same time not separating them or placing them in a hierarchy, but rather working with them in a complex way, or in other words, in constant interrelation. This challenge involves

accepting social networks as the means of producing knowledge and of social and cultural interaction. Consequently the networks must be alert to multiple emerging pedagogies and politics and, above all, re-iterating once more, to constant outbursts that oblige us to unlearn and relearn continuously and collectively in all kinds of practices.

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# BETWEEN PRACTICES OF SOCIAL COOPERATION AND CREATIVE PRODUCTION

SANTIAGO BARBER

The intention of this text is to provide an overview of some questions arising from the *Reversible Actions* seminar concerning different positions in artistic practices intentionally involved in social fields. To this end, I would like to take the opportunity for reflection provided by the publishing project *El Gran Pollo de la Alameda (A Huge Stir in La Alameda)*. *How it was born, grew and resisted being swallowed up. A dozen years of social struggle in the La Alameda neighbourhood of Seville.*<sup>1</sup> The production process, the contents and the end result of the *El Gran Pollo de la Alameda (A Huge Stir in La Alameda)* project is criss-crossed in varying intensity by elements that are linked to the fields of art, education and territoriality. These three force fields that frame, by way of key words, the proposal for the seminar, sustain each other and re-appropriate a cooperative working method from one another, which convert the concepts into a kind of hazy photo of their roughly recombined selves resulting from so much reciprocal friction. I suggest we take a good look at this hazy photo provided by such an unusual and distinctive project.

The project was born more than two years ago now, nearly all the thousand edited copies have been distributed and close to thirty presentations have been made all around the country. Maybe its distance in time, following the stages of total immersion and hygienic oblivion (so closely linked to one another), is what made me so eager to look for new discoveries and gave rise to my need to share some of the experiences before memory was to do its worst. Consequently I decided to give myself an opportunity to point out some aspects that are in my opinion remarkable, as a participant in a basically polyphonic project, as regards the debate we are concerned with here on ways and possibilities of linking artistic practices with transformative social practices. This is clearly a very limited view of the project taken as a whole. There are as many interpretations as there are participants, although the intention here is to place emphasis on points that concern me as a cultural worker, without this adversely affecting other equally necessary viewpoints.<sup>2</sup>

1. *El Gran Pollo de la Alameda (A Huge Stir in La Alameda)*. *How it was born, grew and resisted being swallowed up. A dozen years of social struggle in the La Alameda neighbourhood of Seville*. Collective work, Seville, 2006. A wide-ranging collective work, presented publicly in June 2006, completed by informal social networks in the area of La Alameda, Seville, in order to construct a perspective of critical practices as regards the social and urban-planning transformations imposed upon the neighbourhood over the last ten to fifteen years. It was designed as a self-researching project drawn up over two and a half years, made possible thanks to the huge efforts of around a hundred people who participated in the project. The writer participated on the editorial committee and carried out shared coordination tasks. [www.elgranpollodelaalameda.net](http://www.elgranpollodelaalameda.net).

2. For a better understanding of the project, we recommend reading the jointly written text of presentation to the book (pages. 10-20), and the interview carried out by GAS (Social Action Group) with two members of the editorial committee (M<sup>a</sup> José Romero and Santiago Barber), which can be consulted at [www.redasociativa.org/gas/?q=node/229](http://www.redasociativa.org/gas/?q=node/229).

## WHEN I SAY ART, I MEAN ARTISTIC PRACTICES

When the step is taken to consider the usefulness, and communicative and transformative potential of the artistic work, it stops being interpreted principally in relation to the oeuvre and instead questions the hegemonic concept of art itself. These and other breakage mechanisms, already present since the early historical avant-gardes of the twentieth century, were updated once more at the beginning of the nineteen nineties when a wide range of practices emerged, centred on the domain of the Spanish state, the aim of which was to get the expansive potential of artistic practices up and running by means of the social conflicts giving rise to these practices. This artistic displacement had a resurgence when, and it was not coincidental, a series of global struggles were initiated by Zapatism, which provided impetus in a variety of ways, but not on their own, for a range of forms in which the new social dynamics of opposition started to articulate other modes of protest and political subjectivity.<sup>3</sup>

This quick introduction serves as a framework for the type of tensions, both from the social and artistic point of view, at play and which actually affected the construction of renovated politics throughout the nineties and the beginning of this century. This trajectory, which as mentioned is not only temporal, is described from a local specificity in the book entitled *El Gran Pollo de la Alameda (A Huge Stir in La Alameda)*.

When political art is referred to today, as part of the directed drift in the hegemonic field of art, which invokes the evolution of conceptual art to contextual art, the predominant model is the one of protest art mainly of an individual nature and anchored to the frameworks of institutional exhibitions. In recognition of the variety of positions that may be adopted by these relations with what is political, the discussion about the possibilities of autonomous and socially relevant artistic practices is a question of understanding that what is political in art is not just the aestheticising of social problems and conflicts, but also the capacity to provide impetus for other practices that are inserted and deployed in the interior of the context and from this perspective observe the questions and challenges that emerge. Having escaped and laid out their own approaches, they question the rigidity of certain ways of being political and doing art, of expression with language and images, and suggest challenges by deploying tools, symbolic frameworks and methods and testing the luck of their political effectiveness.

3. As artists involved in these processes, the field in which we moved in this space in transition in the early nineties can be exemplified by its relationship with some cultural methods with a political content. When we collaborated as artists in cultural exhibitions or initiatives in for example Squatted Social Centres, "expectations" were for the artists to provide a specific type of work. The work deposited in this framework was validated mainly from the point of view of its political content and its location, in a political context, despite the fact that the stereotypes or exhibition formats were being reproduced. Somehow its value resided in the completion of an agreed image the space already had of itself, with an insistence on the circle of representation and identity, where it was impossible to imagine other possibilities for articulating relations between art and politics.

When looking at the book, we see how it aspires to work as a communication device drawn up with an expressive preponderance and a desire to create representations. From its title to the enunciation of thematic blocks and chapters, from the illustrations to the inclusive idea of the archive, an assumption is made to a certain extent, and from a humble point of view, that it is a visual construction that reflects multiple sensibilities not trapped in a monolithic identity. Why is it important for a project such as this one to contain this communicative dimension? The project has no complexes about the expressive potential driven by the ways in which we think out our position as social agents creating culture, which in turn determine the way in which we lay out our skills in the public domain. At the same time it has a bearing on how we envision our political antagonism, how we express ourselves, how we use languages, how we invent representations, formulate words and bodies.

And part of all of this had already been tested and set in motion during the time described in the book, by means of a range of modes of expressive practices, direct actions, visual interventions, attacked on many occasions by a desire to stick to the territory and popular culture, operating around local virtualities or taking into account the communication media as potential spaces for occupation or employment. Most of the practices described live with a scarcity of resources. Need becomes virtue, where the possibilities of each situation are profited from, each has its own code and the most is made of each one with minimal resources.

## EDUCATION SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH SOCIAL PROCESSES

In recent years my tasks involving artistic production have been linked principally to the territory in which I live, interweaved to a greater or lesser extent with social, neighbourhood and cultural networks of the La Alameda neighbourhood of Seville. Running through all of which is *what is political*, as cooperation, fostering self-organisation processes, hatching plans to energise in a neighbourhood constantly suffering the debacle of speculation, and which has never stopped trying to respond to and resist this imposed process (or rather by taking on as well as possible, as anchoring points, the most visible and tangible parts of this all-consuming machine). To this end, the people have had to create physical and symbolic spaces, in which to actively set up cooperation to then analyse the urban-planning conflicts and the population expulsion processes, the problems of access to homes, the domestication of public spaces and their transformations, the precariousness of everyday life under domination and relations with wage-earning and rents.

Establishing this knowledge being debated in a continual reciprocal learning process, from the socialisation of the information to the distribution of knowledge, is a task of re-education as regards the type of relations (horizontal, non-patriarchal, etc.) we want to set up for the transformation of lives; the more lives the better. That is why this can only be

done with many others, who as one, also want it. This way of working is therefore understood through the principles of joint-involvement and commitment to the territory. When all is said and done, the emotional networks sustain it all; knowing you are not alone is what makes the mutual confidence possible.

We are therefore talking about the emotional territory on the small scale of a neighbourhood, which is lived in and created, and about the way in which the space and the people are affected by changes and the complex reorganisation of the city as a whole, governed as a space for maximum economic profit. As a result the book focuses on the territory as an expression of other expressions, and at the same time as a territory being transformed at high speed. Consequently questions are raised about the model of city and its self-indulgent viewpoint, and possible active participatory models are proposed.

We know some things, but are also unaware of others. Collaborative practices set up in this collective initiative for the reconstruction of a common memory are essentially self-training by means of a search for a specific methodology adapted to the skills and resources at hand. Training in process in which it is necessary to explain and provide meaning for an image, a phrase, a name, a logo, to make words and dissent work, to learn to take decisions and reach agreements, argue, listen, debate common texts or write collectively.

## THE RUBBLE REACHED UP TO HERE

To bring this to a close and paraphrasing one of the thematic blocks of the book, which refers to an illustrative intervention on an abandoned home in La Alameda, we will attempt to sum up a range of questions that have not been adequately answered during the process and evaluate their virtualities. *Rubble* can be viewed not only as everything that has been trounced by the market and bad government and been left lying on top of the terrain and its people, but also as how far our critique can reach, and how we can pile up this common utility. Unresolved questions:

- The first and most tangible is the book itself as a conclusion, as a closed case, something set in stone when, at the same time, we recognise the limited scope of our viewpoint. The symbolic weight involved in the physicality of the book.
- The difficulty of writing self-critical accounts or those which escape the grips of a historical or lineal narrative. It seems easier to place the emphasis on data collection, filing and compiling with a somewhat self-indulgent tone. Analysis of the processes themselves in which we are immersed is missing, which would include, structurally, the conflicts themselves as questions open to the interior of the reflection, which work through the thought as possibilities for invention.
- The limited capacity of the project itself to be rearticulated by others. Awareness of the constant redistribution of information by provid-

ing materials in formats that can be used and appropriated once again (in a first instance an evaluation was made of the possibility of creating materials in parts, specific modules, which, as a result of their low cost and immediacy were more mobile than a book)

- A collective reflection of this nature would be worthy of a public presentation (to give it a public face) and of seeking out the option of pointing to the false consensus more diligently in the domain of the media.
- Precariousness established as life means the work cannot be paid. Its voluntary nature means each personal situation and its ups and down determine to an even greater extent a process hanging in the balance. Are we able to imagine an adapted and mobile commitment which is paid?

Throughout the text references have been made to some virtualities and powers of collaborative practices inserted into the territory and how they are related with artistic and educational elements in the case of the *El Gran Pollo de la Alameda (A Huge Stir in La Alameda)*. Here are some more:

- Moving and questioning ourselves at the same time is to experience the urgent dynamics so typical of activism and to enable the creation of other spaces for reflection.
- The transparency and generosity of the process generates confidence and enlivens social dynamics operating at that moment in time. The book accompanies the political subjects immersed in the territory in conflict. By experiencing the city from the bottom up, a circulation and possible functionality is ensured by the social networks themselves from which it emerges.
- Activation and exercising the common utility, which belongs to everyone, and has been created jointly and consequently must be updated once again.
- Working using an archive concept endows the project with foundations that enable the imagination of other forms of compilation and other uses; other compilers and other users.
- The inclusion of dissent in the common approach and applied methodology means an assumption of being immersed in a political space.
- Understanding its construction as a communication device with a strong educational nature that generates empathy also for the uninitiated. Fighting to get out of the ghetto.
- Consideration of the redistribution of the compiled material as a political, communicative and expressive tool not limited or subjugated to the mere enchantment of its representation.





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3

1. Design with information on the title, which was also used on façades and street furniture.

2. Front cover, spine and back cover of the book. Although this choice was controversial, with opposing views, this 'goose-pimple skin' is the only external information that appears. We wanted to focus on emotions, the two bodies touching, everything that gives us goose pimples and, at the end of the day, that we find moving.

3. A twist on Seville City Council's official logo. The original reads *NOMadejaDO* and was awarded to the city by King Alfonso X for remaining true to him; the new version *SI&DO* refers to the city being abandoned and those responsible for it. This irreverent flag was placed on piles of dog mess to try and call attention to the lack of official interest in the neighbourhood while the city was organising nothing less than the Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Sustainable Cities (1999). This sign was also used on posters, wall posters and actions within the framework of protests carried out by the Alternative Forum to the official conference, and was also appropriated by other groups and neighbourhoods in the city. It is a simple image that people can identify with, with a subtle but clear twist that reflects the general feeling of discontent that speaks volumes. The positive thing about this kind of 'work' that comes from a conflict is that it uses empathy in order to be used and reused by other people.



4

4. Feelings were running high in La Alameda in spring 2001. The City Council was threatening to build an underground car park there and many residents were getting ready to stop them. Civic meetings, talks with experts and technicians and other activities were organised to hold a collective debate on the neighbourhood's needs, including assessing the need for a car park. One of the main initiatives was a workshop where over the course of several weeks different people produced materials and thought up actions and other initiatives.

This led to the "*We apologise for any inconvenience*" *Experimental KIT*, an action involving neighbouring buildings that could be affected by work on the car park. The picture shows the contents of an envelope to be handed out to neighbours while the action was being carried out: a Housing Impact Form, a Danger and Disaster Detector, a smoke mask, ear protectors, a map of alternative green areas, an emergency envelope (nostalgic handkerchief, anti-stress lollipop and sticking plasters) and a registration form for joining the Work Sufferers Association.

The action involved impersonating City Council technicians and going round the neighbourhood before work started to inform residents of the disadvantages of the proposed work and giving them the kit. The idea was to draw people's attention to the fact that work on the car park was about to start (in stark contrast to the silence and less-than-open approach from the City Council, who wanted to slip this by people quietly), the structural danger faced by neighbouring houses, the height of the water table (La Alameda lies on a dried-out lagoon) and the impact that drilling and tree-felling would have on homes.

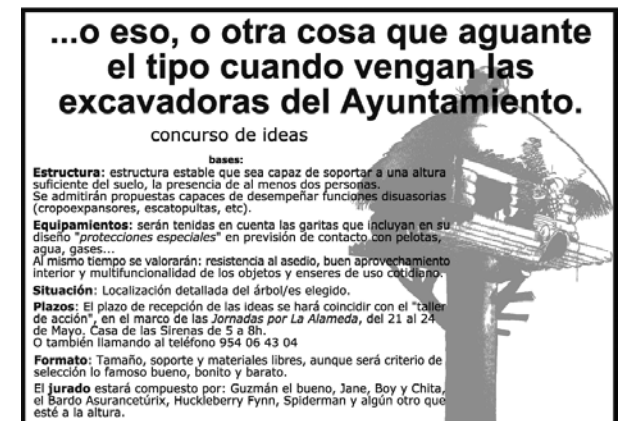
The kit was designed at the start of the workshop and took some time to prepare; when it was presented, however, the neighbours' strategy had changed. They were getting ready for the Villardilla event, and there was a proactive, integrating and optimistic feeling in the air and an action like this would not quite fit with the feeling of empowerment being sought through other initiatives. In other circumstances, only a few weeks earlier, the action would have worked as a catalyst for other actions, but we had to say that the plans could be changed and this opened the way to a much more powerful joint action.

This example shows the importance of gauging how effective an action will be in political and communicative terms in relation to other actions. The 'quality' of an action does not lie exclusively in its internal workings, but in how it is deployed in a complex scenario and how it deals with limiting factors.



5

5. This is a simple, cheap and fun example of giving a new meaning to the deluge of institutional propaganda produced by Seville City Council's delegation in the city centre, run in 2001 by the Partido Andalucista (PA). They produced an obscene amount of material to promote both the delegation and their own party in a display of graphic engineering that failed to achieve either aim. When the leader's speech was changed by simply adding a sticker, hundreds of copies were made, 'smartened up' and put back into circulation as if nothing had happened.



6

6. Front and back of the poster for the *Box Needed* project (2001), which was set up as an ideas contest to prepare living spaces hung from trees. The idea was to call for functional suggestions for spaces to offer shelter to two or more people for an unlimited time. This was one of the resistance actions designed by residents in the face of the threat of a large number of trees being felled as part of the work on the underground car park planned by the City Council.

The poster used the idea of a contest to communicate the neighbourhood conflict and thus expand and suggest new fields of action for people not usually involved in activist circles. This dynamic used a sense of humour and playfulness as vehicles for communication. Five excellent proposals were received and collectively assessed with participants and two were finally chosen to be built. For two and a half weeks, participants took 2-hour shifts, 24 hours a day, as part of the experience of the rebel warrior Asuranceturix, who stopped the Romans building their car park.

# **TOWER SONGS: MAPPING CRITICAL COORDINATES FOR COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE**

AILBHE MURPHY

As with my presentation for the seminar *Reversible Actions: Seminar about Art, Education and Territory*, I will begin this paper with a 'reversible action' of my own and start with the last of the three areas for consideration, namely the question of territory. After that I would like to address the question of art in the production of a complex project such as *Tower Songs* and to conclude I would like to make some comments on the question of pedagogy.

## **TERRITORY**

Territory in this case means the distinct architectural spaces in Dublin where the collaborative art project *Tower Songs* takes place. These are high-rise tower blocks or public housing flat complexes as they are known in Ireland. *Tower Songs* has evolved within a set of relations between artists, arts institutions and those community development organisations located in these flat complex estates. In Ireland the community development sector is a complicated matrix of youth and community organisations who work to effect social change in relation to equality, social inclusion and the amelioration of poverty. Over the last decade in Ireland, both the community development sector and the cultural sector have had to respond to the profound social and cultural changes in Irish society brought about by our unprecedented economic growth. After years of neglect on the part of the state, the proposed regeneration of several flat complexes in Dublin served as one of the most vivid reminders of Ireland's new found economic confidence.

The majority of these flat complexes were built in a spirit of optimism in the mid-1960s as a solution to a worsening housing shortage in the inner city. However, they rapidly became (within fifteen to twenty years) the sites of dystopian social problems. There was a cycle of dis-investment in the provision of adequate estate management infrastructure in these public housing estates by the state. This neglect, combined with high levels of unemployment, poverty and attendant complications such as a sustained heroin epidemic in the inner city in the 1980s caused a crisis in many of these flat complexes across the city. Individuals, residents, community development organisations and voluntary groups organised and lobbied over many years for better social and economic conditions for residents. Their sustained efforts, coupled with a renewed interest by the state and private interests in the transformation of the public housing stock, situated on what had become prime investment land in the city centre, meant that over the last ten years or so, many flat complexes have found themselves the subjects of major regeneration initiatives. The negative perceptions about the flat complexes which had built up in the wider social imagination served the combined interests of the state and private developers well when promoting such regeneration programmes. Their predominantly ahistorical readings of flat complex life, reflected in the remedial rhetoric

they used, contrasted sharply with the distinctly multi-layered historical narratives of urban working class experience in Dublin over the last seven decades.

## ART

As an artist, when it came to the point of formulating a project such as *Tower Songs*, I had become increasingly pre-occupied with how the flat complex communities were negotiating their very survival in the shifting architectural landscape of the city. I was also curious about the possibility for a city-wide, community-based arts project to act as a counter point to the largely celebratory rhetoric of the state in relation to the closure of six decades of tower block living in the city.

In 2003 I initiated *Tower Songs* as a long term collaborative arts project which set out to make visible the collective memory and experience of a number of Dublin flat complex communities as they made the transition from tower block living via major urban regeneration initiatives. *Tower Songs* sought to explore the use of the voice, the tradition of singing and the sound-scapes of these flat complexes because they uniquely embody and transmit the lived collective experience of those communities and their various collective historical and personal narratives of place. *Tower Songs* was devised as a project which would draw together a core team from the field of community development and art practice in order to develop the conceptual and practical framework required to deliver this cross community, city-wide arts project. In other words, it was a project which sought to explore how artists, arts organisations, community development leaders and their constituencies might collaborate together in the context of a changing city.

Because of the long-term nature of *Tower Songs*, it was very important to identify and establish a sustainable organisational base. Initial research took the form of a series of investigations to establish the optimum organisational 'home' for the project. CityArts is an arts organisation in Dublin with a thirty-year history of practice in community contexts. CityArts had recently embarked on the Civil Arts Inquiry, a two year review of the organisational and conceptual basis of the organisation. The Civil Arts Inquiry was a public exploration into the role of an arts centre in a changing city which involved all of the organisation's key stakeholders. This process of critical reflection held out the promise of a potentially rich conceptual fit with the goals of a project like *Tower Songs* and in early 2005 *Tower Songs* became a key project in CityArts community programme. *Tower Songs* also began to develop links with other cities where the experience of regeneration resonated.

CityArts extensive collaborations with youth organisations, community development partners and artists had yielded a network of practitioners and organisations equally pre-occupied with the question of how to establish sustainable, community-based cultural processes within the city. In early 2005 two of these community development organi-

sations, Fatima Groups United and the Rialto Youth Project became key partners in *Tower Songs*. Each was very experienced in their respective fields of community development and youth work. Fatima Groups United had developed a unique capacity for arts and cultural work against a backdrop of severe economic disadvantage over the last thirty years. The Rialto Youth Project has been continuously evolving collaborative models for advancing cultural work with young people in community contexts since it was established in 1981. Both organisations share a belief in the centrality of participative, community-based arts practice as a means by which a community can explore, describe and celebrate its particular identity, culture and experience of change and regeneration.

From 2005, with the support of key CityArts personnel, the *Tower Songs* artist team worked closely with the Rialto Youth Project, Fatima Groups United and residents of flat complexes in Dolphin House and Fatima Mansions. The project realised three community-based performances in Rialto. Two were held in 2005 in the context of Dolphin House and Fatima Mansions summer festivals. The third was held in Fatima Mansions in 2006 in the week preceding the final demolition of the two remaining H and J blocks. Fatima Groups United invited *Tower Songs* to contribute to a community-led arts process to mark this critical moment in the history of the flat complexes. This invitation to be part of a wider community leave-taking of Fatima was very significant for the project. It was decided that the *Tower Songs* event on 29 June 2006 would precede an evening of community-wide ritual and celebration called *Bury My Heart in Fatima Mansions*. There followed an intensive twelve week workshop process between members of the *Tower Songs* artist team, residents of Fatima Mansions, youth workers and young people from the Rialto Youth Project. There were many planning meetings between the community development team of Fatima Groups United, the Community Programmer in CityArts and the *Tower Songs* artist team to co-ordinate the event.

Over a two-hour and a half-hour period on the night of the *Tower Songs* promenade event, close to three hundred residents of Fatima Mansions and a small number of invited guests journeyed through the space of the remaining two blocks. They listened to soundscapes devised and performed by composer George Higgs on a specially built instrument called the Fatimaphone. Young people from Dolphin House and Fatima Mansions had written 'The Faces Are Still All The Same' with singer songwriter Sean Millar. They performed this song about their response to the demolition and regeneration of Fatima Mansions in one of the remaining deserted flats. Fourteen local women residents performed the 'Goodbye Song' which they had also written with Sean Millar. The women performed on the balconies, where so much of life in Fatima had taken place. People were visibly moved as they journeyed through the last two vacated blocks of the flats to bid a quiet goodbye to their homes of the last fifty years.

## EDUCATION

How do we build a rigorous analysis and create the potential for critical reflection which can account for the complexities and the challenges of advancing this collective work? A central aspect of *Tower Songs* was to explore the possibilities for constructing shared evaluative co-ordinates to facilitate the project's competency to negotiate and communicate its position within a complex and multifaceted field of operation. The challenge of representing the complex architecture of *Tower Songs* and the ongoing analysis of its work is considerable. The combination of regular *Tower Songs* team review meetings and extensive cross-sectoral, evaluative processes between all the project partners have shaped the critical thinking and development of the project. But how can this project-centred learning translate into broader measurements of the value of long-term collaborative arts processes within a specific community context? This question leads me to my current work as a member of an interdisciplinary arts and research team, Vagabond Reviews. Vagabond Reviews is currently working with Fatima Groups United on a practice-based research project called the Cultural Review. The Cultural Review is a shared reflective process which through engagement with key arts, cultural and community development practitioners, examines the range of past and current arts processes within the Fatima / Rialto area. This includes a consideration of the work and outcomes of specific projects such as *Tower Songs*, among many others. The Cultural Review has three strands of work.

1. Cultural Archaeology: a review and (re)presentation the history of arts and cultural practice and its role in the overall process of urban regeneration for the Fatima / Rialto community.
2. Cultural Audit: capturing and (re)presenting the repertoire, range and capacity of current arts and cultural resources which are available to key individuals and groups working on behalf of the community.
3. Cultural Anticipations: capturing and presenting the philosophical, attitudinal and experiential orientations which underpin arts and cultural practice generally within the Fatima / Rialto community as a first step towards identifying the basic pedagogical principles for a proposed *Fatima Academy*.

The Cultural Review aims to identify and formalise some of the key principles underlying the extensive know-how for arts and cultural practice in Fatima/ Rialto. Vagabond Reviews recognises that the interdisciplinary nature of this shared practice requires the building of a shared analysis. Such a shared language could reflect the complexity of the human, artistic, ethical and institutional interactions which have

created the work. By examining a wide range of views and experiences of key cultural events, the Cultural Review is exploring the potential for shared learning between artists, arts organisations, residents, community development and voluntary groups. The Cultural Review aims to address this key question of learning by following a central line of inquiry which asks: what would a pedagogy for community-based arts and cultural practice in urban regeneration look like?

## AFTERWORD ON TOWER SONGS

While as an artist I was involved in establishing the project framework and guiding *Tower Songs* towards its first major public manifestations in 2005 and 2006, the project has continued to develop with new leadership. CityArts Community Programmer took a leading role in the project in 2006 and 2007. In 2007 CityArts appointed a dedicated project leader to co-ordinate *Tower Songs*. More recently the project has worked with older residents in Ballymun on Dublin's north side with the support of the Ballymun Partnership. In February this year over two hundred young musicians from the Ballymun Music Programme, working with Dublin-based composer Daragh O' Toole, will perform a new suite of four pieces based on their views of regeneration. Groups from Fatima and Rialto will also perform on the night. Over the last year, building on local participation in *Tower Songs*, Fatima Groups United has established a regular music club for young people and residents of Rialto. The project continues to make links internationally, most recently in Lithuania where *Tower Songs* has just been awarded one of the residency commissions in the Kaunas Biennial 2009.





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1, 2, 3

These images are taken from the latest action carried out at Fatima Mansions in the Rialto district in Dublin in June 2006, a week before the last tower blocks were demolished. The Tower Songs team of artists worked closely with Rialto Youth Project, Fatima Groups United and residents of the flats in Dolphin House and Fatima Mansions.

# CREATIVITY AS A TWO-WAY FLOW

LORAIN LEESON

Art, education, place – what can be engendered through the interaction of these three components? The *Reversible Actions* conference questions how these factors might be brought together to help inform the design of new projects. Here I draw on some of my own experiences to look at ways in which issues arising from context or location can become mediated through cultural production to create a multi-directional educational experience with the potential to give rise to new *knowledge*, insight and, by extension, social change.

The two projects I will be using as examples have taken place in the same location, though twenty years apart. Very different approaches and processes were involved in each and I hope that this contrast can help throw light on factors that have remained true for both, while also demonstrating that there is no formula for ‘good practice’. If projects are to make a difference they need to be able to respond creatively to the requirements of people, place and circumstance, and have the opportunity to develop through dialogue and research. An understanding of how such work comes about might help to indicate how it can be best supported.

## ***DOCKLANDS COMMUNITY POSTER PROJECT 1981-91***

The first of these projects took place at a time when there was clear difference in the UK between the politics of Left and Right. The Labour party was following a broadly socialist agenda, trades unions were a force protecting workers’ rights and there was a great deal of ‘grass roots’ activism. Individual creative authorship was coming under question, as was the role of the artist in relation to society. Oppressed groups were becoming militant and organised. In *Community, Art and the State* (1984), Owen Kelly characterised his understanding of the ‘socially engaged’ work emanating from this period as three distinct types. The first was the creation of new and liberating forms of expression, as in the work of the Arts Lab (precursor to London’s Institute of Contemporary Arts). The second was the movement of fine artists out of the gallery and onto the streets. The third was a ‘new kind’ of political activist who believed creativity to be an essential tool in any kind of radical struggle.

It was in this climate that a Conservative government, headed by Margaret Thatcher, came to power. Recognising the market potential of the land surrounding the partly disused London docks, an Urban Development Corporation was designated to take over this area, effectively removing the democratic local control of land across five London boroughs, with the aim of transferring it into private ownership. There were enormous implications for the local population. The kind of homes, services and jobs that would benefit these mainly working class

communities, would not only fail to receive urgent improvements, but were in danger of disappearing altogether.

At that time I had already been collaborating for a number of years with artist Peter Dunn and East London trades unions on posters and exhibitions to support campaigns against cuts in the National Health Service. We were now invited by the local trades council to produce a poster alerting local people to the re-development about to take place in the Docklands. Consultation with the highly organised tenants and action groups that characterised these boroughs followed, revealing a scenario much more extensive than initially envisaged. Over time, and with support from the local boroughs, regional arts association and finally the Greater London Council, we were able to develop a community co-op<sup>1</sup> led by a steering group of local people to create not just a poster, but eventually a decade of cultural production to address the issues. Changing photo-mural sequences were displayed on eight billboards constructed by the organisation in and around the Docklands, while posters and graphics were produced to support individual campaigns. A series of laminated exhibitions designed for display at community venues, festivals and meetings communicated issues in greater depth. Collaboration with the Joint Docklands Action Group led to docklands-wide campaigns and events such the *People's Armadas to Parliament* and a touring roadshow which took the lessons of Docklands around the country. Locations, campaigns, and events were all documented, and this archive of negatives now serves as the only photographic record of this era from a community perspective held by London's Museum in Docklands.

The Docklands Community Poster Project was intrinsically linked to 'place', and the project driven by its local communities. This enabled us to focus on tangible issues which, though having wider ramifications, were essentially problem-solving exercises aimed at specific local outcomes. Most members of the community would not have cared about whether this was art - only whether it worked. However the 'invitation'<sup>2</sup> to become involved in the campaigning had come from someone who had an understanding of the link between culture and politics. Dan Jones (now a key figure in Amnesty International UK) was a trade unionist, member of the local trades council, social worker and artist. His input had been integral to our earlier union-led work on health issues and he understood how it might now be brought to support campaigning over the future of the London Docklands. Clifford Geertz defined culture as "conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which

people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (1973: 89). The way that we used art to serve the docklands context did not differ from this. Its function was to consolidate meaning, facilitate communication and enable the emergence of new ideas for the future.

The effectiveness of the Docklands Community Poster Project as an activist cultural strategy was largely due to the dialogic process at its heart. Not only did we attend the meetings of docklands groups, but representatives of these local action groups also formed a 'steering group' for the organisation, which initially came together on a monthly basis. Meetings would commence with a report back from each neighbourhood, followed by consideration of the cultural approaches that could be employed around different issues. The steering group did not however comment on the appearance of the work. Visuals were discussed in terms of their meanings, not their aesthetics. Each member of the group was considered an expert in their field, and it would have been similarly inappropriate for Peter or I to promote personal views on the issues.

This project continued for ten years while the campaigning lasted. However lessons learned from the experience extended much further. Processes of negotiation, collaboration across difference, production of artwork through collective input as well as the power of propositional campaigning have continued to underpin my practice to the present day.

### **CASCADE (1999 - 2008)**

*Cascade* is the name I have given to a collaborative process that maximises the educational potential of projects through the involvement of young people and students from three levels of education in collective cultural production. University students act as mentors to support 17/18 year olds from colleges of further education. These pairs of students are then placed in school classes to facilitate workshops, where production work takes place. All this is heavily facilitated by a team of collaborating artists with a high level of skill in inter-personal communications and conflict resolution.

This and other recent projects may take different forms, but their aims are not dissimilar to that of the Docklands Community Poster Project. In each, cultural means are used to bring the concerns, issues and aspirations of ordinary people, and particularly those whose voice is least heard, into the public domain. The role of the young people within projects, like the activists, is that of experts in their field, whether this is through first hand experience of an issue or location, or the power of their imaginations. As Freire puts it:

1. The Docklands Community Poster Project involved six paid part-time staff. Peter Dunn and myself acted as artist/coordinators, supported by a designer, administrator and support workers who assisted with photo-mural production and installation.

2. In *An Outburst of Frankness* (2004) Ailbhe Murphy discusses the importance to a project of the "quality of this invitation".



**Educands' concrete localisation is the point of departure for the knowledge they create of the world. Their world in the last analysis, is the primary and inescapable face of the world itself.** (1992: 85)

The agenda of each project remains a joint one, to which we each bring our specific knowledge and abilities. My role as an artist has been to use visual and organisational experience to create the frameworks through which this expertise can be brought together to make a difference. *Cascade* has been one of these initiatives. Its process underpins a series of projects that have taken place over nearly a decade, with locations and issues overlapping those of the earlier work in the docklands. This time the focus is on the regeneration of the Thames Gateway, an initiative of the current Labour government. Their plan is to solve the housing problems of the South East by building on the flood plains bordering the river, eastwards from the London Docklands to the North Sea. It also encompasses the re-development accompanying the 2012 London Olympics. Participants in the *Cascade* projects live in these areas, and constitute some of its potential future residents who will benefit or otherwise from the changes taking place there now. Their role is to draw on their experience of life in East London and consider the kind of future that they wish for themselves and their communities. Their ideas are then communicated through a range of different cultural outputs in the public domain.

*Cascade* describes the two-way flow of skills and experience that takes place through these projects. The youngest cohort hold most of the expertise about 'place' while benefiting from the support of slightly older students who are more 'buddy' than teacher. Undergraduates demonstrate their work to the college students, describing their often circuitous routes into higher education. Through these personal stories the younger students gain glimpses of different ways to realise their dreams and ambitions. At the same time the older students gain skills in running workshop and frequently comment on how much they have gained from their contact with the younger participants. The role of myself and other collaborating artists is to manage the relationships so that participants may concentrate on production, underpinned by many levels of learning. All contribute in different ways to the final outcomes, which have at different times included exhibitions, books and web sites. The current *Cascade* project focuses on the making of a *Young Person's Guide to East London*, an online resource being constructed over several years by hundreds of East London teenagers. It will provide an ongoing resource for local youth and offer their view of the region to the thousands of visitors attending the Olympics in 2012.

Although sharing a similar location to the Docklands Community Poster Project, the inception of these projects has significantly differed, reflecting both changes in the social and political climate and the kinds

of opportunity on offer. What the projects share is a similarly organic developmental process based on dialogue, circumstance and interaction at both personal and institutional level. Each has taken into account the potential for finance, but neither have been 'funding-led'. The 1980's project nevertheless benefited from the long-term support of the Greater London Council, while *Cascade* progresses through a series of small, unconnected funds which frequently leave it on the edge of a financial precipice.

From experience, the 'design' of an art project with social and educational value needs to be flexible enough to allow it to build organically on community relationships and to uncover need. If the project can tap into where energy is already flowing it is more likely to engender long-term and developmental outcomes. This however contradicts many well-intentioned initiatives in the art world that stem from a curatorial desire to create something 'new'. In the UK at the moment, the process of commissioning is rapidly overtaking financial support for artist-led projects, while public funding for the arts is beginning to mimic our increasingly target-driven economy. Although the latter might seem a counterpoint to the negative practice of 'parachuting' artists into communities, the imposition of a governmental 'social inclusion' agenda from above is also highly problematic. This is particularly so where it extends to insistence on particular forms of the 'bottom up' instigation of projects. As can be seen from the examples given, a formulaic approach cannot hope to fit all. It can also prevent creative innovation and lead either to simplistic work invented to fulfil funding directives, or a misdirection of creativity to give the appearance of doing so. It is heartbreaking to see how lessons in the social value of art have become turned on their head through this 'top down' approach, which is now supporting the widespread use of artists as a cheap panacea for society's ills.

As a warning from a practitioner in one country to policy makers in another: do it differently. Social benefits do not require social control. Where possible give support to existing initiatives and offer development money rather than commissions. Don't force collaborations; enable them to happen. Prioritise core funding to artist-led organisations over project finance and build educational initiatives around artistic production. Find new models for the interaction of art, education and place that we can learn from, but above all help to create the conditions where this can come about. As Catherine Wilson has recently reminded us:

The possibilities of artists engendering profound challenges to constructed cultural and social dichotomies, and influencing wider actions and thinking, is as infinite as the creative process itself. Nevertheless, tak[e] responsibility for the process, but [understand] that social outcomes rely on nodes of interaction in the wider public realm that the artist does not control (2008: 6).

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**1. Mural in situ, Wapping Lane, Londres, E1**

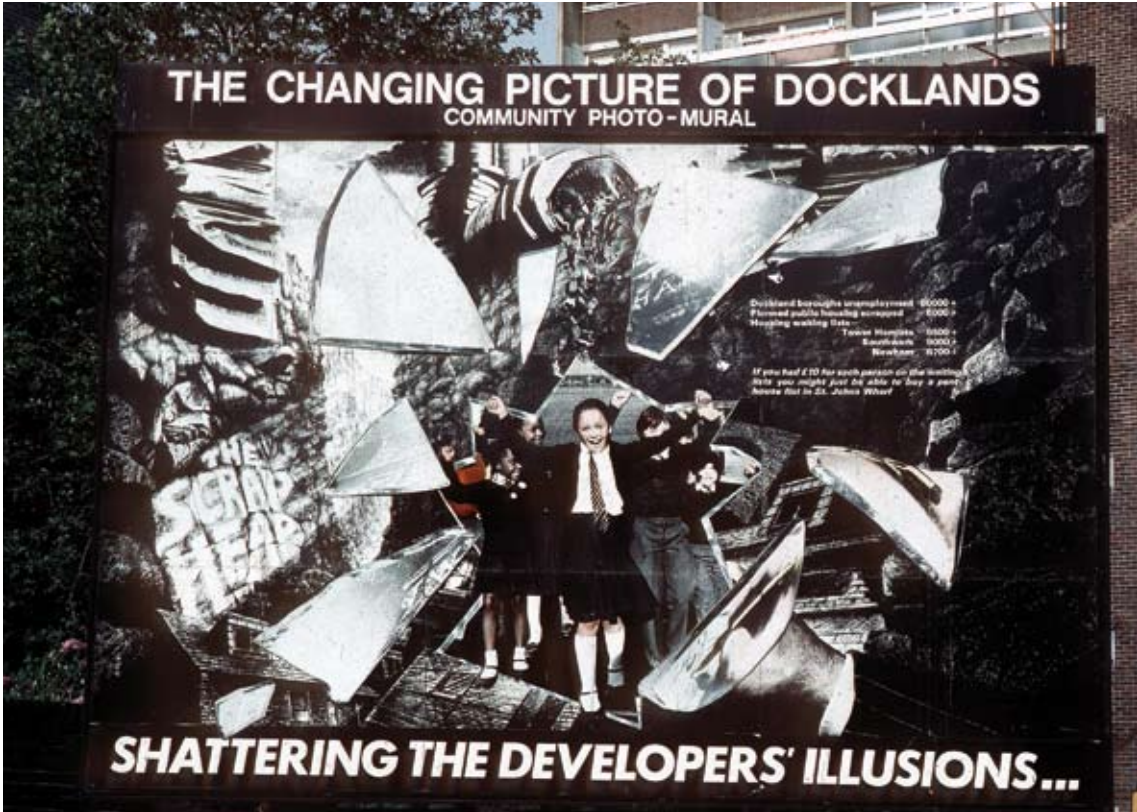
© Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn, *Docklands Community Poster Project*, 1985

One of eight photomurals created in the area of London Docklands and surroundings. Produced in collaboration with different local community organisations. These images, which underwent gradual changes, highlight the main problems and effects of redeveloping the Docklands area.

**2. Undoing the illusions of the impellers of the change**

© Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn, *Docklands Community Poster Project*, 1982-1985

The seventh image from the first sequence of photomurals from the piece *The Changing Picture of Docklands*, which examines questions concerning the redevelopment of London Docklands from the point of view of local communities.







1



2

#### 1. Advice

Photography: © John Nassari

Students at the University of East London helped secondary school students produce and create school workshops.

#### 2. Photography

To help prepare the guide, the young people were taken to visit the area and places they were documenting which they thought would be of interest to other people of their age.

#### 3. Dockland Light Railway Guide for Young People

Design: Henry Iles

Several extracts from the guide were used as 'information cards' inside DLR carriages.

#### 4. Launch

The guide was presented at the Docklands Museum in March 2005 at an event where participants turned their experience into a lively debate on the plans for the area for future generations.

#### 5. Royal Victoria Dock Footbridge

Design: Henry Iles

Each place highlighted in the guide included a series of photographs, a brief description and useful information. The East London guide, which is about to be published, will have similar features, but will be published in a larger format and will be easier to carry out searches.

#### 6. Website for the Royal Docks Guide for Young People

Design: Henry Iles

This guide contains the top twenty places for young people to visit in this off-the-beat neighbourhood.



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6

# STORIES FROM *WHAT*>

RIKA COLPAERT  
HERMAN LABRO  
DE KUNSTBANK

## WHAT

What is *What*>? A space, place, wunderkammer, wonderland, somewhere, nowhere, everywhere, where fantasy, intuition, play, joy, colours, fabrics, the haptic, visuality, tactility, people, things meet each other. Where people and things are welcome... Where Alices come to play and wonder. Let your imagination run free...

## WHERE

*What*> could be situated anywhere. *What*> meeting space for visual culture was based in Leuven due to local cultural policies. City politics have changed, the building has been torn down but the memories remain and are shifting into other contexts, projects,...

## CONTEXT 1: DE KUNSTBANK

*What*> is a project by De Kunstbank. Our organisation was based in Leuven until the end of 2006. We then moved to Brussels. As a non-profit organisation, we focus on several things: on promoting visual culture - contemporary art in particular - through gallery education and exhibition projects; on enhancing cultural participation through participatory (art) projects and on (visual) knowledge production through shared research practices. Some of the exhibition projects are mobile and travel to Flemish schools, accompanied by our collaborators who hold workshops there for one or two weeks. Other initiatives such as the participatory projects take place in a specific context: for that sort of projects we prefer to collaborate with partner-organisations like Leren Ondernemen, an organisation dedicated to eradicating poverty and social disadvantage.

## CONTEXT 2: CULTURAL POLITICS IN FLANDERS<sup>1</sup>

At the end of the 1990's, there were great shifts in Flemish and local culture policy: a phenomenon called "city marketing" arose and cultural heritage was recognized as a valuable domain. In Leuven, with its 90,000 inhabitants plus 30,000 students, there was also a desire to raise the city's profile in the regional landscape. Culture, art and heritage seemed the right track to pursue. During the same period the Flemish government issued a decree that established a regional and local policy concerning cultural heritage. Extra funding was made available and these decisions led to the establishment of heritage cells in every community.

1. We speak about Flanders and Flemish cultural politics. The political situation in Belgium is complex: some areas, such as culture and education, fall entirely under the separate communities' competence, that is, Flanders or Wallonia; other areas like health care, fall under the federal level. Attitudes and trends in culture and education differ greatly on either side of the language border.

### CONTEXT 3: THE CITY AND ITS CULTURAL POLICY

In spite of being heavily bombed during the First and Second World Wars, the medieval centre of Leuven, with its late Gothic town hall, many churches, two beguinages, and many university college buildings, was well preserved. The university library, thanks to numerous American and European donations, was rebuilt after the Second World War. In addition to the university, several breweries played an important role in the prestige of the city. Today the multinational Stella Artois (InBev) is still prominent in Leuven.

Some of Leuven's cultural players found that the existing museum was not attractive enough and wanted to find more space for contemporary art. The city museum, a former bourgeois townhouse with a historic garden, was located adjacent to the former art academy and municipal library. It seemed ideal to renovate the site and create a new complex where there would be space for modern art. In order to give this project for the museum site an appropriate profile, external advisers were consulted. The internationally renowned curator Jan Hoet was hired as a consultant by the city in 2001. In his final report he sketched the situation in Leuven: under "existing potential" he mentioned the rich medieval patrimonium, the university and several initiatives in contemporary art, including the Leuven biennial. Herman Labro, artistic director and one of the founders of the De Kunstbank, had served as curator in the second edition of the Leuven biennial in 2000. His highly original selection of artists, works of art, and locations was well received by both press and public. Jan Hoet specifically mentioned De Kunstbank in his report as a unique resource due to Herman Labro's commitment to the biennial and the great expertise of De Kunstbank in relation to art education. He recommended a close partnership between the museum site and De Kunstbank.

Aside from a few top pieces, Leuven's art collections – including the Vanderkelen-Mertens museum's collection were considered as heterogeneous and second rate. Therefore it seemed optimal to anchor the museum site project in a wider societal context and to create an "ambience" in which "high" art and daily life could interact with one another; an environment in which the public would feel comfortable and which would link the inside and the outside of the museum site with one another.

Hoet linked this concept of "art as 'ambience'" with the idea of the "room". The site consisted of many buildings. The museum's holdings – in his eyes a kind of Cabinet of curiosities – consisted of paintings and sculptures but also valuable furniture, decorative objects and porcelain china from various styles and periods. The "room" model made it possible to invite contemporary artists like John M. Armleder who has affinity for this theme. "The museum site must become the focus of critical discussions and conversations, and must constantly generate new inspiration and initiatives." Two poles had to be considered here, which he for convenience called the "creative" pole and the "conserving" pole.

"On the one hand, there is creation, which flows out of our current thinking about now and the future. On the other hand is the necessity to reflect about how we deal with the past – archiving? cultivating?" Finally the question of public access and outreach had to be considered.

This report was widely circulated, eagerly read and constituted the beginning of cooperation between the city of Leuven and De Kunstbank. Saïd el Khadraoui, the young city alderman of culture at that time, rose to the challenge: De Kunstbank was invited to participate in the discussions and was asked to formulate an experimental and innovative way to involve the public in the museum site. The old municipal library, which would be eventually demolished (all but its façade was deemed unusable) was considered a suitable location for this experiment, and it was here that *What>*, a meeting place for visual culture, was born.

### ABOUT WHAT>

*What>* explores the at times familiar, at times bewildering surface world of visual culture. Classical art from the collection of the city museum, from the university or from private collections, as well as contemporary art, pieces of cultural heritage from the city archives, design work, photography, video, comics, popular culture, fashion and media can be a part. *What>* is a meeting space, a place where people and things meet and where intercultural dialogues take place with residents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students, tourists, etc. Through an exchange of experiences and ideas, *What>* encourages different ways of looking at, interpreting and creating images.

### SOME FACTS

*What>* interpreted public access and outreach literally as involving the public, working with citizens. There were eight exhibition projects that took place from 2002 to 2006. Together with the French artist Franck Bragigand the space was transformed each time into a new painting in which the visitor could literally walk around. Most of the exhibitions had an open theme, such as places, people, or things, and consisted of many concrete and separate projects. The exhibitions were never finished; projects were continually added and ideas changed, not only during but also after the opening night. People could make suggestions and inspire future projects with their stories, associations and ideas. In the summer "in betweens" were held: exhibitions that looked forward as well as backward, and left room for playful experiments.

The exhibitions were produced by cooperation of many actors: the other institutions on the site – the Vanderkelen-Mertens museum and the heritage cell, professional and amateur artists, members of institutions and organisations in Leuven, citizens, visitors, and more. It was a reflection of the (cultural) abundance of the city, its citizens, museums and organisations. This four-year project welcomed a total of 59,600 visitors.

## WHAT> TWO: PEOPLE> POPULAR> PEOPLE>>>

A case study will clarify what a *What>* exhibition looked like. A select overview of some of the projects and activities follows.

In *What>* two, we displayed silk screens by Andy Warhol, the pop art superstar: his “Marilyn Monroe” series, “Flowers” and even a “Saint Apollonia”. Warhol’s heirs were welcomed, used and further explored: “popular culture”, “we, the people”, and “everyone is famous” were the initial themes of this exhibit.

Artist Franck Bragigand used primary colours for his painting: red, yellow, and blue. The painting encompassed approximately 15 projects.

From the municipal collection came several late Gothic sculptures. Saint Catherine kept Warhol’s Saint Apollonia company; here and there were statues of Christ on the Cold Stone, a popular medieval genre that was mass produced at that time in local workshops. The current female curator and her secretary both provided commentary to the portraits of the founding fathers of the city museum: the scientific commentary was contrasted by the anecdotal.

Several projects allowed people to experience Warhol’s renowned “15 minutes of fame”. Spinosh, a popular brass band which includes older gentlemen who sing in local dialect, experienced a comeback thanks to their performance at *What>*. Their photographs were part of the exhibition.

Flyers and advertisements in the local newspaper invited young people to be models in the show “Idriz Jossa goes pop” by the fashion designer of the same name during the opening night of the exhibition. For “Blue eyes”, a project by René Kantor, young girls were approached that evening, professionally made-up with blue eye shadow and photographed with a Polaroid camera. The results were presented a few hours later as a mini-exhibit in the *What>* gallery. The well known Mr. Alain Extravaganza and another drag queen put on their Sunday best. Visitors could choose to have their photograph taken with them during a special session by a professional photographer. (image 1 & 2)

Children from a local school showed their project “exceptionally famous”. On opening night they appeared dressed as VIPs and their own famous alter ego. Alongside pop stars and Olympic athletes were famous inventors, writers, and artists as well. With professional assistance, they produced their own magazine covers and gave an interview to a well-known journalist. During the exhibition it was possible to listen to the interviews on headphones and see their magazine covers. Enormous black and white portraits of them as themselves in poses of their choosing, were displayed on the windows. Some of them were so frequently recognised that in the end, they became tired of being famous. (image 6 & 7) Flyers invited participants to become Marilyn Monroe themselves in a Monroe Special during the finissage. Mainly young women responded but a feminine-looking young man also participated. One woman came in an ornate Marilyn costume and paraded the whole evening in the gallery and up and down the street. Monroe films were

screened the entire evening and a debate was organised between a well-known film critic and a director: one a devoted fan, the other a Monroe detractor. (image 5 & 8)

Photographs of the various projects appeared later in many exhibitions.

The serial aspect of Warhol’s silk screens and the medieval sculptures repeated itself in a project by the Spit, a social employer and recycling centre for used goods. A collection of painted chests of drawers from the 1950’s played a prominent role in this. The result of a joint project between artist Franck Bragigand, the Spit, and *What>* was that several Spit employees worked with Bragigand in a creative workshop and designed a special collection for each exhibit. For *What>* two, they were inspired by Warhol’s silk screens. (image 3)

The idea to give Ingrid Betancourt, former Colombian presidential candidate and hostage, a place in *What>* two came through a meeting with a local activist. She was touched by Betancourt’s book, “Anger in the Heart”, and founded a local support committee with two friends. We wanted to support their commitment to a brave contemporary heroine, as a counterpoint to the medieval female martyrs, even though we knew little about the situation in Colombia.<sup>2</sup> We invited them to set up activities during the exhibition; during one of these activities some of Betancourt’s supporters from Belgium and France came to visit. At the time we were silk screening *pancartes* with a portrait of Betancourt as an icon on them. The national head of the support committees pointed out that this was a delicate situation: there were so many other hostages in Columbia, and people were upset there that the European press was only interested in Betancourt. Even though we were proud of the *pancartes*, he had a point: from this came the idea to write the names of all the hostages on the facade of the building and on the *pancartes*. The performative actions left a great impression on those who worked the next few days writing down all the names as well as passers-by and visitors. Word got out to people with Latin American roots in Brussels and Antwerp, who came to see it. They were surprised and touched by the attention for and the solidarity with the suffering of simple people and victims in their home countries.

The protest march the support committee wanted to organise was forbidden. The city alderman did not want *What>* to involve itself with “political activities”. The specially made banner, upon which the women had let themselves be photographed in brassieres, dyed in the colours of the Colombian flag<sup>3</sup>, was not permitted to be hung over the street.

2. Latin American is barely covered by the Dutch-language press and at that time Betancourt was not well known (only her spectacular liberation was front-page news).

3. A play on words: they named their organisation “Leuvens comité de soutien”. Soutien in French means support and is also part of the word soutien-gorge which means brassiere.

Instead we organised a mini-march: we cut photographs out of people holding the *pancartes* and displayed them in the exhibit. The *pancartes* were later used by the support committees in demonstrations and other activities. When the police tried to forbid them, the activists used the argument that it was art, which helped. (image 10)

## COMMUNITIES

*What>* succeeded in creating temporary new communities. The hosts and hostesses played a crucial role in this. They succeeded in making people feel welcome as visitors. As long as it felt “right”, they gave information, listened to impressions and associations, offered coffee or water. At the same time we worked with a wide variety of existing communities: social projects, schools, institutions, young people united by sport or lifestyle, the Academy of “Leives” (academy for local dialect), and so on. We always pursued a healthy social and generational mix. In order to connect with the local communities, we regularly published articles in the local free weekly newspaper, distributed flyers and worked with the local television station.

## CONFLICTING INTERESTS

Inherent to this experiment were many challenges and conflicts of interest. For example, authorship issues concerning the work produced during the cooperation between Franck Bragigand and the Spit seemed obvious in the beginning. The Spit employees assisted in the workshop with his monochrome collections. These were exposed in an artistic context or developed for the design label Droog Design (Amsterdam). It soon became more complex: in the Spit collections for *What>*, they were able to participate in the selection of colours and they began to experiment on their own, painting and accentuating details. Franck Bragigand found this difficult and even threatening. The symbolic-economic question became an issue. For the artist these were works of art that could also be used in a practical way as a chair or a cupboard. For all parties it was also important that the items would in the end be sold at democratic prices in the recycling centre’s store and at *What>*. For the people at the Spit it was difficult to reconcile the idea that, depending on the context, the same cupboard could vary widely in price.

Some choices were difficult for the artists and other participants to accept. We did not provide unequivocal references to authors of works (we refused to hang name plates as in a classic museum context) and “the individuals and interest groups that wanted to get involved in *What>* had to tolerate one another in their process of gaining visibility, as well as in their respective claims for a specific space. This is how the project made the public negotiation of fairly contradictory interests and

articulations possible, thereby materialising the claim associated with the concept of culture often referred to as ‘third space’.”<sup>4</sup>

*What>* played with levels of representation. Placing objects in another context created shifts in meaning. “The peculiar and singular arrangement of things between other things, of objects, furniture pieces, fragments, texts, quotations, art works: the quoting of behaviour modes as performative acts (the subject always has only a performative status, it enacts itself), letting different referential systems simultaneously be hinted at; in a playfully-serious way. Art alongside balls of wool, alongside fragments of the everyday, professional photographers alongside amateurs, models alongside girls, female political resistance fighters alongside three women. Through the arrangements they change their texts. Where is the meaning in this? It originates in the middle, in between things.”<sup>5</sup>

Although we wanted to create an open space where things could happen, choices were not made arbitrary and we did not accept every proposal. We found the aesthetic component for instance very important. Starting with *What>* two, we shared the curatorship and not only did we negotiate with potential participants but also with each other. In many meetings we tried to motivate our choices as well as we could.

The fact that everyone was welcome also created problems. Some preferred the “right” audience. A spontaneous crochet project that attracted many disadvantaged people, was especially and sharply criticised, not only by a certain “cultural elite”, but also by politicians who were, officially, proponents of socialist theory and social inclusion.

## END OF THE MUSEUM SITE

At the outset we had a positive and constructive relationship with the curator of the museum. The other player at the site, the heritage cell, was populated by a young, inexperienced staff who were sceptical about their own mission. They found our proposals too complicated and the spontaneous nature of *What>* too difficult and chaotic.

Things soon became more complex. The city planned to hire an “intendant” for the museum site. The curator of the museum felt threatened and started a new campaign to reform the museum site into one new museum with her as its director. She began to lobby to reduce *What>*’s mission to the museum interests. The fact that *What>* attracted many more visitors also created jealousy and suspicion and played an important role in the conflicts. Despite many constructive attempts, this led to a breach.

4. Mörsch, Carmen, The Shift of Vocabularies. In between Pragmatism and Deconstruction in Aufsätze zum Wandel kultureller Handlungsweisen (Hg.) Dominika Szope/ Pius Freiburghaus/ Charles und Agnes Voegelé Stiftung, 2005. Mörsch refers to the article of Homi Bhaba, ...

5. Idem



Some concepts and projects were taken over and produced by the museum and heritage cell after 2006, a practice that Carmen Mörsch often sees happen with small innovative projects in these neoliberal times.<sup>6</sup> Officially, *What>* has disappeared: in reports on the historical perspective of the city of Leuven's cultural policy as well as on official websites, *What>* is never mentioned.

**TO BE CONTINUED ELSEWHERE**

*What>* meeting space for visual culture does not physically exist in Leuven anymore, but the *What>* spirit live on. The strategies, energy, results have moved on with us to our new location in Brussels. We continue to welcome fantasy, intuition, joy, colours, fabrics, the haptic, visuality, tactility, people and things. And we will continue to inspire play, wonder and imagination. To be continued...



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6. For an analysis of *What>* with Gilles Deleuze see Sturm, Eva: "Gilles Deleuze and Eva Sturm and *What>*". In: *What>* (Ed.) (2005): in between, Leuven.





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# WHAT ARE ARTISTS TALKING ABOUT WHEN THEY SET UP EDUCATIONAL-ARTISTIC PROJECTS?

FERNANDO HERNÁNDEZ

The groundwork for this article comes from a presentation entitled “*De què parlem artistes i educadors quan diem que fem projectes artístics amb finalitat pedagògica?*” (“What are artists and educators talking about when they say they set up artistic projects for educational purposes?”), which I presented at the course *Accions reversibles. Seminari sobre art, educació i territori* (“Reversible Actions. Seminar on Art, Education and Territory”), held in the city of Vic on 7 and 8 November 2008. In order to convert a presentation designed to be given orally and visually (in slides) in the presence of an audience into a written text I have had to rehash what I presented there by making changes to both the linguistic register and the contents. I wish to point this out because if anyone who was at the Vic seminar reads this article, they will notice the similarity to what I said and presented there, but in another register, with the inclusion of different references, and with the revision and development of ideas and proposals that were just rough sketches at the presentation.

## FOUR STORIES TO GET THE BALL RUNNING

I have approached the topic of my presentation as an opportunity to explore the foundations and mechanics of relationships between artists and educational projects in schools and the wider community. Projects that are not created to be exhibited on the traditional art circuit. Projects that involve others in the role of authors and collaborators.

I have approached this inquiry firstly as a review of a range of international experiences in which regulated competitions have been set up so artists can present their projects for financing. As regards all of these, I will provide pointers for reflection, which will aid the learning process; since we are basically just beginning this journey of shaping artistic practices outside traditional art circuits (museums, galleries and exhibitions in general).

I will conclude by making some proposals, which should be taken on board in order for artistic projects carried out in the community to become more than just money-spinning, social activities, and take on a transformative role beyond the scope of their own limits and premises.

I will set off on this journey by telling four stories, so we are not starting from scratch. The path already walked is always rich in experiences. It fosters understanding and lays down markers, which come to light in the discussion on a route related to arts in education.

**Story one.** In 2006, I was in Brazil and was given the opportunity to present a seminar at the Maria Antonia cultural centre of São Paulo University on new perspectives on education in and through the arts. I wanted to know who my colleagues would be in this activity so I asked those in attendance about their professional situations. Most presented themselves as art educators, and a small group as artist educators. I asked after the difference. They told me that some of them taught art, while others executed artistic projects in the areas in which they worked. The distinction not only got me thinking about the question of the professional “localisation” of each of them, but also about the development of their careers; the way in which they had built a professional identity that positioned them in such well-defined professional “areas”. I also wondered about their training; about the baggage each of them brought with them to “education in and through the arts” or to the execution of artistic projects of an explicitly educational nature. And I asked myself about the differences I would discern in each of them if I was to watch them at work.

**Story two.** A few years back I was invited to organise a symposium for the La Caixa Foundation on education in and through the arts. One of the people who responded to my invitation was Rachel Mason, who had at that time been involved in the educational training of artists in the field of dance, music, theatre and the visual arts participating in projects set up by the British Council for the Arts, as part of the *Artists at Schools* programme. I was struck by the fact that the artists did not just arrive at the schools with their artistic baggage and allow their talent and creativity to do the rest. It was first necessary for them to receive training on how to ensure their knowledge fully took into account their learners; those participating in the experience they wanted to construct. I was interested in a training plan that was attempting to make their artistic knowledge compatible with the educational skills required of them.

**Story three.** At the institution in which I work, the Faculty of Fine Arts, students graduate having been trained preferentially to be visual artists, designers or restorers. Talk of education or educational methods causes discomfort or outright rejection. A recent study (2006) carried out by a range of institutions to ascertain the professional fields entered by students leaving the faculty showed that more than 60% were in one way or another working in education. In the faculty education is normally identified with being a teacher. We appear to have forgotten that any activity undertaken by an artist is and always has been educational. And this also presents us with a clear paradox; we are all in the faculty because in one way or another we act as teachers. This means we should be designing the learning experiences we create for the students in educational terms.

**Story four.** At the end of the 2006-2007 educational year, *Les Saloniers* invited me to participate in one of their halls in Mataró. I prepared a presentation on the topic of artist educators but could not give it, because the debate that occurred was a lot more interesting than anything I could have presented. I did however point out in my comments that I had observed the following ways in which artists, or people working in the field of culture relate to educational projects:

- (a) They use the community (school, groups...) to execute their own projects.
- (b) They have a project and “sell” it to the communities.
- (c) They get involved with the community and see its members as their assistants.
- (d) They construct a project as a collaboration (in which case we must consider different types of collaboration).
- (e) They collaborate on a project executed by a group of the community.
- (f) They view any work they execute as educational in the sense that their aim is to set up and propose ways of seeing the world and relating to reality.

This list provides a rough guide. It is based on a range of experiences I have known or in which I have participated in institutions (museums and art centres), community centres, town halls, groups of young people, schools, etc.

As in the stories from *The Arabian Nights*, the choice of these four stories was not coincidental. They all converge. They provide fragments of what I am bringing to the table this evening. For this reason these four stories not only work as a starting point for my comments, they also present an index of some of the themes that come together in educational projects involving artists: identity, training, relationships and power. These are the central themes I wish to examine using examples of artistic projects designed to be undertaken with others and which require the construction of educational relationships for their completion.

What I am going to do is explore the characteristics of certain foreign initiatives I think we can learn from. Above all when we are looking to expand the educational project concept and to pose questions concerning the relationship between artists and community projects (whether they are in schools, with groups of children or young people, or other types of collective, etc.).

It is however necessary to lay down a proposition before setting off on this journey. I share with Mary Nash the idea of *Teaching* not only being about the sharing of knowledge/power appropriated by the teachers. It is also a concept associated with *the creation of identity*, or the way in which *we learn to see ourselves in relation to the world*. This definition

means all the “spaces” the subjects relate to become relevant and worthy of investigation. If this is the case, all artistic projects “are” educational, since they constitute a discursive experience that “sets” ways of seeing reality and positions our search for our own identity (in relation to what we should be). This presupposes that all artistic projects foster experiences of inclusion/exclusion, affirmation/negation of the sense of being of those relating to them (as viewers, spectators, actors, etc.).

## LEARNING FROM EXAMPLES

Since the nineteen nineties, the English-speaking countries have led the way in the development of programmes in which artists can present their proposals for undertaking their work alongside a range of groups in the community, especially those linked to schools.

In New Zealand for example the Ministry of Education has set up the *Artists in Schools*<sup>1</sup> programme, which provides professional artists in the fields of dance, theatre, music and the visual arts with the opportunity of working with young people in the country’s primary and secondary schools.

The intention of the programme is to foster the involvement of all school children (from the first year of primary school to the second year of secondary school) through the artistic disciplines on the curriculum. The programme pays each artist \$800 a week, up to a maximum of \$8000 for their work with the students and the teaching staff for a period of ten weeks.

But not only does the programme benefit the artists economically, it also provides the schools with \$250 a week up to a maximum of \$2500 if the project requires ten weeks for execution. The money is paid to the schools for materials, costumes or instruments required by the project.

There are several programmes in England. Some are similar to those offered by the educator city programmes, which allow schools to access and undertake activities in conjunction with artistic and cultural institutions in the city. We are not however dealing with these programmes here. And as Loraine Lesson<sup>2</sup> reminded me during the seminar, on occasions the pressure to register for these institutional activities in schools is generated as a consequence of a sense of obligation that must be responded to, without there being a necessity linked to an on-going project at the school.

The project I am going to discuss is *What is Artists In Schools?*<sup>3</sup> This programme runs workshops for groups of school children. A range of formats are employed to provide schools with the opportunity to work

with some of the best and most renowned artists in a wide variety of artistic fields.

The goal of the programme is for the artists to adapt to the demands of the groups and individuals. To this end workshops are given in which half-day, week-long or longer projects are undertaken. The artist-in-residence model is used in this case.

In my opinion the relevance of this programme resides in the possibility of getting to know the framework and context in which artists work. The programme organises the infrastructure so that each artist can develop the workshop, and so the artists in the database can be employed for tutoring in these. The programme itself is presented to the schools and provides support for the work undertaken by the artists. The people promoting the programme work with the school and the artist in order to meet the workshop’s goals, and they are also responsible for managing contracts. This means the artist can be completely devoted to negotiating the project with the school and setting up the workshop that will make it possible. In contrast to other initiatives in which funds are handed over to the school, here the artist is paid by the programme. As a result, the programme acts not only as an intermediary between the school and the artist, it is also the artist’s agent, in that it handles all the bureaucracy involved in the management of contracts, access to the schools and end visibility of the completed project.

At the beginning of the current decade in England several schools of art joined forces to create what is now known as the University of the Arts London. The Engine Room<sup>4</sup> of this institution/network sets up collaborative projects between artists, schools and other institutions such as prisons, in which the function of the ER is to mediate and carry out research work on the activities undertaken, which:

- Foster creative skills and attitudes.
- Are linked to artistic practices.
- Are related to the cultures of those participating.
- Do not ignore the economic contribution made by the arts to the development of countries and individuals.
- Are aware of the social content of the projects as a means of contributing to redressing inequalities.
- Have a strong innovative component in their proposals and development.
- Do not ignore spiritual elements of the arts.
- Contribute to the educational function by building bridges between schools and the world beyond the school gates. To this end it is important for education in and through the arts to be relevant to the learners.

In order for these goals to be met, the projects aim to promote the following:

1. The characteristics of this programme can be found in: <http://arts.unitec.ac.nz/artistsinschools>.

2. Artist and director of cSPACE at the University of East London.

3. Further information on this and other English programmes in: [http://www.artistsinschools.co.uk/artists\\_info.php](http://www.artistsinschools.co.uk/artists_info.php) and [http://www.mjbdata.co.uk/webdesign/portfolio/artists\\_in\\_schools.php](http://www.mjbdata.co.uk/webdesign/portfolio/artists_in_schools.php).

4. For further information see: <http://www.engineerroomcogs.org>.

- Flexible organisational structures within passable limits.
- Active and collaborative participation, which means sharing responsibility for programme planning, implementation and evaluation.
- Accessibility for all. Quality programmes are understood to be set up as inclusive, which means proposals must provide a suitable learning space for everyone.
- The fostering of reflection, which means viewing the work critically and flexibly.
- A localised focus in the projects, which is expressed in the use of resources linked to the surrounding environment, both in terms of materials and contents.
- Execution of projects linked to investigations, which means projects also train those involved as researchers assessing the journey travelled.
- Every project involves an active creation process; the performance and exhibition of what has been made, the purpose of which is for those participating to receive recognition for their work and to extend the benefits of the art to a wider audience.

I think these considerations should be kept in mind as a good starting point in order for artistic projects to exceed their own limits and remain mindful of the fact that exiting the world of the artist's studio involves making contact with the sort of knowledge and skills it is not possible to learn in art institutions.

Another English collaboration model is the *Creative Partnership* of the Arts Council England, financed by departments of this body, the goal of which is to foster the development of education and skills, as well as culture, the media and sport. It has the following objectives:

- To develop the creativity of young people, by promoting their aspirations and achievements.
- To increase the abilities of teachers and their skills for work with creative professionals.
- To bring educational practices and cultural institutions closer together.
- To work with creative professionals as true collaborators in the learning process.
- To draw up clear goals and objectives.
- To design contextualised programmes.
- To clearly establish the roles of creative professionals.
- To promote the sustainable use of resources.
- To construct long-term creative relationships.
- To provide teaching staff and artists with consultancy.

It never ceases to surprise me that the ambition of the proposal and the value of the existence of an organisation that coordinates these activities and fosters the achievement of these objectives combine implicitly with the idea that the teaching profession is not viewed as a group attributed with the characteristics of creative professionalism.

On the other side of the world, the *ArtsPlay* programme in Australia has developed from a City of Melbourne initiative backed by the Sidney Myer Foundation. It has the following objectives:

- To encourage children and their families to develop their creativity and their imagination.
- To involve top-quality artists and creative personnel from a range of disciplines.
- To value the role of families and community in creative learning.
- To promote physical environments and creative resources.
- To carry out longitudinal evaluations.
- To employ methods based on the arts to obtain evidence and evaluate the activities.

The last experience I am going to talk about brings us back to the Iberian Peninsula. It is the *Projecto Respira (Breathe Project)*<sup>5</sup>, which is linked to the field of music and above all dance, and has been developed in Portugal. The intention of the artists and educators participating in the project is to link experimentation to the conception of a dance spectacle. This means an exploration of the multidisciplinary nature of this area and the involvement of the school community in a research and creation process by means of the promotion of a particular standpoint and method to undertake the artistic activity.

To this end, during an intensive period a team of artists works with groups of school students on a common conceptual topic to complete the different parts of a dance piece: the body, the music, the video, the costumes, which converge in the final spectacle presented in a conventional theatre.

## QUALITIES OF ARTIST EDUCATORS

As can be deduced from all the above, not all artists are apt for participation in these programmes, since a series of skills and certain sensibilities are required that are not always found in someone who has decided their main career priority is “to be an artist” within a specific discipline. Some of the programmes specify certain qualities the artist educators should have by way of advice so schools can use them as selection criteria. A review of these helps us understand that as with teaching it is not enough to just know your subject. Similarly, to be an artist educator it is not enough to have completed a volume of work and to be recognised as a professional artist. The following is also necessary:

- The skills to be able to communicate with teaching staff, the students and the families with regard to social diversity and cultural circumstances.
- A willingness to have participation in previous projects evaluated.
- And for the contents of completed work to be available.
- Attendance at an interview.

To weigh up whether the artist is capable of responding in a responsible way to the context of the school, the following is taken into account:

5. An example of the type of work they undertake can be seen in: <http://www.youtube.com/aldarabizarro>.

- Whether the artist is aware of what an inclusive curriculum means.
- The attitude of the artist in the interview or what is reflected in the text they have written by way of presentation.
- Whether the activity proposed is recognized and approved by the members of the community.
- The awareness of the artist of the needs of the students and the context in which he or she must be involved.
- The awareness of the artist of the community the school is linked to.

## WHAT WE LEARN FROM THESE COLLABORATION EXPERIENCES

A series of characteristics can be extracted from this overview, which we can learn from in the event we wish to set up a coordinated policy to link the projects of artists with the communities.

- There is a promoter and coordinating organization that constitutes part of a cultural and educational political action (linking both areas) and is responsible for promoting, disseminating, providing resources for and evaluating the development of projects.
- There is no single unique model for action. Examples include specific workshops of a limited time-span, to long-term collaboration projects requiring a high degree of involvement.
- The priority purpose of the projects is not to create a finished work or spectacle; it is rather to promote the development of creativity in the collaborating community the project is linked to.
- Not anyone can become an artist educator. That is why there is a selection process that takes into account a classification of the artistic work as well as communication skills, knowledge of the community and the circumstance of the school or group being collaborated with.

I would also like to suggest that when planning or getting involved in artistic-educational projects, the organisers should take on board the classification of collaboration proposals that the *Learning by Design*<sup>6</sup> project recommends we keep in mind:

- *Experiences* (What can participants learn from themselves and from others?)
- *Concepts* (What are we going to think about that we had not considered before, or had considered but are now going to look at in a different way?)
- *Connections* (What sort of relationships are we going to explore and establish? What links between disciplines, experiences and fields of knowledge are going to be set up?)
- *Applications* (What are we going to do with all this? How are we going to exhibit it, to publicise it and share it with others in the community and outside it?)

6. Kalantzis, Mary; Cope, Bill, et al. *Learning by Design*. Altona, Australia: Common Ground Publishing, 2005.

The following two quotes are perhaps the best way of providing a synthesis of the meaning of what an artist educator could be and of the spirit that could guide their projects. The first is from David Darts, an educator and artist from the United States who summarises his position as regards intervening in educational projects of an artistic nature:

**What I do as an educator is no different from what other teachers do: I help the students find meaning in their experiences and in themselves. I facilitate creative research. I help them solve problems critically and support them in their efforts to create meaningful interactions and connections between and within the worlds that surround them.<sup>7</sup>**

The second quote is from Luis Camnitzer, education director of the 6<sup>th</sup> MERCOSUR Biennial:

**The master (the artist, culture worker) must change positions from holding a monopoly on knowledge to that of an agitator or catalyst. Intuitions are unpredictable and as a result bring with them the risk of subversion, since they do not always fit the dictates of the status quo. In view of the fact that governments have now decided to equate subversion with terrorism as if they were synonyms, nobody wants to set up subversive actions. The function of good art is however precisely to do with being subversive. It stirs up fossilised paradigms and aims to expand our knowledge. The emphasis on the production of objects to all intents and purposes ignores these elements. Existing structures are consolidated and society is pacified and bored. This focus generates Valium-Art.**

This has led me to recommend those of us working in educational projects to ask ourselves what Luis Camnitzer is suggesting: To what extent can our projects be interpreted as valium-art made to keep us quiet and prevent the promotion of instability? To what extent do we contribute to the creation of subversive art that contributes to the transformation and destabilisation of what is real?

## THE ARTIST EDUCATOR AS OPPORTUNITY

All the above invites us to move beyond the limits imposed by those who consider art and artistic practices to only refer to what artists create for exhibition circuits and private collections. That is why the examples I have presented and those we have come into contact with in this seminar provide an opportunity to:

7. This quote from David Darts appeared on the cover of the September 2006 edition of the *Art Education* magazine.

- Reinvent ourselves as artists, culture workers and educators.
- Look at children, young people and different groups in the community with fresh eyes; not as consumers but as having an active role to play.
- Include other areas of knowledge and skills in artistic practices related to questions about identity/subjectivity, power, cultural politics, individual and collective memory, etc.
- Contribute with artist educator projects to open up schools and the community to the multiple forms and experiences of representation that exist in the world. The artist educator should therefore play a role of fostering change in schools.
- Contribute with artistic practices to making schools and communities provide exciting projects for their members, from which they can learn about themselves, others and the world.
- Contribute to being critical of impositions, and use projects to question established forms of power and hegemonic relationships.
- Believe we can share and learn with others. On this point we should not forget the artist also has an opportunity to learn while helping others to do the same.
- Contribute with the projects to the building of bridges between schools, family and communities.
- Be prepared to learn from what is new, from what is happening now and not only from what is established and recognised.
- And lastly for the projects to be experiences that contribute to transgression and creation.

# WEAVING NETWORKS OF SYMPATHIES: FROM FRAGMENTS TO CONSTELLATIONS

SCRIPT FOR A “PROCESSUAL  
DOCUMENTARY” OR THE  
WORLD AS A PATCHWORK  
QUILT

LILIAN AMARAL

Processes are evolution; they are not judged by the results that limit them, but rather by the quality of their fluxes and the power of their continuation.

Gilles Deleuze  
*Conversations*

Experience passed from mouth to mouth is the source from which all story-tellers have created. And the best written stories are those that are less distinguishable from oral stories told by countless anonymous story-tellers.

Walter Benjamin

The starting point for writing this text is personal experience at the heart of the National Network of Visual Arts of FUNARTE in 2007. The experience took me across and through creative territories (*Inter-Territorialities: collaborative projects*, Rio Branco/Acre), territories of mediation (*Multimedia of the Human/Home Figure in Memory*, Paranaipiacaba, Santo André, São Paulo) and territories of conceptualisation and dissemination (presentation; *Visual arts in the world of networks*, Guarulhos, São Paulo).

On these journeys spaces were activated and turned into collective writings, which were possibly incomplete, but which aimed to provide room for in-depth discussions on the future of our cities, and above all, on man's place within them.

My intention here is to outline possible readings, interpretations, and appropriations of an expanded understanding of this “network of sympathies”, devised with an interdisciplinary perspective that has decisively blurred borders and been at work in the interstices of contemporary thought-action and artistic-critical practices. To this end I will employ projects undertaken by artists, curators, critics, administrators and socio-cultural agents in the range of contexts established by the National Network of Visual Arts of FUNARTE and the interfaces set up in these places (real and symbolic). In this way the network establishes interlocution, mediation and dissemination devices for the network art, in a context of daily life and weaving architectures of relationships from what is local to what is global.

The result of these is a kind of “geography of friction”, not so much in the sense of confrontation but rather as rubbing against each other, which means meetings and new interpretations for poetic journeys and movements.

Within a wide range of work completed in very different contexts, methodologies and languages in terms of the origin of the poetry of the actors/authors, there are converging blocks of understanding and inter-



cultural practices, the affinities of which can be used to define groups that can be formulated as follows:

- Collaborative art, memory and identity
- Documentary-documentation
- Corporeality, trajectory and urban composition.

### **COLLABORATIVE ART, MEMORY AND IDENTITY**

A great deal of the work presented by the National Network of Visual Arts was based on collaborative processes providing perspectives on the appropriation, ownership and resignification of the material and immaterial urban patrimony where public/relational art is the platform for operations and the work is shaped in a context of the experimentation of contemporary artistic practices that investigate urban imaginaries employing the borders and power found between languages, methodologies and environments. The processes merge in the expanded conception of art as experience and employ the (real and imaginary) places as support for collective creations involving artists and non-artists to stimulate the documentation and the critical and creative appropriation.

We move from experiencing the city as a spectacle to the differences between visibility and visibility, from the city to the place. A distinction is made between visibility and visibility, between reception and perception, between communication and information. The viewpoint metamorphoses in all these differences.

### **Memory**

Artistic work guided by the use of photographic and video-graphic methods expressed in projections in re-appropriated urban spaces, productions investigating references in oral stories and family albums, our modern-day archaeologies. They are all part of this collection, formulating spaces of memory, architectural spaces and spaces of experience.

Memory is a phenomenon constructed socially and individually subject to constant transformations, which is closely linked to a sense of identity, and which must be understood as the image an individual or group makes of themselves, for themselves or for others.

### **Present time and history**

The contemporary world is characterised by accelerated transformations of notions related to time, space and individuality. They all entertain the idea of excess, a characteristic of super-modernity. The “anthropological place” becomes defined as what is lived by whoever lives there and also by whoever comes from outside and attempts to interpret it. Such a place is in opposition to what are known as “places in the memory”, which arouse nostalgia, remembrance.

### **Anthropology of the here and now**

Ethnologists at work are those in a certain place (their here of the moment). Anthropological research discusses the question of others in the present. It is undertaken in the present, which is sufficient for it to be distinguished from history. While in the “anthropological place” the inhabitants “do not make history; they live in history” (socio-cultural practices of the present), in the “places in the memory” “the image of what we are not anymore” is assimilated once its meaning is in the memory, is in the past.

Another notion of present time is expressed by Walter Benjamin’s concept of history. In this concept, the past still has something to say and the present contains the unredeemed past.

### **DOCUMENTARY: REALITY/FICTION**

Olgária Matos sees images located halfway between what is palpable and what is intelligible, they are “material immateriality” (Matos, 1991: 17), referring to an extraordinary force, that is greater than itself, and related to a magical effectuality (image, in the sense of reproduction, of representation).

### **Representation**

The approximation of documentary film to what is lived or has been lived leads us to affirm the idea that the representations of this genre of films are what differentiate it from fiction and not its construction as a text, because both are texts.

### **Differentiation**

The differentiation is important, but the resources currently available to documentalists/historians/artists/“artographers”<sup>1</sup> (Irwin, 2008) mean images can be altered to such an extent, situations recreated, that the final documentary film does not end up being another representation of the lived-in world, but rather discusses the imagined world.

In what other way can any “past”, which is by definition constituted by events, processes, structures, etc. that cannot be perceived, be represented in any consciousness or discourse apart from in an “imaginary” way?

### **Documentation: the artist as documentalist or ethnologist**

Shared authorship: provided by the audiovisual history resource and marked by collective work.

Assembly: the moment in which expression is searched for from amongst the preceding stages, which involves all the constituent elements of the documentary.

1. *A/r/tographer: artist-researcher-teacher*, propositions for collective writing in which the artist and the community are co-authors of the same narrative or text. See Rita Irwin.

### Oral stories, audiovisual stories

Audiovisual stories have a strong relation with written stories. The spoken word, when transcribed, becomes the written word. And then it constitutes a perfect means of reconstructing the story.

In oral and video stories, the word reappears, also of vital importance, but the filmed word alongside the image, when edited is brought into contact with other languages, which results in new types of story that audiovisual methods can provide, stories that run parallel to the written story.

### Visual story: brought about by a change in support media

Seeing, according to Marilena Chauí, is thinking by means of the language. Seeing, also according to the author, takes people to the exterior world and hearing takes them to the interior world (CHAUI, 1988).

In the oral story on video, seeing and hearing are different sides of the same coin. That is why the expression “visual story” is somewhat inappropriate, because the film narrative evokes other narratives or languages behind the images, such as verbal, written, musical and gesticular languages. Whether or not the denomination “visual story” is appropriate, what concerns us here is that the story that comes out of the video support is different from the story that comes out of written language. The confrontation between written story and audiovisual story gives rise to some mistrust, misunderstanding or rejection when accepting the audiovisual methods in the historical recreation process. This is the consequence of the plurality and diversity of methodologies.

### CORPORALITY, TRAJECTORY AND URBAN COMPOSITION

Imbued with a new critical-aesthetic attitude marked by greater proximity between art and politics, we can identify a significant collection of proposals that are proof of, by means of urban inter/in-ventions, trajectories and compositions, “the conception of art based on deep-rooted collective social practices, which points to a productive relationship between art and the management of public space [...], resulting in creative inventions for ways of inhabiting” (Veloso, 2004-5: 113).

A dialogic vision is presented between the spaces of art, everyday life, body and place, with a firm belief in the possibility of constructing and reconstructing other types of cities, real and imaginary. In the (re) invention of the city, the citizen city is created by the inhabitants and empowers urban imaginaries (Silva, 2001).

Studying citizen cities is not just a question of examining citizen practices in the construction of social identities and actions against the powers that be, it is also an attempt to understand these new forms of citizen presentation, which consolidate or challenge established ways of living in the present and of imagining the future.

As for our right to the city, we can understand participatory management as being at the heart of all questions affecting its democratic

development. This creates the symbolic map of the city for the visualization of conflicting narratives by capturing the image and identity of the place.

Critiques of urban marketing, as simplistic and elitist exercises, emerge in parallel to a demand for an increase in local pride and the belief in the use of cultural activities as a catalyst for the recovery of the city that can aid the creation of a bridge between the need for an exterior image as well as a local identity.

In this sense, the production and representation of a history and/or image agreed by consensus of the urban regeneration process could be considered an essential expression of the democratic management of the city, which sets up lines of action around the politics of representation, practices for legitimizing discourse and critiques of curator, media and town-planning visuality models.

The symbolic merchandise will be interpreted by means of its relationship with contemporary artistic practices, with creative work and with new ways of producing subjectivities through cultural representation, and will confer visibility on a group of local identity production and consumption practices (symbolic-cultural capitals) in the well-defined context which is the intercultural public space of contemporary cities.

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1. Workshop on photography and memory, September 2007, with photographer and artist Rogerio Nagaoka (Espacio Coringa collective).
2. Workshop on the stylisation of collective art, with artist and architect Daniel Toso (Argentina/Barcelona).
3. Workshop on oral history and audiovisual memory, with historian Sonia Freitas (Museu de la Gent).
4. Workshop on documentary film, publishing and editing, with André Costa (Olhar Periférico), director, teacher and documentary producer.
5. *Mapping Paranapiacaba* project, Daniel Toso and Julio Palacio (Barcelona/Spain).
6. Observer chair: Lilian Amaral and Katherine Bash (Brazil/United States).
7. 'ctrl\_c-ctrl\_c 1' - Body parts: Corpos Informáticos research collective (Brazil).
8. Wandering memory: Rogério Nagaoka (Brazil).
- 9-14. Dialogue at Niterói Contemporary Art Museum with residents of the *El Morro de Palacio* shantytown and Fluminense Federal University.

# AULABIERTA. LEARNING TACTICS

JOSÉ DANIEL CAMPOS FERNÁNDEZ  
PABLO PÉREZ BECERRA

AULABIERTA

We learn nothing from those who say: “Do as I do”.  
Our only teachers are those who tell us to  
“do with me”.

Gilles Deleuze  
(*Difference and Repetition*)

The way in which AulAbierta works is constantly changing. It changes as a consequence of the projects taking place within it. We try to extract things from this experimentation that make it possible for us to construct a methodology that enables the consolidation of AulAbierta as an experience in the design and construction of a learning community at the University of Granada that is self-managed by the students themselves. The idea is to create a space at the University of Granada that is open to other contexts. An arena connecting people of a restless nature who want to participate more actively in their own learning. An injection of contrasting practices atypical in the University environment. An attempt to fix the disconnect between learning and its practical expression in space and time; between what can be found in the syllabuses of the regulated education system and practices commonly adopted in contemporary cultural production.

We believe AulAbierta is interesting because of how it does things, not because of what it does. This text aims to provide a synthesis of how it works. It was written by two people who have participated actively in AulAbierta over the last two years. We still have strong links with some of the projects being run today. We have however set ourselves an objective at this moment in time (as have other people in a similar situation in relation to AulAbierta) of guaranteeing a changing of the guard to prevent the structure from becoming hierarchical and the work of the collective being channelled to the benefit of individuals. At the same time, it is more than likely that many of the people who play or have played a part in AulAbierta at one time or another do not subscribe to the opening up of its working code, which is our goal here.

## WORKINGS

### *Tools-spaces*

We view AulAbierta more and more as a collection of *tools-spaces* that can be used freely. We are moving away from its identification with a specific group of people. Far from it, we are tending towards decentralised working in affinity groups that make use of the *tools-spaces* to work autonomously on the development of their projects and activities.



### **A. Spaces-tools for discussion and management (assembly, mailing lists, wiki)**

The assembly is one of the decision-making bodies of AulAbierta. Important questions on the projects are discussed there and proposals are also made for new activities. It is not essential however for projects to have passed through the assembly; it does not have a veto on the execution of activities. That AulAbierta could be considered to have kept up a consistent line of work is the result of the fact that the people participating have had common interests. The premises for the execution of a proposed activity are: the creation of a management group suited to the volume of work required by the project, the obtainment of the necessary financing and safeguarding the appropriate use of the *tools-spaces* we are trying to bring to light here (for example: by not providing receipts for subsidies, which would lead to other coordinators not gaining access to grants at a later date).

Unsurprisingly, the workings of the assembly are never idyllic. Whenever possible we prefer affinity groups to work more autonomously, as we mentioned before, by notifying the status of projects by means of the mailing list and downloading information from a range of activities to the wiki. The development of each project can therefore be monitored by others who are not directly involved in the coordination of the activity in question.

### **B. Management spaces-tools (association)**

AAAbierta (AulAbierta Association) is the legal entity backing the management of the project. We should stress the idea that this is just one more *tool-space*. This is the most efficient solution found to resolve issues such as financing (access to grants, etc.) and legal representation (dialogue with the institutions). Some of us have worked in AulAbierta without registering in the book of members. It is not essential to be a member of AAAbierta in order to design and set up activities in AulAbierta.

Our aim is to negotiate the impositions resulting from our legal constitution as an association and make them compatible with our way of working. For example as a *non-profit university young-persons association* we are obliged to have a president, treasurer and secretary (the posts are currently held by two girls studying Fine Arts and another studying Architecture). We try to ensure these posts are held by the people most actively involved in the coordination of activities, although in practice, the tasks they are supposed to carry out are shared amongst a larger group of people. Nevertheless, this way of working is not taken into consideration by the institutions so the greatest responsibility falls on their shoulders. Up to now we have not had too many problems getting over this superimposed organisational structure.

### **C. Spaces-tools for connection/representation (open publication webs)**

Public web spaces (in contrast to wiki, a privately managed web) are public because they have an open publication policy. There is no moderation; at least it has not yet been required. In order to publish on the webs, it is just necessary to register as a user although, despite there being *nicks* that publish more assiduously, there are also published articles and comments produced by users we are unable to identify. The web is an indicator of the interests of the people who use it.

### **Self-training mechanisms, performance solutions obtained during projects**

As we mentioned in the introduction, the concept motivating all of AulAbierta's work is self-training. During projects, mechanisms for employing the contents being generated in academic transcripts so they can be included in the curricula of participants, coordinators and external collaborators are continuously being discovered. The main mechanisms referred to are as follows.

#### **A. Freely designed credits, Self-construction**

The syllabuses of Spanish Universities reserve a certain percentage of credits, no less than 10% of the total workload of studies, for freely designed curricula. During the self-construction project of the physical centre of AulAbierta directed by Santiago Cirugeda, most courses making up the project (still unfinished, immersed in the space's regulation process) could be validated as freely-designed credits in the academic transcripts of those participating. The fact that the self-construction process was backed as a learning activity meant the University was in some way legitimising the project. This was one of the main reasons for working with a system of credits. The workshop entitled *AulAbierta Assembly, Practical Course on Self-construction* awarded 4.5 freely designed credits, almost the same as some four-month subjects.

Credits have turned out to be a double edged sword. Most of the courses on offer in AulAbierta as part of the Continuous Training Centre (the University of Granada body for managing regulated teaching activities that complement those included in the syllabus) are given at a much lower cost in comparison with other courses on offer in the centre. And neither do they carry out pre-selection processes for those participating. The result of these two factors is that on occasions those registered for courses are more interested in completing this part of their academic transcript than in learning the contents of the course. Paradoxically, when activities have been completed without credits, the participation has been of a far more positive nature, since those wanting to get involved were motivated by a true desire to learn.

#### **B. Slipping into the syllabuses of subjects, ZonaCHana**

Another route to self-learning has been the introduction of contents

into the programmes of some subjects. A large number of lecturers have interests in common with AulAbierta and view this collaboration as beneficial. The first time this happened was during academic year 2005-2006. Rafael Reinoso, subject director of Urban Projects in the Higher Technical School of Architecture of Granada agreed to collaborate in the *ZonaCHana* programme ([www.zonachana.info](http://www.zonachana.info)). This project was devised by AulAbierta and the artist Jorge Dragón in order to link a wide range of different learning experiences, in the field of artistic creativity, community development and the new ICTs with the implantation of a range of strategies for participatory research applied to the neighbourhood of La Chana, the location of the Faculty of Fine Arts and Higher Technical School of Architecture, centres in which AulAbierta began. The collaboration consisted in the execution of town planning and participatory proposals in this district of the city; projects undertaken by students working alongside local residents. The final presentation of the proposals was made in a public space in the neighbourhood with an open invitation to all the local residents including those who had advised the students of the subject on the final formalisation of their ideas. This collaboration model was at a later date transferred to other subjects in both the School of Architecture and the Faculty of Fine Arts.

### C. Teaching innovation project, *AulaGarden*

*AulaGarden* ([www.aulabierta.info/aulagarden](http://www.aulabierta.info/aulagarden)) is a project that aims to open an interdisciplinary experimentation process applied specifically to the creation of green space in the University of Granada (surrounding AulAbierta's physical centre), and which can be employed to set up a protocol that can be implemented in other cases and contexts.

The interdisciplinary nature of the project led us to consider registering it officially as a Teaching Innovation Project (PID) in the University of Granada, because the methodology fitted perfectly, and because it could also become a source of financing. Subjects from a range of areas of knowledge, departments and centres, with their students, lecturers and administrative and services personnel have drawn up a joint and coordinated programme to get this space working. The project is still in its initial phase, corresponding to the 2008-2009 academic year, during which it will be developed.

### Participation outline for human and physical resources

We have distinguished the following participation types in the project:

- *Students*. The project is based on self-learning. Students are therefore normally the ones coordinating the activities under study. The courses and workshops are open to other interested people. When people get to know how AulAbierta works, some of them decide to set up and coordinate new activities.

- *Collaborators*. In order to carry out the projects, we usually turn to those professionals we want to execute the activities with, either from the university or externally. The intensity of the collaboration varies depending on those involved. Some of them have participated in AulAbierta very intensively over a long period of time.
- *Coordinators*. Those who have set up self-learning processes and used the tools-spaces to promote activities. In this case the intensity is equally variable. There are those who are highly involved in the project and those who participate more sporadically.
- *Institutions*. Basically different bodies at the University of Granada. We have however also collaborated with art centres, other higher education institutions, civic centres, other associations, etc. This interaction with institutions has given rise to the ups and downs described in so much writing concerned with institutional criticism. In our opinion, there is no problem undertaking work backed by the institutions, provided no conditions are placed on the project.

These roles are changeable and in many cases there are people who have played several of them. The pragmatic dimension of the activities set up and developed in the lifetime of AulAbierta has generated two factors that define the continuity of other similar practices in space and time or those inspired by what has been achieved already, but drawn up in a different way, basically in a professional environment.

The two factors referred to above are first, the *real repercussions in the individual curricula* of participants and second, the setting up of a *collective working dynamic*, a sort of group work that fosters the constitution of other independent collectives by like-minded individuals participating in the project, who employ their practical experiences in other environments.

### (SOME) CONCLUSIONS (IF THAT IS WHAT THEY ARE)

By way of summary the activities carried out in the AulAbierta could be defined as *collective work*, the direct beneficiaries of which would be a group composed of the new affinity collectives, individuals participating, groups coordinating projects, external collaborators, etc. They are all receivers of the results of the work in terms of learning, curricula, experience, symbolic capital and in some cases economic capital. Worthy of mention here is the lack of any qualitative difference between the people in AulAbierta, although we could point out a quantitative difference in results, linked more or less proportionally to the volume of coordination or work carried out in each activity.

It is relatively easy to accept the identification of specific work or a project with its author or a defined group of individuals. Similarly it is common for some of these authors to monopolise or capitalise on work carried out collectively. This is basically because of the demands of a

market fragmented by brands and labels. AulAbierta is not external to this situation and in certain circumstances controversies have arisen, which have contributed to the establishment of the methodology.

We do not feel AulAbierta should be a project clearly identified with a particular collective. Nor should it have a defined line of action. The disadvantages this gives rise to have led us to draw up ways of bringing in a new generation to enable AulAbierta to unlearn its own experience, to grow without depending on specific people. We are committed to a superimposed or reticulate structure as opposed to a straight line of work.

The idea of designing and holding a new *re-founding* meeting has now come up as a possible solution for the inclusion of new faces, new structures, new methodological or conceptual lines, new languages and new practices to prevent the existing ones from becoming entrenched.



1. Session from the AAAbierta workshop, an activity which started to manage the project *AulAbierta*. Granada, March 2005.
2. Workshop course on Sustainable Actions in Urban Space I at the start of *Aulagarden*, a project that aimed to design and build a garden around *AulAbierta*. Granada, April 2008.



3



4

3. Open class, public presentation of the ideas from the subject *urban projects* from the Architecture School in Granada, within the project *ZonaCHana*. Granada, May 2006.

4. Course *AulAbierta-Cerramientos*, informative board on *Palecha* (constructive system designed as part of *AulAbierta-project workshop*). Granada, May 2006.



5



6

5. Evolution of the flower beds around *AulAbierta*, within the *Aula-Garden* project. Granada, April to October 2008.

6. Meeting of students and residents in the neighbourhood of Chana, within the project *ZonaCHana*. Granada, June 2007.



# MAIZ OR DOCUMENTA 12, FOR EXAMPLE.

BETWEEN LONG-  
AND SHORT-  
TERM (POWER)  
RELATIONSHIPS  
BETWEEN ARTISTIC  
INSTITUTIONS AND  
LOCAL CONTEXTS

CARMEN MÖRSCH  
RUBIA SALGADO

## CONTEXT I: DOCUMENTA 12

*documenta 12 (d12)*, “one of the most important and prestigious contemporary art exhibitions in the world”,<sup>1</sup> was held from June to September 2007 in Kassel. One of the three leitmotifs established by the artistic direction as debating points in the run-up to the exhibition was the question concerning the relationship between education and art in today’s world. That is why for the first time mediation in artistic fields played a central role in the framework of the event.

Mediation at *d12* was conceived as something self-questioning; as an exercise in criticism of the *documenta* exhibition and institution. It encouraged debate, with a desire to make the comparison with the individualised communication of authorised knowledge, and at the same time represented the pluralism of mediation methods, and was also transparent as regards these methods. Specifically, it meant that the usual format employed by mediators for guided visits to the exhibition could also be used to transmit information on works and the concept of the commissioner, to set up a debate on the educational process underway in the exhibition or through performances; for example by endowing the mediations with themes by changing costumes and ways of talking. Similarly, the fact that the seats of Ai Wei Wei’s work *Fairy Tale*, distributed throughout nearly the whole exhibitions space, provided accredited places for mediation was taken advantage of to strike up discussions with the public on the situation of a group being guided around a large-scale exhibition.

21 people from the group of mediators also collaborated on a research project aimed towards the study of actions in groups and used *d12* to analyse the questions arising from their work.<sup>2</sup> Apart from the guided visits, the fields of action of the mediation also included a programme for children and teenagers called “hatching ideas”, designed for local groups and foreigners or the young audience visiting *d12*. Within the framework of a more wide-ranging project entitled “Populating the World” young people from in and around Kassel guided adults through the exhibition.

In addition to the guided visits, 35 art mediators undertook collaboration projects with different local and trans-local target audiences during *d12*. The aim was an exchange with groups that, without an explicit invitation, would not have come to see the exhibition, but whose points of view were of interest to the people carrying out the mediation.

Many of the activities came about as a result of close cooperation with the local committee of *d12*, a group of around 40 experts from Kassel, whose intention was to link the exhibition to local knowledge. During the debate held by the committee on topics chosen by the commis-

1. [www.documenta12.de](http://www.documenta12.de)

2. The results of this research project were published at the beginning of 2009 in German and English by the publisher Diaphanes, Berlin and Zürich.

sioner of the exhibition of *d12*, six activities were set up to be developed in different locations around the city.<sup>3</sup>

A central area for the mediation was the *documenta* pavilion, the only part of *d12* that could be accessed without a ticket. Through a programme of daily public events the three organizational methods (committee, mediators, and *d12* Magazines)<sup>4</sup> held conferences, round tables, workshops, open-ended question times and presentations of projects. The *documenta* pavilion also became a space that was taken over by the public using it every day as a meeting point and debating centre or simply to take a break.

At previous *documenta* events, only the art mediators were willing to run the risk of working for an hourly average salary in accordance with German norms. This meant they had to make an investment in training and four months in a shared flat without any guarantee of an income. These conditions and the resulting competitive environment would have made it impossible to set up a joint exercise, in which the mediators, men and women, supported and provided each other with advice and criticism in an atmosphere of confidence between professionals. This was one of the arguments that led to the creation of a minimum guaranteed salary to give these professionals relative economic security in their work. Aside from this guaranteed income (which was not compulsory) and the financing of the management and coordination, or of some employees and receivers of grants on meagre wages, as well as a scientific companion, neither the committee of *d12* nor the *d12* mediation had a production budget. The guided visits were self-financed from the money they earned. The other fields of action were financed by voluntary work and supplementary resources we raised ourselves.<sup>5</sup>

The fact these resources were approved very late in the day meant it was not clear until after the inauguration of *d12* whether, or which of, the projects of the committee and the mediators would be executed or not. Consequently, a large number of projects were planned, executed and documented in a very short period of time. These conditions made it almost impossible to collaborate with the groups selected, as initiated during the planning stage. As a result, some of the activities took on a paternalistic dimension, in that they were set up *for* the participants rather than *with* them. A lack of time and resources was also the cause of the absence of a major space for reflection on the relationships of power and privilege in the cultural domain and for the detailed development of strategies to fight against them.<sup>6</sup> One of the consequences was that

the main group involved in the activities of the committee, as per usual, was principally made up of members of the cultural elite. In short, they were people interested in making good use of the cultural capital available at an artistic event such as *documenta* and as a result very willing to commit to the activities without any kind of payment.

We do not yet know whether future *documenta* events will adopt and continue to develop the proposals and procedures worked on by the committee and in the mediation project, which aim to set up cooperation between the artistic institutions and the local environment, since their configuration is always the responsibility of the corresponding artistic management. Basically and critically, the activities of the committee and the mediation contributed to a great extent to endowing *d12* with a contemporary educational aura. Despite this, the extraordinary efforts involved have up until now barely managed to instigate transformations in the *documenta* institution.

## CONTEXT II: MAIZ

Maiz was created out of a need for changes as regards the life and working situation of migrants in Austria with a view to fostering the strengthening of their cultural and political participation. Since 1994 Maiz has worked in accordance with the principles of autonomous organisation in a range of areas: creating connecting networks, with public and cultural work, counselling and accompanying migrants, preventative health issues, counselling and street work for migrants in the sex trade, training young migrants and research.

Work in the cultural field has been one of the main focuses of attention of Maiz's activities for ten years. The intention is to draw up strategies and carry out monitoring on a political-cultural level to enable us to establish a framework for conditions that safeguard participation based on equal opportunities, and our collaboration as participants in the organization. In tandem with our political-cultural action, we have for several years carried out numerous projects that fit into the cultural and educational domain. We are interested in the study of political-social fields and also aim for anti-hegemonic positions, as well as our collaboration in a lead role in the creation and dissemination of anti-sexist and anti-racist images and narratives, based on critical social work in the cultural domain.

The educational activities are centred on the training of adults and political training work for migrants: courses on German, computing, professional counselling and literacy, preparatory courses for qualifications in the health and care sector (*PreQual*) and preparatory courses for the obtainment of the school certificate for young migrants. The study plans reveal non-Eurocentric, feminist and epistemological attitudes.

3. The activities of the Committee and information on projects can be consulted at [www.documenta12.de](http://www.documenta12.de), in German and English.

4. As regards *d12* Magazines, see [www.documenta12.de](http://www.documenta12.de)

5. The financing was made through the BMB+F, the federal centre for political training, the Heinrich Böll foundation and the socio-cultural fund.

6. During the planning stage, and during and after the execution of the projects, the mediators critically questioned their work, among other things their forms of participation and representation. During the period of the exhibition, they

created a forum for projects and research with centralised resources for this reflection every week for three hours. A joint comparative discussion with all participants could not be carried out because of a shortfall in resources.

This obliges all those participating (teaching staff and students) to reflect on their values as regards legitimised hegemonic knowledge. It is a question of constantly evolving, testing and evaluating methodological approaches and instruments that make critical approaches to the dominant body of knowledge possible and at the same time re-evaluate and recognise the marginalised area of knowledge of the participants. The acquisition or expansion of one's linguistic knowledge involves a consideration of language in its didactic relationship with reality. In other words, either as the credited regulatory authority, that constitutes the obtainment of certain power relations, or as action and therefore as a component of the reality. In keeping with Paulo Freires' Pedagogy of the Oppressed, we view language as the means of presuming a transformed reality. The students are thereby distanced from the language and on a meta-level understand language in its constituent function as regards the reality; they can speculate when designating the reality in another way, also from their vision of the world. Consequently, models of reality transformation may arise and may be put into practice (Freire 1988).

The basic methodology of Maiz includes interweaved actions in the cultural and educational domain in all its stages, from the planning to the execution and with the documentation of activities. A group of migrants attending a German course in Maiz might therefore be encouraged to read the novel *Robinson Crusoe* by Defoe for example. The questions that have led to this choice of novel are as follows: What joins the idea of noble nature to the concept of interculturality? What can we learn from history about the ideological origin of the concept? This guided 'rereading' and the drawing up of an interpretation or adaptation of the novel from the perspective of the migrants in their German class is at the same time part of a project that takes place in the cultural domain. It is a critical analysis of the year 2008 in the EU, announced everywhere as the "Year of Intercultural Dialogue".

Another characteristic of cultural work in Maiz is the decision to place the action in the field of autonomous cultural work.<sup>7</sup> Cooperation is therefore undertaken in the cultural domain mainly with initiatives and organisations specific to the sector. The few exceptions were/are the result of a strategic reflection. Temporary access, occupation and signalling, as well as the challenge of transforming a specific space in the long term, framed in the field of high culture, are from this perspective a realistic and logical political-cultural objective.

7. According to the definition of "free cultural work" promoted by Kulturplattform Oberösterreich (KUPF), we understand autonomous cultural work as self-determined and politically democratic, which generates changes in society, is participatory and places passive consumption in opposition to active participation. The participants in the domain of autonomous cultural work are initiatives that are organised autonomously through a democratic consensus and independently of political parties or creeds in order to transmit or foster contemporary art and culture. See also: <http://kupf.at/node/927>

## REWRITING/DESCRIBING MUSEUMS

The idea of the project we describe below is the result of a reflection on shared utopian horizons, which emerge from the correspondences of the work in the contexts described above. The intention of our title *Rewriting/Describing museums (Das Museum um-schreiben)*, is to develop approaches and methodological material so the migrant population can learn German in the museums. The participants (teaching staff and students) should therefore be encouraged to confront the language of the dominating society and the museum as a hegemonic space through well-targeted, feminist, anti-racist, post-colonial and pedagogical practices. Strategies should be drawn up to enable the occupation and employment of both institutions, the language and the museum, autonomously.

### Occupying the museum

As a consequence of the evaluation of the mediation work of documenta 12 we are interested by the question: How could mediation that is non-standardising, anti-racist and anti-sexist, historically aware, self-questioning and not only critical of institutions but also capable of transforming the institutions, come into being in the long term? What conditions would have to exist to make this possible? The subtext is the question concerning the present and future function that (could be) is undertaken by the cultural institutions and the function of the mediation and educational work in the institutions.

The preparatory functions of the (art) museum, its mechanisms for exclusion and hegemony, with the corresponding performance and rituals, the ethnical, civilising and sexually discriminating code for ordering its spaces and exhibitions, its historical involvement and present in colonialism and the global economies, as well as in the local domination structures (linked equally to the contamination of its cultural duty) have been extensively analysed over the last 20 years; sifted through by the history of art and an informed post-colonial and feminist museology. (Compare for example: Bal 2002; Bennet 1995; Duncan 1996; or more recently, for German-speaking countries, Muttenthaler/Wonisch 2007.)

In contrast, we are still to write the history of attempts at revisionism and against the dominant logic of the museum by adapting the institution in the manner of critical commissioners and above all through artistic mediation. The position of the museum is therefore very rarely described as an interrelated set of strongly differentiable representative and power interests, which can within their structure suddenly become unstable and threatening, just as soon as self-questioning transformations are attempted and their own limits sounded out. The existence of museums depends on local decision-making powers and on a system of references and international recognition, as well as on a need for legitimisation, on occasions variable, and sometimes contradictory.

Furthermore, there are up until now very few documented models and very few proposals in the literature or in the practice of artistic mediation that avoid, or at least describe an attempt at avoiding, for example, a paternalistic subtext, an intervention exploiting exotic subjective positions branded as inclusive, or a reproduction of dominant representative relationships.

The few documented projects, the approaches to which have progressed (although there are still several open questions), have two aspects in common: First, they are committed to the “Unlearning Privilege” or “Doing One’s Homework” after Gayatri Spivak (1993). And second they are committed to cooperation that is consequential with the local environment (in its widest sense) and especially with interest groups, that hold knowledge and a political position, which can support the institution on the first point (unlearn your privileges), and with other things, provided these force the case.<sup>8</sup> Our preliminary project includes the vision according to which the function of art museums in the future will be to be public training spaces and linking points in a network of local activism that cooperates in self-criticism, actively and in solidarity with other groups against hegemonic logic, power relations and standardisation. The possibility of transformation must at least be put to the test by way of example.

The migrants that come into contact with Maiz are in the main a group that “does not visit” museums or other similar institutions in the artistic and cultural domain. Before describing isolated motives for the “conduct of non-visitors” we are interested in the question concerning the reasons that lead discriminated people to participate in the culture on offer or to participate in the cultural landscape of the country in which they experience marginalization, exploitation and criminalisation. In order to avoid the cynicism that goes hand in hand with measures for the inclusion of minorities in a range of systems, we would like to encourage the institution through this project to set up a dialogue and, with a base of perspectives and proposals contributed by the migrants involved in the project, set off on a transformation process (for example, by means of the adoption of approaches and materials developed during the mediation phase and the initiation of structural changes). We are interested in a project that contributes in the long term to the transformation of spaces in the domain of high culture and we feel the best bet is collaboration with participants in the field of mediation in the corresponding institutions.

### Occupying the language

The pedagogical practices developed in the project take shape through the definition of the concept of interculturality, which has established itself as a *mainstream* approach or methodology, in the material for

“Deutsch als Zweitsprache“ (DaZ, German as a second language) and in fields of work with immigration in the German-speaking space. We resolutely reject this approach to culture and identity, as well as the folkloric cover-up of structurally conditioned discriminations.

On the contrary, we are interested in a pedagogical attitude that understands the changing reality. In agreement with Freire, the recognition of a space in which the capacity to operate emerges and is employed in the emancipatory and problematic training of an adult; the basic condition for enabling the transformation of discriminatory relations and conditions. The migrants are not therefore political or personal subjects in the concept of interculturality, but are simply recognised as culturally “different” (Mecheril 2004). That is how any possibility of power is removed in the political anti-racist or feminist sense.

The process of learning the language of the majority society accepts the possibility of a movement in reverse. A movement in favour of assimilation of the specific reality, in which you teach and you learn, explaining the reality of the dominating society and simultaneously moving away from that reality, in which experiments are made and you learn the reality can be qualified and, mainly, as a result of this act of qualification, it is manufactured in a certain way and can in turn be transformed. Nevertheless, this second movement is only possible where a meta-level is going to be reached in the learning process, in which the teaching staff and the students are not (only) interested in training or transmission of knowledge, but also in the joint construction of meanings. The tension resulting from these counterpoised movements also therefore determines the work in the subsequent *rewriting/describing museums* project. It is not a question of eliminating the relationships of power between cultural institutions and local autonomous organisations, but of taking advantage of these tensions. Or as Foucault describes it “keeping the power struggle alive and well” rather than reproducing relationships of domination.

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# ***DOCUMENTA 12 ADVISORY BOARD. ON THE LOCAL MEDIATION OF AN ART EXHIBITION***

AYŞE GÜLEÇ  
WANDA WIECZOREK  
DOCUMENTA 12

The *documenta 12 Advisory Board* was an experiment: to date no *Documenta* had ventured to engage the city of Kassel surrounding it. Even though the city was always the setting for the international art exhibition – ultimately it has its origins here and is closely tied to the history of the city – it mostly played a sad role: too small, too provincial, not lively enough, and too ugly to provide the spectacle of contemporary art an appropriate space. In the best case it was suitable as a contemporary historical testimony of modernist urban planning fantasies – and mainly as evidence of their miserable failure.

We didn't undertake the experiment described here – linking *documenta 12* with the city of Kassel – in order to rebut such and similar reservations of incoming visitors to *documenta*. We, Ayşe Güleç from *Kulturzentrum Schlachthof e.V.* in Kassel and Wanda Wieczorek, developed the local partnership for *Documenta* – that is to say two people with diverse institutional backgrounds and equally divergent perspectives on art and the local context. We were united less by an interest in the classifications of Kassel coming from within and outside the city than the question regarding what *documenta* has to do with the social network of the city and what it could give to this: who actually perceives the exhibition and who identifies with it? What does it contribute to the handling of pressing social problems? Or also: What meaning can a contemporary art exhibition actually have for a community and for the individuals living there? These questions turn the normal perspectives around. They allow the mostly taken for granted relevance of *documenta* to be measured against a new standard: the social fabric of Kassel in all of its fragmented, heterogeneous reality. Getting to know this entity and initiating an exchange with it steered the developmental process of the *documenta 12 Advisory Board*. Its aim, to establish a fixed and for both sides fruitful link between the residents of Kassel and the contemporary art exhibition residing here, remains subject to future *documenta* exhibitions. But over the course of a good two-year ongoing collaboration there were bright moments of success that made the stressful and often obstacle full experiment a worthwhile experience for all of those involved. And they show that cooperation and communication with diverse population groups is a necessary part of organising an exhibition when the art should offer a sphere of action and negotiation for questions relevant to society.

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE, LOCAL EXPERTS

In the summer of 2005 the artistic director Roger M. Buergel and the curator Ruth Noack began the search for suitable collaboration partners in Kassel for realising their wish to anchor *documenta 12* locally. They wanted to create mutually productive correspondences between the exhibition and the local context: on the one hand a sounding board should be established for the exhibited art so that its demanding, critical potential has the opportunity to unfold. To achieve this, local knowledge is necessary for linking both current and locally relevant themes to the exhibition – knowledge that an exhibition like *documenta 12*, which is limited in terms of time and in view of its social reach, is barely capable of developing on its own. On the other hand the exhibition should fulfil its mission as a location for educating the public, i.e. it must allow for and make visible social heterogeneity and the resulting associated conflicts, invite them and make them negotiable in the context of the exhibition. In this way it could also gain relevancy beyond the professional field of art and the established circle of middle-class visitors.

Following the initial discussions with university representatives, architects, sociologists, planners, and city representatives Buergel and Noack invited the three socio-cultural centres in Kassel. The two representatives from the *Kulturzentrum Schlachthof e.V.*, Christine Knüppel and Ayşe Güleç, showed enormous interest in the collaboration and offered to share their local contacts and knowledge in getting *documenta 12* “to land” in Kassel. As the collaboration’s first step they planned a discussion round with Kassel residents from various social backgrounds and compiled an invitation list primarily from Schlachthof contacts: approximately 40 people from the university, from academic and informal education, children’s and youth work, architecture, urban planning and social geography, from women’s initiatives, youth and education work, trade unions, religious-cultural organisations, and from the political scene. In word-of-mouth and printed invitations the Schlachthof expressly addressed them not as representatives of their institutions or a political current, but as “local experts” who were invited to share their specific point of view in linking *documenta 12* and Kassel. Ultimately this gathering wasn’t supposed to duplicate any already existing bodies, organisations, or interest alliances in Kassel, instead a new organisational form was to be added that might enrich public discussion with new impulses. Therefore it was important to configure the invited circle in such a heterogeneous way that it also had an activating effect on the social groups that otherwise have very little influence over socio-political questions and don’t belong to the addressees of an art exhibition.

## STATIONS OF PROGRESS

From the first semi-public meeting in November 2005 onwards workshops took place every month in the spaces of the *Kulturzentrum Schlachthof*. Participating from the *documenta 12* side were the artistic director, the curator, as well as varying additional team members from the exhibition office, gallery education, and communication.

Wanda Wieczorek was especially tasked with developing the local connection, likewise the Schlachthof made Ayşe Güleç available for the collaboration with *documenta 12*. After almost four months the loose association had formed into a group that Buergel suggested naming the *documenta 12 Advisory Board*.

The focus of the *Advisory Board*’s work initially followed the conceptual approach of Buergel and Noack. They formulated three questions that guided the exhibition research as much as they inspired participating artists, and which were devised to invite the public audiences they addressed to debate the issues. They referred to the state of today’s societies (“Is modernity our antiquity?”), the vulnerability of human existence (“What is bare life?”), and the question of education (“What is to be done?”). These themes were examined for their tangible qualities in Kassel: What do they mean for the local context? Which histories and current realities are they connected to in Kassel? How can they be reformulated for addressing pressing problems and implemented for stirring up public debate? Initially the discussion of these questions was the focus of the gathering. They helped board members get into a joint working process whose goal remained largely open-ended. Little by little the desire grew within the group to work out the specifics and to make the discussions public. Hence work groups were formed around individual thematic strands that opened outward for additional members and developed their own types of approaches around which the public discussion of the leitmotifs—in their connection to current, local issues—could be organized. These activities were presented in the *Advisory Board* meetings and were jointly discussed through inquiry, thematically relevant information, and elaborations.

## OPENINGS

Alongside exploring the leitmotifs and their manifestations in Kassel, the exchange among participants was the focus of the *Advisory Board*’s work. *documenta 12* team members also benefited from this: they gained access to a concentrated form of local knowledge about Kassel. For instance they made contacts that they could utilize for *documenta 12* and were in a position to relay this knowledge to participating artists. Especially for artists who wanted to develop their work on location and in relation to Kassel, the *Advisory Board* was an irreplaceable resource of information and contacts. From spring 2006 onwards this exchange was arranged in regular intervals: in nearly every board meeting an artist presented his or her way of working and the still vague or already

concrete ideas for a project in Kassel. With their local knowledge Board members advised artists in developing their works, provided contacts to teens or other population groups, and accompanied and supported artists in realising their projects. Up to the opening of the exhibition 12 artists presented their work. A deeper collaboration arose with some artists which ultimately was also visible in the exhibited works.

In Autumn 2006 a new phase began: *Advisory Board* members made their first activities public, presenting their concerns in events and press conferences, and inviting the public to participate in discussions and actions. During this time the local media attentively followed the *Advisory Board's* every movement, interest in the upcoming *documenta* was at its peak and the *Advisory Board* took advantage of the attention for its own purposes. But this also meant added pressure: implementing and promoting the activities required an enormous amount of time and *Advisory Board* members had to make the time for these activities alongside their professional activities and private lives.

## SELF-ACTUALISATION

However, it was precisely this decision to develop and implement its own activities that must be seen as the factor ultimately responsible for the broad reach of the *Advisory Board's* work: on the one hand the activities arose out of Kassel's connection to the themes, and provided thus actual links to the everyday experiences of Kassel residents. On the other hand they were realised with types of approaches taken from the repertoire of the *Advisory Board* members – not in formats from the art field – that impacted each group of people involved. The decision to continue the *Advisory Board's* work in the form of these activities meant on the other hand a conscious renunciation of relying upon the exhibition or the art exhibited there: the primary goal was reaching the local public and to involve it in socio-political discussions. At the same time the art and the proximity to *documenta* served rather as “door openers” for engaging in this debate. Only after the opening of the exhibition was it possible, with the help of third-party funds from the Federal Agency for Civic Education, to organise an “interface” between the *Documenta 12* gallery education team and the activities, and to incorporate artistic positions in the debate. For this two gallery educators each dedicated themselves to an activity and with participants realised workshops, trips to the exhibition, and other gallery education formats that corresponded to the particular needs pertaining to themes and methods.

## TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING PROCESS

What was particular about the *documenta 12 Advisory Board* was that for the first time *documenta 12*, with the Schlachthof, entered into a collaboration with a local organisation that expressly understood itself as a location for social-cultural encounter and political education and that felt committed to linking together heterogeneous social spheres. This

collaboration made it clear that *documenta* is dependent upon knowledge and the willingness of locally involved residents for formulating relevant contributions to the local context and for gaining access and contacts to additional population groups. At the same time this approach didn't serve the development of the public in the way the cultural marketing had envisioned. Driving the process rather was the desire to learn from local circumstances and to garner inspiration from them for developing the exhibition further. With the *Kulturzentrum Schlachthof e.V.* *Documenta* gained as cooperation partner a 30-year-old institution with contacts to numerous social realms—an established organization that was capable of offsetting *documenta's* predominance with a self-confident demeanor and a clear self-interest. This interest included, alongside gaining exposure and prestige (an important aspect for negotiating the Schlachthof's continually precarious livelihood), both the need for impulses for developing the focus of the organisation further and for expanding its methods and scope. In return the Schlachthof staff was ready to impart to *documenta 12* their knowledge of the city and most notably put their contacts to use. This network and the skills for making connections necessary to its creation were crucial to the quality of the exchange between the main players from the art context and those from the local scene.

To organise a mutual transfer of knowledge the Schlachthof invited people who themselves play active roles in various social fields. A sense of courtesy pervaded the setting for the exchange: the group was defined, as location for the meeting the Schlachthof was already known to those invited, and the atmosphere was cheerful and friendly. At first the leitmotifs provided the structure to the exchange. However, this initial framework favored academic modes of expression, therefore the decision to realise its own activities was essential for achieving a more balanced use of the various informational resources. The exchange with artists was another important factor in the transfer of knowledge: here expert art knowledge was dealt with – an important addition for actually creating a mutual exchange rather than a one-sided calling-up and confirmation of local knowledge.

The principle of collaborating with established organisations pervaded all facets of the *Advisory Board's* work: every single activity, every single collaboration with artists drew on available structures and organisations and in turn invited these to also participate in the transfer of knowledge. In the process new impulses and connections were created throughout the city that cut across existing structures. This approach was also essential in view of the collaboration's lasting impact: the interest in local themes and main players was led by *documenta* which takes place once only every five years.

## RESOURCES THAT MOVE

The experiment *documenta 12 Advisory Board* has just ended — *documenta 12* is history and a future link between document and the residents of Kassel will take its own shape. However numerous experiences were gained, like how to approach such collaborations and knowing what factors are critical to their success — not only for Kassel and *documenta* but for collaborations in general between art institutions and local organisations that work in the social and political sphere.

An essential aspect determining all areas of the collaboration is the question of resources related to time, personnel, and finances since these are dependent upon one another. Initiating the cooperation almost two years before the start of the exhibition may seem early for an exhibition lasting only 100 days, however it is appropriate in view of the complex social and communicational processes that rely on building up a sense of trust. It should also be pointed out that *Advisory Board* members and all other individuals participating in the collaboration had to muster up energy for their involvement on top of professional and private lives, necessitating as a result longer developmental planning times. This brings up therefore the question of personnel capacities: these are essential to the venture to be undertaken when it concerns the exchange of knowledge. Both Ayşe Güleç, the *Advisory Board*'s spokesperson, and Wanda Wiecek dedicated themselves full time to the Board's development, moderation, and external promotion. With more and more activities being made public and the opening of the exhibition just around the corner, increased demands were placed on press relations, promotion within the city, and on the *documenta 12* team. There was no buffer zone for these acute pressures, on the contrary they soaked up the capacities that were lacking for attending to directional concerns — and even more pressing — for securing financial backing. After all the *Advisory Board* didn't have its own budget! It may be true that *Documenta* covered a portion of basic personal and material costs, however the activities were not budgeted and had to be developed without secure financial backing. Correspondingly the *Advisory Board* members invested a lot of time in raising funds or they made available their own institutional resources. Thus such activities that had no institutional connection or lacked their own lobby were disadvantaged from the outset — thus for example *Salon des Refusés*, an activity by the unemployed on the crisis of the labor economy. Not least in consideration of the status of this type of collaboration the question of financing must be regarded as central: the allocation of resources reflects its importance among the participating institutions. In view of the art it is therefore necessary to question the thus-far accepted ranking of "exhibition first, then gallery education", and to assign an equivalent value to the social and communicative significance of local collaboration in the financial arrangement as well.

Also within the collaboration the relationship between social or communicative processes and artists and artworks should be organ-

ised in a well-balanced way. Since the *Advisory Board* based its working methods on the leitmotifs — the very same theoretical basis of the curators and artists — it was a given that it would cohere internally with the exhibition. But with the opening of the exhibition quickly approaching, the artistic questions and the work itself moved into the curator's and the public media's main field of vision. Although the *Advisory Board* came into contact with artists very early on (contrary to the otherwise strict and reduced information policies of *Documenta 12*) the activities couldn't cope with the shift from the leitmotifs to the artworks. On the one hand they were stretched to their capacities in realising their own formats; on the other they lacked the professional preparation and access to extensive information for this. Collaborating early on with the gallery education team would have enabled a stronger integration of the art in developing the activities, also without having to abandon the demand for a local socio-political focus. In order to facilitate this the structural conditions of the entire gallery education enterprise must actually be changed, which is mostly known for doing things at short notice and overburdening the main players.

## UPCOMING COLLABORATIONS

Thus, like for gallery education in general, an approach that takes a longer view must be devised if the exhibition is to be connected locally. Long-term collaborations allow participants to develop flexible social relationships, try things out, make mistakes, and to change directions. It's not a matter of institutionalising a specific format; in fact the form of collaboration can change, and it should, in order to accommodate altered demands on both sides. For *documenta*, which appoints a new artistic director every five years, this necessity is especially present, ultimately each director is granted the possibility to redesign the entire exhibition concept and organisation. Hence the previous incarnation of the *Advisory Board* will change and the idea of local collaboration will be continued in a different form. It was however the important first step in getting Kassel residents to encounter the exhibition in their city with self-confidence. Up to now their relationship to *documenta* had been somewhat distant. True it had been closely observed and by all means considered important, but it remained an exotic event that had little meaning for the questions pertaining to one's own life. With the connection founded by the *Advisory Board* a cornerstone has now been set for thinking of the exhibition as part of the public domain and itself as the designer of this public institution. On the side of *documenta* the experiment *documenta 12 Advisory Board* showed just as clearly that local collaborations don't disrupt institutional operations but are a worthwhile and necessary form for linking questions of art to the public and for promoting exchange that art makes accessible in its social identification.





1-2 ►  
 This is the only group of photographs produced by the Advisory Board. They were displayed at the exhibition opening in summer 2007. This was the first time a list of Board members had been made public, a point that had been raised in the local media.



3. Room at the Schlachthof Cultural Centre  
Chalk drawing on blackboard. Local experts and the Documenta 12 team met regularly in this space. On 7 January 2007, Allan Sekula presented and discussed his work for Documenta 12.  
Drawing: Jürgen Stollhans, 2007  
Photo: Robert Collette

## Reversible Actions

Drawing: Jürgen Stollhans, 2007

Photo: Robert Collette



# REFLECTIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR NEW CONTEMPORARY CREATION CENTRES

JESÚS CARRILLO

This text is a response to the proposal of counterbalancing my critical analysis of artistic institutions, in particular new contemporary culture centres – culture factories as they have been called – with the opposite approach in which I provide a rough outline of what in my view would be a model institution perfectly adapted to the demands of today's society and working on the recognition and development of the common good.<sup>1</sup> Attempting a response involves walking through a veritable minefield with no guarantee of reaching a successful conclusion beyond mere rhetoric.

It is clear from the outset that I do not believe in or desire the existence of an ideal formula – they only exist in inaugural addresses – that universally resolves the serious crisis currently affecting the notions and workings of culture, and which even tarnishes its traditional antagonists or opposition. I am not however amongst those who believe institution and cultural value are necessarily incompatible terms. Rather I think, although this may appear contradictory or look like science fiction, public institutions can play an essential role in the development and continuity of spaces for cultural production endowed with autonomy from market forces and under the protection of the dominant neo-liberal ideology. Nevertheless for this to occur, the institution must safeguard its credibility, a quality which is placed in doubt every time the official promotion of culture is employed as an instrument or Trojan horse for other operations.

It is not the first time I have been asked to complete an exercise of this type. Two years ago I had the opportunity of participating in the technical commissioning of a project for a contemporary creation centre being proposed as the flagship for the new cultural policy leadership of an autonomous region. As members of the technical commission we were first charged with designing the convening of the competition for the architecture of a state-of-the-art cultural complex, which was initially presented to us as a collection of common areas focussed on an association between new technologies, culture and contemporary art; the fermentation of the modernisation of the city and the region as a whole, leading us down the road to the future. The discourse justifying the need for this cultural centre sounded very similar to one that could have been applied to an industrial plant during the epoch of development.

We were however surprised by the attitude of the representatives of the institution, who were to begin with open to our suggestions as regards filing down the neo-technological and futuristic edges of the

1. This text by Jesús Carrillo was read as part of the workshops corresponding to the first stage of the Working Group of the Common Utility Laboratory promoted by the Medialab Prado of Madrid in February 2008. It has been developed from a previous text entitled *New Culture Factories: Places for the Creation and Production of Culture in Contemporary Spain*, presented at the III Conference on Intellectual Property and New Technologies, organized by the Cultural Centre of Spain in Mexico (AECI) in collaboration with Medialab Prado, held in December 2007.

competition and providing it with another social and politically committed side where the vocation of the centre was defined as exploring in greater depth new fields of common worth through creative experimentation. This nuance was strengthened further after the selection of the winning project, when we were able to work with the architects on the transformation of their original approach in accordance with our ideas concerning the nature of the spaces, their hierarchies and circulation in and around these. We were pleasantly surprised by the reaction of the architects. Far from becoming entrenched in the strong points of their winning project, they were very curious and flexible about assimilating our suggestions: the promotion of spaces for sociability and meeting to the detriment of the individual studios initially allocated to the artists; permeability between areas for production, documentation and exhibition; malleability of the spaces so as to avoid a rigid and pre-determined framework for the interpretation of the cultural artefacts being produced, discussed, exhibited, etc. in them. An example of the receptiveness of the architects was their willingness to turn the huge façade-media screen they had initially designed to catch the eye of the members of the jury of the competition and the politicians who had to accept the project into a much cheaper and more sustainable device, which rather than looking to increase the spectacular nature of the building and attract tourists like moths to a light bulb, would serve as a communication membrane between what was occurring in the centre and in the city.

Once this first phase had come to a close, and in the same climate of cooperation, we were asked for a text that would provide a framework for programming and a model for how the centre would work, which could present the project publicly and begin creating the catchment area for the reception of the centre in its range of *hinterlands* up until its doors were eventually opened. We were encouraged by the interest in and the healthy reception of our proposals up until this point, so we decided to emphasise the political and democratising meaning of the cultural production and artistic creation in order to differentiate the centre from its other “competitors” that were beginning to show up in other parts of Spain. The consequent short circuit between consultants and institution was not however the result of our political emphasis but rather arose from the ultimatum that went with it: firstly, that our discourse was not to be used in a presentation of the art centre at ARCO, the antithesis of the notion of culture we were defending, and secondly, that we were to be given the capacity to participate in the design of the activities that would shape the personality of the centre while it was actually being constructed. The response to our demands became clear when, following a long period of institutional silence, we read in the press that the project had been presented publicly with great fanfare and expense, with a gastronomic tasting produced by young “creators” in the field, made more enjoyable still by the *performance* of artists with

vague contemporary credentials and a starring role for the architects. Those attending the ceremony were presented with badges adorned with the name of the centre; the name which half-joking and half-serious I had “invented” myself. As a result of a slip up, nobody remembered to invite us to the party. Despite the sincere apologies we were given by our institutional contacts, and following a courtesy meeting, our relationship with the project was terminated on friendly terms.

I have described this recent case by way of introduction to my response to the invitation to imagine once again the profile of a contemporary culture centre. Despite this failure, I have accepted their replacement of the museums of the nineties as the cultural infrastructure paradigm for the new millennium, after allowing myself to present my scepticism of the process configuring the new “culture factories” models – I studied those in San Sebastián, Gijón and Madrid – in public in this very same building<sup>2</sup> a few weeks ago.

As a caveat related to the description of this recent experience presented as an introduction, I would just like to forewarn of the functions awarded to “experts” – a form of address taken from the scientific field I do not feel comfortable with – in processes that are out of our control; and the ease with which we uncritically accept this role happy to exist in this area cushioned from academic activity, when the circulation circuits and action processes in which our lucubrations are inserted are very different from those in the lecture room. Only in a state of self-denial could we seriously believe that a contemporary culture centre, housed in an emblematic building worth millions of euros, set up to speculatively gentrify an impoverished neighbourhood and place a “provincial” city on the global radar, is going to become a hub of critical and autonomous experimentation of alternative methods of subjectification, relation and communication, the potential of which we recognize abstractly in the new social dynamics, merely because of our goodwill and learned opinions.

This leads us to the first condition that must be adopted by a culture centre promoted by the institutions: Its independence from macro-projects for urban renewal, which not only turn culture into an accomplice of multi-million-euro operations, but also determine the type of culture being tackled: deterritorialised, abstracted and mystified culture which is also deterritorialising, blurs meaning and mystifies. I am not denying the role of culture as a tool for social transformation – far from it – but rather showing the way in which a banal and fetishised version of culture is employed for spurious purposes.

It may be an impossible condition to meet in current circumstances, in which this appears to be the main reason town halls and regional governments invest in “prestigious” cultural infrastructures, but since we are trying to be imaginative here, we could add that cultural cen-

2. I am referring to the Medialab Prado space in Madrid.



tres should be set up where there is social demand, or at least, should take into account the relation between cultural infrastructures and the needs and shortfalls of the area. The intensification of their concentration in the “golden mile” of Madrid – Medialab and Caixaforum are less than 50 metres from one another – and the functions they aim to carry out are a clear example of the criteria employed by the institutions.

This does not mean all cultural centres must invariably be “neighbourhood centres” working exclusively to fill the free time of the unemployed, retired people and the few remaining house wives. The hinterland of a cultural centre has a blurred and variable profile, which could include a district, city, region or even a country. In simple terms, it should connect with the wishes, expectations and potential of a population the borders and limits of which are not as parochial or locally impermeable as one might think. Urban populations are varied, mobile and heterogeneous in their needs and expectations. A centre willing to relate to its environment in a sustainable way must adopt an ecosystemic attitude and not attempt to indiscriminately cover everything “that moves” and could fall into the category of culture as if it were a monopoly, as occurs, for example in *La Casa Encendida*. That is why it is essential to use the internal dynamics of the place as a base to avoid the “UFO” and “Attila’s Horse” effects, and for place not to be understood either as a cultural reserve to be profited from through tourism, or as a territory to be put right and transformed in a systematic manner. The neutralisation of the action of the “Archimedes’ Principle” that may be involved in the installation of a cultural centre in an urban environment should be in the hands of municipal authorities who put a break on, rather than cheer on, speculative dynamics.

All cultural movements of interest have arisen from a happy local negotiation with what is external and strange, a negotiation that is only possible if there is some symmetry between the different sides involved. I can remember no case, since the Library of Alexandria – we can recall the refined, select and hermetic nature of everything “Alexandrian” – which has flourished in disconnection with its human hinterland. The brilliant poets and painters from the provinces would never have brought us the “age of silver” in the *Residencia de Estudiantes* on their own without the restless Madrid of the end of the twenties. Closer to what we are discussing here is the “success” of *Arteleku*, an institutional centre in which public money funded local creative dynamics and at the same time generated the artistic hub most open to international trends during the nineties. Only powerful institutions such as the Prado Museum or the MACBA can undertake operations of a deterritorialised and global nature, working as they do in the upper echelons of art and international tourism, and only when they participate as agents of prestige. It is clear from experiences such as Medialab and discussion groups such as ours that the continuity of these projects, closely linked as they are to immaterial currents, suffers or benefits from the

relationship they have with the local social strata in which they are inserted.

The second condition resides in the generation of structures for the workings and financing that guarantee the independence and transparency of the centre, as well as its efficiency. The two first factors are vital to inspire confidence in potential collaborators and participants in its activities, if what we want is for the cultural space to become viewed as an integral part and generator of the common good.

It would be inadmissible to reproduce the international competition system on the scale of a small centre. It is less important to dramatise a new management election system than to promote mental, ethical and working structures that prevent and avoid the interference of local officials and guarantee the development and continuity of the activities in a climate of confidence and independence. As in the case of hospitals, schools and universities, cultural centres are not instruments to be used by the current political power, regardless of how legitimate their election has been. Transparency is the other side of the coin of independence and one of the most effective incentives to attract the participation of external agents in the system, who have traditionally been suspicious of opaque and secretive cultural institutions.

The efficiency of the centre depends above all on the existence of a qualified, united and coordinated team endowed with stability and job security, as well as salaries adjusted to qualifications and the value of the work completed. This management team should be complemented by a committee of consultants, which is renewed on a regular basis and chosen by agreement with the agents of the local area or the specialised sector the centre focuses its activities on. The definition of the initiatives and the programming would not therefore be the exclusive responsibility of the team. It would be drawn up in collaboration with the committee, the mission of which would be to increase the scope and capillarity of the centre in its social and cultural environment. Regular renewal would prevent the committee from becoming opaque and aloof.

The participation of society in the centre would not be limited to this consultancy committee. The centre should not consider itself to be the issuer or producer of culture, but rather a mere catalyst for proposals that have their origin and destination in society. And society, through individuals, groups and bodies participating in each specific project or activity, would be invited to do this in terms of reciprocal responsibility with a capacity to intervene in all the decision-making concerning the processes in question. The institution would work as a provider of production and socialisation spaces and infrastructures, and as a vehicle for communication between the different projects and the wider public. This communication would not be limited to conventional exhibition formats; it could be developed in seminars or workshops, depending on the case, or through the generation of documentation that would be deposited in the centre for public consultation, in person or on-line.

This function of being a documentation centre or archive is one of the basic functions a cultural institution must carry out, in opposition to the dynamics of transitory events lacking in lasting footprints typical of many contemporary processes, which contributes to the sense of precariousness and the lack of agency between those involved.

Also of fundamental importance is the drawing up of procedures to incorporate projects into the activities of the centre. Traditional competitions held on a regular basis in order to provide grants have shown themselves to be ineffective and de-structuring for what in a first instance they are trying to support. In the competitions projects are obliged to be adapted to the demands imposed in their bases in order to then receive a paltry quantity in exchange for which they are subjected to strict controls and oversight. This is often the only feedback they receive from the institution. The alternative would be to provide sufficient funding for projects presented in a permanent and flexible tendering system, where approval is made jointly by the managers and the consultancy committee in accordance with the relevance and appropriateness of the projects. The institution should work to consolidate external initiatives, at the same time as uniting the common dimension of each of them by means of the compulsory condition of generating channels for communication or materials for public dissemination.

The third aspect fundamental to the configuration of a cultural centre is an in-depth consideration of who constitutes its interlocutors, collaborators or users, its *constituency*, from the moment in which it abandons the conventional dual structure of creator/spectator mediated by the white cube which is the institution/museum.

We are currently immersed in an intense and multi-sided debate on the identity of the producer of contemporary culture, whose profile appears to have expanded and become diversified to the point that it is now almost unrecognisable alongside traditional artistic standards. And it is still harder to hear reflections on the transformations occurring in those traditionally identifiable as the public and in the mechanisms for relating to subjects now indiscriminately viewed as users, consumers, cultural tourists or mere statistical data as part of a measurement of audience size. The inanity and schematic nature of the conclusions of reports on these issues published by the Ministry of Culture or European Commission is a cause for concern. They only become a little more precise when they attempt to determine the economic importance of cultural consumption.

The figure of a hurried artist trapped in the melee of contemporary cultural production and sucked into the “creative industries” is a phenomenon that has been analysed in depth by the critics. I refer you to the terms of this debate<sup>3</sup>. What we are concerned with here is the obser-

vation of how this new and vague profile fits like a glove on the changed model of cultural centre increasingly being implemented by the institutions. The vague and imprecise definition of its features mean this new cultural producer is repeatedly questioned as the performer par excellence in the renewed contemporary creation centre. It is interesting to see how many of those who previously considered themselves artists are now prepared to identify themselves with and be assimilated into the new framework, and not just as a self-indulgence to gain the advantages of recognition in the dominant discourse, but also from a vindictive and critical point of view as regards the destabilising and de-powering processes implicit in this new profile in the contemporary system for the exploitation of work.

It is interesting to see how these new protagonists are interpreted simultaneously as issuers and receivers, an attempt to transfer the bi-directionality of communicative flows framed in the Internet – as if this dynamic did not exist before the traditionally unidirectional structure of institutionalised culture – which gives rise to a strange revision of the old ambition of the avant-garde to merge creator and spectator. This transfer involves a displacement of the modern notion of public in the dominant cultural scheme of things, and a general disruption of the traditional system of mediations. This transformation is of such great significance and has so many implications, it is essential to prevent the dynamic from becoming banal or being translated into empty and meaningless shams, as has occurred with much of what is referred to as “relational art” designed to be consumed by “tourists” who are no longer seen as public, and are not participants in a real process either. Furthermore, it is equally important to avoid the packaging of the protean capacity of naturally open cultural processes in the conventional containers of institutionalised culture, and its entrapment in the self-referential circularity of what the institution recognises and sanctions as “contemporary culture”, all of which contributes to the uniformity and homogenisation of cultural subjects, and in the final analysis, causes the displacement of those who do not share the same codes; in other words, the majority of the social masses.

Once again, the cure for these ills would lie in the commitment of the cultural centre to dynamics in existence beyond its walls, and its commitment to abstain from simulating or modelling them in the centre in order to neutralise them or turn them into a great spectacle. It would also be necessary to prevent and avoid the self-proclamation of traditionally recognised agents – artists, theorists, etc. – as the natural and exclusive heirs to the new expanded domain of culture, a trend that is easily recognised in the contemporary closing of ranks of the “crea-

3. See for example, Gerald Raunig, “Creative Industries as Mass Deception”, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0207/raunig/es> or my somewhat more modest “The Artist as Producer... of Culture”, both revisit the turning of the screw resulting from the

current situation as regards the Frankfurt School and Benjamin. See also texts contained in the volume *Producta50. An Introduction to some of the Relationships between Culture and Economy*, YProductions (eds.), CASM-Generalitat de Catalunya, Barcelona, 2007.

tors” in defence of a sector they consider to be their property, where they take advantage of the fact that the always disturbing critical position of the public has at last been excluded from the system.

The last aspect I wanted to discuss concerns the function of the new cultural centre. Culture and its institutions – or culture that is institutionally recognised – had an undeniable role in the modern-bourgeois disciplinary regime, as a reflection of the symbolic order and foundation of the system of values governing society. This position has been tackled widely over the last few decades, affected by the same regime of contingency that has affected other modern institutions. The cultural institution has today survived its own lack of need in a way similar to how, for example, the state has, and on many occasions in complicity with the state. We could go as far as to say it has proliferated and expanded once freed of the norms and restrictions of its traditional vertical and canonical structure and in connection with the economic dynamics of the knowledge economy based on the flow of intangible assets and the commercialisation of experience. George Yúdice aptly described the role of culture in modern-day society in “resource” terms.

The proliferation of new-style cultural centres could either contribute to the dissemination of this notion of culture as a resource that must be put to work in cooperation with the capitalisation and population turnover processes of the areas in which they are established, in the capillarity of the new post-Ford governmentality, and working as a mechanism for social espionage; or, on the contrary, they could be set up as a counterbalance to these processes, and a place for experimentation, testing and the setting up of alternative devices in an open and independent manner.

For this to be more than just a sham or an effective instrument for the assimilation of dissidence, it is first essential to escape a reified notion of criticism – assimilated exclusively into the elaboration and reproduction of theoretical formulas – very much in vogue in Spain since the nineties, by means of the commitment of this critical conscience to specific problems and conflicts. Secondly, a problematic relationship must be maintained with its own institutional definition, which means the constant review of its dependent links with other authorities in power. Thirdly, an anti-corporate position must be adopted as regards the official system of culture and its agents – I include myself here – to foster the communication between different social strata and condemn the appropriation and exploitation of the added value of culture by a minority.

Having written these lines, I am left with the sensation that there will never be a moment like the present in which the task of bringing effective formulas for the socialisation of culture to fruition is so simple; it is just a question of providing working frameworks with transparency and autonomy and fomenting an ethical reactivation of behaviours related to the area.

The disturbing unknown quantity still to be clarified is why the powers of the contemporary state continue to encourage and finance this type of culture, when all the evidence points to the fact they are simultaneously committed to another type in a far more systematic manner. Maybe it is just one more effect, in this case to our benefit, of the same state overflow that reacts inclusively to the actions and demands of certain sectors, the “avant-garde” critical nature of which is recognised as one of the foundational cornerstones of its power. The remains of the traditional autonomy of the artistic field are also on our side. Lastly, we should not forget the ambivalent relationship of contemporary capitalism towards those processes that lead to the imagination of a field of action beyond that which is given.





Images from the *Reversible Actions* seminar, *Art, Education and Territory*, organised at the Remei Community Centre in Vic, in November 2008

PLATONIQ

EL GOOG

COMMON  
KNOWLEDGE  
BANK

# EL GOOG

## PLATONIQ

### **EL GOOG - The Internet and Social Networks for the Elderly**

This project by the Platoniq group for ACVIC. Centre d'Arts Contemporànies promotes catalysing and energising public participatory activities for the elderly. It was carried out between June and November 2009 with the Mossèn Josep Guiteras Centre for the Elderly in Vic, in close collaboration with the Vic County Pensioners' Social Association to prepare tools and dynamics to encourage the elderly to get involved in the work at the centre and in the town of Vic.

Platoniq's work with the centre started out with the presentation of a project being carried out in many towns and cities, the Common Knowledge Bank.<sup>1</sup> This project sets out the methodology to be applied in the new project within the *Reversible Actions* programme.

### **WHY PLATONIQ WANTS TO WORK WITH THE ELDERLY**

Self-organisation is regarded increasingly highly by the older generation. This trend is particularly clear in the way in which the elderly define their retirement and infuse it with life. An ageing population poses the following question for us all: what role will the elderly play in the near future? Their increasing visibility makes it crucial to involve this group in social development.

This premise requires us to rethink the current concept of participation and shift it away from the field where it has been valid for years. Social participation looks for different forms of participation and cooperation involving the elderly. It is not about strengthening services to take care of them passively, but promoting free roles and ensuring the elderly can redefine themselves as they get older and create spaces for action where they can get involved.

We know that if we promote participation, we are encouraging a sometimes uncomfortable, uncontrollable force. We are promoting processes with unknown results. But social participation is participation in shaping life spaces, a creative opportunity for a 'civically' active old age.

Many countries are developing the concept of ongoing training: the elderly are trained as 'senior trainers' and then act in their community. In taking on this new responsibility, many active trainers and expert old people take responsibility for unmet needs, start up new projects, launch initiatives and support existing organisations and institutions. As ambassadors of a new positive image of the elderly, they act as agents of social commitment in their town.

Platoniq's experience can act as a key catalyst for participation and social innovation to forge new paths in what appears to be an inevitable change in these organisations: training the elderly to be more than simple users of the centre and become real engines of change.

1. In this publication we have chosen to publish a text on one of the experiences carried out within the framework of the Common Knowledge Bank project, a workshop held at Antonio Domínguez Ortiz secondary school in Seville invited by Zemos98. It explains in detail how the workshop was carried out in a different context to Vic.

## THE PROCESS AND THE IDEA

After getting to know how the centre works, Platoniq explained the Common Knowledge Bank civic participatory project. The shared energies between the association and Platoniq mean that some of the dynamics behind this project, based on sharing knowledge and promoting self-organisation in communities, can be applied to the centre. However, we arrived at the conclusion that if these dynamics were to take root at the centre, they had to be developed at the centre's natural rhythm and be based on the idea of Platoniq members fitting in and getting a close understanding of the space and users' interests.

It was suggested to start with a workshop on the internet and social networks and in parallel to set up a working group between the association and Platoniq to rethink participatory dynamics above and beyond the workshop itself. This kind of activity was chosen not only because we were eager for the elderly to increase their awareness of the internet (chat rooms, blogs, email, search engines, etc.), but also due to other factors promoted through the internet and social networks, such as:

- Creating new social networks: keeping in touch with friends and family, making new friends, finding groups of people with shared interests, etc.
- Online education: keeping active.
- E-work: creating new kinds of volunteering.

These are just some examples of initiatives that let users remain self-sufficient, which gives them increased short- and medium-term quality of life and promotes active ageing.

This workshop also aims to lay the foundations for participants to become future trainers in this area and teach the contents to their peers. Training them in this fashion gives them the necessary independence to ensure their knowledge expands beyond small groups of people and is not conditioned by hiring professionals.

One of the main goals is to create an open workshop centred on the use of the internet where social issues take precedence over technical questions. Based on these participatory experiences, the suitable mechanisms can be created to move these dynamics into the physical space of the centre itself, ie outside the network, but drawing on the support of the network when necessary.



### Platoniq

The launch of the *El Goog* project in the ACVIC space was marked by presenting previous Platoniq projects such as the *Common Knowledge Bank* and *SOS*. Both projects were based on exchange processes and creating networks: the former involved supply and demand of knowledge between people; the latter looked at the spatial side to exchange and created a network of relationships in a neighbourhood.





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1-2. Graphical image of the *El Goog* project.

3-4. Public presentation session for the *El Goog* project, before project launch. The idea was to create possible collectives to start a process of joint work. Finally, the project was aimed at the elderly.

5. Work session with communications students at the University of Vic

6. Moment of debate of contents within the workshop carried out between September and December 2009 at the Mossèn Guiteres Centre in Vic. One of the aims of the workshop was to train future educators.

7. Work group with members of SeniorLab from CitiLab in Cornellà and the Mossèn Guiteres Centre in Vic, as part of the UrbanLabs 09 activities held in November 2009 at CitiLab in Cornellà.

8. Presentation of the project at the ACVic space once the centre workshop was finished.

9-10. As part of the project, a game was designed to simulate situations between organisations and people. This game helped raise awareness of the negotiation process and internal conflicts which arose from the workshop. The game was presented as a prototype that could be redesigned for other circumstances.

# COMMON KNOWLEDGE BANK

PLATONIQ

In mid-2006, Platoniq launched the Common Knowledge Bank (CKB) with the aim of setting up a laboratory, a public-space meeting point, to strengthen the dynamics of social participation and help promote knowledge exchange and free culture.

Inspired by freeware, the internet and P2P file-sharing systems, the CKB was set up as a platform for the collective production of copyleft content and for carrying out pilot experiences based on the free transfer of knowledge and mutual education. The CKB recreates the social ties that underpin reciprocal learning, shared skills and collective intelligence. It follows today's paradigm shift in terms of producing, distributing and organising information.

The CKB aims to give back power to those who see themselves as producers and not just users or consumers, people who have the tools to bypass intermediaries but who still need to collaborate with peers and want support from the community. The CKB creates networks or communities of people with common interests who want to share resources and knowledge. In the CKB, citizens can offer and request knowledge, or recommend others who could teach useful and interesting things, mostly based on their own experience.

There are no limits to what can be offered and requested; all kinds of knowledge are valid, be it academic, practical or experiential. The CKB detects the skills, knowledge and expertise of people who have something to teach, and attracts others interested in learning. Supply and demand are the object of what we at Platoniq call 'P2Pedagogy', a series of methodological exercises for mutual peer-to-peer education.

The CKB organisation is inspired by the coordinated collective production model at the heart of freeware. It aims to apply the dynamics of cooperation, process documentation and shared responsibility between the members taking part in a cultural project. The CKB has a horizontal, non-hierarchical organisation that is constantly evolving – a flexible, open structure that adapts easily to change.

Participation in the CKB is also open. You can form part of the organisation as a Shareholder or create offers of and requests for knowledge and become a Donor. Key to the development of this community of people is trust and motivation, which could be ideological, professional, learning-based, etc. Shareholders are organised into small working groups based on their interests and common skills: these are the CKB cells, which work independently and carry out specific functions, such as Audiovisual Production, Communication Strategies, Production for Knowledge Exchange Markets, etc.

The functions of the CKB cells are broken down to facilitate participation and horizontal organisation. This creates microtasks, which can be carried out by anyone who has recently joined the project and has the added benefit of helping them form part of the CKB team, since they take on a small degree of responsibility in accordance with their time, skills and interests.

The interactions between the CKB organisation, cells, shareholders and donors take shape in the Free Knowledge Exchange Markets, which bring together supply and demand and create a programme of engaging sessions (games, micro-workshops, demos, takeaway theory, challenges, etc.) held over one or more days, during which participants play an active role teaching and learning. These open days are open to all and free of charge – everyone can come and take part.

The CKB has a powerful tool in the form of the website [www.bancomun.org](http://www.bancomun.org), which is an integral part of the platform. It not only promotes and presents the project, but also documents the processes that take place during the open days to create an extensive archive of audio-visual capsules recorded during the exchange sessions.

Since it was set up in 2006, the CKB has held Knowledge Exchange Markets in Barcelona, Cambridge, Casablanca, Lisbon, Linz, Berlin, Girona and Seville, and presented its methodology in cities worldwide, including London, Dublin, Manchester, Mexico City, Singapore, Yogyakarta and Hong Kong.

## **THE COMMON KNOWLEDGE BANK AT ANTONIO DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ SECONDARY SCHOOL IN SEVILLE**

Within the framework of the 11<sup>th</sup> ZEMOS98 Festival, with the Expanded Education Symposium at its core, in March 2009 Platoniq carried out a pilot Common Knowledge Bank experience at Antonio Domínguez Ortiz secondary school in the Polígono Sur neighbourhood in Seville, also known as Las 3000 Viviendas. The school structures its educational approach around the Educational Compensation Plan, which forms part of the Commissioner's Comprehensive Plan for Polígono Sur, an area whose social, economic and cultural characteristics call for new educational models and practice to ensure effective schooling and prevent social exclusion. Platoniq took up this challenge together with the school team and ZEMOS98, who had spent the previous months setting out well-defined lines of action for a week of experiences with students.

Below is a chronicle of the CKB workshops held at Antonio Domínguez Ortiz secondary school in Seville, which can only hope to give a glimpse of students' intensive experience over these days and hint at the tremendous progress made.

## **CHRONICLE OF THE PLATONIQ COMMON KNOWLEDGE BANK WORKSHOP AT ANTONIO DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ SECONDARY SCHOOL IN SEVILLE, BY RUBÉN DÍAZ (ZEMOS98)<sup>1</sup>**

### **First Session**

Have you ever felt that if you only knew 'something', that 'something' could change your life forever? Is there something you'd like to be able

to do, but just never found anyone to teach you how? How many useful things could you teach your friends? Do you know anybody who can do something useful, interesting or special? This is a chronicle about the art of listening, learning and sharing at the first session of the CKB at Antonio Domínguez Ortiz secondary school.

After several months of meetings and preparations, we finally set up this Knowledge Exchange experience at Antonio Domínguez Ortiz secondary school, in collaboration with Platoniq and their Common Knowledge Bank project.

We set up our base camp in the school library and organised the chairs and tables to help form working groups. This strategic location (in the middle of a corridor on the ground floor of the building) was chosen to ensure the whole school would see us as an open office for knowledge exchange.

We got under way with an introductory session for 4<sup>th</sup>-year secondary and 1<sup>st</sup>- and 2<sup>nd</sup>-year baccalaureate students about Platoniq and the CKB and how we were going to create 'networks' in the school and neighbourhood. Olivier Schulbaum (Platoniq) reassured students that this would be the only 'theoretical' session where the teacher speaks and the students remain silent; after this the idea would be to invert the roles of teacher and student.

The CKB project follows the philosophy of copyleft, social networks, freeware and knowledge transfer. One student asked whether you needed to know what freeware was in order to understand the Common Knowledge Bank. Olivier gave the example of making *gazpacho* soup: we all know what the basic ingredients are (tomato, pepper, bread, etc.), but everyone has their own particular way of making it. And we understand that the recipe doesn't belong to anyone; it belongs to everyone, even though everybody follows it in their own individual way. This is the key idea in both cooking and software. Knowledge – belonging simultaneously to both everyone and no-one – is a kind of 'asset' (as on the stock exchange) with its own value. This whole week would be about giving knowledge value: we would be responsible for deciding what was important. And, above all, we were going to strengthen and forge new relationships and networks.

Have you ever stopped to think what you could teach other people? This isn't an easy question for anyone to answer; some of us found it the most complicated exercise this morning. What can you teach your friends? And, more to the point, are you interested in sharing something? And in exchange for what? On what subject? What might others find useful? We tried to find answers to these questions, without forgetting our own interests and bearing in mind the questions that the school's educational system cannot answer or for which we'd like different answers and from different people: "Teachers know lots of things they don't teach."

1. The sessions were held every day from 16 to 20 March 2009.



We split into two groups, first only 4<sup>th</sup>-year secondary students and then the sixth-form students. Platoniq suggested making a map of everyone's skills. "Let's look at people's hobbies, good practices, interests, etc." We used board markers and pens to write down what we wanted (What do I want to learn?) on pink post-its, and what we could offer (What can I teach?) on green ones. We also used yellow post-its to suggest other interesting people with something to teach, from outside our working group or school (friends on other courses, family members, friends from the neighbourhood, etc.).

"I compare the CKB with Cash Converters: you sell what you no longer need and buy what other people no longer want. Once you know something, it's not that you no longer need it, but you don't mind sharing it and you might need something from someone else in the same situation", said Antonio (2<sup>nd</sup>-year baccalaureate) to his friends.

We asked each student to write at least five requests for knowledge and five offers of knowledge. When there were at least two matching requests, the group would get to work and look within the neighbourhood network for someone to satisfy this request. If there was already someone in the group who could satisfy the request, we would put them in contact with each other.

Each group's map of interests took shape in the form of a notice board with the post-its organised by subject: sport, technology, society, humanities, the body, etc. We agreed to continue the exercise the following day with a smaller group, the motivator group, which would return to their schoolmates' classes to set up the knowledge market.

## Second Session

The goal of today's session was to work with the motivator group. By Wednesday, everybody should be 'experts' on the Common Knowledge Bank; we should all know how to communicate the project to other groups, teachers, friends and members of our family or anyone else who asks us.

Up to now, knowledge had not been as important as teamwork, joint responsibilities, new ideas and internal organisation for communicating a project. Students threw themselves into the exercise, and the working environment flourished as motivation increased when they saw the first results. They were responsible for communicating the work they were doing in the Common Knowledge Bank office.

We defined goals and tasks. On Wednesday the motivator group (about a dozen people, including 4<sup>th</sup>-year secondary and baccalaureate students) would go into some 2<sup>nd</sup>- and 3<sup>rd</sup>-year secondary classes to find 'assets' for the bank: a) what people know and want to share and b) what they want to learn.

Teamwork and commitment to each task is key. Students divided up into groups by interest and personal tastes:

- *Communication group*. This group decided which sentences and keywords explained the CKB simply, clearly and directly. In addition, they prepared a script to help structure the presentation to each class, decide what needed to be transported from class to class and determine what to do at each moment.
- *Production and Design group*. This group decided which format to use to get the ideas across: post-its, T-shirts, posters, murals, etc. The production cell was the coordination centre and gave shape to the work being done by their classmates in the Communication group.
- *Audiovisual group*. This group documented actions and used ads and short informative videos to express the ideas from the Communication group using the cameras and video cameras on their mobile phones. To make the ad, they had to prepare a technical script, decide on the shots and the necessary material and above all decide what they wanted to communicate and how to do it.
- *Search Engines group*. These 'human search engines' analysed the data on supply and demand, cross-referenced them and put people in contact to exchange knowledge.

## Third Session

Jenny is a 4<sup>th</sup>-year secondary student and an active member of the motivator group within the communication cell the CKB set up in the school. The other members of the motivator group were also very keen to 'expand knowledge exchange'. Another student, Cortés (who was somewhat reticent at the start because he said he didn't understand the theoretical concepts behind the project) made a great effort to show how useful his PR skills (as he put it) were to bring together knowledge supply and demand.

We were impressed by Raúl's serious approach to the work and the way he took responsibility for taking the group out to other classes. He acted as producer-manager for each new presentation of the project, always with one eye on his watch and the other on the next point on the script. Joaquín was very confident and convincing presenting the project mid-morning to a 3<sup>rd</sup>-year secondary class, whilst Jessi gave out green and pink post-its and encouraged students to write what they could teach and what they wanted to learn. And these are only two of many examples, including Francisco, Antonio, Isaac, Aurori, Alejandro, Rocío...

Wednesday's work was very well organised by all workshop participants. There were strict timings, well-defined tasks, a polished script, and all the materials were prepared and all needs were seen to. It was however, paradoxically, the most difficult day for me to chronicle. Motivation, expectation, smiles and a fantastic atmosphere are difficult to get across in writing. Not to mention the personal stories of teachers

and students, shared thoughts and conversations and, naturally, the inevitable tensions and criticisms of the methodology. All this was intensified by the changes taking place in the students – changes based exclusively on motivation and the learning process through communication with others.

Would it be possible to maintain the same level of work and enthusiasm if the project went on for longer or became a fixed part of the school's workings? Is motivation key for understanding that effort is one more ingredient in the learning process? What tools can teachers use to communicate themselves and motivate students better? How can they avoid a feeling of distance between them and their students creeping back during the rest of the year?

#### Fourth Session

After preparing all the materials and making a preliminary visit to pick our site, we left the school for the street market in Las 3000 Vivien-das neighbourhood with the aim of expanding the CKB out beyond the school. The materials for our visit to the street market included a table and chairs to set up our stand, posters to identify who we were, a megaphone, a mounting board for the offers and requests, post-its and pens... and lots of enthusiasm!

At the street market, hundreds of people were selling fruit, vegetables, clothes, ironmongery, CDs and other objects. The idea of the motivator group was to join in with this environment and include knowledge exchange as another merchandise to be traded in the market. The methodology was the same as before: coloured post-its so people could say what they wanted to learn and what they could teach.

Some of the students in the group had family in the market and they used these contacts to reassure people that our cause was worthwhile. One of the shoe stalls gave us some of their space to set up our stand. The groups split up and the street market carried on its business of constant exchange. They had accepted a new, less tangible merchandise to be traded: the exchange of ideas.

One of the major problems in this neighbourhood is school truancy. At the street market we saw several students who should have been at school. It's difficult to verify, but when these kids (and their parents) saw the school attendance campaign and the group of students working on the stand, perhaps they thought "Maybe it wouldn't be a bad idea to come to school more often". The best part of the day in the neighbourhood, though, was seeing the sparkle in people's eyes when they saw that – contrary to what we usually hear – maybe the youth of today wasn't that bad after all... "Maybe they're worth listening to because they've got something to tell us. And perhaps we've got something positive and valuable to teach them".

#### Fifth Session

Today we held an information exchange market at the school itself. This market travelled through the playground, basketball court, gym, music room, 3<sup>rd</sup>-year classroom and school hall and finished with lunch in the school canteen with all participants. We applied maths, physics, music, mechanics and physical education to the offers of and requests for knowledge that the human search engines had found during the week inside and outside school. These offers and requests were the result of a survey to assess what was worth learning and teaching reciprocally, following only the criteria set by each participant and the experience and process itself.

This was a cathartic experience for all participants, a day planned by the motivator group for learning and playing, organised so the whole school could enjoy what education should be about. The most interesting thing was that ties had been strengthened, new communities of interest had been set up, and what was exchanged wasn't actually as important as the actors involved in the exchange.

The motivator group, divided up into cells, put up a notice in the school hall giving details of when and where the exchanges would take place:

- *How to clean a motorbike carburettor* (entrance area). Inma, a teacher who played a very active role in the whole process, wanted to learn how to clean the carburettor on her motorbike, a Vespa she brought along for the activity. Almost the whole school turned up to see Manual explain how to do it. Inma took her bike away not only with a clean carburettor, but with her indicators fixed as well. Manual wasn't that keen on taking part at first, but soon realised that he possessed valuable mechanics expertise of use to the school.
- *What is Tuenti?* (computer room). Cristian is a 14-year-old lad now in reception class after several years of truancy. He offered his knowledge of Tuenti, a social networking site popular with teenagers: he explained how to set up an account, how to share images, videos and comments. This website operates on a similar philosophy to the CKB, where sharing knowledge and resources is key.
- *Martial arts and philosophy* (outside gym). Roberto is the school's Director of Studies, a philosophy teacher and was also onetime karate champion in Andalucía. He offered to teach how to apply karate philosophy to life. Isaac, a student and member of the motivator group, complemented the theory with a Thai boxing class.
- *Mathematics and physics applied to basketball* (basketball court). Two teachers competed to see who could find the most appealing way of applying mathematics and physics to basketball. We learnt how to formulate mathematical expressions for a ball's bounces and why a ball always bounces lower and lower, and we used physics to

analyse the straight and parabolic movements of a ball thrown from the free-shot line, taking account of space, time and speed.

- *Learn how to play musical instruments and create rhythms* (music room). The rhythm chosen by the music teacher for us to learn was a *bulería*, a traditional Andalusian song. We tried out clapping, a rhythm box, guitar and drums and finished with a *batucada* with tambourines, drums, bells, etc.

Finally all the participants got together for lunch, where we all had a great time. For anyone interested, there are videos of some of the main highlights. We are very pleased to have set up this energising pilot experience, although we are well aware that there are still many things to think and write about.

1. First day of the workshop: Green if you want to teach, pink if you want to learn.
2. First day of the workshop: Armando covered himself with Post-it notes with the offers of and requests for knowledge.
3. First day of the workshop: Social Tagging at school.
4. Second day of the workshop: What do you want to learn today?
5. Third day of the workshop: The steering group prepared to extend the Common Knowledge Bank to the whole school.
6. Third day of the workshop: The steering group encouraged its fellow students to take part.
7. Third day of the workshop: What can I teach?
8. Third day of the workshop: Offers and requests were grouped by subject.



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9. Fourth day of the workshop: The Common Knowledge Bank was set up at the Polígono Sud street market.
10. Fourth day of the workshop: Looking for offers of and requests for knowledge outside the school.
11. Fourth day of the workshop: The neighbourhood worked with students and took part in the initiative.
12. Fifth day of the workshop: Knowledge exchange market at the school.
13. Fifth day of the workshop: Two of the students who took part in the knowledge exchange market.
14. Fifth day of the workshop: Students learnt how to calculate the perfect throw on the basketball court with a mathematics teacher.
15. Fifth day of the workshop: At the request of a teacher, Manuel taught how to clean a motorbike carburettor in the school courtyard.

Photos 1-11: Antonio Miñán (ZEMOS98)  
Photos 12-15: Blanca García (ZEMOS98)

# CATALYSTS



# 1021 DAYS. (2007-2009) MARKET AND MEMORY. SANT ANTONI MARKET

JORDI CANUDAS

A project by **Jordi Canudas** from the twofold perspective of both artist and neighbour keen to involve the social fabric of the neighbourhood.

**Concept and project management:** Jordi Canudas, visual artist and teacher at Escola Massana

**In collaboration with:**

The Vokalía de Dones de l'Associació de Veïns del Barri de Sant Antoni, Comissió per a la Gent Gran de la Xarxa Comunitària de Sant Antoni - Xarxa@ntoni, Associacions de Concessionaris del Mercat de Sant Antoni, Associació Sant Antoni Comerç and the Biblioteca Sant Antoni - Joan Oliver. Also involved was the *Mirades al meu mercat* workshop, organised by the association Lacasamarilla.org and the Districte de l'Eixample in Barcelona.

**Supported by:**

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**Market and Memory** is an art project that examines day-to-day life in Sant Antoni Market in Barcelona before it closes for renovations. This unique space houses several different markets under the same roof on different days of the week: a fruit-and-vegetable market, a flea market and a second-hand book market. With renovations looming, it is currently facing uncertain times.

As a public place and focal point for the neighbourhood, the market is much more than a commercial space. The project aims to capture these everyday interactions and experiences and reveal the unique identity of Sant Antoni Market through a dialogue with the place, people and objects. This involves forging close ties with the context and undertaking a shared project with the social fabric of the neighbourhood, market stallholders, users and neighbours.

The project is being carried out through a number of different collaborations as an 'in-progress' and 'in situ' project at Sant Antoni Market between early 2007, which marks the market's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and September 2009, when the market moves to a provisional location so renovations can get underway.

The works include *Scenes\_Market and Memory*, which aims to give a voice to the market's past and consists of pieces set up in stalls not currently in use. The walls of these stalls were turned into giant boards for displaying experiences, comments and snippets of conversations about day-to-day life and the history of the market.

Some of these spaces, which we have called Scenes, include benches where the elderly sit, relax and chat. These spaces are used to record the comments, memories and experiences of people linked to Sant Antoni Market to create *Video\_Market and Memory*, which is currently in production.

Another work is the *Collection of Ten Posters\_Market and Memory*, which are being handed out at the market between March and July. The posters refer to different characteristic features of Sant Antoni Market and are piled up on trolleys at the different *Scenes\_Market and Memory*. People can pick up the posters as if they were metaphorically peeling away part of the skin of the market and helping with its 'move'.



#### 1. Day-by-day Archive

Starting in January 2007, Jordi Canudas has been photographing everyday life in the market from the twofold perceptive of both artist and user. This day-by-day archive will be complete when the provisional market opens and work starts on renovations in September 2009.

#### 2. Community Network Committee for the Elderly - Xarx@ntoni

Meetings with the Community Network Committee for the Elderly - Xarx@ntoni. Participation in the digital photography workshop *The Perspective of the Elderly at Sant Antoni Market*, 2007.

#### 3. Scenes \_ Market and Memory

Participation in the *Market and Memory* scenes. Six scenes repeated at different spots in the market. Up until September 2009.

#### 4- Video \_ Market and Memory

In 2008, twenty-four people were interviewed to share their memories and experiences linked to Sant Antoni Market (stallholders, market workers, customers and neighbours). The video is currently in production.

#### 5- Postcard \_ Market and Memory

A reproduction of a postcard from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century or early 20<sup>th</sup> century bought at the Sunday second-hand book market at Sant Antoni Market. Stallholders, customers and neighbours are invited to take part in the process of putting together an archive of old photographs linked to the market (October, November and December 2008).

#### 6- Posters \_ Market and Memory

Distribution of ten *Market and Memory* posters (March-July 2009).



# AMASTÉ/CASI TENGO 18

TXELU BALBOA  
AMASTÉ

One of the main functions of modern-day culture and creation is to help us interpret the world we live in and gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and our role in it. We therefore believe that promoting creativity and personal expression in teenagers (perhaps the key time for forging our identity) and getting them to play an active role as proactive cultural users should be a central goal of committed social, political and cultural action.

In line with this philosophy, since 2006 Amasté<sup>1</sup> and Casi Tengo 18<sup>2</sup> have been carrying out joint participatory experiences, socio-cultural actions and nonformal education with teenagers following creativity- and mediation-based teaching strategies.

These initiatives encourage participation and interaction between participants and promote the languages, media and dynamics of their choice to let them give free rein to their imagination and hone their (self)critical skills. They also pursue other goals, such as strengthening imagination and creativity as the ‘raw materials’ for personal and joint development, encouraging the conscious use of new information and communication technologies and (new) media as work channels and platforms, promoting individual freedom together with teamwork skills and cooperative work on collective projects, and fostering a proactive approach for participants to pursue their interests independently.

*Dinamik(tt)ak*, a summer fieldwork project aimed at young people aged 17-19 falls within this framework. This active educational and reflective experience aims to give teenagers a multidisciplinary view on imagination, creativity and art as tools for social action above and beyond a series of skills related to aesthetic representation. For two weeks all those involved – participants, instructors, and guest artists – live together 24 hours a day. This communal experience creates close bonds and shared energies that continue to be strengthened afterwards.

1. Amasté is an ideas office specialising in articulating relational and participatory mediation processes and setups to promote imagination, active reflection and a critical spirit in areas such as social innovation, youth, culture, learning, media literacy, land development, etc. [www.amaste.com](http://www.amaste.com)

2. Casi Tengo 18 is an association that works to promote cultural diversity through projects based on the active participation of civil society, focused on teenagers (working with them, rather than for them). [www.casitengo18.com](http://www.casitengo18.com)

## WHAT, HOW, WITH WHOM

This fieldwork activity is organised in workshops given by artists and professionals<sup>3</sup> involved in creative work from very different areas whose work – or work processes – is related to the subject or approach of the event in question and *Dinamik(tt)ak*'s underlying philosophy. There is also preliminary work to prepare the different workshops, set out the subjects, objectives, contents, expectations, dynamics and specific goals of each workshop and the experience as a whole and coordinate production questions and specific needs.

In each workshop, the guest artists get participants to carry out projects by following their approach and/or key aspects of their work. The group – participants, artists and instructors – define the project as a whole: they give it shape, develop it, communicate it and implement it, through collective decisions.

*Dinamik(tt)ak*'s pedagogy is based on learning from others. Instructors and artists aim to facilitate the learning experience and try to strike a delicate balance so mediation lets the group's skills come to the fore.

We value the work process itself and getting informal results more highly than obtaining 'exceptional' results. We are more interested in what the experience will mean for participants in the future than in the here and now.

Another crucial aspect is knowledge and interaction with the environment and context in two fields:

- The institution<sup>4</sup> housing the fieldwork. For participants, the experience of meeting the different agents brought together at these production centres offers them the opportunity to immerse themselves in a real creative production context. For the centre, welcoming *Dinamik(tt)ak* represents a major challenge, since they are not usually used to working with teenagers. In addition, housing a 12-day experience of communal living means they have to modify their dynamics and routines.
- The city and its land. The fieldwork doesn't aim to deal with an independent reality, but to act in/with the local context in question. The workshops aim to get their final results, for example, in the street, by interacting with passers-by. In addition, there are also comple-

mentary actions such as visits to cultural agents or involvement in other initiatives taking place in the city at the same time.

## 2006-2009

*Dinamik(tt)ak* has been held annually since July 2006. The most stable and longstanding event we organise with teenagers, it offers the possibility of ongoing analysis and establishing a model of changing practice, improving year on year (or at least trying out different possibilities), both in implementing specific activities (duration and subject matter of workshops, the guest artists, how to work with them, etc.) and in organising the communal experience and applying crosscutting concepts in real situations that come up in everyday situations.

The first edition did not have an overarching subject, but aimed to offer participants a wide-ranging overview of different creative forms and experiences through micro-workshops, visits to artists, talks and debates. The 2007 edition was based on ways of working. We designed each workshop as a collaboration between two artists (or groups of artists), one local and one from another context, which made for a very powerful experience as it combined two experiences in a common goal, multiplying visions and enriching participants' stay. In 2008 we decided to reduce the total number of workshops and stress the working processes in question. We invited artists with different ways of working and we expanded the specific actions within each workshop. The most recent event, in 2009, was held at ARTIUM and had a common subject of 'rethinking museums', with activities in two main workshops (one on thinking about museums from an inwards perceptive and the other from an outwards perspective) and a series of complementary activities.

## ON-LINE

In order to promote conscious use of new information and communication technologies, *Dinamik(tt)ak* has a collaborative blog updated regularly by participants during the experience. This blog acts as both a window onto the outside world and an archive of past editions (workshops held, guests, images, videos, etc.)

*Dinamik(tt)ak* is all this and much more. Come and find out more at [www.dinamikttak.com](http://www.dinamikttak.com).

3. Artists and professionals who have taken part in *Dinamik(tt)ak* include: UbiQa, Iñaki Imaz, Consonni, Pripublikarrak, Xabier Erkizia, Isabel Herguera, MYJOK, Julio Cesar Palacios, Fela Borbone, Joystick, Misha Canibal, Maria Ptqk, basurama, Saioa Olmo, BABA, FAAQ, Arturo-Fito Rodríguez, Iñaki Marquinez, Laurita Siles and Yogurinha Borova.

4. *Dinamik(tt)ak* has been held over the last four years. The first three editions were held at Arteleku, a cultural centre run by Gipuzkoa Provincial Council in Donostia-San Sebastián and the 2009 event was held at ARTIUM, Basque Contemporary Art Centre-Museum, in Vitoria-Gasteiz as part of LEM (Museum Experiences Lab). Since 2007 it has formed part of the Basque government's international fieldwork programme Auzolandegiak.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11

1. *Santiago Loves Kebab.*  
Dinamik(tt)ak'o6 (video frame).
2. *Santiago Loves Kebab.*  
Dinamik(tt)ak'o6.
3. *Knowledge activity.*  
Dinamik(tt)ak'o7.
4. *From 0 To 100.*  
Dinamik(tt)ak'o7.
5. *Do It Your Music.*  
Dinamik(tt)ak'o7.
6. *Do It Your Music.*  
Dinamik(tt)ak'o7.

7. *Euskal Munstro Berriak.*  
Dinamik(tt)ak'o8.
8. *Euskal Munstro Berriak.*  
Dinamik(tt)ak'o8.
9. *Ontzi Postontzi*  
Wishes Box.  
Dinamik(tt)ak'o9.
10. *Ontzi Postontzi*  
Wishes Box.  
Dinamik(tt)ak'o9.
11. *Museum Night Iii.*  
Dinamik(tt)ak'o9.

# MAISON DE LA NÉGOCIATION

JOSEP-MARIA MARTÍN  
IN COLLABORATION WITH  
ALAIN FIDANZA AND CARMEN  
GONZÁLEZ

with the involvement of students at EMAF art and multimedia school in Fribourg and HEART art school in Perpignan. Created for the Kunsthalle in Fribourg, Switzerland (2003–2004) and curated by Sarah Zücher.

The **Maison de la Négociation** (Negotiation House) project is based on how to tackle conflicts in everyday life and create the context for changing inflexible opposing positions through learning, coexistence and direct democracy.

## Background

The Kunsthalle in Fribourg invited Josep-Maria Martín to create this project just as Swiss artists and intellectuals had put themselves forward as mediators in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Additional factors, such as the fact that the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are based in Geneva, helped create an optimistic climate for resolving conflicts on the international stage. Another factor was an internal conflict which arose within the Kunsthalle organisation, which called for negotiation. This close-to-home situation was what actually sparked the project. A mediation process was led by a trade-unionist to try and resolve the conflict between management and a secretary at the centre. This filmed process helped reveal the importance of the micro-conflicts we all experience in everyday life. The time had come to ask ourselves how to tackle day-to-day conflicts.

## Process

A series of interviews was conducted with specialists, professionals and other agents interested in and involved with negotiation processes: mediators, psychologists, anthropologists, architects, historians, politicians, neighbourhood associations, Schönberg residents, diplomats, etc.

The space to be built was designed and sited following discussions with architect Alain Fidanza. The interviewees were then shown a pre-project and discussed the proposal to build Negotiation House.

The Employment Office in Fribourg arranged for unemployed people to build Negotiation House. In addition, a series of meetings was held to encourage residents to get involved in the project. The project was seen as a prototype which residents could then make their own.

A former school building was selected to create a life-size model of Negotiation House. The idea was to create a neutral space different to existing ones in the neighbourhood, with the aim of creating an atmosphere inside where people would forget existing conflictive situations and tackle them as if they were fresh situations. Objects related to conflicts were used as mediation tools: a stereo system, a football, a table or game, objects that promote dialogue and negotiation.

A manual was drawn up for the prototype Negotiation House. Using relationships between participants, their interests and disagreements, a list was drawn up of necessary aspects and objects for negotiation meetings. In consultation with residents, a credible person was appointed as director of Negotiation House and a support and monitoring committee was created to promote services.

The prototype was open for a period of three months, during which time a series of negotiation sessions employing imaginative formulas were programmed to come up with a variety of different possible uses of the objects inside the prototype.

In addition, a number of parallel activities were held, such as talks, role-playing games with associations and institutions, meetings with mediation professionals and negotiation workshops for schools and neighbours.

**Impact**

The prototype Negotiation House was used intensively by residents in the Schönberg neighbourhood of Fribourg to tackle everyday conflicts. Schools, neighbourhood associations, organisations and individuals also used Negotiation House to experiment, think and learn how to negotiate and reach agreements.

The prototype Negotiation House was presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> World Mediation Forum Conference held at the 2004 Universal Forum of Culture in Barcelona.

The Kurt Bosch University Institute, based in Sion in Switzerland, invited Josep-Maria Martín and Carmen González to take part as guest lecturers on the European Master’s Degree in Mediation, which involved conceptual and critical work on the prototype Negotiation House for a year. Students on the course from countries with different conflicts (armed conflicts, linguistic conflicts, cultural conflicts, etc.) recreated the prototype from a critical perspective. They put forward different alternatives linked to their area of experience and work.



Workshop carried out with children at the local activity centre in Schönberg, Fribourg.



Roundtable with Claus Jacobs, Imagination Lab and Germain Collaud, mediator with the cantonal police in Fribourg, March 2004.



Interior and exterior of Negotiation House. For three months the space served as a prototype for resolving micro-conflicts.



# REHABILITATING SUBSTANDARD HOUSING (IN A GYPSY SHANTYTOWN IN AS RAÑAS)

SANTIAGO CIRUGEDA  
RECETAS URBANAS

This project was launched in 2007 in response to A Coruña City Council's decision to rehabilitate 19 self-built houses in the settlement of As Rañas. The programme included training residents in building their own houses.

The project started by studying conditions in the shantytown of As Rañas, inhabited by a community of gypsies who mostly make their living from collecting scrap iron. A planimetric and volumetric survey was carried out on the houses concerned in accordance with the Town Planning Department criteria. A study was also carried out on the failings of the substandard housing and Social Services were charged with rehabilitating the houses and immediate surroundings and equipping the residents (the ultimate beneficiaries of the project) with the necessary skills to build their own houses, guided by technical experts. The idea was that the project would train a community in areas that would later be of use to them on the job market, since they would be able to show off their technical skills in the form of the work carried out. A series of graphical sheets were drawn up to clarify technical procedures and ensure basic concepts were grasped in terms of work safety. This methodology and these kinds of documents have been used on other projects and been supervised and validated as “**Safety Studies**”.

Individual projects were prepared for each house, keeping in close contact with the family living there. Rehousing strategies were drawn up between families in the same community to try and keep families in the shantytown, where they would be carrying out building tasks. The members of the community were shown a graphical simulation of the final result to get them on board and boost their confidence in the project and collaboration process, which inevitably went through some fraught moments. Those responsible for the regeneration process for housing, communal spaces and social work set out a series of basic concepts to develop for the community to share and understand.

## **Rehabilitating housing:**

Roof repairs throughout the shantytown. Partial demolitions. Structural reinforcement. Improved heating and plumbing. Rearranging the layout of houses in accordance with families' needs. Tiling. Woodwork. Ventilation and damp-proofing. Painting, colour scheme.


## **Communal areas:**

Channelling rainwater from the slope. Arranging a car park for lorries and cars. Creating a play area for children. Covered communal areas. Storage areas. Improved visual appearance and identity.

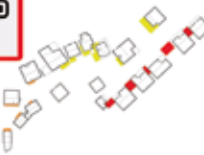
## **In the social sphere:**

Revision of the pre-project by the gypsy community. Questions and answers. Participation in self-building. Equipping the community with job skills. Recycling culture. Agreed rehousing within the community.





**REHABILITACIÓN ASENTAMIENTO  
GITANO DE AS RAÑAS**



**RECETAS URBANAS**  
 DIRECTOR: SANTIAGO CIRUGEDA


**NOMBRE Y APELLIDO** \_\_\_\_\_


**DOMICILIO** \_\_\_\_\_


**POBLACIÓN** \_\_\_\_\_

**PROVINCIA** \_\_\_\_\_


**TEL. Y E-MAIL** \_\_\_\_\_











☐





























**PREFERENCIAS** \_\_\_\_\_


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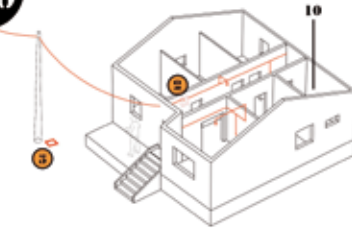
## FASE ELECTRICA


ESTA FASE CORRESPONDE A LA ETAPA DE INSTALACIÓN ELÉCTRICA EN DONDE SE PREPARAN TODOS LOS DUCTOS Y CAJAS POR DONDE A POSTERIORI UN TÉCNICO HA DE ENHEBRAR EL CABLEADO DE ABASTECIMIENTO.




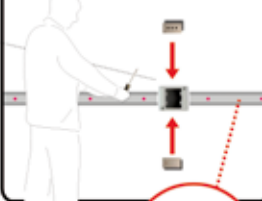
**A) DIBUJO DE LA INSTALACIÓN**


1 SE REQUIERE DE UN PLANO DE UBICACIÓN DE LOS ELEMENTOS A COLOCAR

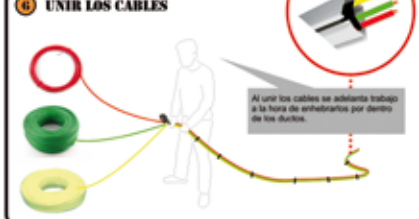












**2) COLOCAR CAJA CON LLAVES GENERALES Y TÉRMICAS**  







**3) COLOCAR DUCTOS EXTERIORES**  







**4) COLOCAR CAJAS PARA FICHAS**  


**5) COLOCAR JARALINA**  


**6) UNIR LOS CABLES**  


PERSONAS
         

HERRAMIENTAS
    

PROTECCIONES
    



# FASE CERO

ESTA FASE CORRESPONDE A LA ETAPA INICIAL DE DEMOLICIÓN DE LOS TABIQUES INTERIORES DE LAS VIVIENDAS CORRESPONDIENTES, A LA RECUPERACIÓN DE LOS MUROS POR MEDIO DEL REVOCAO Y DEL CORRECTO ACONDICIONAMIENTO DE LOS BAÑOS PARA SU POSTERIOR HABILITACIÓN. LAS TAREAS SERÁN DETALLADAS POR MEDIO DE ESTE MANUAL INSTRUCTIVO:

F 0.1 - DEMOLICIÓN      F 0.2 - REVOCAO      F 0.3 - REVESTIMIENTOS

## F0

### A DEMOLICIÓN TABIQUE INTERIOR

1 EN EL INICIO DE ESTA ACTIVIDAD SE DEBE COLOCAR EL CARALLETE CON LAS PRECAUCIONES Y PROTECCIONES NECESARIAS

La mesa de trabajo debe de estar firme, se puede hacer con dos escuadras y un tablon.

2 CORTES EN EL MURO

Con la motosierra cortamos fajas lineales en vertical cada dos metros, de modo que los golpes posteriores no afecten a la estructura.

3 LUEGO COMENZAMOS LA DEMOLICIÓN POR TRAMOS DESDE ARRIBA

Con la motosierra vamos demoliendo las fajas que anteriormente marcamos. Tenemos que tomar las guías puestas.

4 RETIRAMOS EL CARALLETE Y CONTINUAMOS LA DEMOLICIÓN POR LA PARTE DE ABAJO

Una vez en el suelo se mas fácil picar. Un corta ferro ayuda a picar sobre los bordes del piso.

5 RECOLECCIÓN DE ESCOMBROS

Debemos juntar los escombros seleccionando las piedras medianas para luego utilizarlas.

6 REUTILIZACIÓN DE LOS MISMOS

Con los escombros seleccionados, en la fase siguiente, rellenamos el hueguito de las fundaciones.

PERSONAS	HERRAMIENTAS	PROTECCIONES

3

# FASE CERO

RECUPERACIÓN DE LOS MUROS POR MEDIO DEL REVOCAO Y EL CORRECTO ACONDICIONAMIENTO DE LOS BAÑOS PARA SU POSTERIOR HABILITACIÓN. LAS TAREAS SERÁN DETALLADAS POR MEDIO DE ESTE MANUAL INSTRUCTIVO:

F 0.2 - REVOCAO

## F0

### B REVOQUE PAREDES INTERIORES

1 TAMBIÉN PARA ESTA ACTIVIDAD DEBEMOS COLOCAR EL CARALLETE CON LAS PRECAUCIONES Y PROTECCIONES NECESARIAS

Primero acomodamos la superficie a revocar con arena y portland de forma que la capa de revoque se adhiera fácilmente.

2 COLOCACIÓN DE LOS BOLINES

Debemos alinear todos los bolines en fajas paralelas distantes entre sí 1,5 mts.

3 NIVELACIÓN DE BOLINES

Es importante nivelar, con la gnomada de tambor, los bolines a 3 cm del plano de la pared.

4 RELLENAR CON MEZCLA OBTENIENDO FAJAS GUÍAS

Pasadas 24 horas de colocados los bolines, relleno con mezcla entre los mismos hasta formar una faja guía.

5 LLENADO CON MEZCLA ENTRE FAJAS GUÍAS

Estando seguro que las fajas guías se van a colocar, colocamos mezcla entre faja y faja nivelándola con una madera (paga) al mismo espesor que la faja guía.

6 COLOCACIÓN DE MEZCLA FINA

Con una cuchara colocamos una capa de mezcla de 1 cm de espesor.

7 ALISADO DE LA SUPERFICIE CON LA LLANA

Para finalizar, es importante generar una terminación propia, lo más lisa posible.

PERSONAS	HERRAMIENTAS	PROTECCIONES

4

# FASE UNO

ESTA FASE CORRESPONDE A LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DE DADOS DE HORMIGÓN QUE SOPORTEN LA ESTRUCTURA DEL TECHO QUE SE MONTARÁ SOBRE LAS VIVIENDAS EXISTENTES. LAS TAREAS SERÁN DETALLADAS POR MEDIO DE ESTE MANUAL INSTRUCTIVO.

## F1

### 1 RELEVAMIENTOS

EN EL INICIO DE ESTA ACTIVIDAD SE DEBERÁ ESTABLECER EL SITIO Y PROFUNDIDAD DE LA EXCAVACIÓN.

### 2 EXCAVACIÓN

### 3 APISONADO

Asegurarse que el piso de la excavación se encuentre firme.

¡Ayuda regando con agua para asentar la superficie!

### 4 MEZCLA DE MATERIALES

Seguir la dosificación de arena dado que el escombros ya contiene un porcentaje de grava.

### 5 VERTIDO DE HORMIGÓN

### 6 FRAGUADO > 48 HS

Los dados quedarán esperando la estructura del techo.

PERSONAS	HERRAMIENTAS	PROTECCIONES

5

# FASE REPLANTEO

ESTA FASE CORRESPONDE A LA ETAPA DE VERIFICACIÓN DE OTRAS ETAPAS CON EL FIN DE PODER EJECUTARLAS CON TOTAL SEGURIDAD.

## F0

### A REPLANTEO DE ACTIVIDADES

#### 1 SE DEMUELEN LOS MUROS INTERIORES COMO ENBOCA LA FICHA DEMOLICIÓN

Luego de demoler los muros interiores se debe tomar medidas perimetrales de las viviendas.

### 2 REPLANTEAR LAS POSICIONES DE LOS DADOS

Se debe definir las posiciones de los dados en función a un caso general y contrastarlo con las viviendas existentes.

### 3 ESTAQUEAR A EJE LAS POSICIONES DE LOS DADOS

### 4 UNIR LAS ESTACAS CON TANZAS

Picar un agujero en el muro para unir las estacas interiores de las edificaciones.

### 5 VERIFICAR NIVELES

Asegurarse que las tanzas queden a nivel.

### 6 LLENADO DE LOS DADOS INTERIORES

Definidos los niveles se podrá comenzar con las excavaciones - Ficha Fase 1- teniendo en cuenta que para una primer etapa, se realizarán los dados que quedan al interior de los muros.

PERSONAS	HERRAMIENTAS	PROTECCIONES

6

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6  
Set of activities carried out to guarantee basic concepts of work safety in the process of self-construction.

# TRANS\_ART\_ LABORATORI (2) (IN THE FIELD OF HEALTHCARE)

A PROJECT BY SINAPSIS  
(CRISTIAN AÑÓ AND LÍDIA DAMAU)  
WITH JAVIER RODRIGO,  
RACHEL FENDLER AND  
MARIOLA BERNAL  
AND ARTISTS  
LAIA SOLÉ AND TANIT PLANA

**Trans\_Art\_Laboratori** is a permanent theoretical and practical research platform based on artistic processes that structure collaborative strategies in specific contexts and areas.

It aims to explore crossovers between artistic practice and social contexts; analyse and test methodologies, tools and strategies for managing, measuring, producing and creating; and forge ties between art and society. At the same time, it reveals some of the limits, resistance and failures that can appear whilst attempting to promote these interactions.

Trans\_Art\_Laboratori acts in the public sphere by creating new imaginaries and other forms of visibility and representation from the specific area in which a line of work is being carried out and putting them into circulation. The idea is to activate reflection and shared practice based on producing these imaginaries.

Trans\_Art\_Laboratori carries out lines of work that explore different areas such as the sociocultural and educational. This exhibition presents the project related to the area of healthcare.

**Trans\_Art\_Laboratori's work in the area of healthcare** started in 2007 with the aim of activating reflection on the process of constructing and promoting imaginaries linked to the field of health.

How are these imaginaries created? Where from? Who do they represent? Can artistic practice help build a space for collective work with healthcare institutions that can then structure other representations of health, illness, death? Are there any practices and policies that have already carried out experiences from this starting point?

Trans\_Art\_Laboratori set out three interlinked actions to explore the answers to these questions:

- 1. Research** carried out in 2007 to produce an international map of experiences that created a crossover between the healthcare system and artistic practice. The result is an archive of projects, an archive of programmes, institutions and policies, and an archive of bibliographical work on the subject.
- 2. A study** of the work processes and methodologies used in seven art projects carried out in healthcare contexts. These cases (available for consultation in this exhibition) form the basis for a 2009 publication that sets out a set of methodologies and tools to accompany healthcare and art professionals who want to carry out collaborative artistic projects.
- 3. A work process with a healthcare team** to carry out a practical intervention. In 2008 a collaborative platform was set up with **Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau** which served to negotiate the possibility of the institution welcoming two artists, Tanit Plana and

Laia Solé. Based on the starting points suggested by the hospital, these two artists carried out fieldwork in this context to help structure their ideas. Their work was carried out between October 2008 and January 2009. The original idea was to exhibit some of Tanit Plana and Laia Solé's work in the entrance to the new building – due to open in July 2009 – but, for reasons unknown to us, this was not possible. The work presented here reflects this sudden end to the process and tries to articulate within the work itself their perplexity at a decision that remains unexplained.

Sinapsis, now more than ever, persists in asking:

**Can artistic practice help build a space for collective work with healthcare institutions that can then structure other representations of health, illness, death?**<sup>1</sup>



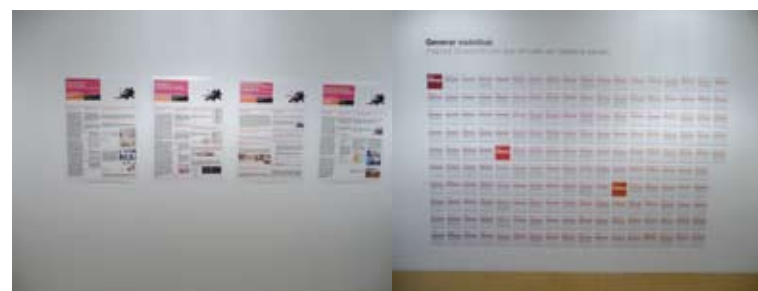
The edition of Trans\_Art\_Laboratori (1) was held at Fort Pienc and Espai Jove de l'Eixample in Barcelona from September 2006 to March 2007.

From September to October 2006, Phase 1 was carried out with the exhibition *Open Workshop: Six Projects in Progress*, which revealed the evolution of the process of the six art projects.



From January to March 2007, Phase 2 was carried out with the exhibition *Trans\_Art\_06: Six Projects Exhibited*, which brought together the results of the experience.

Participating artists: Laboratorio (animation films), Txuma Sánchez (visual artist), Experimentem amb l'Art (art education), Sitesize (collaborative art), Pau Faus (architect) and Riccardo Massari (sound artist).



The edition of Trans\_Art\_Laboratori (2) activated reflection on the processes of constructing and promoting imaginative ideas linked to the field of health through a collaboration with Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau.

1. For more information:  
[www.trans-artlaboratori.org](http://www.trans-artlaboratori.org) and [www.sinapsisprojectes.net](http://www.sinapsisprojectes.net)



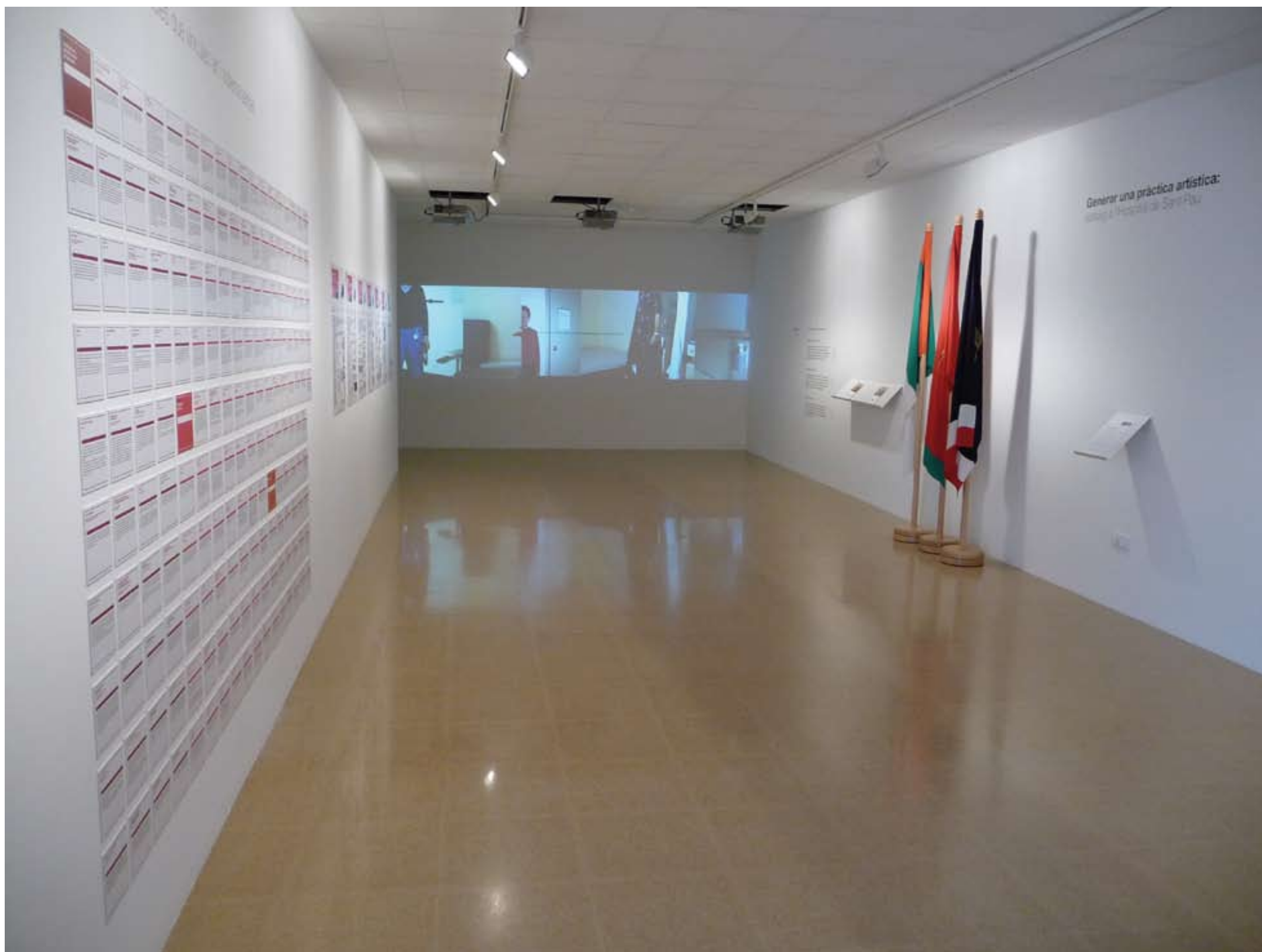


Image from the *Catalysts* exhibition  
 Trans\_Art\_Laboratori (2) (in the area of health).

## LA TERRA PROMESA (THE PROMISED LAND)

Tanit Plana

Tanit Plana's project examines Hospital de Sant Pau's move to its new site and compares it to a healing process and travel to a promised land. A bright, hopeful time, tinged with impatient tension. This reading is echoed in the situation of some of the long-term patients in the former pavilions, linked to the project through the nurses collaborating with the project.

Based on the meetings and interviews with patients in the coronary unit, the idea took shape of focusing on a climactic moment in the healing process. The artist was keen to capture the tension of waiting: the nurses was asked if they thought it would be possible to film coronary patients just before they went into the operating room. Perhaps surprisingly, the patients were keen to take part. They feel confused, brave and frightened, but don't hide: they look straight at the camera and leave their image as a legacy.



Tanit Plana, *La terra promesa*. Video projection.

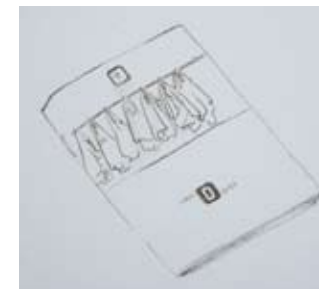
## GRADA ZERO

Laia Solé

Laia Solé's project *Grada Zero* takes a look at the hospital site by building up an imaginary world piece by piece to present the hospital as a continuation of its surroundings.

The hospital's move to a new building offers an opportunity to talk about the relationship between health and sport and strengthen ties between the hospital and the neighbourhood: Complex Esportiu del Guinardó (Guinardó Sport Centre, home to the historic F. C. Martinenc) and Centre Cívic del Guinardó (Guinardó Civic Centre, home to the grandfather of Catalan bowling clubs, Club de Bitlles Guinardó).

The artist's methodology is based on weaving together a network of interests and confessions from different players in the neighbourhood and researching and revealing the points the different communities have in common. This material helps forge close ties that are consolidated through a publication and specially designed flags.



Laia Solé, *Grada Zero*,  
October 2008 to January 2009



# BIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

**Lilian Amaral** is an audiovisual artist, researcher and promoter. She has a doctorate in visual arts from the University of São Paulo. She has curated for Casa de la Memòria and led the project *Open Museum: the City as a Museum and Museums as Artistic Practices*.

**Amasté** is an ideas office that specialises in shaping relational and participatory mediation processes and initiatives to promote imagination, active reflection and a critical spirit in areas such as social innovation, youth, culture, learning, land planning, etc. They work by applying dynamic crosscutting strategies, such as applied creativity and sociocultural R&D&I.

**Aulabiarta** is a design and construction experience at a learning community at the University of Granada that is self-managed by students. This open space aims to set up an active community with the social character of a collectively built space.

**Santiago Barber** uses art and crossovers with politics as his space in reality. He combines art and community work with experiences with different social movements within the framework of urban regeneration projects and social self-organisation.

**Jordi Canudas** is a visual artist and lecturer at the Massana Art and Design School – UAB. He is currently working on the idea of place and time, context and territory, such as in the project *Hospital 106, 4<sup>a</sup> 1<sup>a</sup>* (Barcelona, 1995–2005), which he co-produced with Isabel Banal, and *1021 Days. Market and Memory \_ Sant Antoni Market* (Barcelona, 2007–2009). His work examines everyday reality and aims to preserve memory and experience outside official registers.

**Jesús Carrillo** has a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Cambridge. He lectured in contemporary art history at the Autonomous University of Madrid from 1998 to 2008 and is currently head of the Department of Cultural Programmes at the Reina Sofía Art Centre. His research centres on the relationship between technology, art and power, narratives of contemporary art, contemporary forms of the public sphere and critical analysis of modernity.

## Santiago Cirugeda – Urban Recipes.

Santiago Cirugeda is an architect and founder of the Urban Recipes studio. For several years, Urban Recipes has carried out projects exploring different areas of urban reality. They have systematically filled public spaces with containers and built prostheses on and in façades, courtyards, roofs and plots of land, deftly weaving between legality and illegality in order to reveal the enormous control we are subjected to. They carry out architecture projects, write articles and take part in different teaching and cultural communities.

**Alain Fidanza** is an architect who has worked for Lehmann Fidanza & Associates Architects in Zurich and Fribourg since 2009. Since 2004 he has worked regularly with Josep–Maria Martín and between 2003 and 2005 he was a member of the urban planning committee for the city of Fribourg. Since 2004 he has been a member of the architecture and planning committee for the Swiss region of Fribourg.

**Ayşe Güleç.** Her work focuses on intercultural education and the construction of local, national and international networks. She is actively involved in development and self-organisation initiatives connected to subjects concerning women and immigration and helped set up the Documenta 12 Advisory Board, for which she acted as spokesperson.

**Fernando Hernández** teaches visual arts and culture at the University of Barcelona. He is co-director of the Study Centre on Cultural Changes and Education at Barcelona University Science Park.

**Herman Labro** is director of Kunstbank and **Rika Colpaert** is a member of this team; both are visual researchers. What> is a space where things can happen, a place where coincidences are welcome and where unexpected meetings occur.

**Loraine Leeson** is an artist and director of cSPACE at the University of East London, where she is a guest researcher. Since 1970 she has worked closely with communities on subjects of urban regeneration, using art and the media to make an impact in the public domain.

**Josep–Maria Martín.** His projects use art to create new action strategies for exploiting cracks in certain consolidated structures in modern-day society. Through a subjective and reflective approach, he questions and criticises the reality

he is working on. His pieces examine the ideas of process, research, participation, involvement and negotiation. He combines his creative work with teaching in Switzerland, Perpignan and Barcelona.

**Carmen Mörsch** is an artist, researcher and educator and director of the Art Education Research Institute at the University of Art in Zurich. She was a researcher for the education project Documenta 12 in Kassel in 2007.

**Ailbhe Murphy** is a visual artist with extensive experience in the context of collaborative and community work. She is currently carrying out research at the University of Ulster in Belfast on collaborative art work and urban regeneration processes in Dublin. She is cofounder of Vagabond Reviews, an interdisciplinary platform for social commitment and critical art work.

**Ramon Parramon** is an artist and director of Idensitat and co-director of the Master's degree in design and the public space at Elisava–UPF. His work promotes interest in transdisciplinary projects and the functions of art in a given sociopolitical context. He has organised numerous seminars and published articles on art and collective action in the social space.

**Tanit Plana** is an artist. In recent years, she has worked as a special envoy in areas of personal, family, domestic and relational conflict: she visits the people involved, studies them, photographs them, films them and does drawings of them; later she tries to explain what she saw and felt. She recently discovered the tremendous power of teamwork and the strength of activist photography and is seriously considering the possibility of leaving the world of art to become a guerrilla fighter.

**Platoniq** is a collective of cultural producers and software developers based in Barcelona since 2001. Their job is to research the different social uses of technology and networking in order to improve communication strategies, self-training, and civic organisation.

**Javier Rodrigo** is a researcher and art educator, coordinates the education team at Teb Youth Association, and is a member of the Artbarri network. He has worked on teaching projects and community development at several art centres in Spain and coordinated Spanish and European conferences on teacher training, critical pedagogies, cultural policies and collaborative work.

**Rubia Salgado** is cofounder and a member of the Maiz team, an independent centre that uses culture and education to work with immigrant women in Linz in Austria. She promotes different projects in the area of education and cultural work. In addition, she is a writer and committed activist in the field of cultural policies.

**Sinapsis.** Since 2006 it has worked as an office for contemporary art projects and practices that develop and examine forms of mediation between art and society. Its work methodology centres on articulating interactions between the public, cultural agents and artists to create collaborative work processes that reshape collective imaginations from critical and participatory positions.

**Laia Solé** is a visual artist. She has produced photographic and video work, as well as installations and interventions in the public space to reflect on the relationship between architecture, urban space and the community living there. She has organised on-site exhibitions and projects in Barcelona, Madrid, Rome, Jerusalem, Belgrade and Pristina, amongst others. She was awarded the Visual Arts grant from the town of Olot for the project Balkan Suite, and the *Generaciones* grant from Caja Madrid for the project Homelessness in Europe.

**Wanda Wieczorek** has worked with several contemporary art projects and social and political movements of art in urban space, including the Culture and Social Movements Archive and Park Fiction. She was assistant director on the Documenta 12 Advisory Board and Documenta 12 Halle.



