ENGAGED ART EDUCATION
Engaged Art Education

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Research and Praxis for Social Engaged Arts Education in Southern Europe, Balkan and Mediterranean countries

Introduction

Why did we start InSEA seminars and how did it work?

The world of art education has been concerned with the ongoing global issues such as poverty, climate change, cultural diversity, inclusion, migration, political radicalization, marginalization, artificial intelligence, digitalization, posthumanism, eco-justice and post-colonialism. Although the field has been established as important subjects of school curriculum, the advocacy endeavors continue to take place all over the world. The advocacy attempts stem from the global financial crisis that threatens the funding for education, as well as the accountability that is connected with the market jeopardize the significance of the skills that an individual may develop when they engage in art practices. Eventually along with the advocacy attempts, a new interest arises for the usage of arts as a therapeutic and integration tool in marginalized communities (e.g. poor, immigrants, refugee communities). Also, an increased need rises about how education and arts education may support the cohesion of the society over the political radicalization.

Therefore art educators and other cultural workers are seeking for alternative modes of critique and collective action through the arts. This publication is an outcome of the InSEA seminar held during 16-18 July 2018 at the School of Early Childhood Education, Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, Greece. The roots for this seminar can be traced in events and actions created by art educators, artists and researchers from countries in the peripheral western south coast of Europe: The Iberian Peninsula, where the survival kit for art education was created by the members of the activist art education group C3. The group C3, coordinated by Cristina Trigo and Mª Jesús Agra-Pardiñas is an educational and artistic resistance cell proposing alternative ways for research and praxis in art education. The survival kit presented in the European InSEA congress in Lisbon 2015 suggested a slow pace way of living, promoting pauses and the creation of spaces to think/feel, to slow down, to restrain, and to make. The idea to start InSEA seminars followed the same logic: we wanted to create a possibility for encounters where art educators can be together, share their practices, inspire each other, and initiate conversations by making things together. Spaciousness was the main flavor of the event - we tried to offer not only counter-narrative to linear and goal oriented passes of time, but to create fertile intervals that sometimes provoke confusion, but also can be a potential for play, creation and learning.

Furthermore, it became a common sense to claim that knowledge production is certainly not neutral - the process is instilled with norms and values, which are being passed on through academic action. It is based on epistemologies that seek to confirm western hegemonic structures (Thielsch, 2019). Within the European framework, knowledge production is taking place in the “centres of Europe” reflecting the existing imbalance of power between East and West, North and South. What is considered to be socially engaged art education among scholars is often based on Western European concepts such as relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002) which is considered as a door-opener for community participation, collaboration and collective actions. The purposes of such efforts mirror the main European
values – participation, diversity, civic engagement and democracy, and socially engaged artistic practices are seeing as a possible catalyst for change, although sometimes being very costly and elitist projects. Furthermore, different events within the academic context are happening inside the logic of hegemonic knowledge production, and often they reproduce inequalities and confirm imaginary differences between European center and periphery. Not forgetting the relevance of symbolic realm, this is also a consequence of the huge disparity in available resources and support that academics and students receive within their context. Certainly, there are efforts to transcend those divisions by suggesting different conference fees for different countries depending on their GDPs, or offering bursaries for PhD students. Still, these measures did not manage to overcome inequalities and those events where discourses are produced and reproduced are still dominated by Western European institutions. As the organizations of the academic conferences is a very expensive endeavor, big events often take place in developed countries, making it even more unattainable to “the periphery”.

After the financial crisis hit Europe, austerity measures were introduced to Southern countries and their image was constructed as a kind of a teenager who was incapable of taking good care of the future, recklessly spending money guided by the principle of instant gratification. These European children were seen as “unable to organize their lives democratically without guidance from another” (Buden [2009] in Petrović, 2014, p. 10). The somewhat infantilized representational position, transforms these geographical areas into objects of knowledge production. “The role of the periphery is to supply data, and later to apply knowledge in the form of technology and method. The role of the metropole, as well as producing data, is to collate and process data, producing theory (including methodology) and developing applications which are later exported to the periphery” (Connell, 2014, p. 211). The Balkan region specifically is constructed as a field of study: Yugoslav studies, post-communist studies, post-conflict etc., thus making a geographical area into a research one without agency.

Other European countries can also be part of the peripheral map, specially when we talk about art education. Models of cultural agency, education and art education coming from North Europe and North America had been a great influence upon curriculum development, teacher training and research in art education. The global art education landscape is characterized by the centrality and certain invisibility of geographically marginal practices and knowledge mainly because of the dissemination of academic publications in English language in journals with high impact factor, texts that are largely distributed in universities. A rush for number of quotations and publications with ‘impact factor’ is undermining the universities; carrying out a multinational business model of distributing information. Maybe is time to start to react against the model.

Another interesting factor is related to the places and types of congresses and conferences art education researchers use to attend. Normally in universities of Northern countries with very traditional formats of displaying information such as lectures by keynote speakers, presentations by participants and some workshops. Even if in the InSEA European congresses from the last eight years we can observe a move to more dialogic formats, we still need to enlarge the focus, the scope and the places.

We urge to consider how academic praxis and intellectual work produces place and what kind of critical-creative endeavor is needed as a counter action. Therefore, we see the seminar Research and practice of socially engaged art education as a proactive response to hegemonic knowledge production as we tried to take into account social, political and geographical context of knowledge making, talking, and writing. The seminar took place in Thessaloniki with the
attempt to create space for gathering and sharing that was organized beyond regular conference logic that follows rigid structure. The model of the seminar was dialogical and non-hierarchical, including interactive sessions where everyone had an active role, workshops and performances reminded us the crucial role of the body interaction in communication. Making things together, walking together, performing together removed participants from their comfort zones of written and spoken languages creating spaces for emotional conversations. Due to the small size of the seminar the dialogue was fruitful and everyone got connected overcoming linguistic difficulties and cultural differences. In the difference we reached connections and constructed links. We were able to be attentive to the small details, to perceive the subtle varieties of art education in its many forms and contexts, without judging from the academic gaze, but trying to understand through the slow pace of making together the small nodes of collective actions.

‘As long Thessaloniki exists; everyone will have a homeland’ wrote the Byzantine scholar Nikiphoros Choumnos in 14th century. The majority of the participants came from Balkan and Mediterranean regions, but the seminar in Thessaloniki also welcomed people from some Northern European countries, Brazil and Japan. The InSEA seminar took place at a crossroads of social transformation throughout history. Since ancient time Thessaloniki invited and offered shelter to many different groups and communities that eventually flourished. As a consequence these circumstances gave prominence to the significance of its location. In our days, Thessaloniki is still a solidarity center even if it has suffered from the contemporary financial crisis. The topic and content of the seminar was a response to a contemporary need for collaboration and creative exchange in Balkan and Southern Europe in order to foster interdependence of the several communities and prevent hostility.

Why socially engaged art education?

Contemporary artists have been eliminating the boundaries between the arts and the audience, creating relational forms for human communication and knowledge construction. They opened up completely different perspectives on levels of interaction between things and people proposing diverse roles for the arts in the society and providing tools that can be most useful in educational settings involving image, sound and movement as ways of knowing and interconnecting people. Globalization phenomenon caused a sense of fragmentation, loss of social bonds and alienation in many population groups in the world. Engaged artists believe that close working relationships among artists, arts organizations, and the broader community enable better living conditions for all and create a more sustainable environment for the arts, claiming a return to a social function of the arts and a non compromised role of the artist in the society. Some cultural workers point out the need to merge art in collective experiences often performative and political. Activist movements are growing in all the continents, raising critical interventions, provoking situations and creating collective situations to raise urgent issues and polemical questions that are often hidden by the hegemonic media discourses. In its many variations, such as "relational art," "participatory art," "community art," or "socially engaged art," these manifestations often facilitate collective situations and promote greater participation and cultural agency (Emmelhainz, 2016).

Socially engaged arts education (SEAE) began as a pedagogical direction which purposes the civil engagement of participants. Whether it takes place in educational institutions or in the community, the evaluation of the projects depends on the ethical responsibility on the social concerns that the members of the action undertaken. In educational settings and especially in
public schools the aim is to shape the students’ civic role. Arts are seen as a means to enrich the experience of the participants with playful and creative ways. Yet, the interdisciplinary character of the SEAE is obvious in order to foster a dialogue and a direct social change. Whether this is only a short-term change, marking the difference with the goals of traditional politicized art, or a more enduring and influencing process, time will tell (Emmelhainz, 2013). The processes usually include collaborative and interdependent activities that make visible the individual perspectives and how the location affects the critical responses and thinking. As a consequence a sense of “community” is created through the elimination of conflicts that the SEAE evoked. Further, SEAE evokes a radical reappraisal of the modes, purposes and context of arts education. Schlemmer (2017) draws the pedagogical implications of Socially Engaged Art practice that foster a hybridized space beyond formal instructions. Art practice is encountered as an educational experience and vice versa. The critical and reflective actions as perquisites of an educational space become traits of art practices that are formed through an aesthetic process.

The participants

The seminar attracted many valuable contributions, also from other regions than the Balkan and the Mediterranean regions, but the majority of the articles submitted for this publication were from the latter. The focus on the Balkan and Southern European countries in this seminar gave space to certain topics to appear in the fertile intervals. Some might also appear in other places, others are site-specific.

Public space is seized by art education, stimulating energies and possibilities that sprout from the locations and, if needed, giving people alternatives to respond to a dominant way in which space is organized. In Czech Republic the grassroot art association Trafáčka (2006-2014) initiated street art activities for young people and worked together with teachers to pass on techniques. This led to the new concept of ‘Public Pedagogy’, as noticed by Kamila Karagavrildisová. In Serbia installations in the form of windows or portals were put in public space inviting people to paint their vision. Jelena Joksimovic explains that the aim is to express and then combine different feelings and understandings of educational practices. Vanja Zarić and other students of adult education at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade reveal that socially engaged art in liminal spaces has a great potential to initiate the transformation of individuals through the processes of participation and learning, as well as social practice and reality itself.

The senses play traditionally an important role in art education and in the Thessaloniki seminar the use of senses was stimulated in a specific way. They caused individuals to be more aware of the body and its surroundings. Antonio Félix Vico Prieto presents the idea of “turning vision into sound” which involves a technique of recording audio that reproduces the real conditions of human hearing, to show how a visual image may be transformed into a soundscape. María Lorena Cueva Ramírez presents ‘My hands tell you’, a practical proposal to work with hands, gestures and paint to get the message across. Her workshop has benefit from the cultural and linguistic diversity of the participants. Without oral language they are able to communicate messages, concepts or sensations to other people only using colors and hands. Another way of communicating without speech was developed by María-Isabel Moreno-Montoro, María Martínez-Morales and Nuria López-Pérez, in a system of body expressions. Ideograms that represent concepts are proposed in a performative act with a technical basis of action and documentary recording. Also Katia Pangrazi shows art as a common language in the project ‘Art
Lab x Kids’. The project was developed in Italy but the aim is to create a “travelling place” of creativity and knowledge, experimentation, discovery and learning through play. It is a place for educational meetings, training and collaboration. A space to develop the ability to observe with eyes and hands and to learn to experience reality with all the senses.

Myriam Romero Sánchez, reviews the dualism of standardized and real beauty and explores its socio-cultural consequences. She makes a distinction between divergent bodies and convergent bodies and then she explores those typologies with a large installation with an empty face in which the participants may temporarily transform. Melissa Lima Caminha uses embodied inquiry that is based on feminist and queer theories in order to uncover perspectives of the social construction of gender and sexuality. Combining video and photography with drawing made it possible for María de la Paz Barrios Mudarra to carry out artistic investigation of daily experience. With those means, sensations you have while doing routine actions in your house can be intensified as in the work ‘Invisible Woman’ is shown.

The artistic, nature, ecology and the social came together in new projects in Spain and Brazil. Carmen Andreu-Lara, and Rocío Arregui-Pradas describe a new Masters degree of Art at the University of Seville intertwining ecology, art and social contexts, as in the concept of ‘ecosophy’ by Guattari. The authors acknowledged the connections created by Spanish, Moroccan and Latin-American students in their curriculum. In Brazil Rosana Gonçalves da Silva also involves ecology in social contexts of learning - a tri- polar process of self-learning, learning from others and learning from the earth expressed in Poetic language to raise the principles of the Earth Charter. In a public elementary school located in Brasília she developed an experience of artistic ecoeducation/ecoformation and sensitive experience in school routine.

In Cyprus and Greece, socially engaged art education is also about war and refugees. Spyros Koutis started his artistic research dealing with war from a personal question: what is my responsibility as an artist in regard to war? With use of ‘Agnostic arts practice’, a form of arts based research, which explores the potential of art to have political impact through process of disruption, subversion, and participation, he developed socially engaged art projects-workshops related to Syrian war and refugees. He carried out the projects with children at a primary school and with young adults at the Birmingham City University.

Martha Christopoulou describes the project “depictions of a refugee’s journey” which aimed at (i) enabling primary school students to critically assess information provided by the mass media (ii) enhancing their understanding of empathy and (iii) increasing compassion and empathic behaviour towards distant strangers who face extreme circumstances in their lives. All the students that participated in this project managed to locate, identify and label the different facets of migrant-refugee crisis, in a way that was meaningful for them.

Cultural regional traditions often are defended in war contexts with different population groups. In this seminar very interesting art educational projects were organized concerning local community and cultural traditions. Maria Letsiou describes socially engaged art education (SEAE) in which the primary goal of art learning is students’ involvement with the community’s concerns and issues. She delineates how studio-oriented learning is enriched by the collaborative learning experience and by students’ meaningful participation in the process and content of learning. Antonia Batzoglou describes practical applications of the praxis of Mythagogia: an interdisciplinary praxis that draws from mythology, the educational art of psychagogia, as defined by Socrates, and the therapeutic and reflective qualities of performative storytelling. Socrates describes psychagogia as the educational art of leading the psyche towards dialectical examination of the good. In mythagogia, myths are the tools that
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enable an embodied experience and dialectical reflection of social and personal themes. Ismini Sakellariadi presents the results of a project carried out by 15-year old students of the Experimental School of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, who used art to research and communicate a new understanding of their cultural identity and history. They looked at the way the past permeates the present in various ways, studied the multicultural past of their city and discovered untold stories. They then proceeded to communicate their artwork and their findings with the wider community, hoping to help bring about change in attitudes and beliefs regarding history, identity, minorities, multicultural symbiosis, human rights and social justice.

Conclusions and recommendations

Some of the topics, or parts of them, that appeared in this seminar, could also be discussed in Western-European conferences. But the focus on Balkan and Southern-European countries shed a light to different aspects. This publication brings up so many voices, different tunes, different colors but the same concern: education through art, an approach to arts in education that although old - Herbert Read seminal book ‘Education Through Art’ was published in 1943 - is still relevant. More than ever we need to believe in the power of the arts as a tool for making collective actions, as a pedagogical strategy to enable cultural participatory skills. Maybe we are witnessing a recession of arts in schools, we see that art education is not as valued as it was in the twenty century. But through the voices and stories of this book we can look further and embrace the different places where education may be art and art may became education.

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Resumen.

El presente trabajo, pretende dar cuenta de una experiencia abordada desde una problemática sobre cómo llevar a cabo una investigación artística en torno a las vivencias cotidianas. En la investigación, he incluido el proceso seguido para la creación del video, desde la recopilación de datos, información y hechos para abordar el trabajo que presento Mujer Invisible. Para ello, me baso en trayectos de ida y vuelta, un proyecto basado en el proceso experimental, desde la constante forma de contar, de hacer e investigar a través de diferentes medios.

Mi objetivo de trabajo es crear formas de creación contemporáneas para contar diferentes expresiones artísticas como el video, la fotografía o el dibujo, y así dar sentido a la investigación. Una fuente de recursos para la comprensión de aspectos que el lenguaje verbal no puede mostrar. Por lo tanto, el mismo proceso creativo configura la respuesta.

Palabras clave: Creación audiovisual, investigación artística, experimentación.

Abstract

The present work, is an experience about a problematic on how to carry out an artistic investigation around the daily experiences. In the research, I have included the process followed for the creation of the video, from the collection of data, information and facts to address the work presented by Invisible Woman. To do this, I rely on round trips, a project based on the experimental process, from the constant way of counting, doing and researching through different means.
My goal is to create contemporary forms of creation to tell different artistic expressions such as video, photography or drawing, and thus make sense of the research. A source of resources for understanding aspects that verbal language can not show. Therefore, the same creative process configures the response.

Keywords: Audiovisual creation, artistic research, experimentation.

Introducción

Investigación, la cual intento resolver desde la articulación de diferentes historias que suceden en la misma. Una serie de narrativas que voy experimentando en mi formación cómo docente en el máster de educación secundaria y cómo investigadora con la intención de ir configurando un producto artístico en la necesidad de sumar herramientas que posibiliten alcanzar relatos que los métodos tradicionales no proporcionan, y la necesidad de abrir espacios de conocimiento.

Elijo este proceso artístico cómo investigación social al ofrecer posibilidades para la comprensión e interpretación de mi entorno más próximo, una serie de relatos creativos para indagar sobre mis experiencias en diferentes contextos educativos, formas de aprendizaje y modos de representación. Así con esta experiencia pretendo compartir formas de articulación de lenguajes para mostrar otras posibilidades de generar conocimiento.

Me he documentado a través de diferentes fuentes bibliográficas para documentar el proceso creativo del video, entre ellas, López-Fernández y Llamas-Salguero (2018) y Wallas (1926), donde nos muestra una forma las fases del pensamiento creativo en El arte del pensamiento creativo, y lo divide en cuatro fases: Preparación-Incubación -Illuminación-Verificación.

Preparación.

Nos documentaremos y recogeremos información para definir un problema, y la utilización de conocimientos adquiridos y la realización de esquemas. En mi trabajo he ido recopilando testimonios reales de género femenino desde los años cuarenta hasta los días de hoy.

La incubación.

Sería la fase en las que circulan las ideas. Comencé a hilar y entrelazar las ideas para poder representar a través de otros medios cómo la fotografía, dibujo, video, sonidos

La iluminación
Se encuentra la solución al problema. A través de historias de vidas, recogida de sonidos, la fotografía y el dibujo. La persona presente que esa es la solución y salta la conciencia. Las diferentes artes me han ayudado a reconducir una historia patenten en la realidad.

**Verificación**

Terminando el acto creativo se elabora la Idea, teniendo en cuenta la objetividad y realismo de esta. Se elabora y se aplica utilizando diferentes medios para trabajar. Algunas teorías nos muestran que la creatividad nace con el individuo que tiene capacidad para resolver o crear, aunque pienso que la creatividad hay que trabajarlo a través de diferentes aptitudes. Según la teoría de Guilford, J. P. (1993). La estructura del intelecto. ISPE. Varona, Impresión ligera, Ciudad de La Habana. Formulando la teoría del pensamiento productivo. Nos muestra dos actividades cognitivas. El pensamiento convergente y el pensamiento divergente que tiene relación directa con la creatividad. El primer pensamiento se despliega en múltiples respuestas para resolver un problema el segundo pensamiento es lo opuesto no innova ni imagina soluciones a un problema. Es por ello que voy a nombrar algunas aptitudes trabajadas.

*La flúidez.* Nuestra capacidad de producción cuantitativa, generando muchas ideas en poco tiempo para resolver un problema o situación.

*La flexibilidad.* Empleando nuestra capacidad de dar respuesta a una gran variedad de categorías de enfoques diversos.

*La Originalidad.* Es la capacidad de producir asociaciones novedosas, atípicas e insólitas para la resolución de un problema dado.

*Las aptitudes.* Pueden ser entrenadas ejercitadas por medio de programas y actividades de formación en creatividad. El proyecto realizado es un conjunto de imágenes o ilustraciones organizadas secuencialmente para pre visualizar la estructura y continuidad de una historia animación o imagen en movimiento.

**Se acabó Tu Historia**

Tú me enseñaste, a ver a las otras cómo enemigas. Tú me enseñaste a rivalizar incluso con mis hermanas.

Tú me enseñaste cómo contentar a un hombre. Por qué. EL AMOR, es así. Con mayúsculas. Es lo máximo que aspiro.
Me enseñaste, que las mujeres debemos elegir, entre sumisa o bruja. Tú me enseñaste el placer de la necrofilia. ¡Sí, sí, sí!

El romanticismo de besar a un cadáver. Me enseñaste, recuerda, a usar la dicha que se me queda dormida. No importa si está cansada, drogada, si está inquieta o pinchada por una rueca ¡Qué gran maestro fuiste!

En cambio, ellos ¡Cómo! A ellos les enseñaste a ser valientes a combatir dragones, a escalar montañas, empuñar espadas. Tú le enseñaste a ser. (El rey León de la manada).

A ser hombres fuertes, listos, musculosados cómo Hércules que llegan y ganan.

Pero a nosotras nos diste el amor cómo opción. Ni siquiera teníamos amigos humanos cómo ellos.

¿Qué más da si te quedas sin voz admirada callada siempre estás sujeta?

¡Por eso! ¡Saca tu lengua y triunfarás!

Nos enseñaste a fabricar porciones para estar más bellas, en el país del nunca jamás.

Niña date cuenta que no eres suficiente contigo misma. Necesitas un hombre que te diga lo que vales un príncipe azul que te salve y un John Esmich que te diga. ¡Si no lo conocieras! Tu vida sería una mierda.

Ay, pequeña. Si quieres triunfar córtate el pelo cómo Molán.

Por suerte mi historia está terminando. Había unas niñas que escavan de sus torres.

Brujas que escaparon de sus torres, brujas que rompieron cadenas, princesas que dejaron de hacerse la cera, y unas a otras nos quitamos la venda y empezamos a sacar el pájaro de la jaula. Aullar y salir de noche sin miedo a partir de las doce sin escobas y a liderar dragones y es que nosotras, las gordas, las flacas, las que no se depilan, las solteronas, las de las tetas caídas, las que no saben cocinar, las que llevan bumbas y no zapatos de cristal, las del rímel corrido, las que no se peinan, las que tienen nariz, las que tienen hijos, las promiscua, las viejas arrugadas.

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