

Ethical, Aesthetic and Political Formation in Workshops with Youngsters: Tensions, Transgressions and Concerns in Intervention Research / *Formação ética, estética e política em oficinas com jovens: tensões, transgressões e inquietações na pesquisa-intervenção*

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents and discusses events that emerged in the course of research involving an intervention conducted with youngsters. The objective was to discuss contributions to ethical, aesthetic and political formation of both the researchers and participants. Aesthetic workshops mediated by artistic-visual languages consisted of the *modus operandi* of the intervention research, and the events related to a graffiti workshop were the focus of this analysis. From 20 to 25 youngsters, aged between 13 to 16 years old and enrolled in a city public school in Florianópolis, SC, Brazil participated. The activities were coordinated by undergraduate research assistants, senior psychology students, and one graffiti artist who received a Technical Support scholarship. The activities were filmed, photographed and recorded in a field diary. The analyses were conducted from a dialogic perspective focusing on responsiveness that connotes the actions and grounds the otherness nature of existence.

KEYWORDS: Aesthetic Workshops; Dialogy; Ethical, Aesthetic and Political Formation; Intervention Research

RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta e discute acontecimentos que emergiram no decorrer de uma pesquisa-intervenção com jovens, visando problematizar as contribuições para a formação ética, estética e política tanto dos pesquisadores como dos participantes. Oficinas estéticas mediadas por linguagens artístico-visuais consistiram no modus operandi da pesquisa-intervenção, sendo os acontecimentos relativos à oficina de graffiti o foco das análises aqui apresentadas. Participaram dessa oficina entre 20 a 25 jovens matriculados em uma escola pública municipal de Florianópolis/SC, com idades entre 13 e 16 anos. As atividades foram coordenadas por bolsistas de IC e extensão, graduandos de psicologia, e um bolsista AT, grafiteiro. Os registros das atividades foram feitos via filmagens, fotografia e registros em diário de campo. As análises foram realizadas a partir de uma perspectiva dialógica, com foco na responsividade que conota as ações e pauta a condição alteritária da existência.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Oficinas estéticas; Dialogia; Formação ética, estética e política; Pesquisa-intervenção*

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Introduction

This paper presents and discusses events that took place in aesthetic workshops that enabled discussing relationships among the young participants and between those participants and the coordinators. These important events were devices that enabled ethical, aesthetic and political formation as recommended in the ArteUrbe Project: aesthetic workshops directed to young individuals.¹

Through aesthetic workshops using varied artistic-visual languages, such as photographs, graffiti, stencil and *lambe-lambe* posters, the project was intended to discuss the relationships of young individuals with the city and the potential to (re)invent these relationships through art. The groups included a varied number of participants aged between 13 and 16 years old and an average of 8 to 12 meetings were held with each group. The discussions presented here refer to workshops conducted with one of these groups concerning one of the issues that took place between 2010 and 2014.

Even though the meetings' general objective was to focus on the relationships of youngsters with the city, existing tensions between these individuals and the workshops' instructors in regard to the rules established in the workshops emerged with greater intensity. These tensions were characterized by conflicts and opposition to dominant modes of subjectivity, objectified in rules and standards agreed upon among the instructors, though not accepted by the group. Several times, and in different ways, the youngsters manifested their opposition by transgressing the agreements proposed, disrupting the order and activities and demanding reorganization and/or the establishment of a new arrangement.

The focus of the discussions presented here is on the occurrences of one of the sessions in which the individuals were working with graffiti, a time when transgressions were more intense, and in the following meeting, when activities were proposed in order to discuss with the youngsters the events that took place in the previous session.

The Intervention Research technique, as in the case of the ArteUrbe project, focuses on facts and potential interventions at the micro-political level; theory and intervention are simultaneously constructed while the researcher's ethical, aesthetic and

¹ Brito and Zanella (2012), Fonseca, Neves and Zanella (2014), and Zanella et al. (2014) discuss the ArteUrbe Project in more detail.

political formation interweaves with that of the participants so that the way one can intervene in the context and the effects of such an intervention can be discussed.

In these interventions, investing in ethical development requires the creation of conditions/opportunities to discuss choices and their effects through a non-moral perspective. Moral or moralizing discourses based on a rationale of what should be generally emerge with greater intensity when an impetus to normalize and control arise. The role of the instructors and/or other participants in these situations is to discuss, listen, and demonstrate the weight of these discussions to encourage another type of discussion, one that is attentive to differences and possibilities to do things differently. The idea is, therefore, to invest in ethical relationships focused on the potential of life and its reinvention. Ethics, in this sense, is seen as

[...] a dwelling, a way of inhabiting the world and a place where values and attitudes are updated. That is, ethics is implicated in human choices that create worlds and ways to appreciate and experience these worlds. Ethics is, therefore, inseparable from the subject of choice (SCHMIDT, 2008, p.392, our translation).²

The aesthetic aspect refers to the process of creation that unfolds in the context of conducting and developing the intervention research. Once choices are tensioned, they offer opportunities for new relationships to be engendered, both interpersonal relationships and relationships between the subject and his/her choices. This deconstruction of crystalized relationships suggests that a new way to be with others is invented, with new configurations, both for interpersonal relationships as with oneself, which are essential for the production of new possibilities to be and stay in the world.

When choices and their effects are fleshed out, the political aspect of the intervention becomes evident: to enable risks and the potential of each act for oneself and for the collective, because

[...] [l]iving means taking an axiologic position at all times; it means taking a position in regard to values. We live and act in a world saturated with values; within each of our acts there is a responsive

² Original text in Portuguese: “[...] morada, modo de habitar o mundo e lugar de atualização de valores e atitudes. Ou seja, a ética está implicada nas escolhas humanas que criam mundos e nos modos de valorizar e viver estes mundos. A ética, portanto, é indissociável do tema da escolha.”

gesture in a constant and ongoing process (FARACO, 2003, p.23, our translation).³

As subjects of the world and in the world, we are always in intense dialogical relationships⁴ established with many other individuals, whether they are present or absent, known or unknown, from different times and spaces. This relationship is responsive; that is, it is based on the possibility of responses, which once they are concretized in whatever way, they open up possibilities to other responses. This is reflected by Bakhtin, in regard to an unfinished dialogue that inexorably connects us to many others and in which we take part: “[...] a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds (1984, p.293).”⁵

Those to whom our responses are directed are not necessarily nominated, acknowledged because dialogy is not to be confused with compositional dialogue, with alternating speeches. We dialogue all the time with varied social voices – understood by Bakhtin as points of view regarding the world – that compose the universe in which we take part. Our very presence is a response by itself, a way to take a position in regard to social voices with which we agree, disagree, or totally or partially refute.

The guideline that oriented the meetings of the instructors with the youngsters was the understanding of the responsiveness that connotes actions and supports the otherness nature of existence (BAKHTIN, 1986,⁶ 1984;⁷ FARACO, 2003; SOBRAL, 2010), and this paper represents a response on the part of the researchers to those who made these meetings possible.

³ Original text in Portuguese: “[...] viver significa tomar uma posição axiológica em cada momento, significa posicionar-se em relação a valores. Vivemos e agimos, portanto, num mundo saturado de valores, no interior do qual cada um dos nossos atos é um gesto axiologicamente responsivo num processo incessante e contínuo.”

⁴ Bakhtin (1984, p.40) highlights that “dialogic relationship” - are a much broader phenomenon than mere rejoinders in a dialogue, laid out compositionally in the text; they are an almost universal phenomenon, permeating all human speech and all relationships and manifestations of human life – in general, everything that has meaning and significance.

⁵ BAKHTIN, M.M. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

⁶ BAKHTIN, M. M. *Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences*. In: _____. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist and translated by Vern W. MacGee. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986.

⁷ For reference, see footnote 5.

1 About the Research

The group that participated in the ArteUrbe project, which was the focus of the discussions presented here, was composed of 20 to 25 individuals aged from 13 to 16 years old and were all regularly enrolled in a public school in Florianópolis, SC, Brazil. At the time of the workshops, the individuals were attending middle school and lived near the school, located in a region far from the city's central area.

The aesthetic workshops were conducted by three undergraduate students from the field of psychology – one research assistant and two from the extension program – and one graffiti artist who, at the time, was contributing to the ArteUrbe project and receiving a Technical Support scholarship from CNPq. In its entirety, the work was coordinated and advised by the primary researcher, who wrote this paper together with the research assistant.

This intervention research is based on the idea that “interventions are always performed by diving into the experience that involves subject and object” (PASSOS; BARROS, 2012, p.17, our translation).⁸ From this perspective, we understand that research and its theoretical body merge and are reinvented based on events that take place in the field – theory and practice are inseparable and constantly changing – and further analyses.

The methodological procedures used to record the events presented and analyzed here include: filming the meetings held with the youngsters; photographs; and a field diary in which observations were recorded. The videos were transcribed to be later analyzed. The speeches recorded in the field diary and in the videos were analyzed from a dialogical perspective as proposed by the Bakhtin Circle. For Bakhtin, “[...] a subject as such cannot be perceived and studied as a thing, for as a subject it cannot, while remaining a subject, become voiceless, and, consequently, cognition of it can only be dialogic” (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.161).⁹

Dialogy concerns a relational, responsive condition – and, therefore, otherness – of every person, of every act, whether it is objectified in one word, a gesture, image or

⁸ Original text in Portuguese: “a intervenção sempre se realiza por um mergulho na experiência que agencia sujeito e objeto.”

⁹ For reference, see footnote 6.

expression. Every act, understood as an encounter with another (BUBNOVA, 2011)¹⁰ to the extent one addresses another and answers to another, is inserted into a complex discursive plot in which social voices of varied force meet, confront, complement each other, distance themselves, and in the end, transform each other. Paying attention to this plot is a way to visualize tensions that connote it and, at the same time, understand the way we position ourselves and affirm ourselves as unique beings in a complex process of becoming.

2 The Graffiti Workshop: Transgressions and Tensions

The schedule of the second meeting of the graffiti workshop included the following activities: to ask the participants to illustrate on paper the city as they experience it, what, from that context, affected them; to collectively sketch or illustrate the graffiti they were going to produce; to sketch the design on the wall previously chosen by the instructors using graffiti techniques presented in previous meetings. The wall, located at the entrance of the school the participants attended, was visible to passers-by, and permission to use it was given by the school board to the instructors.

The first stage went well. The participants produced illustrations on paper including buildings, cars in traffic, beaches, graffiti letters and graffiti,¹¹ and people walking on the streets. The drawings were collected, spread on the floor, and then the participants circled the drawings to better visualize them. The images were analyzed, and a sketch of the city was presented on the board outlined by the group's contribution.

The group went to the wall provided by the school. Before the drawing was sketched on the wall, some rules, necessary to ensure the development of the activity in regard to the use of spray cans, were reiterated, namely: graffiti was allowed only on the wall assigned to the project; preferably they should outline and paint only what was

¹⁰ “The act always will be an encounter with another, the encounter based on a specific responsibility that the relationship with another produces: my position in space and time is unique and unrepeatable, for this reason I am the only person able to realize concrete acts that correspond to my unique place in the world, acts that nobody can do in my stead”– free translation from the original in portuguese: “o ato sempre será um encontro com o outro, encontro baseado em uma responsabilidade específica que a relação com o outro produz: minha posição no espaço e no tempo é única e irrepitível, por isso eu sou a única pessoa capaz de realizar os atos concretos que me correspondem a partir do meu único lugar no mundo, atos que ninguém pode executar em meu lugar” (BUBNOVA, 2011, p.272).

¹¹ About the difference between graffiti and *pichação*, see ALMEIDA, G.B. *Política, subjetividade e arte urbana: o graffiti na cidade*. 2013. 140 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Psicologia). UFSC, Florianópolis.

outlined on the wall and add/draw only that which maintained the theme 'city'; they should not draw over the drawings of other people; and they should share the spray cans so that everyone could participate.

After the design was outlined, the process was initiated. The activity started smoothly; some reminders were required, though no more than expected. Then the first transgression of the rules occurred: two boys started drawing graffiti on the floor. The principal saw them through her window and started yelling to warn them. One of the instructors interrupted the activity and asked everyone to lay down their spray cans and listen. He called everyone's attention for what had happened, questioned the boys who did the wrongdoing and showed dissatisfaction. After a brief conversation, the activities were resumed.

Only three of the four instructors were present that day and there were a larger number of participants than the previous meetings: 26 participants. The graffiti artist was absent, which negatively impacted on the coordination of activities.

The group was excited. The idea of using spray paints was enough to agitate them and render them unable to listen to their instructors and peers. Some 'going over'¹² began to occur and one of the boys almost fought with a girl, who was crying due to the fact that her drawing had been covered by his drawing. The instructors briefly mediated and the conflict was minimized.

The graffiti was no longer based on the topic 'city,' and the participants sprayed paint over the wall without paying attention to what was being drawn. Intensity and speed emerged, and it was difficult to coordinate the process. It was necessary to pay attention to what was being done, to limit conflicts among the participants, to the questions of some, and to the hour, as it was already closing time.

They were asked to put their cans on the floor and observe what had been graphitized: a multicolored, confused wall, with no apparent use of any painting technique. Nonetheless, at that hour, under those conditions, the instructors could not judge the aesthetics of what had been produced, but could only reflect upon the work process. Due to the lack of time and the dispersion of the group, this reflection was postponed until the next meeting.

¹² In the practice of *graffiti*, 'going over' means drawing over another person's drawing that was already on the wall, that is, to disrespect that drawing and, consequently, its artist.

When the material was being collected, the instructors noticed that a large black marijuana leaf had been drawn on a wall within the school grounds but outside the limits that had been authorized and against the pre-agreed-upon rules. The alternative the instructors chose at that point, and considering the conditions they had, was to cover it with a random drawing and discuss the issue in the following meeting.

Minutes later, a riot began at the school gate. Police officers approached three boys. The police had been called because someone threatened to fight at the school's departure time, but the turmoil was aggravated when the police officers found marijuana in one of the boy's pockets and two cans of spray paint in the backpack of another. One of the officers wanted to take them to the police station, but one of the school's teachers and one of the instructors mediated the conflict and convinced the police to free the boy.

The instructor recognized the project's spray cans and took them back; among the cans was the same black paint that had been used to draw the marijuana leaf on the wall. There was not enough time on that day to take any action, or even disposition to do so, because at this point everyone was too tired for any intervention to take place.

3 About the Events

How does one detect emerging modes of subjectivity, foci of collective enunciation, existential territories, group intelligence that escape consensual parameters and captures of capital, and that have not gained sufficient visibility in the repertoire of our cities? (PELBART, 2003, p.22, our translation).¹³

In every meeting, the instructors from the ArteUrbe project would propose a different activity. These activities basically consisted of developing certain techniques of urban art, producing some and (re)thinking the city and ways to inhabit it. Although artistic languages and dynamics changed, the focus was on the potential of aesthetic workshops to be a device to discuss visibilities, sayabilities and thinkabilities (RANCIÈRE, 2012)¹⁴ and to enhance others. They devised a plan to reach the

¹³ Original text in Portuguese: "Como detectar modos de subjetivação emergentes, focos de enunciação coletiva, territórios existenciais, inteligências grupais que escapam aos parâmetros consensuais, às capturas do capital e que não ganharam ainda suficiente visibilidade no repertório de nossas cidades?"

¹⁴ RANCIÈRE, J. *The Future of the Images*. Translated by Gregory Elliott. London and New York: Verso, 2009.

objectives proposed in the project, but the meetings were based on the intensity of affections that emerged in the process and the possibilities available to reconstruct routes. The objectives to be achieved and the paths were part of the group process, marked by the choices of each person and of the group, their implications and effects. That is, the objectives were (re)defined at every event in an incessant reinvention of activities enhancing the meetings with these young individuals. This process, however, was not easy, and the choices of some participants, previously reported, affected the group's activities. The meetings, therefore, had to be analyzed and discussed within/by the group.

What could be considered failure in the course of the workshops was considered an opportunity to intervene by the researchers. The acts, if analyzed only from a moral perspective, would indicate that the participants failed to fulfill the agreements established and disrespected common rules. If, however, analyzed from the perspective of the transgressors and based on what is opposed to established standards, these acts could be seen as a response in a context marked by tensions. This is what an analysis that takes into account responsiveness and otherness, as well as acknowledges the possibility of producing new relationships with others, causes, because “denying the *status quo* is a dimension of fighting, but not the only one; adopting other modes of existence that escape determinism is to make history” (ROCHA, 2006, p.171, our translation).¹⁵

Before painting the wall, it was necessary to discuss non-compliance with the rules upon which the group agreed. In addition to the general rules previously reported, the participants had also agreed: not to paint walls not intended for the activity; not to write symbols outside the activity's scope; to preserve and take responsibility for the painting material; not to paint over the drawings of other people. The imperative ‘no,’ however, was insufficient. The individuals bowed to ‘yes,’ a yes that resisted regulation and, as a consequence, allowed rupture and its reinvention.

It was clear to the researchers that this was a chance to intervene so that history would take another turn, so that something new would emerge. The analysis of facts and the intervention to be implemented with the individuals in the continuity, therefore, could not see transgression as something wrong in itself, as if the main problem was to

¹⁵ Original text in Portuguese: “negar o *status quo* é uma dimensão do combate, mas não a única, afirmar outros modos de existência que escapem aos determinismos é fazer história.”

deviate from the pre-established order with which the group should have complied. If it was denied by the participants, it was the role of the researchers to analyze the group and, with the group, the consequences of not complying with rules and the possibility that new orders, new agreements could be established. That is, the voices in tension needed to be heard, and the dialoguing presented needed to be understood.

Could the actions of these individuals be analyzed based on Pelbart (2003); that is, could they be considered a 'perverse' attempt to be included? An attempt to imprint their ways of thinking and acting on the group in order to participate in that meeting? The researchers considered it a rupture, noise, asking for investment in ethical, aesthetic and political formation not only of the young participants, but of everybody. Therefore, it was necessary to analyze, think and (re)signify transgressions as potential for life.

In the analysis of the term 'biopotency' by Pelbart (2003), the author highlights the importance of changing the focus when one refers to biopolitics, previously understood mainly from the perspective of power, that is, based on mechanisms used by the government to manipulate masses, to manipulate life. "This is the origin of the inversion, partially inspired in Deleuze, of the meaning of the term forged by Foucault: biopolitics no longer as power over life, but as potency of life" (PELBART, 2003, p.23, our translation).¹⁶ With this inversion, the focus lies on the strategies and possibilities used to reinvent or to resist the verticality of institutions, even if through transgression or direct confrontation (as was the case for the project's participants). The focus includes actions of the basis, chaos, and margins: singularities willing to re-write history, reinventing existence.

The gap between the meetings and the distance of the event enabled the researchers to signify the transgressions as political potential for life that pulsed within the bodies of the 'offenders.' The condition that generated tension was only the first step for a necessary intervention, for the instructors to respond to the events. After all, silencing the transgression and believing that loosening the standards involved would be sufficient for ethical and productive meetings to be established would be a mistake.

It was necessary to pay attention to another aspect of the intervention, which concerned listening in a context of intervention research in psychology. It was the role

¹⁶ Original text in Portuguese: "Daí a inversão, em parte inspirada em Deleuze, do sentido do termo forjado por Foucault: biopolítica não mais como poder sobre a vida, mas como a potência da vida."

of the researchers to invest in possibilities of acknowledging the differences of the group and within the group by discussing tensions rather than denying them. As we have pointed out, “to be means to be for the other, and through him, for oneself. Man has no internal sovereign territory; he is all and always on the boundary; looking within himself, he looks in the eyes of the other or through the eyes of the other” (BAKHTIN, 1984, p.96).¹⁷ What eyes were those that constituted the possibilities of these young individuals to look within in the way they did? What potential others could emerge from listening to the dialogue woven by those individuals with these social eyes/voices?

Breaking the agreements was the condition for investing in the opposite process, the objective of intervention, which is to gaze at the other and at oneself and to reinvent relationships. The disagreements manifested within a work group, so it was not sufficient to legitimate the choices of the transgressors, but it was also necessary to address those who possibly felt affected in the process, including the instructors.

Axt (2008), based on Bakhtin’s perspective, understands that there is no hierarchical separation between researcher and the study subject. The theoretical construction and intervention are developed over the course of the process and are woven within the research context, since

[...] research does not, whatsoever, refer to a monological form of knowledge in which the intellect contemplates something and comments on it, translating it literally; in which there is a subject, the one who performs the act of cognitive contemplation and abstraction and comments on it, speaking as his/her authorized representative and has before him/her *a speechless subject, a speechless thing*. (AXT, 2008, p.96, our translation, emphasis added by the author).¹⁸

The subject in human sciences research is, according to Bakhtin (1981),¹⁹ a subject of language, so s/he does not remain static for the researcher to analyze or observe him/her. The singularity of one’s movements is essential for carrying out research because movements provide cues that indicate paths. Listening to the subject,

¹⁷ For reference, see footnote 5.

¹⁸ Original text in Portuguese: “[...] a pesquisa *não* se refere, em absoluto, a uma forma monológica de conhecimento em que o intelecto contempla uma coisa e se pronuncia sobre ela, traduzindo-a literalmente; em que há um sujeito, aquele que pratica o ato de contemplação e abstração cognitivas e se pronuncia sobre ela, falando como seu representante autorizado, tendo diante de si o *sujeito mudo, a coisa muda*.”

¹⁹ For reference, see footnote 6.

about whom the research signifies, and consequently giving visibility and space to life, is essential, as

[...] the senses are produced as effects of a living context, governed by an ethic of relations and an aesthetic of existence. It is based on these senses that we propose to listen: listening established on a relationship that supports intervention, an intervention constituted of listening (AXT, 2008, p.97, our translation).²⁰

Over the course of the ArteUrbe project, giving greater visibility to events that are the focus of this paper's analysis, listening was triggered by offenses. It is possible that the offenders were sincere in regard to their demands; however, the notion of ethics, which involves the world beyond individual desires, required greater investment in order to emerge.

The need to pay attention to the implications of the events for all those in the group was intensified in a context in which those who were affected could manifest. Instead of emphasizing rules, we would emphasize creation; instead of ethics, individual desire from a perspective of otherness and, therefore, from a point of view of political existence. After all, one's ethical, aesthetic and political formation, in this context and with these conditions, implies creating conditions based on the contributions of those in the project that would allow placing choices under tension – especially those who broke the rules, thus, current moral – considering the implications of these choices and the responsibility for the actions of oneself, others and everyone.

Engendering processes that enable the emergence of these issues means investing in relationships to the extent that one's own choices and the implications of these choices in regard to others are put under tension. The events are treated in the intervention research “in the very spaces of reality in which they emerge, so they grow in these spaces in a relationship of co-existence and solidarity, both as empirical field and the theoretical-conceptual and interpretative thinking that supports it” (AXT, 2009, p.95, our translation).²¹

²⁰ Original text in Portuguese: “[...] os sentidos se produzem enquanto efeitos de um contexto vivencial, regido por uma ética das relações e uma estética da existência. É desses sentidos que propomos fazer a escuta: uma escuta instituída numa relação de solidariedade com a intervenção, uma intervenção, ela própria constituída em escuta.”

²¹ Original text in Portuguese: “nos próprios espaços de realidade de onde emergem, para aí crescerem, numa relação de coexistência e solidariedade, tanto como campo empírico, como com o pensamento

Thus, the challenge for the next meeting was listening to these young individuals, to encourage them to listen to each other, and to listen to us.

4 Implications

The schedule for the meeting following the graffiti included a stencil workshop, but the events of the previous meeting demanded a response. When the participants entered the room where the sessions were held, the instructors were immediately asked about the stencil. The participants were excited to work with the new technique but were informed that the schedule was changed and another activity would be implemented that day. Without further clarification about the activity, they were asked to form five groups of four people each, and each group would sit around a table.

Each group received a piece of poster board, brushes, and gouache paint of four different colors, one for each of the group's participants. They were asked to paint a collective work, according to the following rules: they would take turns so that from time to time, the poster board would be passed to the next person to continue the painting, adding his/her own strokes to the work.

The participants concentrated on the work but asked continuously what would result from that activity. The instructors, however, only guided them to proceed with the drawing. When the poster board had passed three times to the hands of each participant, that is, when the work had already taken shape, the instructors initiated the following intervention: without asking or informing the participants, all the coordinators simultaneously took black paint and brushes, and each coordinator painted an 'X' from end to end of each group's piece of poster board.

Reactions were varied, though most manifested indignation. The instructors were questioned and confronted; however, without much explanation, they oriented the participants to proceed with their paintings, only saying that it was the coordinators' contribution to their work. The groups kept drawing, trying as much as possible to fix the damage or drawing in the remaining spaces. When the poster board had already passed three times to each person (the work had taken a new shape), new 'X's were painted by the instructors on the poster boards, which again resulted in indignation and

teórico-conceitual e interpretativo que lhes dá sustentação.”

tumult. Without explaining their ‘contribution’ to the works, the instructors dismissed the groups for a break, telling they would talk in the second part of the meeting.

Upon their return, they were asked to sit in a circle. The conversation was initiated by the instructors with the following questions: “What does this ‘X’ represent to you? What did you feel when we painted it? Please, one group answers at a time.”

The responses showed indignation, anger, sorrow (for instance, “I didn’t like it, I was hurt”; “I got pissed off”; “We were doing it and, then, these ‘X’s spoiled our drawings”).

The instructors kept asking: “Do you think these drawings were important to us?” The participants said: “Not at all”; “But why did you do it?” The instructors asked back: “Why did you think ‘X’s were put in your productions?” After some time of silence, one girl answered: “You did it to show us what we did, the bad things from last week.”

At this point, many of them became excited and started talking all at once, but the voice of one boy stood out: “There were 18 people on the same wall, not thinking about what they would do. I stayed there for a long time, filling out something. Then, someone came and painted all over it. I had to do it all again. That was bad!”

After this boy’s testimony, the instructors asked the participants to talk one at a time, so they would continue the exercise of reflection and express their opinions. The responses were varied and often antagonistic: “I felt bad, offended, I didn’t understand”; “Ah, I didn’t feel anything; the drawing was ugly anyway.”

At this point, one of the instructors intervened: “She said she felt nothing, perhaps because she did not care; she didn’t put any effort, but last week, we all put a lot of effort. We cared about the activity that we brought to you; we cared about you and about the material that was difficult to get. We were deeply involved in all that. So, if you draw an ‘X’ on our work, as you did last week, we feel bad.”

Silence took the room for a few moments until one boy said: “It was disrespectful what you did.” One of the instructors immediately answered: “We heard a classification right there, ‘disrespectful.’ Does anyone else want to add a classification?” The participants uttered a flood of adjectives: “It was a terrorist act”; “vandalism”; “you’re irresponsible,” among other responses.

The tone of their speeches was a mixture of joke with indignation. They did not use these words in an aggressive way. The instructors asked for the last group to express themselves, though they did not say anything. Considering information recorded in the field diary and filming, one can say this group was the one that gave greater importance to the 'X' drawn by the instructors because they put effort into the work: it was a marijuana leaf with the Jamaican flag on the background. The film recording the moment when the 'X' was made on their work reveals surprise, anger, frustration, and, finally, silence.

The instructors respected their choice to keep silent and moved on to the next activity. They inverted the question so that the participants could put themselves on each other's places: the other who turns his/her gaze to the young individuals themselves. They asked the participants to tell what they imagined the 'X' from the last meeting represented to the instructors.

The first to talk was a girl: "I guess it was in regard to the marijuana leaf, first because they did it on a wall outside the limits authorized by the school and also because they took the spray paint to draw the leaf without asking." "They painted over other peoples' drawings, which is not right; you have to do it all over again," another girl commented.

At this point the participants became agitated and started talking all at once in an attempt to defend themselves, while others remained silent, downcast. The instructors asked them to remain calm: "Look people, the objective here is not to tell you what's wrong and what's right ... We planned an activity to allow you to reflect and try to understand a little bit what the 'X' was about ... The idea is not to punish, but to show you that your choices have consequences, so you don't need to keep your heads down thinking that you are all wrong or trying to question us to prove you're right. We want to listen to you, about your feelings, how you think we felt. This is a conversation based on sincere exchanges; it's not a court room."

Silence once again dominated the group. One boy tried to distract from the subject, commenting on a cow seen from the window, but his attempt was in vain. Silence prevailed and was broken only when two boys, who had not yet returned from the break, entered the room.

The instructors talked to them and asked them to tell what they felt about the ‘X’ on their work. It was essential to listen to them, since the police officers had found the spray cans in one of these boys’ backpacks. At the time of the “turmoil” with the police, the instructors could not (and did not intend to) identify who had taken the spray cans, but they knew both boys were implicated.

The first of them commented: “I felt embarrassed, of course. I was doing my drawing, then the guys came and without any warning, you could say you were going to draw an ‘X’ there because it was part of the work, you know. You don’t see a scene like that everyday; you don’t give any warning and just do it.” “But how could we have warned you?” one of the instructors asked. “I don’t know, saying: ‘Look I’m going to make an ‘X’ right here on your drawing.’” “So we had to ask your permission to make an ‘X’ on your drawing?”

The group became greatly agitated. Many voices agreed that the instructors should have warned them about the ‘X’ on their drawings. After a period of great agitation and a moment of silence, one of the instructors said, “During the entire week we thought about the activity we would propose to you. We gave you a blank piece of poster board, we went after paints, we planned, left home earlier and changed this meeting, which was troublesome; we put up with your noise, talking, and I didn’t get discouraged, nor did I raise my voice. We answered the questions from each group; we gave you a place to work; you were enjoying the painting, a lot of effort but then, after all this, we did an ‘X’.”

“It was revenge, right?”, one boy interrupted the instructor, who in turn, answered: “No, it wasn’t an ‘X’ of revenge. It was a way to create conditions for you to realize how you feel when your objectives are frustrated. I could just talk to you about how frustrated I felt, because we had planned the entire activity in the workshop. We had a hard time to get the paint; the instructors devoted their time. Before the activities began, we came here, talked to the principal; she provided the wall, we got the material from all the other workshops, we planned and worked to get this far. Then, you people don’t care, don’t listen, draw a marijuana leaf with one spray can that we didn’t even know where it was; spray cans go to some people’s backpacks, and we find it only because the police make a raid? We trusted you. We gave you spray cans because we trust you; it’s a partnership. We wouldn’t be watching you, but then the police officers

had to return the spray cans to us? You didn't come and ask us to lend you the spray paint to do whatever you wanted to do or say that you wanted to draw a marijuana leaf and ask if it was possible or not, and if so, where you could do it. What are the consequences? If it's outside the school, on the street, why can't it be in the school? Or, why don't we propose a debate about marijuana in the school?"

"But anyway, where is the marijuana leaf they painted on the wall?" One of the participants asked. "We covered it with a random symbol," one of the instructors clarified. "The leaf would look cool there," another boy said. "True, it would be cool," another boy agreed.

One of the instructors answered: "You said the leaf would look cool. You know what the problem with letting the leaf stay there is? I'm not pro or against drawing a leaf. The problem is that you drew a marijuana leaf and signed with our name, because we were the ones who asked the school to provide the wall and we provided the paints; it was our responsibility [...] Everything we do, we have to be willing to face the consequences. If we are teaching graffiti to you, you're doing it under our responsibility. I teach you how to hold the can, how to make the strokes. Now, what you're going to do on the streets, if you want to leave and draw a thousand marijuana leaves, it's your responsibility. There can be a thousand implications, and you'll have to face it, because here, inside the school, it's our responsibility, which is easier for you. On the street, you have to face the consequences, and you better have a good explanation for your actions to whoever may be."

The conversation continued, but we thought it was necessary to interrupt the narrative to discuss the intervention and develop some of the voices that became evident in the actions of the instructors, in the way they responded to the events. A certain romantic perspective that permeated the proposal of aesthetic workshops could be observed from the beginning of such endeavors and became even more apparent after the analysis. It resulted from an exotopic movement of the researchers in relation to the research field itself.²² Note the excerpts: "you care";²³ "deeply involved"; "we feel bad."

²² On exotopy (outsideness), see Bakhtin (1981; 1984), Amorim (2006) and Machado (2010).

²³ TN. In Portuguese, the verb is "importar," the same used to convey the idea of "importing" goods.

Considering the word “import” as presented in the dictionary: “to buy or bring in from a foreign country, to bring in from an outside source, to convey, to give significance or importance.”²⁴

The instructors’ discourses echo these meanings, which indicate dissatisfaction with the reality that is presented to the extent it does not correspond to the vision of what would be the desired course of things. That is, the discourse is based on something that “is brought” from outside and that inevitably confronts what emerges in the context of the workshops. But what did they bring from outside? The expectation that the participants would behave and respect the rules of conviviality they considered to be shared by everyone? The rules the group agreed upon for the development of activities?

We see another meaning of the word “import” that refers to “importance.” When the instructors said that the participants cared, they did not realize that the contrary was also true: the workshops were important for the participants, though they had their own way to show how important they considered it to be, and it was not the way the instructors expected.

We see that

[...] [a]ffirming life also means to differentiate, to single out; also means loving things without fusing or identifying with things; it is affirming the principle of our own differentiation so that we love the differences as something that is foreign to us (FONSECA *et al*, 2006, p.659, our translation).²⁵

These differences, however, are often ignored when ideals, whether places where one desires to arrive or expectations regarding others, marked by specific patterns (generally hegemonic) of conduct, are references for practices. Apparently, this was what happened in the workshops. It was necessary to get away in order to analyze the events and enable discussion and to problematize. The responses of the instructors to the participants were, up to them, marked out by a salvationist view, frequently present in

²⁴ Free translation from the original text in Portuguese “Mandar vir ou trazer de país estrangeiro, introduzir; Convir, ter importância ou interesse; Trazer alguma coisa de fora de um sistema” (MICHAELIS, 2009, p.461).

²⁵ Original text in Portuguese: “[...] afirmar a vida é também deixá-la diferenciar-se, singularizar-se; é, igualmente, amar as coisas sem fundar-se ou identificar-se com elas; é afirmar o princípio de nossa própria diferenciação para que venhamos a amar a diferença como exterior a nós.”

educational contexts and in discourses that place education as the bastion of social transformation.²⁶

Emphasis on the importance of considering the implications of choices for oneself and others enabled leaving this salvation rationale and highlighting ethical issues present in the choices by participants and instructors. One of the boys who arrived late after the break raised his hand and said, “It was me who took the spray paint.”

The fact that this young man acknowledged, before the group, the authorship of an action that triggered a succession of unwanted events – from the police raid up to the ‘X’s on the drawings from the following workshop – was acknowledged and appreciated by the instructors. Finally, punishment or even a reprimand was not appropriate: the boy understood the need to take responsibility for his choices and consequences. He understood his own condition, that of being inserted into a complex web of relations, of which he was part, and in which he played an active role.

Appreciation for the young man’s confession was expressed through the testimony of one of the instructors who reported that he had experienced a similar situation years ago when he was still a student. His testimony stretched the frontiers and hierarchy existing between instructors and offenders and non-offenders, affirming them all as responsive beings in the world, in a context marked by tensions and struggles, from which one cannot abstain. About whom was the instructor talking? Was the person present right there the one who had stolen the spray paint? A dim light blurred correctness so that unequivocal, exact answers were no longer possible. One could not establish a single protagonist. Everyone, anyone is a protagonist.

Brait (2013) presents an analysis based on a dialogical perspective in which the author presents an interlocution between illustrations made by the Austrian Alfred Kubin and the narrative *The Double* by Dostoevsky.²⁷ Image and writing contaminate each other, slip from one to the other, confounding the boundaries between the verbal and the visual. The illustrations do not represent what the Austrian read; they create, dialogue, and, therefore, multiply the text’s voices. They do not describe; on the

²⁶ We consider, as Paulo Freire (1979), that social and political transformations require changes in education; however, these are not sufficient for desired transformations.

²⁷ Among the three translations of *The Double* into Portuguese, the last one, by Paulo Bezerra, includes illustrations by Alfred Kubin (BRAIT, 2013).

contrary, they utter what was not written, weave the very gap that reverberates in the words of Dostoevsky.

Voices that emerge from the dialogue between the works do not silence nor overlap with the products; they do not compete. The slips, which blur some boundaries of compositions, do not result in a total destitution of marks, since responsibility (and merit) for each production still belongs to each author but does not cause extensions, dialogues, or continuities. Not only does the drawing illustrate the text, but it is illustrated by it, especially what had escaped and thus was not read until then.

The processes of creation that enable such slips, according to the author, can be analyzed based on notions of “*incompleteness, answerability, externality and, even, otherness or dialogical relationships* of a non-polemical type, not of adherence, almost by osmosis” (BRAIT, 2013, p.52, our translation, author’s emphasis);²⁸ this expresses the vicissitudes of the work, of the characters.

In the case of the events discussed here, *otherness* relationships based on the interventions reverberate with voices hitherto inaudible. The works presented by Brait (2013), as well as those involved in the events, once they are always incomplete, could reveal, through the point of view of others, potential consequences of their infinites. Only the other, ethically and aesthetically implicated, was capable to produce and express what was excessive, what escaped, but what, once discussed, could compose a dialectics and, consequently, potential links between people. Therefore, interventions engendered by the researchers were not intended to find the guilty parties (even though moral issues had emerged, placing actions under tension even more), but rather to present other ways to relate to choices, with resignations, with life, arrangements woven in the heat of events.

Just as the link between the illustrations by Alfred Kubin and *The Double* by Dostoevsky demonstrates, the quality of relationships between the people implicated in the study’s events “is not a simple and submissive legend; on the contrary, it is *entrainment* of active response to the first creative process, to the aesthetics of otherness” (BRAIT, 2013, p.52, our translation).²⁹

²⁸ Original text in Portuguese: “*inacabamento, responsabilidade, exterioridade e até mesmo alteridade, ou ainda, relações dialógicas* de um tipo não polêmico, mas de adesão, quase que de osmose.”

²⁹ Original text in Portuguese: “*não é de simples e submissa legenda, mas ao contrário, é de entranhamento, de resposta ativa ao processo criativo primeiro, à estética da alteridade.*”

5 Final Considerations

About what were the discourses of the participants and instructors intensively involved in the events? What were other possibilities for both the young participants and instructors established in those meetings?

Amorim (2003, p.16, our translation) highlights that “there is only ethics in the dimension of the event, because it is in the event that my singular and unique position faces other individuals.”³⁰ The events were certainly tense and intense. They left marks on all those who experienced them and required an exotopic movement on the part of the researchers; that is, the researchers needed to distance themselves somewhat from the discussion, which does not necessarily present conclusions, but gives visibility to gaps, contradictions, to what could become. “Exotopy” or outsideness is a condition for aesthetic activity,³¹ for the finishing that conforms with what is presented by the researchers as a response to what was experienced over the course of the research project and to many others with whom dialogue was established.

The analysis of the instructors’ discourses from the day of the intervention revealed a certain moral intonation, a characteristic of pedagogical practices that have been intensively questioned by various theoretical frameworks. The intention to enable other relationships was sometimes crossed by a normative discourse, causing moral to prevail while an ethical perspective of relations remained in the background. Perhaps the complexity of the situation (responsibility for properly developing activities with a large number of individuals) added to the social role assumed by the participants and the teaching institution to which they belonged and with which a partnership was established for the workshops. Perhaps the complexity was imperative to constitute the discourses. Perhaps.

The point is that the events narrated here caused discomfort to the researchers. The offenses, in addition to interfering with the planned activities, stretched some of the ArteUrbe guidelines, especially those related to its proposals and the actions of the instructors. The plans and the establishment of rules intended to ensure the future

³⁰ Original text in Portuguese: “só há ética na dimensão do evento, porque é no acontecimento que minha posição singular e única defronta-se com os outros singulares.”

³¹ For reference, see footnote 5.

proved to be unfit and were abandoned during the process as some individuals took the lead and changed the course of things, reinventing the schedule, the ways of doing, and ways of being in the group.

It is true that, in an intervention research project, the schedule and places occupied in the activities are flexible “considering that object, subject and knowledge are co-emergent effects of the research process” (PASSOS; BARROS, 2012, p.18, our translation).³² But it was possible to experience it. The exotopic movement in regard to events, constructed through insistently returning to the images of the workshop’s meetings long after their conclusion, to the writings of the authors who elected partners for the dialogue with the research material, enabled understanding that research and stretching the place of knowledge are necessary for the research to follow the course of life. And life is flow, unpredictable; it is characterized by falling.

The subjects and objects fell. The ideal research that conducted the meetings up to the day of the offenses also fell. It became the focus of analysis. The researchers were confronted with the role of subjects. No longer were they fixed subjects, but unfinished, uncompleted subjects in movement.

The events and their consequences enabled the understanding that “doing research on the subject ‘diversity’ calls for ethical thought, but there is no ethics without an arena and the confrontation of values” (AMORIM, 2003, p.25, our translation).³³ The replies and rejoinders reported here gave visibility to confrontational and tense encounters of differences that enabled the emergence of other differences.

Scenes from various events merged, returned and were re-elaborated. When taking responsibility for their acts before the group, the participants and instructors raised those meetings to another level: a space of ethical, aesthetic, and political formation in which one takes responsibility for his/her own acts, considering the condition of otherness, which connects them as well as their agents, because “no act is an isolated agent but always an act of a subject situated in relation to other subjects” (SOBRAL, 2010, p.66, our translation).³⁴

³² Original text in Portuguese: “considerando que objeto, sujeito e conhecimento são efeitos coemergentes do processo de pesquisar.”

³³ Original text in Portuguese: “fazer pesquisa lidando com a questão da diversidade convoca um pensamento ético, mas não há ética sem arena e confronto de valores.”

³⁴ Original text in Portuguese: “nenhum ato é ato de um agente isolado, mas sempre de um sujeito situado com relação a outros sujeitos.”

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