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Urban Boundaries and Love: The Rebirth of Political Thought Within The Disturbing Education

Monica Mesquita, University of Lisbon, Portugal

Abstract

In a process of emancipatory collective education proposed by the Urban Boundaries Project, this paper discusses the importance of the educational process not as cloistered but as critical tool to the current hegemonic system, and thus its roots in our situationality (Freire, 1970), as well as in our relations of survival (D'Ambrosio, 2013). The concept of love as a political category (Žižek, 2013) will be argued from the modes of production of the urban human beings and its relations among the productive forces, the relations of production, and the conscious bodies (Mesquita, 2011). Disturbing choices made in the dialogical exercise, from a victimization posture to a free collective subject rooted in or identified with a particular form of life, supports this argument.

Keywords

Urban Boundaries, Communitarian Education, Critical Ethnography, Ethnomathematics Posture, Knowledge, Love.

Acknowledgment

Sal Restivo and Ubiratan D'Ambrosio, thank you very much for the discussion time!

The context

For two years, twelve critical ethnographers (Thomas, 1993) with different backgrounds, developed a research project with two communities situated in *Costa*

de Caparica (Portugal) called Urban Boundaries Project (UBP) – supported by a national institution (*Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia* – FCT), and developed at the Institute of Education, Lisbon University - IEUL.

The UBP emerged as an excuse to a group of people to be together in a “legal” way. This group is constituted by academics, fishermen, and residents of an illegal settlement brought together in the struggle against local politics, which has maintained a policy of fear and sadistic enjoyment. The three scientific tasks proposed by the UBP (Critical Alphabetization, Multiple Cartography, and Histories of Life) were developed by members of the three communities and are nothing more than “scientific doors” to claim: water in the illegal settlement; voice to the fishing community; and the right to exercise an emancipatory education. Our context was developed under the transdisciplinary and transcultural philosophical perspective proposed by D’Ambrosio (2013). In his approach knowledge and education are restored to their essential goal of dealing with the universal problem facing humanity today, how to survive as a species, a culture, and a planet with dignity.

Our daily living (experiences, discussions, and the act to rethink in our ethnographical images and actions) made us want, more and deeply, to understand our situationality¹ (Freire, 1970), our conscious bodies in movement intrinsically linked with our position – position of reference (Mesquita, 2011), as well as our relations of survival, as D’Ambrosio (2013) argues knowing and recognizing the State of the World, realizing the global actions acting in the local facts – working with Hegels' dialectic of the Universal and particular. In that sense, we are involved with the other side of education based on its singularity, plurality, and difference, founded in the encounters of diversity, and not grounded in discourses of mastery. However, it is important to highlight that this discourse of mastery is argued in our dialogical process because, as a rabble of the local society, we are part of it, even as invisibles.

The global hegemony of the neoliberal system gives us the possibility to change our posture, to make choices, but with the condition that these choices do not seriously disturb the balance of the dominant ideology – which maintains the acts

¹Men, as beings ‘in a situation’ find themselves rooted in temporal-spatial conditions which mark them and which they also mark. They will tend to reflect on their own ‘situationality’ to the extent that they are challenged by it to act upon it. Men are because they are in a situation. And they will be more the more they not only critically reflect upon their existence but critically act upon it. (Freire, 1970:100)

of different postures “in the same bag”; choice as bondage. The concept of choice is linked with the concept of freedom and can be assumed as a blind position “rationalized”. According to Žižek (2001), we are living in a era of the “escape from freedom” and in an emergent moment in which to rethink the opposition of “formal” and “actual” freedom (in Lenin’s sense), which can lead to some questions about needs and desires – the wound of reality (Žižek, 2006), or even, about “free” decisions.

In a radical posture, this paper **focuses on** the disturbing collective choices, which invite the social actors of the project (all of us) to rethink, critically, the relations among their (ours) needs, desires, and obligations contextualizing them our social-economical nets – establishing a common ground. The reflection about the last threat comes from inside, as Žižek (2002:154) points out: "from our own laxity and moral weakness, loss of clear values and firm commitments, of the spirit of dedication and sacrifice" has been done deeply, walking from the victimization posture to a free collective subject². Central to humanism is the acceptance of the human as an autonomous collective subject. For us, to be free is to be conscious about our closure and, then, to create collective strategies to live with dignity.

The Urban Boundaries Project as a disturbing educational process and as a subversive way to be together – to be free collective rooted in or identified with a particular form of life.

The present excursus is in response to the necessity to clarify two radical points of the UBP: the educational proposal and the intricacies of its birth, which results in breaking with traditional research during its process. This project provoked a disturbing education since its birth. The fact to be constantly with my neighbors – fishermen and residents of an illegal settlement, brought me, as researcher and Freirian educator, an overview of the local situation, of the socio-cultural-spiritual-historical-geographical-political-economical contexts. This exercise allowed realizing

² Is the autonomous collective subject like the anarchist concept of self: socially constructed, embedded in and constitutively social and without free will (an ideological idea, a myth without scientific basis) but with the natural right to freedom (a political concept), and real socially and materially. We cannot freely choose to speak all of a sudden a new language or freely choose to fly without technological apparatuses (this is the extreme implication of free will); but we know the difference between being in a prison (as institution) and not being in a prison, even though we might want to speak of society metaphorically or even theoretically as a prison.

how the local knowledge was neglected at the expense of maintaining a local elitist order – the dominant class. In a simplistic logic: “deny your knowledge” was nothing more than “silence your voices” and thus create a civic invisibility – a desired alienation; after all, “the signifier is what represents a subject for another signifier. Whence it follows that at the level of another signifier, the subject vanishes”(Lacan, Seminar XI, lesson 18, unpaginated).

On the face of it, the first steps of the UBP in a sense to be disturber was centered in its own educational proposal that aimed to bring to the fore one idea in three communities: that the knowledge of each member of these communities is critical for the sustainability of the UBP. In this movement, the project made each member recognize his/her knowledge as a tool of empowerment for the resolutions, choices, and problems they face day-to-day, and, especially, to understand that these problems stem from the society as a whole – supported in a hegemonic system where economic hierarchy prevails. The educational proposal promoted a re-appropriation of the symbolic³ representation of the members of the involved communities, what, again in a simplistic logic, disturbed the local order rooted in an elitist reality. In a Lacanian way our disturber education was centered in the following thought: “I am thinking where I am not, therefore I am where I am not thinking” (1966, 2006: 517).

It should be stressed that the communities involved in UBP are urban communities; even as they maintain strong traditional characteristics arising from the various ancient communities in which they originate. We work with some local fishermen from the founder generation of the city of Costa de Caparica. With the *Fishing Community*, we also have some members of an illegal settlement on the existing agricultural lands of Costa de Caparica - where we found Cape Verdeans, Guinean, Angolans, Romanians, Mozambicans, Gypsies, as well as, Portuguese’s – *Bairro*⁴ *Community*. We, as border researchers, weave collectively a net of perspectives, intentions, necessities, and productions that strengthen: the action traits of each participant (member of the local communities and members of the

^{III} We are referring to what Jacques Lacan (2001) called the Symbolic: the intersubjective symbolic network that structures our sense of reality.

^{IV} This word is present in Portuguese because is the name of this local community. In English this word means neighbourhood.

Academic Community), the recognition of our legal equity, and the understanding of the local educational processes - political tool of action.

In fact, the UBP stood out for being an academic project that would investigate the concept education coming from the core of the current human social construction – the dynamics of cultural encounters at the expense of the oppressive political and economic conditions, which is denominated in this context as Communitarian Education. This innovative research in a Portuguese environment also stood out by allowing community(ies) members to be active actors involved throughout the process - from the construction, development, and dissemination, as well as final discussions on these themes.

The communitarian education is understood, in this research as education that develops in and for the survival of a community. The fundamental basis for this research perspective is based on Popular Education, developed by Paulo Freire, in which the process of emancipation evolves from local knowledge to knowledge recognized by the larger society – the formal knowledge. However, in the communitarian education we sought emancipation through recognition of local knowledge, starting it from its own basis – wherein we the subjects re-appropriate our signifiers in the exercise of discovering the veil of invisibility that hides and oppresses us. Understanding that the knowledge developed in the communities is strong and has a crucial relevance was the main goal and ultimate outcome in the discovering process.

In the neoliberal system in which we operate, it is interesting to realize that only one knowledge is recognized and this fact is one more way for the normalization of society. In case the subject does not has this recognized knowledge (the formal one), she/he is kept on the margins of society with no conditions, within the current political and economical apparatus, to live, and just survives! The problems inside these communities are in society as a whole and not centered in and defined at the local level, contrary to the perspective reified as a prejudice in our society. In the communitarian education process (provided via oppression and expression of the inserted voices in the communities involved) the UBP identified the dialogues and cultural clashes created by our dominant system of governance, thus bringing critical conscientious to all members involved in this research – the exercise of the praxis. The extermination of a community begins with the act of silencing their voice and, consequently, their collective thought.

The fact of trying to be together was another “big problem” for the local elitist reality. Since 2009, when we found each other, some members of these three communities have done a collaborative educational work, focusing in the social problems existent in Costa de Caparica, more specifically, in the fishing and *bairro* spaces. The daily work developed in the communities allowed us to experience, discuss, and rethink our ethnographical images and actions, and created the desire to construct a more systematic way of being together. The search for such systematisation was important since during the three years that preceded the project we found a set of legal obstacles making it too difficult to establish an open and emancipatory collaboration. Our encounter was not welcomed by the local authorities (town council, church, and police). The destruction, by the local government, of a cultural centre built by the Urban Boundaries Movement – how we identify ourselves as an independent local group, as well as the constant raids that members of this group suffered by the local police are two of many examples.

Based on the fact that we could not be together – after all we lived (and live) under a local camouflaged feudalism, where “things” happen without a locus of responsibility for these facts, we decided to find a legal way to be together. As some of us were linked with the academic community as researchers and teachers, a research proposal sounded like a cynical road to legalizing our lives and place. In fact, we spent some period discussing if we desire to submit our struggle through this option – being directly linked with an elitist group, the academy. However, we can find in our images and actions a deep sense of transformation, which is supposed to be the central core to start a struggle inside out in this closed and upstart system, or even blind by convenience, with the conscientious through which we re-appropriate the signifier of research and, consequently, of the researcher's role in this process.

Political Thought and Education

The UBP searched to find alternatives to the educational process promoting a significant relationship between theory and practice or, in our case, between philosophy and politics. This movement of praxis, proposed here is a dialectical unity between the objective and the subjective, the mediation by which the community in itself – a group of people having a common relation to the means of production, becomes the community for itself – a stratum organized in active search of its own

interests. We have lived a revolutionary praxis that was a theoretical and practical activity in which the theory has changed constantly with practical experience, which in turn changed constantly with the theory. We live in a time of circumstance transformation, which has determined us (through dialogical processes) to form ideas, desires, and theories that, in turn and simultaneously, have strengthened our determination to create, in practices, new circumstances. Thus, theory has not crystallized into a dogma nor has the practice crystallized in a social alienation – we experience a free association of producers of local knowledge.

The social actors involved shared a consciousness of the gap between formal schooling designed to maintain brains and bodies that support the dominant norms of the society. Formal schooling mystifies knowledge in general and the communitarian educational process in which that knowledge is rooted. Demystifying knowledge is achieved through praxis of creativity, non-conformism, collaboration, confrontation, and the critical posture. All of this is designed to solve social and economic impasses.

Our main challenge has been working, in an educational process that finds its roots in, arises from, and evolves in the invisible communities. These communities are distinguished from the society at large as rabble, an Hegelian notion. These communities are interpreted as a symptom of our society, the ‘irrational’ excess of the supposedly rational political body and they present a strong characteristic: having no firm place in society, though they subsist necessarily on the boundary between the inside and outside of the system.

The term rabble often comprises immigrants, slum-dwellers or refugees, but can also be constituted by individuals living in situations of chronic unemployment, addictions, homelessness or even workers engaged in undervalued or unrecognized forms of employment. In our case, we are groups of people for whom there is no place within the organized totality of the local dominant class, although we formally belong to it – the invisible people. We are the “part of non-part” (Rancière, 1995) of the local social body. Žižek (1994) distinguishes between human beings that are *in* (included in the legally regulated welfare society and human rights), and those who are *out* (lacking basic survival instruments and a life with dignity). However, to be part, even of a non-part, it is necessary to be *in*, topologically speaking. In that sense, the existence of a space where the social relations between the visible and the invisible are present is undeniable. This is a space mainly characterized by the

presence of the cultural groups materially and intellectually marginalized – a non-space⁵ (2011).

In our own educational process we live education more in terms of a collaborative adventure, giving more emphasis to survival with dignity and less to the closure of choice. There is a possibility that the subject can get some content, some kind of positive consistency, outside the 'big Other', outside the inter-subjective alienated symbolic network, making way for the emergence of political (and pedagogical) acts of freedom (Žižek, 1996). An exercise in overcoming the crystallized forms of subjective and inter-subjective alienation was developed to promote a degree of individual and collective emancipation, in social, political and cultural terms.

Being an educational project, the UBP has promoted, beyond the critical collective construction, an Ethnomathematics Posture (Mesquita, 2011), understanding that there is not only one logic, only one rationality (D'Ambrosio, 2006; Restivo, 2014). This posture considers the human being in an overview, situated in a complex and systemic social environment⁶ and operated-operating by the economical system. In his view, body, brain, and social relations are an integrated whole. The parts are distinguished analytically only, and one is not privileged over the other. In this way we join what we feel, who we are, where we are, and how we think. For us the original provocations for our thoughts and actions about community, love, politics, and social justice came from our engagement in ethnomathematics. Now we operate at a more general level in all of our thoughts and actions and ethnomathematics is a specific case of the more general ethnoepisteme that defined the regime of our knowledge.

One example of our ethnomathematics posture can be given during the dissemination process⁷ of this project: we (the academic community) have not

^V A non-space is created by all of us who watch without seeing. The habitants of Costa de Caparica, for instance, see the *bairro* – it is located at the end of the highway that leads to town – but their existence is not noticed, thus repressed.

^{VI} Situated in a complex social ecology-umwelt. See Sal Restivo and Sabrina Weiss in: "The Social Ecology of Brain and Mind", Chapter 2 in Weiss, S.; Restivo, S.; and Stingl, A. (2014). *Worlds of ScienceCraft: New Directions in Sociology, Philosophy, and Science Studies*. UK: Ashgate.

^{VII} The dissemination process, being understood as a process of decentralization via diffusion inter and intra-communities, was revealed itself as a strong tool to be together in our singularities: knowing our weakness (while invisible), as well as our cyclical and temporary movement; beginning to understand the State of the World by Hegel 'dialectic of

spoken about the other communities in a dichotomized exercise of the desire and possibilities of the Other, and above all what is expected by the ruling class of this community – a non-disturbing action within the academy. We have spoken with the other communities, bringing to the academic environment the diversity and promoting the slow transformation of language.

On the other hand, we (the social actors) have been constantly embedded in the communities' environments, participating in the diverse forms of dissemination processes of all of us. First our official immersion in the fishing community was established and it gave to us (some members of the other two communities) the opportunity to be part of their dissemination plan, participating as active members of their meetings in the local fishing association. In the *bairro* community our participation started before the official immersion and has been very strong, specially as facilitators, through a lengthy critical democratic process, of the development of a local neighborhood committee (composed only by local residents), which already began represent the members of this community in the meetings with local institutions and try to solve (inter and intra-community) problems of actual life processes.

Spivak (2006), in a discourse about Gender and Europe, argued:

“that the making of a new European is through the slow transformation of language in the general curriculum (and therefore in the everyday) from performative (driving a life) into performance (synecdochic/metonymic reflex or choice) by way of class-access.” (Spivak, 2006:10)

In our case, the transformation of language has been possible by the change of our body posture, changing our body space. The body posture is highlighted as a critical posture and not as a posture of charity to the other or even a blind obedience that causes the body to follow the “herd,” the Big Other]. This movement of the body is not present inside the formal Education (Scholar Institution), which appears completely exposed to pressures and market reasons and, according D’Ambrosio (2000:14), “give to the obedience the character of normality”. In the same way, this movement is not present inside of research in Education on a national scale; the

the Universal and particular; and awakening our collective emancipatory posture. It was a tool to connect us directly in our singularity, bypassing our particular hierarchic determinations.

researches in the Scholar Education (Inclusion-Practices, Communitarian-Interventions, Scholar-Administration, or even Critical-Curricular-Theory), or in the Social Education (Education-to-the-Health, Social-Service-on-Education, Cultural-Animation, Communitarian-Action, Lifelong-Learning) have also been working to feed the actual dominant objective in Education: preparing for professional success or even to feed the charity that characterizes Education.

The body posture exercised searches for roots on the strands of the Critical Social Theory that covers the reflection and participation of the social actors involved (as main actors) on the construction of our own educative practices and on our questions of knowledge, power, and local human identity. The communitarian education, in the way in which it worked on this project, is designed to wake us from our status as anesthetized citizen consumers. We have been made into true dreamers, in the Freudian perspective. That is, we are permanently escaping the encounter with a traumatic reality. Under the conditions of the growing systematic crisis of hegemonic system, we are violently pressed to wake up from a dream that is turning into a nightmare (Žižek, 2011), and the body posture brings the conscious bodies in touch with the process of reproduction of social relations that not only anchors in the exploitation of the labour force targeting the extraction of surplus value, but in addition it feeds on the binding of obscene superego enjoyment holding subjective personal privacy to the imaginary version of the desire of the big Other. In our case, we are bound to the fetishism of invisibility as the image of profit. As a local example, the *bairro* has been the focus of NGOs and charity institutions that use them as a source of income; they need to be maintained where and how they are in order to produce surplus value for the local and national economy.

Some researchers on ethnomathematics have been working with the theoretical framework Communitarian Education, willing to empower the people of the communities, by bringing to the research critical thoughts in relation to the local knowledge. There is, however, a clear gap between ontological views, the concept of space in a topological sense (Restivo, 1983; Harvey, 1996; Le Bras, 2000), and the political influences in this kind of education, reflecting a Philosophy of Praxis – a gap between conscious existence and the actual life process.

The intellectual posture of the UBP encloses the value of human knowledge and the relativity to its internal and external context, reaffirming Education (and the extension of the Urban Non-Formal Education) as a political act and allowing the

transformation of the social actors into philosophers of their own educational practices – a movement of the conscious existence. Meanwhile, this educational proposal could be considered as a new form of symbiotic empowerment among urban communities, in our case: the fishing, the *bairro*, and the academic, expanding the academy to the asphalt, and, mainly, bringing the asphalt to the academy and rebuilding a new intellectual form. Following the Douzinas' reasoning: "if the value of human thought is relative to its context and all is doomed to pass with historical progress" (2000: 10), then the research on Education is infected with transience and cannot be protected from change.

Still operating in an urban non-space, we are in the urban boundaries with a different posture: being a part of non-part, but making conscious and conscientious our acts and their relations and, consequently, being IN (topologically speaking). This different posture is experienced through knowledge of our processes of identity (individual and collective) and self-conscientious. We construct our space – a space where the social relations between the visible and the invisible are not only present, they are interacting in ways that make our actions action of freedom, which is inherently political and pedagogical, finding ourselves in a situation always open of not full adequate to our roles and social identifications. Nowadays, we are a stratum organized, materially marginalized, but intellectually visible; we construct our actual space through the disturbing education – which we consider a political act, in Žižek's perspective

The day after

Immersed in the theoretical framework of Slavoj Žižek, the UBP was attempted to demonstrate that "the dimension of the act proper consists in the shift from the impossible to the possible" (2013a: 54). However, we attempted to demonstrate not the political act itself, but how the act rearticulates the frame of the critical change because the act only ruptures, i.e., "the act without later" simply represents an empty space. For Žižek, it is the negative gesture as a condition of a positive act and what matters is the day after.

Analyzing our act, we realize that this is coated with a disturbing education, because it is not a false activity of the educational impotence, which is restricted only to reproduce the socio-symbolic constellation of the existing educational dominant normative. From this point of view, every political act, in our case, disturbing

educational act, is located beyond all its conditionality, i.e., it is unconditional. Thus, it is not an "unconditional act" outside of history and outside the symbolic, but simply an act that is irreducible to the formal parameter and to the local oppressive conditions. According to Žižek (2011), the link between the situation and the political act (in our case the disturbing education) is far from being determined by the situation (or an intervention from a mysterious exterior). The acts are possible because of: the non-ontological closure, the incoherencies, and the gaps of a situation.

The rebirth of the political thought came from the UBP's process and its body-intellectual posture – our slow and small steps into our situationality through a transdisciplinary and transcultural way. Members of the three communities bring their survival characteristics that demonstrate strong knowledge that we can identify as scientific – a local science, a local logic, a local rationality, identified by D'Ambrosio (2013). It was these skills that we discussed and searched to understand and, through them, interact with the local population of these communities, endorsing themselves into categories of knowledge proposed by Ubiratan D'Ambrosio.

According to D'Ambrosio (2002), we can categorize the knowledge via the instruments used to survive. This author defines such categorization by instruments that we operate in our survival regimes, which are: communicative, analytical, and technological tools; they are addressed in the Program Ethnomathematics⁸, which was conceived for the scholar environment. What we emphasize here is that we study, with members of the two communities involved, the instruments used to survive and seek our emancipation in different ways putting in dialogical process our knowledge and place ourselves in an ethnomathematics posture. It gave us a way to reinforce the absolute participation during times of undeniable cultural encounters and confrontations experienced in Costa de Caparica, and to systematize (through

^{viii} I really like the more mature setting, from my point of view, that D'Ambrosio brings in his text "An Ethnomathematics View of Space Occupation and Urban Culture", Presented at the ICEM4 / Fourth International Conference on Ethnomathematics, Towson, Maryland, USA, July 25-30, 2010, and published in the Journal of Mathematics & Culture - ICEM Focus Issue 4 - ISSN 1558-5336, in which he states that: "the Program Ethnomathematics is an analysis of the *tics* (techne, arts and techniques) of *mathema* (explaining, understanding, dealing with) in different *ethnos* (natural and socio-cultural environments.). The Program Ethnomathematics is a Research program in the History and Philosophy of Mathematics and its pedagogical implications, focused on how and why the human species "(p.06).

the dialogical process) our surviving instruments – intellectual and material artifacts. To rethink this whole process now, the ethnomathematics posture and program is not the end but the door that opens into the ethnoscience posture and program.

The UBP presents itself as a critical ethnographic movement focused on the development of an emancipatory educative policy through the action of being together in body, brain, and social relations in a social, political, and economic context. This facilitates and reflects a new way of being individually and collectively and a new way of understanding who and what we are. This methodology was cause and consequence of an ethnomathematics (and more generally, following the suggestions of Sal Restivo⁹, ethnoscientific, or ethnoepistemic) posture. Our main critical ethnographical strategy to study the dialectics of knowledge and practice was the pedagogical method developed by Paulo Freire - Circle of Culture (a critical realistic dialogic process). It is noteworthy, too, that another strong ethnographic strategy was work with art in various representations, maintaining it as transcultural and transdisciplinary tools.

First, the ethnomathematics posture is constitutive of our body-intellectual posture. This gave us a way to consolidate ideas and concretize the first steps in resisting our oppression. Then we were able to spell out our critical thoughts. This was a process that awakened our consciousness to our actual life contexts and situations. The result was that the conscientious of our members spread among us based on examples from various cultural traditions. We now became active subjects in history, reflecting on and struggling for our existence. What came/comes next is transforming our individuality, our body-intellectual language, in our respective communities, and changing our positions relative to the local dominant class.

The slow collective transformation of language has allowed us to understand, and then establish, in a dialogical relationship, our self-consciousness, and to find a common ground in our personal perspectives, meeting our motivations and letting us interact as bastions, our fortress of ourselves. As has been reinforced in other writings of the UBP, coming from our collective discussions, we are conscious that we live in urban non-space communities and, at the same times, we are sometimes more like the ones who are IN than we should expect. We can be passive and aligned with the same system that oppresses ours. For instance, the non-spaces can

^{IX} This suggestion was made during the discussion of the development of this work.

be important places for local and national economy, as was discussed before. We can also perform many activities that can be seen as non-ethical by the dominant class (drug dealing, illegal fishing, production of disturbing education, etc.). We do not want to sanitize our communities but take them as they are and work from there. The urban acceptance of the hybrid phenomena and the process of conurbation¹⁰ as a tool to promote a participative and critical research have been an emergent point to allow our steps in a progressive movement and, through it, develop participative and critical approaches.

By doing so, we demystify the Other both as “dangerous” and as “innocent”. Indeed, in itself a non-space in neither “good” nor “bad”. The UBP has taught us that non-spaces are not the idyllic spaces of diversity and possibility. As such, the ethnomathematics posture here goes against the idolatry of the difference. It is important to be with the Other, and, through the process of the body-intellectual language, knowing and experiencing each other (and sharing our knowledge; cf. Restivo and Loughlin’s (2000) orientalist analysis of science east and west). Only from there is it possible to act and develop strategies aligned with our common ground, strengthening and rooting all the process of our “day after”, transforming our normal life.

Love as political category *in loco*

“ There is a link, I argue, between love and the global political, economic, and general cultural imperatives of our time. The recognition and analysis of this link can, I suggested, improve our understanding of contemporary society in evolution.” (Restivo, 1977: 01)

During the UBP process the love concept was rethought as a collective representation, as the social glue, as a social force. Based on our ethnographical experiences with communitarian education, we have linked love to the modes of production of urban human beings. We have been discussing productive forces, the

^X Geographically speaking, conurbation denotes the region where different towns expand and form one single urban area. According to social geographers, this is moved by the socio-economic needs of the different populations who seek to reduce distances and promote new possibilities. In cultural or social anthropology, this concept is used to explain important aspects of human behavior. In both cases, the word conurbation denotes both a movement and a process. For us, this term signals a process of circumcision where the merging of different populations creates topological disjunction and explicit boundaries (which, nonetheless, may remain invisible).

relations of production, and conscious bodies as a set of socio-economical relations through which the human being produces and reproduces itself.

The centrality of love for the UBP has its origin in Marx and Engels' claim that "the nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production" (2000, unpaginated).

By definition, the mode of production (in our case the communitarian education) is a socio-cultural-historical-geographical-political-economical complex constituted by two elements: the **productive forces**, that understand the produced elements (models, representations, signs, artifacts, social behaviors) and the elements of production (generational education; non-formal, informal, and formal education, the fishing boats, the local fish markets, the local communitarian kitchen – and other locally relevant physical places; as well as fishermen, members of *bairro*, researchers and educators); and the **relations of production**, that determine the social position in the society according to its function (local languages, local hierarchy, local forms of the products' division, local concepts, postulations, definitions, rules of inference or not; ethics, power, racism, illegality).

According to Marx and Engels (2000), in all forms of society, there is a certain production and the relations of production produced by it that set all other productions and relations to which they give rise to a category and importance. Following them: "(there) exists a materialistic connection of the men with one another, which is determined by their needs and their modes of production, and which is as old as men themselves" (unpaginated).

In that sense, and with the UBP focusing its research exercise on the process of the communitarian education in each community involved and in our own collective education (developed in our encounter), the relations and the forces developed in our productions were the main tools to create a communitarian community. Yes, it sounds like pleonasm! However, I argue the ethnomathematics posture as a position that promotes our union through our modes of production – our knowledge, which brings us together in a collective transformation. As Žižek (2013) has argued, love is the force of this universal link that, in an emancipatory collective, connects people directly, in their singularity, bypassing their particular hierarchic determinations. This incorporation of ethnomathematics posture into a hegemonic system has been possible through the deployment of an ideological injunction where we are willing to accept the Other deprived of its otherness (Žižek, 1992) – we are

willing to accept the Other as long as it fits into our symbolic order and as long as it is kept at a safe distance, the distance that prevents us from reaching its non-symbolic dimension.

I have considered the ethnomathematics posture as an example of the parallax view (Žižek, 2008), which has promoted, in our case, a slow and a deep transformation of ourselves (the social actors of this project), in different levels and depths – individually speaking, making our communities communitarian – in solidarity as one. This transformation is directly linked with our structure – the subjects' structure, which is now supported by our consciousness of the lived antagonism in the local social order (and global) through our critical observations (observations of our actual life processes and discussions about them) developed at different angles, reinforcing the individual structure as a conscious body and walking in the direction of a free collective subject.

The UBP considers love as a special case of cooperation lived in our ethnographical experience, as I have argued before, and as our social glue, especially in our collective education. According to Restivo (1977: 241), cooperation “is a social process in which individuals or groups work together toward common goal(s)”. Cooperation was our main objective, not as a naïve, boastful, or arrogant posture to impose something to be conquered among all of us – or even some of us; but in a sense to search our actual problem, in each community, to find our common ground, and to discuss our fragile position as invisible groups, realizing that our actual problems are not ours – they are reflections from the global problems, and converting the local revolutionary process itself into a civilizing force (Žižek, 2013), acknowledging its fragility, cyclic, and provisional aspects.

Nowadays, the ‘art of survival’ in this capitalist universality claims to be serving the others (ourselves, society, other species, nature) and, through some transdisciplinary and transcultural voices, the act of love revealed itself as a topological tool to be together, living on the boundaries, not as a category of charity or a blind obedience but as a political category in which the boundaries, being experienced in its whole sense (pleasure, obligation, and danger) will transform walking to a solidary noetic posture – a stage of a free and emancipatory collective.

“I think that authentic love is always; the majority of people are stupid idiots and ignorant, but maybe I love you and you and you and just you. I much more believe in this particular exclusive love. Now you will say, what about Agape? This is

for me strictly love as a category of struggle. It's not love in the sense of I love you all. It's in the sense of let's establishing solidarity. The only universality that I admit today is the universality of struggle. The only universality is that [everywhere] we [all] have our problems and there is a common front of each of us fighting in our country against a [common] enemy. That is love as a category of struggle." (Žižek, 2013, unpaginated)

When violence poses as love

Slavoj Žižek has reflected on the concept of love in many writings. . However, in 2013, Žižek was invited to give a lecture on Love as Political Category, by the young philosopher Srećko Horvat, in which he established connections among love, political/economic systems, spirituality, religion, etc. However, he established the transversal link between love and violence, which caught my attention by recognizing some aspects I have experienced in the UBP and with my previous work with children in street situation and the concept of space (Mesquita, 2011) – the hidden political process that sustains all these apolitical relations that the concept of love has supported.

Žižek (2013) affirms in his discourse that “the form of non-love today, but which poses as love: charity”. It has been one of the important postures that the local dominant class has adopted with us. By charity, the local institutions denominated as apolitical (church, social assistants, NGOs, or local associations) have maintained our three communities in a good conditions. It made it possible to remain where we are, how we are, and, especially, to maintain our processes of reproduction of social relations. These processes are not only anchored in the exploitation of the labor force targeting the extraction of surplus value (explicitly in the case of the fishing community), as, in addition, they feed on the binding of obscene superego enjoyment holding subjective personal privacy to the imaginary version of the desire of the big Other (explicitly in the case of the academic and *bairro* communities). In our case, the charity has supported the fetishism of our invisibility as image of profit and revealed itself as an opposite posture to the notion of love.

Another posture experienced in the UBP has been terror as the work of love. Žižek (2013) reproaches the fundamentalist terrorists, founded in slavish beliefs, which kill but claim to kill you because of your eternal soul, in the name of a true love. During all our life as a collective, we were physically terrified to deal with the

local police, in the name of maintaining the local social order, in the name of the rest of the local society, in the name of it saving lives, in praise of love for local society - remembering that we are not part of the local society for the “big Other”. However, the local terror exercised by the local police (marine and terrestrial) is a parallel contingent with the existence of both local communities (fishing and *bairro*) as economic classes, i.e., since they operate in the mode of production of the local and national economy. Permanent police swoops search the illegalities practiced by members of both communities, reinventing their own concept of legality – it is one of the local actions of terror in praise of true love by the local order (local rules or national laws). These permanent swoops result in the application of fines on behalf of local nature - the jargon of sustainability such as exalted in our modern times, which does not include human existence itself. A member of the *bairro* community owns a bar, and the UBP has discussed possible fines his property might receive. From our discussions, we could realize the social work of occidental mathematics concepts (one of our oppressed languages), which was a dialogical tool between the owner of the Bar and the local police: illegal bar + illegal settlement = legal bar – a case of the adding properties. Nevertheless, periodic police swoop practices are a sadistic superego enjoyment – it is yet another of the local actions of terror in praise of true love, in this case, of self-love (where the self can be identified as individual or collective – as fundamentalist groups). Especially in the *bairro* Community and up until September 2012,, the local police would come in small groups into the community, whether in uniforms or not, always armed and threatening community inhabitants, mocking them, humiliating them, slapping and patting whomever they wished (as in their free will) and sometimes robbing them. Some residents of the *bairro* began to file police reports about the policemen themselves, complaining to the same ones who were practicing the raid (the local police).

Žižek (2013) explains that terror and charity are closely linked, being the front and the obverse of the same power structure, and we experienced it in all local terror actions that have being done in name of love. The politics is the structural, all-encompassing principle and thus, neutralizing any part of certain content, indicating itself as "apolitical", is a political gesture *par excellence*. In that sense, we become “smart” about the brutal oppression that arrives under the name of love. We are learning with our disturbing education to play the game of modernity, creating our spaces to act, inside the social-economic systems, working within the actual values

and traditions, and losing of the local roots rather than a disturbing education based on its singularity, plurality, and difference, founded in the encounters of diversity, and with criticism, specially with our conscious body of our inner condition, even as rabble.

Žižek (2013) claims that in our current economy the blind dimensions of love (stable and passionate) have become an obstacle to realizing their “authentic development”. The crucial dimension of love is gradually disappearing. The UBP is for it members an example of the struggle to be in the world. We are not, we do want to be, just another group of urban human beings. We want to be a people who make a difference locally. We have chosen the strategy of making disturbing choices. I write about those choices here, but we are making other choices that mark the possibility of reconstructing a political posture. This is the objective (for us) of communitarian education, where the crucial dimension of love, our solidarity around an egalitarian social order, has been the foundation for our core social structure.

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