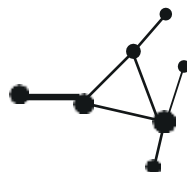


LEARNING UNIT

DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN PAULO FREIRE'S METHOD OF CRITICAL LITERACY AND ANDEAN WORLD-VIEWS

Working Group: Quito - Cuernavaca
Authors: Alejandro Cevallos

POPULAR EDUCATION
KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE
PAULO FREIRE
INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES
CULTURE / NATURE
SOUTHERN EPISTEMOLOGIES
DECOLONIZING THE CURRICULUM
CULTURAL AFFIRMATION
SAN ROQUE MARKET IN QUITO



intertwining hi/stories

LIST OF CONTENTS

1. Abstract
2. Opening questions
3. About the authors of this unit
4. First movement. Southern epistemologies and popular education
 - Suggested activities 1 / Questions to start a conversation
 - Workshop activities
 - Complementary Materials
5. Second movement. Cultural affirmation and decolonization of the curriculum.
 - Suggested activities 2 / Questions to start a conversation
 - Workshop activities
 - Complementary Materials (attachments)

ABSTRACT

The work itinerary that we propose in this learning unit consists of materials, texts, images and personal anecdotes that Sofía Olascoaga¹ and I gathered on a visit we made to WAMAN WASI, a center of cultural affirmation and recovery of Amazonian Andean peasant technologies in Lamas Peru. The questions we asked at the time were: How does the community self-government work? What is understood by education or creativity in Amazonian Andean communities? Could their knowledge interact with our knowledge and practices as artists or educators?

Of course, during our visit to Waman Wasi, our hosts did not try to answer our questions through debates or dissertations, instead they invited us to walk through their communities and their forests, we ate together, and we knitted together. At night we would meet to talk about what we were feeling and thinking.

After this experience, we carefully read the “subplots” in our mediation work with indigenous communities in San Roque market and in our embroidery workshop in Quito. The narratives made by the communities “from within” were, of course, part of a fight over their memories and their right to territory against the eviction process in Quito’s downtown, but they also showed us a radical difference in how they understood and made sense of the world. They showed us dialogues with entities of nature, connections between present life stories and practices, knowledge and ancestral memories. They confronted us with our own ignorance as popular educators.

The text “Re-thinking Freire” by Grimaldo Rengifo,² one of the promoters of Waman Wasi, showed us in a critical way the relationships between popular educators, radical educators and Andean-Amazonian communities, highlighting the lack of recognition of their epistemological differences when establishing relations of dialogue and envisioning social transformations.

Here are some exercises that we propose for a potential workshop. These exercises are meant to share

1 Sofía Olascoaga conceptualized and managed the visit to Waman Wasi in Lamas Peru as part of the educational programming of the Bienal de Sao Paulo „, Incerteza Viva „, in the year 2016.

2 I refer to the text by Rengifo Grimaldo (2001) Rengifo Grimaldo (2001) “Nurturance in the Andes” In Re-thinking Freire: globalization and the environmental crisis / edited by CABowers, Frédéric Apffel-Marglin. LAWRENCE ERLBAUM ASSOCIATES, PUBLISHERS. Mahwah, New Jersey London. Available in English at Art Education Research # 15, 2019, <https://blog.zhdk.ch/iaejournal/category/>

our experience and observations made in the process, the objective is to find together the meaning that this could have in your own work context. We aspire to contribute by recognizing dominant discourses that are embodied in our educational practices and to identify the challenges that the possibility of knowledge exchange in multicultural contexts implies.

OPENING QUESTIONS

- Do you know about critical literacy experiences that have been influenced by Paulo Freire's thinking in your own context? How was it adapted (or not) to the cultural or linguistic differences of your context?
- Can you identify in your context and local history "ways of understanding the world" that have been infantilized, minimized or discredited because they are not part of the paradigm of rational, scientific, objective knowledge?
- How are they, how have they been, or how could the educational practices that are not based on the culture - nature opposition be?

ABOUT THE AUTHORS³

The working group of Quito member of the Another Roadmap School (for artistic education) is formed by the educators Valeria Galarza, Lennin Santacruz and Alejandro Cevallos, who worked together (2012 - 2015) in the Research Department and Community Mediation of the Museums Foundation of Quito, a department whose purpose was to open spaces for collaboration and critical dialogue between museums and communities in the area. During this time one of the main focal points of our work had to do with the popular trade spaces in Quito that are inhabited mostly by indigenous women threatened with displacement due to security, tourism and heritage policies within the framework of a neoliberal development project and land management.

Alejandro Cevallos, author of this unit, has been part of the "Women's Workshop Embroidering in the San Roque Market" between 2016 and 2018 (outside the museums institution) a work group for the creation of educational materials for cultural affirmation in bilingual intercultural schools (Kichwa-Spanish) in the San Roque market.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0viHjBRDTJM&t=63s>

Sofia Olascoaga, researcher and independent curator, helped in the creation of the complementary materials of this unit.

³ Nadia Peñafiel and Vania Ginez helped with the translation of this document.

FIRST MOVEMENT

SOUTHERN EPISTEMOLOGIES # POPULAR EDUCATION



From the workshop “Women embroidering in San Roque Market” Quito, 2018. Photo file from the workshop. For more information on the workshop watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0viHjbRDTJM&t=57s>

For a few weeks we extensively interviewed *hierbateras*⁴ women at the San Roque market in Quito. The questions revolved around how they learned or taught their trade.

Hierbatería (herbalism) is an ancestral practice mainly exercised by indigenous women that includes the collection and cultivation of plants for medicinal purposes, a practice that was traditionally not distinguished from other activities of community life. Currently, popular markets keep alive this practice which of course is not only a commercial transaction of medicinal plants, it is a conversation, an interpretation and the sharing of recipes of plasters, infusions, baths, and *limpias*⁵ with different kinds of leaves, flowers and roots that come from the most diverse ecosystems of the Andean belt (mountains, paramos, valleys, streams)⁶.

Andean ancestral medicine was driven underground by colonization and European Christianity⁷ and subsequently systematically discredited by the public health administration promoted by the Ecuadorian liberal state at the end of the 19th century, which had as its reference the enlightened rational thought and the western medical institution within the “modern nation” project⁸.

4 Translator Note: *hierbateras* (o) could be understood as herbalists in English, they are mostly women who gather and/or sow medicinal plants from local ecosystems in their communities and then sell them in popular markets in the city.

5 Translator Note: *Limpias* are ancestral rituals performed mainly with medicinal plants in order to cure an individual of physical and spiritual ailments.

6 Talking to *hierbateras* in the popular markets of Quito was a necessity that was born in the workshop „Women Embroidering in the San Roque Market“, the interviewers were Silvia Vimos, Lenin Santacruz and Alejandro Cevallos. We appreciate the contribution of Erika Bedón who bet on this initiative through the Institute of social memory of the city. More info about the embroidery workshop on this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0viHjbRDTJM&t=57s>

7 You can look up Federici 2004. Caliban and the witch. Women, body and primitive accumulation. Especially the chapter „Colonization and Christianization. Caliban and the witches in the new world“ pp. 287

8 For a discussion on policies of social hygiene and ornate and control of indigenous populations in the city of Quito Kingman: 2008

However, traditional medicine practices and *hierbatería* in particular, far from disappearing, have been recreated in generationally shared knowledge and shared memories. The *hiebatera* women responsible for the care and reproduction of the popular classes have promoted networks of popular economy among women of the countryside and of the city maintaining an idea of health woven intimately to the relations with the local ecosystems, all of this, always done with affection and prestige.

Back to the particular case of the San Roque Market in Quito, we must emphasize its location in the urban center of the city, also called “historical center” because of the colonial character of its architecture, and so we speak of a place that has undergone constant pressure due to real estate interests and tourist companies that exist in the area. Even so, in this market the biggest popular fair of medicinal herbs of the city takes place twice a week supplying healers and other smaller markets⁹.

The important presence of *hiebateras* in this market can be explained by looking at it through a geographical perspective that acquires a sacred connotation from an Andean worldview.

Half an hour up towards the west from the San Roque market on the hills of *Pichincha* (an active volcano that embraces the city of Quito) is a fresh water spring that appears from the core of the volcano. This spring descends through the middle of the *Ullaguangayacu* ravine that no longer exists nowadays due to the urbanization of the area in the 70s yet at the beginning of the 20th century it was still a living ecosystem of native species that crossed the center of the city from east to west.

South west of the market is the *Ungüi* mountain that translated from Kichwa means “healer” this mountain is guarded by the *Marco Pamba Chilibulo* indigenous community where some *Hiebateras* still collect plants with healing properties that grow wild.

The location of the San Roque market connects these points that despite their ecological devastation are present in the memory, the stories and the practice of *Hiebateras* until now.

Angela Simbaña is a grandmother who has been selling medicinal herbs for thirty years at the San Roque market. She told me that until the early twentieth century there was still a quarry in the hills of San Roque, she refers to the first quarry of the city which opened in 1551 from where the stones and the necessary material for the construction of public, private, and mainly religious infrastructure of the city were extracted with unpaid indigenous labor.

In this quarry, the *hiebatera* women looked for and chose solid stones of approximately 50 centimeters in diameter and took them to a stonecutter to tear them down by removing the outer layers until they were left with core, a stone the size of a fist, this stone was called the *shungo-rumi* or the heart of the stone. The stone was placed in boiling water along with wild herbs such as vetches and an Ecuadorian variety of radiator plant; the resulting infusion was meant for people who suffered from sadness, specifically a persistent sadness¹⁰.

Here we must take a minute to warn against any romantic interpretation. In the Andean worldview of the Guarani and Aymara tradition (Bolivian Andes), thought is something that happens in the chest because the heart's breathing and vibrations are directly related to the act of reflecting¹¹. In the Mesoamerican tradition the center of mental functions was the heart¹² from the *Kitu-kara* tradition (Andes of Quito) the notion “to heart” is used as the intimate relationship between feeling and thinking, reasoning with the heart,

The city and the others. Quito 1860 1940. Quito FLACSO. pp. 215 - 363

⁹ The medicinal herb fair at the San Roque market brings together approximately 60 female *hierbateras* who in turn are connected to an indeterminate network of women who collect and grow medicinal plants in the main ancestral communities of Quito and in indigenous communities of the provinces of Tunhuraigua and Cotopaxi (southern Andean region of Ecuador). A photo essay on the medicinal herb fair in the San Roque market can be seen at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/156257654@N08/albums/72157693246464495>

¹⁰ It should be noted that according to Angela Simbaña, most people looking for advice and *shungo-rumi* medicine are women.

¹¹ It can be found in Rivera Cusicanqui Silvia (2013) „ From the MNR to Evo Morales: disjunctions of the Colonial State“. In Tipnis Amazone in resistance against the Bolivian colonial state. Santander. Otramérica Publishing house.

¹² It can be found in Marcos Sylvia (2011) Drinking from the lips: gender and Eros in Mesoamerica. Quito, Abya Yala

combining intelligence with affection¹³.

Despite having these considerations at hand, my first feeling about Angela Simbaña's story about an infusion made with the "heart" of a stone was disbelief, then I felt something similar to tenderness about something that seemed naive and finally I pondered: how can a story of this kind make sense in a process of popular education? But giving it a naive and picturesque tinge prone to distort the critical sense that we would like to reconstruct from the community knowledge against the dominant idea of a modern and patrimonial city? Aren't these types of stories the ones that would end up discrediting popular knowledge about natural medicine? Aren't these kinds of stories swallowed up by the industry of exotic tourism?

Maybe I felt like the Peruvian educators that Grimaldo Rengifo described in his article "Re-thinking Freire". From the method of critical literacy that inspired Paulo Freire they saw as an obstacle what they called "magical thinking" and intended to banish it from the circle of conversation as a condition to reach what matters: to see and describe the world objectively, to judge and transform it¹⁴.

What's behind what Angela Simbaña told us? And what does that have to do with us popular educators and art educators?

Some indigenous peasants still use the Andes to plant a simple tool that in the communes of Quito is called *gualmo*, it's a wooden stick of one and a half meters that thins out at the ends. With this rod a hole is made in the ground where they will deposit the seeds. In many Andean communities that still practice a small-scale family agriculture, the idea remains that the wood should be made with the wood of one of the trees that has given a lot of fruit, or that it is very leafy, because in this way the wood can "teach" the earth its fertility properties. In the same way "the hand"¹⁵ that sows is of crucial importance for the crops to be good, "a good hand" in the everyday speech of the Andes refers to the condition of having or not having skill, knowledge, patience or love to do something, it is said, for example, "she has" a good hand" to sow, the hand of the person who sows transfers qualities to the seed deposited in the earth.

This idea of mutual transfer of properties between things and beings that are living together can be seen as a broader scope of "conversations". It is usual for a farmer to ask permission to the land that she/he will cultivate before starting her/his workday or to thank it when it's time to harvest, in older times asking permission was accompanied by "offerings" of food and drink for the *allpamama* (the land where you work).

Angela Simbaña and her story of *Hiebateras* healing sadness based on an infusion made with the "heart" of a stone extracted from the hills of San Roque requires us to acknowledge that there is a conversation between them and the subjective world, between them and the world that has become a subjective being and that this is not metaphorical but a counter-hegemonic way of interpreting the world and of knowing it, establishing non-hierarchical senses between the human community and the natural environment.

In a world where everything is alive (stones, mountains, plants, water springs, the earth itself) the beings coexist and try to establish conversations cultivating relations of mutual upbringing (of mutual care). This relationship of mutual rearing in the Andean peoples is agriculture that is re-created cyclically and communally. Agriculture weaves relations of affection that cannot be fully explained in the framework of the paradigm of enlightened reason that opposed culture and nature in a sense of domination of one over the other.

To prosecute, delegitimize, minimize, infantilize those forms of "conversation with the world", those relationships of affection, those practices linked to radically different ways of understanding one another in the world is an automatic action of colonizing and colonized thought. Popular and critical education located in Andean contexts would have the challenge to keep alive these tensions and discrepancies of the memory and connect their practices with the task of re-creating ancestral knowledge and technologies as a form of local cultural affirmation that is essential to make viable the aspiration of an exchange of diverse knowledge.

¹³ It can be found in Guerrero Arias Patricio (2007) „To Heart. Anthropology committed to life.“ In New looks from Abya Yala for the decolonization of power, knowledge and being. Asunción, FONDEC.

¹⁴ See footnote number 2 in this text.

¹⁵ „the hand“ in the daily speech of the Andes designates the body part but also refers to the condition of having or not certain ability, knowledge, affection and patience to do something, it is said for example: „he has a good hand to plant“

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY 1

QUESTIONS TO START A CONVERSATION

- What comes to your mind when we ask you to think about local knowledge and popular memories related to the reproduction of community life?
- What is the concrete practical dimension of these popular memories and knowledge?
- Under which conditions or dominant discourses unfold these practices, knowledge, popular memories in your context?
- Can you refer to concrete ways in which popular knowledge and memories have been minimized, infantilized, illegalized or, on the contrary, co-opted, banalized, digested by the dominant culture? And in contrast, can we identify some of the forms of adaptation, resistance, camouflage or transformation that have allowed the use of these forms of popular knowledge?
- What could be some concrete effects of these forms of knowledge - memory - popular practice in our practices as educators / art educators / museums educators?

WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES 1

In small groups of up to 4 people, start a conversation where we try to identify personal stories or anecdotes, in which we have been confronted with different ways of interpreting the world, knowledge or popular memories (other epistemologies).

At the end of the conversation and listening session (approximately 20 minutes), we can share the flow of our conversation by surveying the following points:

Group presentation of personal stories or anecdotes	How do practices, knowledge, or popular memories relate to the reproduction of community life, symbolically or materially?
	What dominant discourses exert pressure on these practices, knowledge and popular memories?
	How do they adapt, resist, camouflage, or transform these practices and forms of popular knowledge?
	Brainstorming: How do these knowledge, memories, popular practices could concretely affect our spaces of artistic education or education in museums (through activities, implementation of contents or programs, etc.)?

COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

1. TEXT

In Spanish: Rengifo Grimaldo (2003) "Andean upbringing: About Freire" in *Teaching is being happy: Education and Andean cultural affirmation*. PRATEC. Lima.
<http://www.pratecnet.org/pdfs/Enseanzaestarcontenido.pdf>

In English: Rengifo Grimaldo (2001) "Nurturance in the Andes" In: *Re-thinking Freire: globalization and the environmental crisis* / edited by CABowers, Frédéric Apffel-Marglin . LAWRENCE ERLBAUM ASSOCIATES, PUBLISHERS. Mahwah, New Jersey London. Available at Art Education Research # 15, 2019,
<https://blog.zhdk.ch/iaejournal/category/>

2. INTERVIEW (Spanish and English)

Olascoaga Sofía, Cevallos Alejandro and Rengifo Grimaldo (2018) “ Discrepancies between Paulo Freire’s method of critical literacy and Andean world-views”. Art Education Research # 15, 2019, https://blog.zhdk.ch/iaejournal/category/aer15_texte/

3. Cevallos Alejandro (2016) Notes on the days of study at Lamas Perú / Grupo Quito / Bienal de Sao Paulo. in Another Roadmap School. <https://another-roadmap.net/quito-working-group/blog/notas-a-proposito-de-los-dias-de-estudio-en-lamas-peru-grupo-quito-bienal-de-sao-paulo>

4. SOURCE: *HIERBATERAS* IN SAN ROQUE MARKET IN QUITO (available only in Spanish).

Made by Alejandro Cevallos, Silvia Vimos, Lenin Santacruz and the Women embroidering workshop in San Roque market in Quito. (2018)

SECOND MOVEMENT

CULTURAL AFFIRMATION # DECOLONIZATION OF THE CURRICULUM

By Alejandro Cevallos

We know that the history of art in general and the institution of museums, in particular, have a genealogy related to colonialism. The ways of knowing and the spaces to learn are guided by a Eurocentric model that discards knowledge, doings, feelings of the places and memories of the peoples of the global south.

In different meetings, some colleagues from the Another Roadmap School (such as Rubén Gatzambide-Fernandez, Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, Kitto Derrick Wintergreen) mentioned the problems they had when using the notion of “artistic practice” with their students, because it excluded a series of local languages, ways of knowing and ways of doing, forms of popular creativity symbolically and materially related to the reproduction of local community life.

Faced with this problem some of these colleagues have decided to stop using the word “art” and provisionally use the notion of “symbolic creative practices”¹⁶.

From this perspective, not only the genealogy of the artistic institution is questioned, but also the foundations of history and art theory, facing the challenge of re-knowing the stories and creative practices of a local tradition (many of them related to forms of affirmation, cultural recreation of local knowledge and memories) that have been under the radar of the artistic institution. Thus, what has been called “handicraft” or “folk art” by the people of the south or the street dances that demonstrators improvise in social mobilizations in defense of their territory or the performativity and material culture of the celebrations and rituals linked to the agricultural cycles in the Andes¹⁷; they can be gathered in the same vein: they are “symbolic popular creativity practices” we can say with certainty that these manifestations are not art, but definitely respond to a territory, have a concrete material effect in the spheres of popular economy, and many times they are related to taking care of the common with which today it is indispensable to commit oneself.

ACTIVITY 2

QUESTIONS TO START A CONVERSATION

- ▶ Within the framework of a project for the decolonization of the artistic education curriculum:
- ▶ What kind of “symbolic creative practices” can you identify in your context related to discursive traditions and local popular practices?
- ▶ How could our practices (as artists, art educators, or museum educators) be related to symbolic creative practices?
- ▶ What can we re-learn or recognize from work referred to as crafts or folk art?
- ▶ What are the risks and challenges in this movement that is oddly interested in the creativity of subordinate groups?
- ▶ Can we imagine concrete exercises in which theory and manual work are intertwined?

¹⁶ Ruben Gatzambide is a professor in the „Teaching and Learning Curriculum“ at the University of Toronto, working with indigenous communities and youth groups. Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa and Kitto Derrick Wintergreen are artists, theorists and art educators based in London and Uganda respectively, members of the Another Roadmap Network for arts education. About this discussion you can consult the text of Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa „Symbolic creative practices“ <https://another-roadmap.net/articles/0003/4593/symbolic-creative-work-pdf.pdf>

¹⁷ In the Andean region the original communities keep alive the ritual festivity related to the two solstices and the two equinoxes, which are astronomical events that mark the changes of the agricultural cycle and that also determine social, political and spiritual activities.

WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES 2

Embroidery is an artisanal practice, brought from Europe but adopted with affection by native communities throughout the Andean region. We are interested as a group experiment to embroider and at the same time create a journal or make notes about what happens at the individual or group level while we embroider.

We care about the impressions, reflections, situations that we will experience while working with our hands, the perception of time, the contact not always pleasant with the material, threads and needles, as writing tools.

To this end, we suggest the following dynamic:

1. We elaborated a post-it map visible for the whole group where we gather memories, or relationships that the participants have had with the embroidery from a personal experience, it's also important to identify the spaces, the situations and the people associated with those memories.

The organizer, must take into account that embroidery is a feminized practice, therefore, it is important to highlight in the memory map all aspects or characteristics that show the production of the practice: Who teaches? Who learns? How do you learn? How are the relationships that characterize the teaching of this trade? How are the materials of the trade? What is the functionality of what is produced in these embroidery workshops?

The map of memories and relationships will be briefly commented in a group round.

2. The organizer must consider people who already have some experience or knowledge with embroidery, as they could be active helpers with the instructions to their activity partners.

3. The organizer should ask the participants to take a few minutes to write a sentence (a single line), as if it were an epigraph, that condense an idea that is representative of their work or practice (remember that we are mainly working with people who come from the field of research, museum education or art education).

The phrase will be written on a piece of cloth that would be provided by the organizer of the workshop.

The phrase is chosen from a personal repertoire, it can be taken from academic texts or philosophical texts, but not only from these "authorized" sources, you can use quotes drawn from popular songs, snippets of interviews or conversations that you've had with people or communities with which you interact daily in your work, you could also resort to your own ideas.

In any case, the phrase collects and condenses an idea, a principle, a provisional reflection, a metaphor or any form that expresses the positions or foundations that are key in the development of the practices of the participants.

4. The next step is to distribute the materials for the job, needles for embroidery, Orlon thread, and then teach the simplest stitch to fill with thread the lines drawn on the fabric and embroider the phrases on the cloth.

Before starting the practical work, the organizer will show a list of questions that the participants are interested in discussing later (so that the participants can make a note of it in their journal or mental notes).

Group presentation of the embroidered phrases	What is the relationship between reflection and body?
	What relationship do we experience in regards to materials and time and to the group?
	Did the fact of having to embroider a phrase change into something that we could simply say or write?

5.

At the end of the embroidery session we make a conversation circle where each one will explain why she/he chose that phrase and what embroidering it implied, this will be an exercise of free reflection, using as a base the table of suggested questions.

COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS (CHECK THE FOLDER ATTACHED TO THIS UNIT)

Rubén Gaztambide Fernández, Andrea Vásquez Jiménez, Henrjette Mece, Iris Ferrer / Eileen Legaspi Ramirez, Alejandro Cevallos, Luiza Proenza. Decolonize the Curriculum / Decolonizing Curriculum. Multivocal Glossary of the Another Road Map School.

<https://another-roadmap.net/another-roadmap/a-multivocal-glossary-of-arts-educationun-glosario-multivocal-de-educacion-artistica>

Cayo Honorato (2022) No somos el único tipo de nosotros. En La Escuela

<https://laescuela.art/es/campus/library/mappings/no-somos-el-unico-tipo-de-nosotros-cayo-honorato>