

Intertwining Hi/Stories of Arts Education

Theoretical and methodological foundations

‘Intertwining Hi/Stories’ demonstrates how hi/stories of arts education interlink between different geopolitical regions as well as how they exist in often conflictual relationships. The project works on the connection between stories and the translations between individual *stories* and *history*.

Arts Education

The foundation consists of a very broad understanding of arts education. It encompasses learning effects created by and across artistic activities and cultural production that are connected to institutional educational spaces such as schools, universities and museums, as well as in informal settings. The aim is to reflect on the fact that ‘art’ and ‘education’ are in fact European concepts, while there are historically different conceptualisations of learning and “symbolic creativity” (Willis 1990). Thus, at the start of the project, no a priori definition of ‘arts education’ is established; rather, historical processes will be identified within each research context that are certain to be of particular relevance with regard to considering arts education today. The examination of institutional contexts can thus be considerably varied depending on the local circumstances, and it is these very differences which emphasise the relevant historical contexts that this project is exploring. As such, institutions that deal with art and which have a long and sometimes problematic history shaped by colonialism clash with more independent contexts offering alternative models of ‘education’ and ‘art’, as well as seeing themselves as laboratories for new interpretations of history.

Hi/Stories

Connecting these manifold approaches gives rise to new perspectives on the field of arts education as a whole. This process is explicitly based on specific local and biographical experiences. The *stories* that they generate are taken seriously as a pivot which can be used to shift our concept of *history*. Interpretations of history are therefore not projected onto individual activities; instead, the opposite happens: these activities become the framework within which a reconfiguration of historical understanding takes place. Connections between separate and, at first glance, unrelated events are also

drawn from the perspective of specific hi/stories (and not based on a pre-established global narrative). This outlines the structure of the project: the research foci of Intertwining Hi/Stories will become apparent through local research and practical experiments. Joint meetings, festivals and workshops will examine how these elements relate to one another. Further subsequent research phases will be used to examine these collectively established connections more intensively.

This achronological and dispersed approach to history critiques the concept of a one-size-fits-all Eurocentric narrative of classic historicism that is tied to progress. This critique of a homogenised idea of time and past is inspired by Homi Bhabha, who, in his concept of “Third Spaces” – in reference to Benedict Anderson (1991) – understands and illustrates the problematic nature of imaging a “homogenous, serial time” that has been the basis for European nationbuilding. He posits that European historicism is built upon the idea that history can be described as a sequence of events and that this would develop from “lower” to “higher” history, playing out in and spreading out from Europe, and setting the bar by which everyone and everything would be measured. This “first in Europe, then elsewhere” idea of historicism shaped the entire concept of a globally applicable structure of time (Chakrabarty, Dipesh: “Provincialising Europe: postcolonial thought and historical difference”, 2000). Critiquing chronological sequences and thus an approach which is itself an ideological foundation for the creation of European hegemony (Chakrabarty 2000) led us to formulate the terms ‘Hi/Stories’ and ‘Un/Chrono/logical timeline’. The title Hi/Stories assumes the methodological potential of oral history, of the process of storytelling, and by doing this attempts to negate the dichotomy between the larger idea of ‘history’ and the small micro-practice of storytelling in order to see the telling of positioned stories as part of the construction and thus as an interrogation of ‘history’. Beginning with small, specific and sometimes orally transmitted ‘micro-stories’ and examining how they relate to one another is to critique Eurocentric, historical and chronological concepts in a way that is not just theoretical but which offers specific research alternatives in terms of methodology that have an effect right from the data collection stage until the dissemination stage. These practices of generating and presenting history make other, decentred perspectives in the field of arts education possible.

Planet thinking and new cosmopolitanisms – alternatives to the concept of the 'global' and the paradigm of cultural difference

The aim of this project is to conduct historical research into Arts Education in different geopolitical regions and to make this research beneficial for the training of arts educators. The goal is for educators to be able to consider how they perceive their profession and their methods in a way that goes beyond local 'self-evident facts' (in the sense of unchallenged perceptions) and to find new points of reference on how to deal with heterogeneity and difference. Here the issue is the *comparison* and the imagination of the *global* in contrast to the local comes into mind. Both points of access are problematic: a comparison implies an all-encompassing set of benchmarks. The idea of the global implies a totality that can be accessed and for which an overview can be achieved, for example, in a 'global history' of arts education. The project must thus develop access points that allow historical networks to be researched between different localities without allowing a researcher's viewpoint which would sit above and beyond these perspectives. At the same time, there must also be the aspiration to go beyond the local perspective - as this, when seen individually, would in turn imply that 'local histories' are self-contained. This is set out primarily in the project structure and method (see below); however, it is important to also mention the conceptual foundations. Gayatri Spivak describes one such approach, referring to Glissant's relationality, as "planet thinking":

"If we imagine ourselves as planetary accidents rather than global agents, planetary creatures rather than global entities, alterity remains underived from us, it is not our dialectical negation, it contains us as much as it flings us away - and thus to think of it is already to transgress [...] We must persistently educate ourselves into this particular mind-set." (Spivak, Imperative to re-imagine the planet, p. 339.)

Spivak's rethinking of the comparative study of literature from different contexts can be used as a starting point for the work this project carries out with stories. Spivak considers the learning of such a perspective – in which the "world" is not thought of as a totality to be contained but as an inaccessible entity of which I am a part – as the core task of an "aesthetic education".

"If we planet-think, planet-feel, our 'other' - everything in the unbounded universe - cannot be a self-consolidating other, an other that is a neat and commensurate opposite to the self. I emphasise 'education' in the passage above, and I mean specifically training the imagination, 'aesthetic education'" (World Systems and the Creole, p. 451).

Another concept which might be re-appropriated is 'cosmopolitanism'. As Nikita Dhawan, for example, expounds, it should be understood that the liberal concept of

cosmopolitanism shaped by Europe is complicit with global power structures, at least when it is not connected with a reflection on a nation's own historic contexts with regard to such concepts. (Dhawan, Nikita: Zwischen Empire und Empower: Dekolonisierung und Demokratisierung. *femina politica* vol. 18, No. 2, 2009). Gayatri Spivak writes about Kant's concept of cosmopolitanism: "This formulation of cosmopolitheia troubles us because it seems allied to imperialism contemplating the world in its grasp. On the other hand we want to REWRITE IT TO SUIT US" (Introduction, *An aesthetic education in the era of globalization*, 2012, p. 17). This rewriting "to suit us" is what interests us about this concept; just as with "freedom" and "equality", it appears to be a concept from the Enlightenment that is "impossible for us to not want", but that must nevertheless be interrogated in order to determine who factors it in and to what purpose. Homi Bhabha again, with his use of the term "vernacular cosmopolitanism", has begun to reflect on this type of appropriation (cf. Bhabha, Homi: *On Minorities: Cultural Rights*, 2000). The specific appropriation being offered is the focus on rights and responsibilities as "citizens" that goes beyond the national level. In contrast to the restrictive focus on "culture" in concepts of multi/inter/transculturality, it thus seems an interesting starting point for a multi-perspective reflection on arts education.

Research approaches

Inductive, iterative process

Based on the outlined theoretical references, case studies selected for the investigation are not chosen by virtue of a one-size-fits-all basic theory (which would have simply reproduced the criticised Eurocentric approach); instead, they are selected in line with the interests of and specific questions posed by the respective network partners. In this project the process of developing correlations and connections between the 'stories' will apply an *inductive principle*, and the design implements an *iterative process* between the work on local case studies and the analysis carried out in the international research team. The first step in analysing these international crossover points already took place during the application stage and led to a three-pronged research approach being defined in which case studies would be viewed in relation to each other.

1. The transfer of 'art' and 'education' from Europe to the Global South within the colonial context
2. Models of critical pedagogy and their international contexts, focusing mainly on the 1970s

3. The reactivation of historical experiences for the purpose of current practice.

In order for these crossover points to be elaborated on across the entire research process, an ongoing exchange will run concurrently across all three research strands. The local project teams working on each strand will meet regularly via Skype (see WP2 Task 2) and develop areas of interlinkage between their research.

The second ‘loop’ of this process will take place between August and October 2016. For each case study, an initial data collection phase will be carried out (work package 1) which will be supported by more general research on the relevant results and international influences within the respective context. This data will then be used as a basis for the first research workshop (scheduled for October 2016). The purpose of the joint analysis will then be to identify questions regarding ‘intertwining’ at the international level as well as the links between the individual ‘stories’. Here three parameters will be used:

- Discourses: concept migrations – transfer of terminology, models and practices from one location to another through literature and its reception; implementation at a political level ...
- Actors: personal connections, travelling of central actors
- New dialogues: similarities and ‘answers’ (as an alternative model, as an expansion) between events and concepts where no historically causal link can be established.

In the following phase of the project (work package 2), research is intensified focussing on the “entanglements” identified. The local research steps that have already been planned will be concentrated in this vein and expanded through research with international partners and within the broader Another Roadmap for Arts Education network.

Throughout this process of forming associations between different local stories alongside and across the research strands outlined above, connections between the hi/stories of arts education worldwide become apparent which otherwise would not have come into view. They vividly and understandably challenge ideas of Eurocentric chronologies. The ‘Un/Chrono/Logical Timeline’ tool is used to visualise and convey these rewritings.

Practice as the production of knowledge

A further method-based point of reference for Intertwining Hi/Stories is the anchoring of the research in practices of arts education. Grounded in the methodologies of action research, practice-based research and art-based research, practice is not only seen as point of reference for research questions and as a field where research results can be implemented; rather, the assumption is that knowledge, hypotheses and further research questions can be generated within practice itself. The local projects therefore follow a cyclical research paradigm whereby the individual phases – the generation of research questions > field research/actions > formation of hypotheses > additional research questions – are mutually dependent upon one another.

During this process, the project design in each local context is grounded in historical research, i.e. literature and archive research form the basis for the individual ‘practice-based experiments’ and ‘oral histories’ project stages. In some projects, the focus is on archive research, whilst others are more centred on practice-based experiments. These areas of focus vary depending on the local conditions and the research groups’ areas of focus. They connect in the binding research plan that defines common research phases and milestones (see research plan).