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## Biographies for Artistic and Social Intervention: A Youth-Driven Project

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This article discusses how biographical materials may be used in youth arts education projects to develop new methodologies and approaches that can stimulate artistic and social intervention in contemporary urban communities, thus changing the field of arts education policy at the community level. Through their creation of Artistic Society Projects, a group of young people from the arts education project Bando à Parte: Youth Cultures, Arts and Social Inclusion (O Teatrão, Coimbra, Portugal) have created a voice that may be used to transform their own communities. The starting points for this transformation are the young peoples' biographical paths. The influence of youth on education policy may be strategically understood in the context of formal and nonformal school curricula. How can youth use their biographies to develop specific contributions both to change in individual behaviors and to social change in urban communities, influencing arts education policies to instigate action? The exploration of these processes through the work of artistic creation, inspired by collected biographical materials, represents a contribution to ongoing reflection on the issues of memory, identity, youth resistance, and community change in urban settings, influencing the ways in which arts education policy is understood and implemented.

**Keywords:** arts education policy, biographies, social change, urban communities, youth citizenship

### BIOGRAPHIES, NONFORMAL ARTS EDUCATION, AND YOUTH RESISTANCE

Reimagining the cartography of contemporary urban settings and understanding how this cartography is perceived by specific urban subcultures are valuable tools in any reflection on the ways cities and communities are dealing with differentiation. Differentiation is becoming more and more a feature of urban territories, and dealing with it is increasingly becoming a challenge to arts education policy. Authors like Kathleen Gallagher and Jonathan Neelands have grappled with this issue by analyzing how the urban environment creates connections between differentiated social contexts, exploring mutual influences between the theater and the urban setting (Gallagher and Neelands 2011; Enciso et al. 2011). There is thus an urgent need to encourage the development of individually grounded methodologies that can help us analyze the relationships among

education, culture, and individual and group differentiation (Kelly 2009). In more general urban settings and more specific educational contexts, it is important to understand the connections between young people and the impact of socially engaged artistic activity (Gallagher and Service 2010; Gallagher and Wessels 2013). Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard have made an important contribution to this field of study with their book *Community, Culture, and Globalization* (2002), in which they present several examples from around the world of efforts that explore the promise and challenge of community cultural development. In their introduction, Adams and Goldbard define community cultural development as "the work of artist-organizers ('community artists') who collaborate with others to express identity, concerns and aspirations through the arts and communications media, while building cultural capacity and contributing to social change" (8). The examples explored in this book have several features in common with the example presented in this article, namely, they all work toward pluralism and participation in cultural life and are undertaken as possible responses to globalization's pull toward the standardization of commercial culture. Adams

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and Goldbard provide accounts from practitioners from Ocoitepec, Mexico, the Appalachian Mountains, and Río de Janeiro (among others) who—like those from the *Bando à Parte* project described in this article—describe their attempts to explore the social margins, facilitate empowerment, create space for alternative voices, reframe public discourse, and catalyze social action.

The use of a set of methodologies that emerge from a work of creative and artistic experimentation, combined with qualitative analysis, generates a particular symbolic understanding of urban imaginaries, in which an encounter with difference can unveil another side of the composition of urban communities (Dillabough and Kennelly 2010). This work, specifically focused on young people, suggests new approaches to reformulate the relationship between the young citizen and the urban contexts in which he or she lives and explores the possible influences on politics of nonformal (learning that takes place outside the formal school curriculum) and informal (learning through everyday practice) learning methodologies in arts education.

In the case presented in this article, a specific type of creative experimentation is proposed for use in a socially sustainable arts education project with young people, in which nonformal and informal approaches to artistic practice are integrated with daily life experiences in schools, families, and neighborhoods. Nonformal approaches have become increasingly important in creating opportunities for youths' individual development. The approaches presented here are connected with artistic practice and propose innovative ways to deal with social degradation in urban neighborhoods, exploring education methodologies that often do not have the space to emerge within the context of the formal educational system (Sernhede 2011). What I discuss here is a specific artistic and social methodology created through the youth arts education project *Bando à Parte: Youth Cultures, Arts and Social Intervention*, which underwent its first two-year cycle in 2010–2011 and its second cycle in 2012–2013. In the first cycle of the project, biographies were used to instigate individual social intervention and reflective social thinking, creating a new perspective on the social function of artistic practice and its possible influence on education policy. Here, I propose that the approach used in this project be adopted by groups of schools to establish pilot projects through which this nonformal arts education curriculum could be adopted and integrated as a policy strategy. These “Artistic Society Projects” could then be understood as parameters of arts education policy in the school's formal contexts. In addition, this methodology might also be implemented in nonformal arts education organizations that work in nonformal arts education contexts. Through articulation within formal contexts, this methodological approach could provide intervention strategies that would allow the implementation of an integrated system that offers a new policy approach to arts education

based on the principles of critical reflection, individual identity, participation, and life-based experiences.

I refer throughout this article to specific political measures (which are also discussed further at the end of the article) that may be implemented in both formal and nonformal arts education contexts. These measures include: (1) increasing citizen participation, (2) providing incentives to individual and group multidisciplinary and integrated learning processes, (3) relating projects to social and cultural contexts, (4) focusing on individual and social contributions for project elaboration, and (5) creating cycles of youth leadership. Any approaches to achieve these measures should focus on biographies as a resource material.

The construction of individual biographies was a starting point in implementing this approach, representing a way of structuring the approach to individual arts education projects. The biographic process is directly connected with the processes of education (Dominice 2006) and is a basis of social intervention, structuring relations in different collective contexts. Biographies help shape individuals' existential and subjective perspective, giving greater importance to the social, cultural, and political aspects of each individual life course. Therefore, the biographical approach can be used to articulate both the individual and collective elements of a society and its peoples (Josso 2009) by bringing together both a subjective and an analytical component. The individual thereby becomes part of a complex social system that can also illuminate possibilities for youth empowerment and resistance. Therefore, work with individual biographies was here used as the starting point for building Artistic Society Projects (ASPs), which were individually developed and group related. The ASPs were the result of the use of biographical approaches (life stories and biographical narratives, combined with different individual perspectives on the social world) during the arts education process. These projects represented an effort to build knowledge on an understanding of social processes and issues. They were based on the heuristic potential of biographic approaches and their subjective processes, creating, as Elsa Lechner and other authors propose, an interpretation of social history based on the subjectivities of individual stories (Lechner 2009; Niewiadomski 2012). This approach takes into account the transformative potential of artistic practice in its relation to communitarian values and in its reinforcement of social bonds (Friedler 2011). Within this view, structuring arts education processes based on the methodology of ASPs created a new understanding of the essential importance of arts education for the individual development of young people.

Biographies reflect relations of trust between individuals and propose strategies of outreach to and interrelation with differentiated social groups and social worlds. From an individual perspective, such interaction has a strong pedagogical and transformative power, as it gives a person his or her own subjective perspective on a specific situation

(Bertaux 1997). From a collective point of view, it helps generate new methodologies that may influence more formal arts education contexts in particular and arts education policy in general. The materials collected through biographical and life story approaches may catalyze individual processes of social and cultural emancipation. The positive impact of youth emancipation can be seen in its generation of positive forms of civic participation (Christens and Dolan 2011), moving toward a “New Civics” (Checkoway 2011, 10). Biographies can destroy socially constructed stereotypes of youth and help individuals build a political perspective on the social world, as well as a specific code of conduct. In the context of school, the creation of specific ASPs based on these principles encourages the development of a new perspective on arts education. Special attention is given to social interaction based on cultural and social differentiation in order to focus on the development of individual and group projects that structure learning, as well as to the crucial importance of arts education programs. These programs may be organically integrated into schools and may be developed through all learning levels and throughout the entire school year.

In order to be able to make the connection between biographies and arts education methodologies and their impacts at the policy level, we need to take into account, on one hand, the origins of the models of biographical construction, and on the other hand, the connections of this model with education and learning processes (Delory-Momberger 2011), so as to clarify the relationships between arts education and social integration (Marshall 2006) and between artistic practice and arts education policy. Biography is always a social and cultural construction. It represents a fusion of objective and subjective richness, as individual stories are always a reflection on the overlap between individual and collective stories and realities (Lechner 2009). The relation of human beings with their life is culturally constructed, and their life courses express models, social structures, and cultural approaches. Subjects interpret their lived experiences and produce an interpretation of their life and of their relation with it, creating an idea of themselves and an interpretation of the world around them. Biographical activity is consequently an essential process of the social definition of the individual in relation to his or her society (Delory-Momberger 2004). It is in this context of reinterpretation of the social world that subjects are created as active interveners in their own lives, influencing their life course and consequently adopting a political and reflexive perspective on the development of a specific social, cultural, or political situation. Authors like Kathleen Gallagher and Dominique Rivière have explored the unique ability of theater to raise questions about specific social issues like the relations between gender and race, highlighting a specific political and reflexive function of this artistic practice (Gallagher and Rivière 2007). This connection with reflexivity makes it interesting to analyze the contribution to arts

education and education policy of an arts education project that uses some tools of the biographical approach to create individual ASPs. This approach focuses on both the creation of knowledge within the individual’s specific social, cultural, and political context and the individual’s reflection, through the artistic practice, on that same context. The artistic practice incorporates the possibility of rewriting life and rebuilding identity, proposing structural models to build individual constructions of reality. The process uses an individual approach to reporting that assumes the form of an artistic presentation, which is the result of a long process of artistic-oriented research, explained later in this article, in the section on Methodology.

### THE PROJECT: CHARACTERIZATION, ACTIVITIES, AND METHODOLOGY

Bando à Parte is an arts education project that envisions the construction of individual identities based on the promotion of individual capacities, the development of self-trust behaviors, and the promotion of interpersonal and intergroup relationships. All these components contribute to the enhancement of arts education curricula and arts education policy. On one hand, the main objectives of this project are the creation of a culture of civic leadership and the development of reflective behaviors and the capacity for action, with a view to conceptualize and implement ASPs. These projects, during the first cycle of project implementation, used artistic activities to generate positive social change by overturning the negative stereotypes that are normally reproduced by a political system that tends to perpetuate the disconnection of specific youth groups from mainstream opportunities, lifestyles, and outlooks (MacDonald and Marsh 2001). On the other hand, because an active civil society cannot be envisioned as independent from its cultural ties, the approach was also based on the revivification of individuals’ cultural origins through the promotion of opportunities to establish intercultural relations and to promote cultural reconciliation with urban spaces (Measure 3). The instrument used to develop these objectives was the artistic activity within multiple disciplines, namely, theater, music, and dance (Measure 2). In this context, the project’s intervention strategy was to develop individual creativity as an essential instrument for the development of a group of social and individual skills that contribute to the creation of a citizenry that is able to reflect on social contexts and become engaged in civic action. It is this connection between artistic practice and the role of the individual as an active citizen that is an essential contribution to the rethinking of policies in a more connected relation with individual social and cultural surroundings (Measure 3).

In fact, it has become more and more important that citizens in general and youth in particular develop a process for reflection on the social context in which they are

integrated in order to positively act within the communities where they are living. Artistic activity in general is an essential instrument to stimulate critical reflection, as it simultaneously helps develop creativity and facilitates the establishment of connections with other approaches to the social world. The issues that affect youth in their daily lives are directly connected to the main issues that affect society in general. What, then, may the role of artistic practice be in contributing new proposals to reformulate approaches to arts education curricula? What is the role of citizens in general, and youth in particular, in constructing what might nowadays be understood as citizenship in terms of its connection with artistic practice? And how may artistic practice contribute to the generation of knowledge and innovative social approaches for the development of a citizen with a local, national, and international identity? These are the main questions that set up this project's terrain of analysis.

### Processes and Objectives

Bando à Parte aims to instill citizens with a critical attitude, autonomy, and the capacity to act individually and as a group (Measure 1), as well as with a deep connection both to the urban social space that surrounds them and to their differentiated senses of belonging and cultural identity.

To achieve this aim, the project strives to pursue the following objectives:

- Create a structure that supports the creation of ASPs through artistic and cultural activity. The main goal is to support the development of artistic intervention projects that use artistic and cultural tools and are directly influenced by the social issues that affect youths' daily lives.
- Develop youth leadership capacities (Measure 5), stimulating the potential for the conception and implementation of ASPs based on cultural and artistic practice.
- Promote relationships with the urban space, including natural urban environments, daily life spaces, and public spaces, through research for the ASPs in natural and built urban environments (Measure 3).
- Stimulate the development of intercultural relations by using artistic activity as a tool of connection between different social and cultural groups and as a means by which individuals who are socially excluded can become included (Measure 3).
- Promote the development of individual artistic skills through participation in a structured program of activities that include the introduction of the basic tools of artistic practice in different fields. A more formal learning curriculum is complemented with a nonformal learning process in which the youth group establishes direct contact, during the two years of the

project, with different activities of the professional theater company O Teatrão. These activities include rehearsals, production activities, the setting up of performances, the production of artistic events by other groups, and evaluation processes.

- Promote interchange between O Teatrão and other artistic organizations from other countries that work with youth groups and develop programs in which the youth groups have opportunities to discuss, share experiences, develop joint artistic activities, and evaluate the different projects from the different countries. The main goal is to identify good practices in the field of youth arts instruction and social inclusion. It then becomes possible to establish a network in which both youth-related arts organizations and youth can jointly share and propose innovative formats to build youth citizenship in the contemporary world.

### Area of Intervention

This project includes intervention in communities and with individuals with low levels of social inclusion and/or who are undergoing processes of identity affirmation—in short, youth in situations of social exclusion or at risk of experiencing social exclusion.

The area of intervention is the city of Coimbra (located in the central region of Portugal), namely, those neighborhoods with social housing complexes and other social and cultural peripheral areas of the city, such as the Fonte da Talha neighborhood, the Fonte do Castanheiro neighborhood, the Conchada neighborhood, the Misericórdia/Loreto neighborhood, the Rosa neighborhood, the Ingote neighborhood, the Celas neighborhood, the Parque de Nómadas (Centro de Estágio Habitacional), Pedrulha, Santa Apolónia, Adémia, Eiras, Baixa, and Alta.

### Target Population

This project aims to work with communities of individuals with low levels of social inclusion. It also includes individuals who are undergoing processes of identity affirmation, but who are not necessarily in situations of social exclusion. Thus, it includes both youth in general and youth who are in situations of social exclusion (e.g., immigrants, monoparental and disrupted families, and youth experiencing educational and personal development problems). The age group is between fourteen and twenty years of age.

### Diagnosis of Social Needs

An examination of Coimbra's local social network revealed specific needs of the at-risk youth population or youth experiencing situations of social exclusion. It also highlighted the specific social, economic, and cultural contexts of the district and specifically of the most problematic

social housing complexes. It was in these social contexts that this project's growing relevance became evident, as well as its potential to represent an important contribution to the prevention of school absenteeism and drop-out, youth unemployment, addictive behaviors, and early experience in the labor market that may lead to disinvestment in personal education.

Some causes of school absenteeism and drop-out that were identified in Coimbra are related to the low importance that is given by families to education, the disinvestment of more problematic students, and the use of educational strategies that are not well adapted to students with low levels of motivation and high levels of risk of social exclusion. In general, educational curricula do not include innovative content or methods related to artistic education and other creative activities, but instead rely on general approaches that are not well adapted to youths' personal, social, and cultural contexts. These deficiencies within educational curricula may contribute to problems regarding youth development, as well as risk behaviors. The lack of innovative institutional responses to youth needs at the occupational and formal levels in Coimbra is thus clear. Coimbra's social network, through the diagnosis of social needs, assumes that one of main priorities in the field of education is the development of programs oriented toward the community in general and youth in particular.

Another social need that was identified is related to the growing rate of youth unemployment in Coimbra. This is a consequence of school drop-out, which is associated with a lack of professional qualifications and a lack of investment in youth by local enterprises. The main consequences of drop-out are the risk of delinquency, social exclusion, poverty, and life precariousness, all of which are related to migration and emigration flows. This project aims to prevent those behaviors that may lead to social exclusion by minimizing the risks that lead to such behaviors. In order to accomplish that goal, Bando à Parte offers a curriculum that attends to youth needs in matters related to the promotion of individual capacities, the development of self-confidence, and the promotion of interpersonal and intergroup relationships. These capacities favor the development of positive attitudes and personal learning capacities and structure the acquisition of transversal competencies oriented toward human development in society.

In the Rosa and Ingote neighborhoods, two of the neighborhoods where this project is implemented, key problems include the excessive concentration of families, drug addiction and drug traffic, school drop-out, school absenteeism, and unemployment. The causes of unemployment are low levels of educational and professional qualifications and the perpetuation of social stereotypes related to these neighborhoods. These factors generate a lack of self-confidence and motivation for work. By developing intervention strategies targeting the youth population, Bando à Parte promotes the intrinsic motivation to work in society and individual, as

well as subjective, creativity. It also promotes individuals' increased relation with society and the development of their capacity as social agents who are responsible for social action.

In parallel, this diagnosis should lead to the creation of alternative curricula in the arts that include a motivational component. In addition, these curricula should also aim to reflect the multicultural and multisocial reality of these urban contexts, including youth from different cultural origins, namely Gypsies, youth from Portuguese-speaking countries, and youth from Eastern European countries. These specific contexts, characterized by populations experiencing exclusion or at risk of experiencing exclusion, require curricula that are adapted to their specific realities and educative models based on the development of youth capacities of interrelation in contexts of social and cultural differentiation.

### Strategic Approach

Bando à Parte envisions the creation of leadership cycles, during which youth individuals, after experiencing a two-year nonformal arts education curriculum, became peer leaders of the second cycle of youth participants (Measure 5). In this way, participants from each cycle became peer leaders for the next cycle's participants. Therefore, a culture of youth leadership is created in which youth become the main interveners and agents of change (Heath and Smith 1999; Carvalho 2011) (Measure 4). As continuous work focusing on the youth group's artistic capacity stimulates social intervention, a range of reflection on social issues occurs, encouraging the youths' emotional and inter-social development as promoters of ASPs (Measures 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5), through which the relation between biographical contributions and reflection on contemporary social issues is explored.

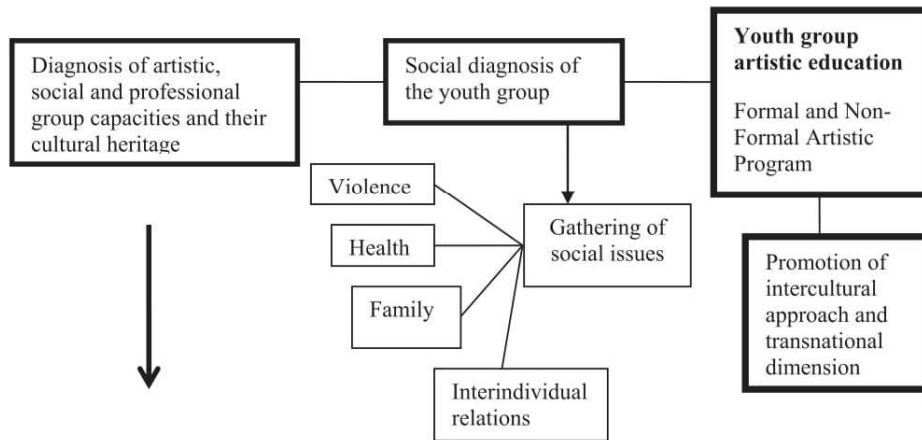
Figures 1 and 2 make explicit the structure that orient the development of a project cycle, creating specific levels of action in order to ensure continuity and focus on the creation of youth leaders (Measure 5).

### Bando à Parte—Strategies of Intervention and Activity Plan

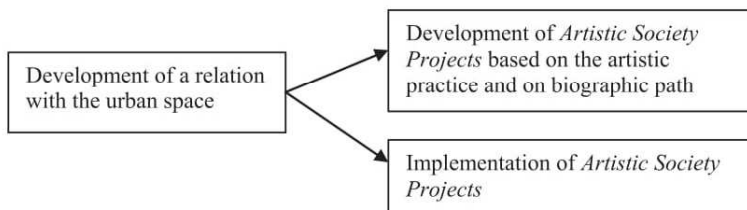
The social and cultural incubation strategy envisioned the development of a two-year process (for each cycle) based on a specific arts education curriculum. This curriculum is based on a model of social development in which a focus on civil society, civic leadership, and critical reflection is presented as an essential mechanism for the creation of ASPs (Measures 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5). These projects use artistic and cultural activities associated with biographical pathways to intervene in concrete social realities. This type of incubation integrates five strategic areas of intervention, all of which influence each other, so that the objectives of

**Level 0: Project Dissemination and Gathering of the Youth Group**

**Level 1: Social Diagnosis, Diagnosis of Capacities, and Arts Education Program**



**Level 2: Implementation of Artistic Society Projects**



**Level 3: Evaluation**

Joint evaluation between educators and youth group of the process, and work on the joint report.

**Level 4: Identification of Group Leader among Young Participants**

FIGURE 1 Structure for creation of Artistic Society Projects.

relating to the urban space, promoting spaces of intercultural dialogue, and increasing artistic capacity are concretized.

The first area of intervention is related to the *identification of social and individual living contexts*. This identification contributes to the development of original projects that use artistic activity, articulated in the form of biographical materials, to reframe and find new perspectives to examine social issues (Measure 3). The second area concerns the *relation to public space*, exploring possible contemporary youth identifications with urban areas. This approach creates a renewed understanding of historical spaces and helps define strategies of relation that may influence the reconfiguration of youth memory and clarify its contribution to redefining youth identity. Some project activities include visits to historical urban spaces and artistic events in public urban sites like parks, gardens, streets, historic centers, and squares. The main goal of these activities is to reframe the

nature of the relationship of the individual to public space and to give visibility to the continuous work of the group and its involvement in each stage of event production, dissemination, presentation, and documentation (Measure 3). In the third area of intervention, strategic attention is given to the creation of a group of individuals who reflect the intercultural composition of urban settings. The group should work together to define the specific working methodologies that, either because of the given theme or because of specific approaches to group work, are essential to building a sense of group identity. In this context, great importance is given to the implementation of international exchange programs and seminars with youth-related institutions from other partner countries such as Italy, Ireland, The Netherlands, Austria, and Belgium. In addition, strategic attention should also be devoted to the outlining of an arts education curriculum in theater, dance, and music that includes both regular classes and different artistic



FIGURE 2 Leadership cycle.

performances in different urban cultural spaces. Finally, it is of great importance to emphasize the establishment of direct connections with the official school system in order to co-design a structured program that strengthens the relationship between youth and the education system, so as to enrich the students' individual biographies. This effort should be carried out in partnership with families—schools, families, and the youth should develop a permanent working relationship.

### Methodology

Bando à Parte is understood as an experimental and experiential project in terms of not only the methodologies used, but also the development of platforms of interdisciplinary and transnational dialogue (Measure 2). It represents a continuous laboratory for testing new approaches to developing the relationship between artistic practice and the education and policy fields. This relationship is developed on the basis of a grounded research approach to biographical courses, taking into account individuals' perspectives on contemporary social issues and individual challenges (Measure 4). This process reveals ways in which nonformal learning methodologies can make important contributions to the field of arts education, generating reflection on the methods used in the more formal arts education system and identifying strategic changes in arts education policy.

Furthermore, the project aims to enrich the development of specific research methodologies in the field of artistic practice and their possible connections with arts education processes (Baldacchino 2009). Following the claim that the

arts must build their legitimacy by developing their own specific paradigm (Knowles and Cole 2008), this project contends that the arts must reinforce their salience through their political importance. Therefore artistic practice should be understood in its possible connection with arts education practice, both in formal and nonformal education contexts.

In fact, artistic practice may offer an opportunity to enhance youths' personal, social, and professional development. Youth are encouraged to become active participants throughout the entire process of ASP preparation, implementation, and evaluation (Measures 1 and 4). The process of learning associated with the ASP requires the generation of knowledge through a creative arts education process and the development of experiential knowledge (Measure 2) through the process of individual project development (Shreeve and Smith 2012).

In consequence, youth prepare the foundation to build a youth leadership culture (Measure 5) based on experiential learning in the arts. This type of nonformal learning represents, in conjunction with the more formal learning that occurs during the arts education program, an essential component for the work of structuring an active and participative society (Measure 1), one of the main components of a more socially integrated community. Social exclusion, especially the kind experienced by youth with few opportunities, may be attenuated by the existence of a structured and active civil society.

I here share what happened during the first cycle of Bando à Parte (2010–2011), particularly concerning the process of creation related to the ASPs (Measures 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5). The individual projects are developed in different phases. First, ASPs in the areas of theater, music, and dance require individual supervisors who coordinate the process of project development. In January 2011, a meeting took place between teachers and project coordinators, during which twelve images and twelve texts were chosen as potential foundations for the design of the ASP. Each participant randomly chose one text and one image. During the first two weeks of January, several brainstorming activities were done with the group, centering on the texts and images. The goal was the elaboration of basic concepts that could be used as starting points for the creation of the ASP. From these basic concepts, each participant generated questions that were important to him or her, exploring the connections between individual problems and more general social issues (Measures 3 and 4). To support the design of the ASP, each participant began a logbook, in which individual thoughts, questions, and reflective contributions could be recorded in order to help build the ASP. At the end of each group session, each participant made a contribution to his or her own logbook. These starting questions were intended to express individual uneasiness, reflections, and worries about their neighborhoods, families, schools, and friends. Between January and February 2011, individual interviews were carried out with all the participants in

order to individually identify the starting questions that would orient all the processes related to the creation of the ASP. The starting questions that emerged from the analysis of participants' life stories were the following: In a mass-driven, alienated, and standardized society, what is the role of the individual? In what way can we overcome a society that levels us and creates stereotypes? How can we live our life in a way that allows us to take advantage of all our opportunities? How can I relate my cultural identity with my actual life? In what ways can I be the owner of my destiny? In what ways can we try to subvert the common order of things in order to walk toward a utopia? Why do we determine our choices based on what others think? What is the possible equilibrium between tradition and innovation? This phase represented the first approach to how biographies, through their direct articulation of individuals' reflections on contemporary social challenges and general perception of the social world, can create materials that may catalyze the process of artistic creation.

After sharing their starting questions, the participants defined an individual strategy for their ASP based on the arts education program. Starting in March 2011, each participant focused on his or her individual ASP. In parallel, the general curriculum on theater, music, and dance continued, as did activities carried out in interrelation with *Teatrão*. During this phase, each project participant also chose an artistic area (theater, dance, or music) in which to develop their own individual project.

For the dance project, individual motivations were connected with diverse possible forms of expression (including opinions, reflections, and biographical materials), and after a precise direction was defined, the work of choreographic research started. The choreographic potential of the participant was determined in more technical classes, and then, through directed improvisations, the choreographic material was created.

During the month of April, in order to bring consistency to the work, the individual project in the field of dance included research at home, including research on movement, sound ambiance, images, and texts. Participants also choreographed short pieces that could be worked out and integrated afterwards. The diary of the project was then completed and thus included practical and theoretical substance.

For those participants who chose theater, two subgroups of three people and one of four people were created in which a creative construction process was initiated based on each individual starting question (Measure 4). Work on each individual project was begun with research on movement, sound ambiances, images, and dramaturgy. The main goal was to build a context for each character through the direct articulation of biographical materials and social perceptions, always trying to articulate the individual as a person and the character as an element of fiction. At the end of each week, participants engaged in both individual and

joint reflections on the modes of creation and project conception. Both individual and group work was also carried out throughout the project. The individual monologues and the building of characters gained continuity, and the physicality of the characters and individual proposals for costumes were developed. Because the goal was the elaboration of the ASP through a final presentation, the participants started to develop a proposal of dramaturgic structure. During the month of May, the work of the subgroups gained continuity through object exploration exercises, research on the consequences of the characters' physical construction, the construction of scenes through the division of dramatic action into units, and the construction of scenes from excerpts of texts. In June, group scenes were explored, and during the month of July, focus was given to the concrete construction of the individual ASP (at the level of character building), the relationship between different scenes, and the building of a structure for the final exercise. During August, work was done regarding the final exercise's choreographic structure, and preparation began for the group presentation at the International Arts Laboratory, which took place between September 5 and 11, 2011. September was dedicated to the preparation of the final exercise and the work of character building for the individual ASPs. The focus was on establishing connections between characters' biographical paths in order to structure a collective presentation that could speak broadly to a heterogeneous audience (Measure 4). A space for participants from different artistic areas to share their experiences was also created. In addition, during this month the International Arts Laboratory *Bando à Parte—LAI* was held, in partnership with MUZtheater (the Netherlands) and Associazione Marchigiana Attività Teatrali (Italy). LAI created a space for youth from *Bando à Parte* and the Italian and Dutch groups to share their experiences, methodologies, and approaches to the building of the ASP.

In the music area, the work was developed in four phases: reflection, experimentation, structure definition, and consolidation. During the first phase, several resources were used to facilitate the reflection and introspection process in order to build a solid starting point for the critical analysis of the biographical material. Some key resources used in this phase were the Internet and other audiovisual tools (e.g., video) and bibliographic materials that enriched the individual research process. In this context, participants created a set of situations experienced by a character who was making a musical journey throughout his past, reflecting on specific moments of his life that had transformed him into what he is today (Measure 4). The second phase (May–July) focused on experimentation with sound and musical resources in order to add consistency to the project. The starting point was the individual body, the voice, and the musical instruments as sources of sound. A diversity of musical styles (e.g., concrete music, flamenco, pop, jazz, traditional Portuguese music) was also explored, as were



diverse techniques of music composition in real time (like looping). All the different musical elements used in the “individual musical history” were defined. The third phase (July–September) was dedicated to the organization (and betterment) of the individual project, including the integration of contributions from other artistic areas. The last phase (September–October) was devoted to project consolidation and its integration in the final exercise.

The month of October was a month of intensive work for all projects (music, theater, and dance) in order to integrate them into the final exercise, entitled *40° 11' N 8° 24' W*, which was presented October 13–15 at the Sala Grande of Oficina Municipal do Teatro (Coimbra, Portugal) and which brought together the ASPs of all the participants in the first cycle of Bando à Parte.

The following is a general summary of the different steps in the creation of the ASPs.

1. Artistic inductors were chosen and concepts for the ASP were created.
2. Individual interviews were conducted to help participants generate questions.
3. Questions were generated that helped spur the creation of the ASP.
4. An individual logbook was created.
5. A strategy for ASP implementation was defined.
6. Focus was placed on the individual ASP.
7. The general theater, music, and dance curriculum continued, as did activities interrelated with Teatrão.
8. The ASP projects were created through (a) subgroup work; (b) the creation of the individual project; (c) individual and group work; (d) the proposal of a dramaturgic structure for the final presentation; (e) the creation of a choreographic structure for the final exercise; (f) the sharing of experiences, methodologies, and processes with international partners; and (g) the integration of theater, music, and dance projects into the structure of the final exercise.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ARTS EDUCATION POLICY

The main goal of this article is to contribute, through the experience of Bando à Parte, to the enhancement of arts education curricula and arts education policy. In order to attend to that purpose, a few guiding principles for policy implementation need to be enunciated in order to facilitate a plan of action at both the official and nonofficial levels. Consequently, a group of principles are here suggested in order to open up the discussion and articulate specific policy recommendations for the implementation of a parallel arts education curriculum that may be gradually adopted. First, pilot projects should be undertaken in cooperation with specific cultural organizations, and these should be

regularly monitored and evaluated. Second, the implementation of this curriculum should be the responsibility of artists who have regular and direct connections with the process of artistic creation and who, along with arts teachers, may be able to elaborate the adaptations required for each school, youth group, and social and cultural context. Third, local governments, in concert with civil society organizations, should be expected to create the institutional conditions for these types of projects to happen in local schools. This task should be formalized in a set of principles that articulate the heightened importance given to arts education in schools, creating opportunities for pilot projects like Bando à Parte to happen.

The following principles and proposals, based on our experience of project implementation in the context of an arts organization, concern the connection between individual biographies and arts education methodologies and policies:

1. Defend and implement an arts education policy agenda with the goal of create citizens able to reflect on social contexts and engage in civic action.
2. Define formal arts education programs based on individual and/or subgroup project learning processes.
3. Foster an interdisciplinary approach to project organization and implementation, as the focus is much more on the creation of an arts project and not so much on the learning of artistic skills.
4. Establish a curriculum based not on differentiated artistic disciplines, but on an integrated approach to building a project learning process;
5. Integrate contextual information—social, cultural, political, and economic—into the definition of the basic concept for project elaboration.
6. Motivate participants to engage in individual and/or subgroup theoretical thinking for the project’s conceptual elaboration.
7. Focus on individuals’ opinions, reflections, and practical contributions to the process of project elaboration.
8. Stimulate youth emancipation through the focus on both individual and group biographical paths capable of generating social impact at the community level.
9. Define individual and subgroup cultural and social profiles as starting points for project conception.
10. Create groups of youth tutors who are responsible for orienting younger youth during their process of project elaboration and implementation.
11. Develop cycles of youth group leadership for the creation of artistic project learning processes in order to promote a culture of civic leadership that becomes associated with arts education processes.

## CONCLUSION

In sum, the specific methods used in this project were based on nonformal learning and informal learning. The process of project development included the direct involvement of youth in suggesting new methods, contributing to the practice of structured dialogue between arts educators and themselves, and stimulating active behavior and an intervention-oriented attitude.

The creation of the ASP, which combined the theater, dance, and music areas, required the collection of and research on a set of biographical materials and experiences that were both individually and socially constructed. The proposal to build an artistic exercise that would create a fictional universe brought together concrete examples of how biographical experiences may be articulated. Through this artistic proposal, a reflective and political position was built, initiating a movement from an often-limited individual perception of the social world toward a more open and critical perspective on the possibilities of creating change in communities. By incorporating a combination of individual perceptions on specific situations that combine elements of social reality and elements of fiction with reflective thinking on social and cultural contexts, the ASPs embrace a very strong political component. It is through this political perspective—specifically at the level of arts education policy—that youths' potentialities are recognized and effective social transformations are begun. Therefore, the guiding principles enumerated in this article provide the context for the elaboration of policies in the field that are structured around the concepts of critical reflection, individual identity and participation, and life-based experiences. These are the main concepts that elucidate the definition of ASPs (and their consequent working methodology), proposed here as a strategic approach to influence policy in the arts education field.

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