

# Chapter 12

## “Insurgence”: Activism in Art Education Research and Praxis

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### ABSTRACT

*When engaging in contemporary community art practices, art educators question and reflect upon daily life aesthetics, creating micro-narratives and provoking actions through poesis and metaphors. Performative practices converge in political events using hybrid languages in-between the borders of various fields where educational practices may be generated through participatory research and collaborative art processes. In this chapter we describe several practices and strategies of activism related to art education research by the authors with intention of promoting socially engaged justice through artistic process in the community. The strategies employed by the authors are based on collaborative pedagogical approaches adopted from contemporary art practices and artistic tools, such as collaborative sketchbooks, kilts, drifts, drawing festivals and online exhibitions. These approaches promote shared learning experience and democratic participation through the arts, and ultimately help to develop community cohesion, solidarity and social justice.*

### INTRODUCTION

*The primary objective is to engage all people in the fabric of society, and ultimately promote social cohesion, solidarity and social justice, creating a better quality of life for everyone. Participatory democracy also aims to achieve quality services for people that are better targeted to their needs. Participatory democracy creates public space for discussion and therefore gives people more ownership of decisions.*

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## **“Insurgence”**

*It aims to engage with disengaged people who are not politically active (e.g. those who do not vote), nor active in associations, creating a more active citizenship. ...By involving people to intervene, participatory democracy can produce solutions that are effective and legitimate, and go beyond traditional political divides. In that sense, it strengthens the legitimacy of decision makers/services providers since their decisions will be based on the real views of people (European Commission, 2006)*

By using the term *insurgence*, we definitely claim our non conformism with the current state of educational practices and policies and disassociate art teaching practices in which the arts are usually recognised as skills and techniques. We use art processes and practices in education as relational practices that may produce subversive actions questioning prevalent hegemonies in society. We suggest that collaboration experiences using art activist events and processes be an important tool to foster greater tolerance toward diversity. In our present times of violent conflicts and forced migrations, educators can raise again the hope in education for peace, trying to teach through socially engaged arts and challenging the current foci on the model of competition and accountability that tends to limit education to an array of transferring objective knowledge and skills. In face of the denial of individual and community's rights embodied in capitalism and technocratic ideologies, arts processes and media may be used to express, critic and share ideas so, thereby creating diverse learning spaces critical to participatory democracies.

According to the European NGOs Social Platform (European Commission, 2006) participatory democracy aims to improve trust and accountability. The types of measures that can enhance inclusive participatory democracy, especially at the local level, require regional and local authorities to establish structures in all policy areas involving social partners and civil society organizations in the planning, delivery, coordination, and monitoring of policies; making wider use of local plebiscites; and providing local citizens information and advice services that support and provide information to citizens on how they can engage in the democratic process (European Commission, 2006). But, the economically driven societal structures had proven to fail in achieving respectful public dialogue and civic engagement. There is now an increasing awareness of the need to go beyond rigid hierarchies of democracy in practice, even though it has been legitimated and supported by political parties in European countries. Key stake holders in Europe are strengthening representation and democratic participation and claim that democracy and social cohesion are interdependent (European Commission, 2011) Without civic engagement there is no democracy. Elsewhere, independent voices are emerging from activist movements saying that we should think about people as the main factor for societal and planetary sustainability as Birgitta Jónsdóttir claimed in a Ted Talk conference “... today the systems no longer serves the people... today democracies had become dictatorships, social institutions, corporations and companies are manipulating people to believe we are powerless, however through networking, sharing, co-creating people has the power to change...” (Jónsdóttir, 2015).

## **Culture and Art Has a Mean to Foster Civic Engagement**

Several contemporary concepts highlight the ways that art and culture contribute to social inclusion and well-being of communities. We understand social inclusion as an active process to enhance personal development, improved social cohesion, and reduced social isolation and active citizenship (Stern & Seifert, 2010). We believe that through arts education activities, artist/teachers contribute to social emancipation and social inclusion for disadvantaged individuals, groups, and communities. Designing and implementing educational actions or situations that raise aesthetic, ethics and political issues can foster

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