

Nomadic learning as mode of inquiry in an Arts Based Research classroom

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Sub theme: Arts-based research and/or artistic research and the norms of communities (cultural, geographic, scientific, and so on)

Explicit connection to arts-based and artistic research.

Abstract

This study draws on the authors' experience offering the course Arts Based Research to Fine Arts students at the University of Barcelona. One of the main contributions of the course, now ongoing for the last five years, is that throughout the semester we develop with students an arts-based research project, which enables us to establish a dialogue between the inquiry process and the readings and examples we study. This format interrupts the norms of our Faculty and our classroom, revealing both the limits and potentiality of doing arts based research with undergraduates.

In 2015-16, students reflected on their foundations and learning trajectories. To address these questions, our group adopted the notion of *nomadic pedagogy* that comes from a concept Rachel develops in her doctoral thesis (Fendler, 2015). The poststructuralist ontology of nomadic thought is defined in terms of processes of becoming, characterized by forces, flows and fluxes that disrupt the unity of the subject (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004; Braidotti, 2014; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Therefore, a nomadic approach encouraged our group to be attentive to the disruptive characteristics of our study. We began to map trajectories not as an outcome but as "a question of orientations, points of entry and exit, a constant unfolding" (Braidotti, 2006, p. 160).

By the end of the semester, students identified 15 episodes to represent their learning trajectories in addition to a selection of key concepts. It was through this emergent lexicon that our group was able to name shared experiences, and raise new questions regarding: a) what it means to generate an artistic research, b) how to investigate the sources and experiences that influence students' learning about what it means to be an artist and c) how to advance our understanding on the colonizing effects of training practices in the field of arts.

What we do in our 'analysis' of this collaborative research is try to read the evidences produced through nomadic theory, asking: How do students transit through the tensions arising from their unstable positionalities during the course? How do they move from the position of art students to art researchers? Through this questioning we reflect on how nomadism localizes learning not as an outcome but as an activity staged within a processual, performative ontology of becoming. This turned our group project into into what Dennis Atkinson (2012) calls a *space-event*. This event generates "a disruption of established ways of

knowing, through learning events”, as students begin to “handle states of uncertainty as new knowledge and (where) new competences begin to emerge” (Atkinson, 2012, p. 10).

Charting our trajectories in this manner, our group did not attempt to solve the question of how they ‘became’ artists. Instead, using images not as a representational tool but as an epistemological medium, this study used nomadic pedagogy to experiment with how to account for those learning experiences that subvert the teaching and research process. In doing so, we unveiled what constitutes their limits.

References

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