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Sub-theme: Arts-based research challenging the norm within communities

Format: Research project presentation

Occupying Non-Place

– Art Education Disturbed

In our presentation we ask: How do site-specific art and activism reveal norms and power structures in urban space? The context in our study is art and art education, with an ongoing dialogue with multidisciplinary framework of urban studies, humanistic geography and youth research. Our research is art based (see f.e. Kallio, 2008). This approach here can be looked at from two angles. First, we define the phenomena art based, and secondly our method of understanding our phenomena is looking through four artistic / activist projects.

Traditionally art teachers have defined how and whose art is presented and present in schools. The new curriculum for Finnish secondary school was approved in the end of 2014 and will come into effect in autumn 2016 (OPH 2014). The curriculum demands a stronger relationship between the "institutional" art in schools and the students' own visual cultures. Where do those visual cultures appear?

One suggestion is that they could be found in tunnels, construction sites, wastelands, shopping malls and in the other urban non-places (Augé 1995; Siitonen 2016). Non-places can be occupied through different approaches, which can be sensitive, provocative or illegal. Hanging around in public places could be understood as a way to occupy or claim space beyond adult control (Tani, 2010). Site-specific art and activism challenge the norm and rules of using urban space and evoke questions like: What is disturbed? Who and for what do we need permission? Who has the control over urban space and non-places?

Our starting point was Minna Suoniemi 's video piece *Metropolis 2012*, which depicts young men parkouring in a construction site. We followed Jimena Ortuzar's (2009) definition on parkour as an art of non-places and asked: What similar phenomena could be recognised? To investigate this setting more closely we chose artistic/ activist cases, which open various angles to the phenomena. The cases in our study are 1) *Security Flip Shifty* by Otto Karvonen (2005), 2) *Wash Graffiti* by Jukka Silokunnas (2015), 3) *Bench-case* by anonym artist/activist (2016) and 4) *Documentary Film Pixadores* by Finnish filmmaker Amir Escandari (2014). These cases cover about ten years time lapse and share a non-materialistic nature. The focus of our research is in Finnish artistic practice, as we reflect our study specifically towards the Finnish art education.

Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) has stated that we should open the concept of art to include situations, acts and processes, and furthermore, there should be room for these forms of art in the context of education. If we are able to renew school's art curriculum and base it on the visual cultures and activities of young people, school will be a stage for many interesting questions. Could the school institution transform from a norm keeper to a critical forum?

References

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