

Cultural mediation and its creative potency in collaborative and participative processes in educators' formation

La mediación cultural y su potencia creativa en los procesos colaborativos y participativos en la formación de educadores | A mediação cultural e sua potência criativa em processos colaborativos e participativos na formação de educadores

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Abstract:

This article presents reflections on collaborative work in processes of educators' formation where the cultural mediation is a strategy and creative potency. Two cases will be presented: the mediators' course formation to 32nd São Paulo Bienal of Arts and the *Aprendendo com Arte* (Learning with Art) course at the *Fundação Volkswagen* (Volkswagen Foundation) in a partnership with the *Instituto Arte na Escola* (Art in School Institute). From the testimonials of some of the mediators in these projects some considerations and reflections will be woven for the issues that moved this article: what is cultural mediation as an educational strategy? What are the relationships between mediation and collaboration in educational processes? And, how such relations reverberate in and beyond the work of mediators.

Keywords: Cultural Mediation. Collaborative processes in education. Educators' formation. 32nd São Paulo Bienal of Arts. Learning with Art.

Resumen:

Este artículo presenta reflexiones sobre el trabajo colaborativo en procesos de formación de educadores donde la mediación cultural es una estrategia y potencia creativa. Se presentarán dos casos: el curso de formación de mediadores para la 32ª Bienal de Artes de São Paulo y el curso Aprendendo com Arte de la Fundación Volkswagen en colaboración con el Instituto Arte na Escola. A partir de los testimonios de algunos de los mediadores de estos proyectos se tejen algunas consideraciones y reflexiones para las cuestiones que han movido este artículo: ¿qué es la mediación cultural como estrategia educativa? ¿Cuáles son las relaciones entre la mediación y la colaboración en los procesos educativos? Y, cómo repercuten dichas relaciones en el trabajo de los mediadores y más allá de él.

Palabras claves: Mediación cultural. Procesos de colaboración en la educación. Formación de educadores. 32ª Bienal de São Paulo. Aprender con el arte.

Resumo:

Este artigo apresenta reflexões acerca do trabalho colaborativo em processos de formação de educadores em que têm a mediação cultural como estratégia e potência criativa. Dois casos serão apresentados: o curso de formação de mediadores para a 32ª. Bienal de Artes de São Paulo e o curso Aprendendo com Arte da Fundação Volkswagen em parceria com o Instituto Arte na Escola. A partir de alguns depoimentos de mediadores nestes projetos serão tecidas algumas considerações e reflexões para as questões que moveram este artigo: o que é mediação cultural como uma estratégia educacional? Quais são as relações entre mediação e colaboração em processos educativos? E, como tais relações reverberam no e para além do trabalho dos mediadores.

Keywords: Mediação Cultural. Processos colaborativos em educação. Formação de educadores. 32ª. Bienal de São Paulo. Aprendendo com Arte.

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*... a desire of learning is a desire
for new states of existence
(Dennis Atkinson)*

Once I was looking at some Facebook posts and I watched a video about deaf people and their daily problems, banal things for most of the hearing people. This video reminded me about Bruno Vital, a deaf educator that once I had the pleasure to work with, because things like sending audio messages to our WhatsApp group, or showing unsubtitled videos or videos that are not translated into Sign Language makes his world, more specifically our work, inaccessible. I keep with me the lessons I have learned from him and, I believe, all the members of that team work have also changed, even though we don't work together anymore.

I worked with Bruno when I was hired as the educational team supervisor of the 32nd São Paulo Bienal of Arts in 2016. In 1995, I started working as a museum educator. Since 2006, I work supervising or coordinating learning departments for several institutions. In formal

education, I have worked as a professor as well. In all these professional activities I have developed an educational strategy: the «cultural mediation»¹.

This paper is about cultural mediation and its creative potency in collaborative and participative processes in educators' formation. For this, I will discuss two main concepts: cultural mediation and collaborative processes in education and my focus will be in educators' formation. To this purpose, I will take two cases: the 32nd São Paulo Bienal of Arts and the *Aprendendo com Arte* (Learning with Art), an e-learning course by *Fundação Volkswagen* (Volkswagen Foundation) in a partnership with the *Instituto Arte na Escola* (Art in School Institute).

The main questions here are: What's the cultural mediation as an educational strategy? What are the relations between mediation and collaboration in educative processes? And how such relationships reverberate in and beyond the work of mediators, considering the education/life relationship with the example I cited at the beginning of this text.

The analysis of the cases cited is partial. It is important to consider that both in the 32nd Bienal as in the course *Aprendendo com Arte* I was part of the team. Other analyzes were carried out at the time, in collaborative and individual works, this presentation intends to provide some reflections on the issues raised by such projects.

Cultural Mediation or Museum Education?

When I was doing my doctoral research about cultural mediation in history museums and their visuality (Alencar, 2015), every time I needed to translate to English its title or write an article I was often in doubt, then I had a concern: should I use the term 'cultural mediation' or 'museum education'? And why?

In Latin languages as French, Spanish and Portuguese, cultural mediation is a common expression to designate, for example, educational activities in museums. In Brazil, it is more frequent than museum education, and the theoretical discussion about it is also common.

The first time I heard the word mediation or mediator as a noun to describe my function as a museum educator, I pictured that person who stay between two candidates in a policy debate. Indeed, this is mediation and brings with it the idea of a conflict mediation and may cause communication noise, especially when we talk about education as a way to emancipation and dissensus (Rancière, 2011, 2014).

When I was hired as a supervisor and trainer of the mediators' team for the 32nd São Paulo Bienal, the coordination of the educational program issued a notice calling for mediators to the work. I, a cultural mediation researcher, found that to be a breakthrough, a gain for the area, I had no doubt about it. I had been immersed in my doctoral research for four years, still

¹ Although it is not common the usage of the expression, "cultural mediation" in the English Language, it's very habitual in Portuguese, French or Spanish. The same happens to "educator formation", being teacher training commonly preferred. However, beyond semantics issues, these choices were kept in this paper and they are fundamental to understand the educational proposals I will share, as they will be further explained.

accounting for years of work as a cultural mediator and my previous master's research related to these discussions (Alencar, 2008), so I was full of certainties in the "Live uncertainty"². It was when I came across a finding: many of the mediators of the team did not like being denominated like this. They argued that the term educator corresponded to a category of work that should be recognized, besides the very common idea of the mediation of conflicts in education, and they also claimed that education is not about mediation of conflicts. On the contrary, they said that education was provocation, construction of knowledge, it was conflict, which I agreed. But, after all, do we still need to discuss the concept of mediation? It seems so, because it is not a consensus, which is good, because it is the dissent that is in the idea of mediation, which I share.

Mediation as appeasement... – something that the 32nd Bienal educators mediators criticized. I began to wonder if this would not have been the idea when the term started to be used in museums, to appease the multiple possibilities of reading images and objects, the different interpretations and discussions, provoked especially by contemporary art education proposals and, thinking about the history museums, like I did in my research (Alencar, 2015) for the critical historiographical revisions. But this is still speculation on my part.

However, the idea of cultural mediation that I share here has nothing to do with mediation of conflict and appeasement, but rather with causing dissent (Rancière, 2014). The idea of conflict mediation would be closer, for example, to what Bernard Darras described as directive mediation:

In the cultural and artistic domain, two great approaches of mediation can be distinguished. The first is directive and, in its poorest form, provides only an interpretative system, imposing a single kind of understanding of the cultural object. In its richest form, it produces interpretative systems that try to articulate, or not, and work together (Darras, 2009, p.37)³.

So, using the visuality of an exhibition to corroborate a previously elaborated curatorial discourse —previously elaborated by the mediato—, is a form of directive, unilateral mediation. Although mediation strategies may be discussed, for example by asking questions, it can also be a form of directive mediation depending on how the mediator conducts such activity, whether or not he or she actually listens to the spectator's or the visitor's statements and reflections.

To listen to, to consider and to articulate the responses of the spectators, to understand it as an educational work is thinking about the educator as a mediator, since the directive mediation can be a form of acting or even a function of the mediation resources like the texts on the wall and audio guides, for example. However, drawing up a question-based script to reconstruct a previous discourse brings a problem, a single point of view does not consider the different contexts, the different looks for that visuality, for that subject. The context of cultural

² The title of the 32nd São Paulo Bienal of Arts.

³ Free translation of: «No domínio cultural e artístico podem-se distinguir duas grandes abordagens de mediação. A primeira é diretiva e, em sua forma mais pobre, fornece só um sistema interpretativo, impondo um único tipo de compreensão do objeto cultural. Em sua forma mais rica, produz sistemas interpretativos que tentam se articular, ou não, e trabalhar conjuntamente». (Darras, 2009, p.37).

mediation thus ends up becoming a context of an education that reproduces the values of the hegemonic culture, even when the educator is well-intentioned:

Such is the concern of the enlightened pedagogue: does the little one understand? He doesn't understand. I will find new ways to explain it to him, ways more rigorous in principle, more attractive in form [...].

A noble concern. Unfortunately, it is just this little word, this slogan of the enlightened – understand – that causes all the trouble. It is this word that brings a halt to the movement of reason, that destroys its confidence in itself, that distracts it by breaking the world of intelligence into two, by installing the division between the groping animal and the learned little man, between common sense and science. [...] The child who recites under the threat of the rod obeys the rod and that's all: he will apply his intelligence to something else. But the child who is *explained to* will devote his intelligence to the work of grieving: to understanding, that is to say, to understanding that he doesn't understand unless he is explained to (Rancière, 1991, p.8, italics in original)⁴.

Jacques Rancière's citation criticizes the idea of an apparently progressive education, that is to say, many preoccupations to explain a content, many attempts and proposals that do not take into account the subjectivity of the learner, that do not consider the learning process of the other, because "the little one" only exists for a final conclusion, a consensus: that of the educator/institution/exhibition.

Resuming Darras's (2009, p. 38) mediation approaches, "the second approach of mediation is constructivist. By diverse interrogative, problematic, practical, interactive means, it contributes to the emergence of the construction of one or more interpretative processes by the "recipient of the mediation".

This second approach may also be associated with certain types of mediation devices: some with strong technological appeal nowadays, such as tablet and mobile apps that allow a different way of looking at the exhibition, or even in the display itself, digital materials that present contexts and problems to reflect on the works, or even simple graphic materials that provoke an image reading. Usually such mediation devices can be used by the public in general, with the purpose of making the viewer understand and/or reflect on a particular artwork, object or image.

But it is the action of the educator as a mediator that I want to focus here, the mediator educator is the one who can use the object or the artwork, taking the risk of not knowing, to enhance the autonomy of the visitor's or the student's gaze, to be aware of the fact that the institution and he himself or she herself brings speeches from which he/she must get undressed. It is not about seeking neutrality, but about reflecting on its subjectivity and taking the risk of not knowing (Atkinson, 2011; Didi-Huberman, 2010), allowing the dissent that "puts at stake at the same time the evidence of what is sensible, thinkable, and possible, and the division of those who are able to perceive, think, and modify the coordinates of the common world" (Rancière, 2014, p.49).

⁴ The translator has identified the English version of the citation used by the author in: Rancière, J. (1991) *The ignorant schoolmaster. Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. Translated with an introduction by Kristin Ross.

To provoke dissent goes through putting him/herself at risk of not knowing. As stated by Dennis Atkinson (2011), the “risk taking” is a common notion among Art educators to promote creativity among students, but the proposal is that the students take the risk. What the author provokes us to reflect on is that the educator must also take the risk to promote the “event” for a real learning to take place (Atkinson, 2011).

Collaboration, participation and their relationship with Mediation as a strategy

Earlier I referred to the term cultural mediation as an educational work related to museums and exhibitions. It was in this environment that the concept emerged in my professional life, the same context where most of the debates and researches are also concentrated.

However, in addition to working in museums and exhibitions, I am a professor and teachers’ educator in formal and non-formal education, and from some years to the present I have tried to take ideas about cultural mediation, especially in its constructivist approach (Darras, 2009), to these spaces. Whether in Bachelor's degree courses classroom, or in exhibitions mediators formation courses, or in a distance continuing education course for teachers, such as *Aprendendo com Arte*.

... it is interesting to think that from the start I understood and conceived the mediation as a collaborative process, an encounter between people where everyone is present in the building or creating something. It is almost the same as saying that mediation is a collaborative process (Camila Lia, mediator at *Aprendendo com Arte*).

And in this movement, I began to realize, in agreement with my colleague Camila Lia, that cultural mediation has a close relationship with collaborative and participative processes in education. As Rancière (2009) says when he writes about the distribution of the sensible as the existence of a *common* shared and that,

This apportionment of parts and positions is based on a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution. Aristotle states that a citizen is someone who *has a part* in the act of governing and being governed. However, another form of distribution precedes this act of partaking in government: the distribution that determines those who have a part in the community of citizens (Rancière, 2004, p.12, italics in original)⁵.

I believe that it is in these collaborative processes that we can exercise the distribution of the sensible, experience a proposal of decolonization of the thought, potentiate a democratization in the construction of knowledge, as Parrilla says: “collaborative groups are those in which all

⁵ The translator has identified the citation in the English version in: Rancière, J (2004). *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible*. London/New York: Continuum. Translated with an introduction by Gabriel Rockhill

share the decisions that were made and are responsible for the quality of what is produced together”⁶ (apud Damiani, 2008, p. 214).

Taking the work of forming mediators for an exhibition or of teachers’ formation as learning processes, “the most significant shifts from a traditional classroom to a collaborative learning experience center on the roles taken up by students and teachers. Hierarchical structures and power relations are modified” (Torres, 2007, p. 340). And I have noticed it is not comfortable neither for the professor/teacher/tutor/trainer/mediator who has to give up his or her role in the process, nor for the students/teachers/mediators who need to take the responsibility for their own learning/formation.

The proposal of cultural mediation in the constructivist perspective, as mentioned previously, can potentialize the collaborative process so that it is necessary for the mediator to actually give up his/her role as a central part in the process, otherwise this proposal would be unfeasible.

It is still worth mentioning the idea of participation suggested in the text. Nina Simon (2010), discusses the real meaning of the participatory museum, saying that the opinions that some museums collect from the visitors or the participation of a small group of the society, or even the displays that care about the interaction aren’t enough. Effective participation would only be possible, she said, when the public can collaborate with the exhibition from the outset so that the community would be heard and encouraged to participate in various ways. This also interferes in power relations, in the “distribution of the sensible” (Rancière, 2009), if we think about the great museums as institutions that, like schools, have emerged with the function of instructing and reproducing the power systems (Alencar, 2015).

In this sense, I will treat the ideas of collaboration and participation as synonyms, since I refer to the characteristic of the “distribution of the sensible” (Rancière, 2009) as the creative power related to cultural mediation.

And it is considering how the collaborative and participatory processes reverberate after the end of a work or a formative process, as the experience of sharing surpasses its own space and time, that I present two experiences in which the idea of the mediation potentialized collaboration and participation in the formation processes, pointing out some cases in which it reverberated and reverberates in other actions.

32nd Bienal’s case and its reverberation

At the beginning of this article I commented on one of the experiences in my work as the mediators’ supervisor and trainer at the 32nd Bienal that has reverberated in my professional and personal life. I do not intend to analyze the work developed, but from the final reports of the mediators who were in my teams, I will make considerations about cultural mediation and its creative power in the collaborative process noticed during the formation course for the

⁶ Free translation of the original citation: “*grupos colaborativos são aqueles em que todos compartilham as decisões tomadas e são responsáveis pela qualidade do que é produzido em conjunto*” (apud Damiani, 2008, p. 214).

exhibition⁷. My work as the mediators' supervisor and trainer continued throughout the exhibition, but due to the large number of visitors of the 32nd Bienal and the frenetic work attending school groups, the characteristics of these two contexts were different, so I will emphasize the formation course.

It should also be noted that we were a group of five supervisors who, along with the coordination of the educational program, decided collaboratively the paths of our work during the formation course and, afterwards, our work during the exhibition. Some guidelines were set by the institution, but within certain aspects, especially regarding the schedule of the guest lecturers, studies on the artists and setting up of the exhibition, we had autonomy to act as trainers. Thus, the processes in the five different teams occurred in a heterogeneous way, not only by their composition, but also by our different experiences as educators' trainers. In this way, I cannot comment on the work of my colleagues, just mine, from my memories and, as I've said, from the reports of the members of my team, written reports in the last two weeks of work, in other words, in the heat of events.

That said, I would like to start by presenting some mediators' perceptions on cultural mediation as a strategy with creative potency in the formation of mediators, based on some testimonials:

The supervision team proposals were great. They contemplated didactic moments with the autonomy of the group, making it easy for each educator to bring mediating practices they already knew to be shared, empowering all of the participants with these practices repertoire - whether they were of welcoming, research or dynamics. Personally, [I believe] it was a key for me to increase my repertoire of practical activities and knowledge as mediating tools.

The discussions were always within the issues addressed and with great space for debating and listening on the part of the supervisor. Also always positioning herself to allow access and equality of speech in the group (Eduardo Palhano).

During the study period, I found it interesting her proposal of each day one different educator starting the activities with poetry, group dance, a popular saying, a text, something that would introduce a discussion about mediation or even about feelings that hovered over the educational body. [...] These activities influenced my visits positively (Karina Costa).

The testimonies of Eduardo and Karina refer to my strategy in the formation of mediators that considers the exchange of experiences, subjectivities, especially listening. If we consider what was said earlier about the idea of mediation with which I share, listening is perhaps the most important action within processes in which mediation is the educational strategy. I can take up Rancière (2011) with emancipatory education, or even Torres (2007) when he talks about the changes in power relations and relate to the autonomy and the horizontality proposed by me as described by Eduardo and Karina.

⁷ It is worth mentioning that the formation course of mediators for the 32nd Bienal lasted 4 months and was considered part of the work, with the same remuneration for the work performed with the exhibition open to the public. My team was composed of 18 mediators, but some of them moved to other teams at the beginning of the exhibition, due to the different schedules and the work shifts according to the attendance of the visiting school groups.

It is also important to consider in their testimonies how much the formative process of each one reverberated for future actions, in my opinion, due to their creative potency.

... we lived a poetic sharing, in which we could understand and welcome our different ways of thinking, feeling and doing things, appreciating the qualities that each member brought to the group. Her sensitivity and listening were keys to help us create bonds between us, the mediators. [...] Valeria brought us some of her proposals, and many of the significant activities we did as a group sprouted from them, but I think the most important thing for the quality of our process at this moment, in the context of many demands I have outlined, was Valeria's generosity to ease the demands that came from outside, to listen to our needs, expectations and anxieties, precisely, giving us space to create the rhythm of the group along with her (Lucas Itacarambi).

Lucas's understanding of sharing is very special, the idea of "distributing the sensible" is so dear to me as Rancière's "emancipatory education" and both have been some of my guiding principles at my mediation work. Also, it is important to highlight the creative perception of the work, when he uses the word "sprouted".

I would also like to draw attention to the perception of collaborative and participatory work, that are facilitated by mediation. As Nina Simon (2010) tells us about how participation works:

There are two counter-intuitive design principles at the heart of successful participatory projects. First, participants thrive on constraints, not open-ended opportunities for self-expression. And second, to collaborate confidently with strangers, participants need to engage through personal, not social, entry points. These design principles are both based on the concept of scaffolding (p. 22).

That is, understanding the participation thrives on constraints is counter intuitive as Simon says, for it may seem that participation, collaboration, must be free. They are, but within a project of creation we have goals and objectives, a collective project must have collective goals and objectives, which isn't easy, but can be built together, as Lucas says in his testimony or even Danielle:

We've built a very beautiful and important exchange field that lasted until the end of the formation course. Valeria left us the will to expose aspects that we wanted to improve and to present to the group our researches and potentialities. [...] we've constructed many maps [conceptual and affective], we talked a lot and had space to propose, too, to build together. Valeria didn't speak to us, she spoke with us (Danielle Sleiman).

Still, taking up Nina Simon (2010), the second principle of participation is the "going social" when she proposes that it is necessary to think about exhibitions where people are meant to meet people, beyond the strategies of the mediator, in other words, to propose that the individual alone makes the "me-to-we" movement. Simon refers to exhibition spaces, but I can make an analogy to the process of the mediators' formation, where my strategy was to interfere as little as possible in the discussions, provoking moments of autonomy and dissent. But for some mediators such strategy wasn't so clear: "It seems aggravating to me that a preparatory course for mediators (although I prefer educators as designation) has so little space to discuss education and educational practices" (Luara Carvalho).

There are two very important points in Luara's considerations. One of them, as I said earlier, the idea of understanding the mediator's work, which was clear to me, a general consensus, I

found out that wasn't. Yes, it was a discovery, several mediators questioned such denomination, and this dissent has reverberated in my actions. Another point was the lack of awareness that the form proposed by me, and also by the coordinators, was that the course itself should be a discussion space about education and educational practices, a kind of metamediation. However, as I've said, this report was written by the end of the exhibition period. Perhaps her perception has changed, or maybe not, but here we are considering the subjectivities in the creative process of educating educators, the noises in communication, important reflections that have also reverberated in my mediating actions.

Aprendendo com Arte: collaborative process in an e-learning course

Aprendendo com Arte is a distance short-term continuing education course for Art teachers provided by Fundação Volkswagen in partnership with Instituto Arte na Escola. It is for free, offered in two modalities: blended (part online, part face-to-face) or totally distance (online), and its targeted audience is Art teachers from public schools throughout Brazil at all levels of basic education, and "aims to involve and assist the educator in a deep understanding of the role of art, culture, and the educational potential of the subject, of the cultural spaces and make a real impact on art teaching in the classroom" (Suzuki, Kenski & Gianotti, 2016, p. 841).

The project has been taking place since 2015 and in 2017 it attended 960 students divided into 24 classes of 40 people each: three classes (120 students) in the blended mode and 21 totally distance groups (840 students).

It should also be noted that the course is divided into six modules⁸, with topics and content considered relevant to teachers today. For each module a specialist is invited to produce a text, from which three short videos that deepen and unfold the ideas presented in the written format are recorded. Each module takes a month and during this period, in addition to the materials offered, the student must work on two activities. To carry out these activities of the course means to also participate in discussion forums, because it is where the course happens: in the experiences exchanges, whether from the course material or from the school routine.

Taking up the issues that move this article regarding cultural mediation as an educational strategy, the relationships between mediation and collaborative processes in education and the reverberation of these relations, I present some examples of *Aprendendo com Arte* about these issues, on two levels:

1. The collaborative process in our formation as mediators and our participation in the construction of the course.
2. The Arts teachers' formation in the Learning Management System.

At first, it is necessary to highlight that since 2017 we have decided to call ourselves mediators and not tutors as it's usual in e-learning courses. And this is not only a semantic issue; it's deeply related to the way we conceive the concept of mediation, as said before. And this can

⁸ The modules of the course are: Technologies and Art Teaching, Cultural Patrimony and Formative Processes, Project Approaches in School Practice, Visual Culture and Work Projects, Hybridisms in the Arts, Art Teaching and the Contemporary School.

be one of the examples of the reverberation of the collaborative and participative process in the construction of the course.

It is also necessary to retake one of the principles of how participation works by Nina Simon (2010), cited above: “participation thrives on constraints”, because the limits function as tools that allow us to focus our discussions. Every fortnight there were meetings⁹ to discuss and study the materials of the modules, raising possibilities for the proposals to be elaborated. Each mediator has autonomy to create the activities of their classes, the pedagogical coordinator comments each one on the language and approach and suggests changes, if necessary, but there is trust and openness for experimentation. There is also in the virtual environment a room of mediators where we discuss the ideas that arise over the weeks and present complementary materials that we offer to the students (Alencar & Frezzatti, 2017).

... ‘**crossings in formation**’, since there is the process of building knowledge shared between the repertoire offered by the course, the one brought by the mediators and that brought by the art teachers that take the course, and how that all goes through and fosters the permanent improvement of the material. We are all professors and students... (Daniele Alves, mediator in *Aprendendo com Arte*).

Mediation has a close relationship with "emancipatory education" (Rancière, 2011), because we must recognize our own learning process when we propose to teach, as Daniele Alves says.

In our team meetings we also discuss issues related to the format of the course, we are asked about changes and definitions that configure its dynamics. Some collective choices are decisive for the development of the pedagogical proposal and how it occurs in practice. One of them is the choice of the environment in which the activities are proposed, since it was decided to use discussion forums. There would be a possibility to use other resources¹⁰, but we recognize that the forum is the best way for the students to share their answers, making them collaborations for the reflections and productions that the group performs, in addition to being able to interact among themselves, considering that it is possible to comment in all posts. Therefore, the choice to use the forum is connected to the idea of mediation that we seek for the course (Alencar & Frezzatti, 2017). And here I bring the second level in which the relationships between cultural mediation and collaborative processes in education take place in *Aprendendo com Arte*: in the Learning Management System.

Considering that *Aprendendo com Arte* is a free course for Art teachers, it is mainly intended to be a space for reflections, but without the burden of the requirements of a postgraduate course, for example, and it is also expected that the discussions raised, commented on and discussed on the platform reverberate in their practices in the classroom. To do so, we mediators are concerned with proposing activities based on their professional experiences and/or their formation paths, without losing sight of the collaborative learning approach that “can be

⁹ The team is formed by mediators from various regions of Brazil, so the meetings happen in a mixed way – those who live in São Paulo participate in presence and those who live in other cities and states join the meeting by video call.

¹⁰ In distance online courses, it is common for the tutor to request a task from the participants who, after completing it, sends a document only to the tutor, without sharing their reflections. Some platforms also count on resources in which it is possible for the class to see the response of all the students, but they are not allowed to comment on each other's posts and there is no interaction between them.

defined as a learning methodology in which, through group work and peer exchange, people involved in the process learn together” (Torres, 2007, p. 399). But how can such interactivity be promoted in a Learning Management System? It is necessary to consider that one of the characteristics of a distance course is solitude, that is, to study alone, and suddenly the participants are invited to experiment exchanges, to collaborate with each other in a learning environment that, *a priori*, would be individualized. But as the title of this article says, there is a creative power in cultural mediation as a strategy, so I would like to cite an example that reverberated positively in this sense in all classes, according to what we have talked about in our pedagogical meetings.

The second module of the course deals with Cultural Heritage and it is especially dear to me, because it is one of my professional activity area and the basic text of this module was written by me (Alencar, 2016). Each mediator, as it was told previously, has the autonomy to carry out its propositions, but in general, the majority ended up choosing a first activity that rescued personal memories.

I took the chance to propose a game that I usually use in classes and lectures on Cultural Heritage, always in face-to-face courses, that’s why I say I took the risk (Atkinson, 2011). The idea was to start from a personal object (in this case, it would be the image of this object) to discuss issues related to memory, heritage and art, but how to make such dynamics in a totally distance mode module? It was a challenge that I combined to the attempt to consolidate the interaction between the students. The proposal of the first activity was, after getting in touch with the material of the module, to do as following:

“Let’s start with our individual memories. Imagine that we will set up an exhibition about the previous formative path of each person. The question that will inspire your action is: What was the first or the most significant contact with art that you have ever had?”

“You have to answer this question with ONLY one image. Choose an object that will be in this "exhibition". An object that, according to your point of view, evokes such memory. It can be any object, bi or three-dimensional, new or old, something that retrieves your first contact with art.

“You should post a photo of the object you’ve chosen in the forum, with a label that says what object is it, of what material and when it was made, like the museum labels.

“ATTENTION!! Do not tell us the reasons that led you to choose the object.

After that, you should comment, read on the object of another colleague. The question that moves this reading is: what history about the formative course can I see in this object? This reading is subjective, doesn’t have to be consistent with what the "owner" of the object intended to tell.

“You have to realize that it is not a matter of “trying to guess” the story of the other, but of perceiving how much personal memories influence the readings, namely, the context of the reception of memories and heritage of the other.

Let’s start?”

Each one should post only one image without any comments and should comment/read the image of a colleague. My mediation started from these comments/readings of images. At first it was complicated because some of the participants did not understand or read the proposal

carefully. I sent private messages talking about the purpose of the activity, so by the end it was working well. The memories emerged during the exercise and supported what would happen in the next two forums of this module¹¹. Questions such as context of reception, subjectivity, the relationships between memory and heritage that was a key point of the material of the module, emerged from people's experiences and they were, somehow, forced to work collaboratively.

The artist teachers could share their work, and other teachers always returned to the Learning Management System to check what had been commented about their image and ended up reading other images. In this process of mediation, the power relations involved in patrimonial and art market issues turned out and reverberated in other forums and modules.



Figure 1. “Crochet quilt” (detail), handmade by Januária Briggs, 1957. Image Source: *Aprendendo com Arte* platform, Jul/2017

This image (figure 1) was posted by one of the students, Soraya Briggs, with the following caption: “Crochet quilt” (detail), handmade by my grandmother Januária Briggs for the wedding of my mother Nadir Briggs in 1957. It was one of the most striking moments of the course, the words tradition and memory were brought to the fore and discussed by all, complicated relationships between art and craft concepts echoed in one of the main subjects of the module: preservation. But whose memory preservation? Whose patrimony? These questions moved the module in the following activities. In the second, when I proposed them to choose a cultural patrimony, or something that they believed should be one, in their own cities, some of the participants stopped considering those issues. Others didn't. But my mediation or, at this point of the process, the mediation of the own participants, brought up

¹¹ The team decided to try, during the second module, the proposition of three activities to deepen the content, but we ended up realizing that many tasks became a problem for the students. After evaluating the module, we decided not to propose three activities, but for the participants who want to do so, there is still the possibility and option to work on all of those three activities.

such provocations. In the third activity, a proposal to work on the chosen cultural heritage with their students, many participants reevaluated their initial ideas of their classes on Heritage, bringing such questions.

Some of the participants were so enthusiastic about the discussions from personal memories and life stories that they drew up their final project¹² inspired on this theme. The crochet also motivated some of the participants of the course to use the embroidery in their projects.

This is an example among so many that wouldn't fit here. But I think it puts cultural mediation in evidence, even in a distance mode course, as a potency in collaborative educational processes that reverberate into practices beyond the measurable.

... Be sure that your guidelines, contributions with texts, videos and images were seeds sowed in the garden of arts education, the fruits will soon be harvested through the changes in the methodology of teaching arts, and society will greatly benefit from this process (Claudineia Ribeiro, student from Amapá).

I enjoyed everything and working on the Final Project made me think a lot and have many insights that I consider to be very transformative. [...] I feel like I've been updated on topics I did not know anything about. I've learned a lot from the content of the course, from the posts of colleagues and much from your mediation - as a teacher, I always like to see how other teachers work. I loved your always dialogical way of intervening - very consistent with what you write and teach (Luana Maribeli Wedekin, student from Bauru/SP).

Wires and hands: text - weave/interlace - images - seams of networks to infinity - sharing

When I asked my colleagues mediators at *Aprendendo com Arte* the relationship between cultural mediation and collaborative processes in education specifically in this work, Daniele Santos wrote the sentence that entitles this conclusion, rather, these final considerations.

From the experience with which I started this text —my work experience with Bruno Vital— to the experience of mediation at *Aprendendo com Arte* distance online courses, through reflections about collaborative processes with the mediators of my team at the 32nd Bienal and the *Instituto Arte na Escola*, all could be in that image of the crochet, in detail: we can't see its end, because the interlacing can be of an infinite network, given the way it reverberates in my own educational practices.

I like to think of the educator as an artist and his/her actions are the artpieces. He or she can create just for themselves, but would it be an educational process? I don't think so. It would be a brutalizing education, to once again quote Rancière. Hence the need for collaborative and participatory processes, hence the creative potency of cultural mediation.

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