

Pedagogy through walking practice: observations

The power balance

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Walking art, education, and learning practices
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Since 2018, since the beginning of the bachelor's degree in Visual Arts, we have been promoting the practice of walking in the curricular unit Atelier I, coordinated by Mónica Faria and I.

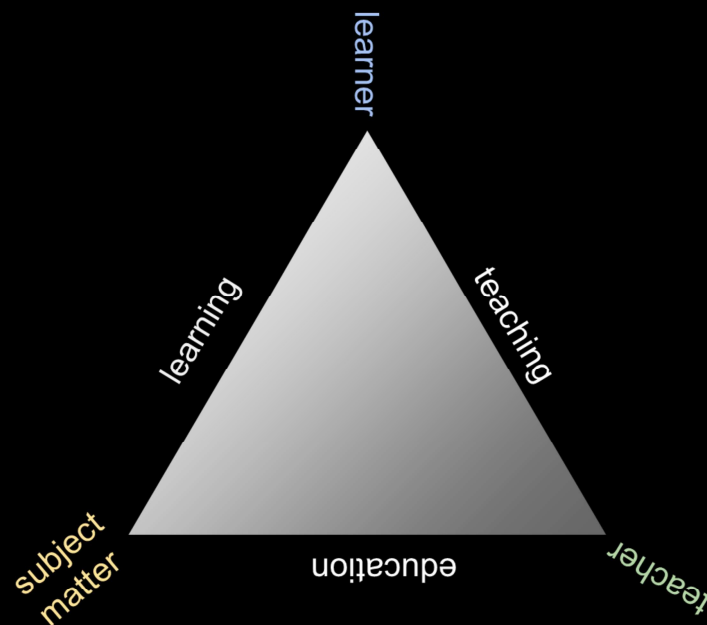
With this article we share the developed experiences and practices, questioning this approach from a pedagogical point of view, observing the shifts in the balance of power. And for this we will use Jean Houssaye's (1988) pedagogical triangle.



Our school is in Guimarães. A small city, listed as world heritage by the Unesco, and part of the Northwest region of Portugal, one of the most industrialised areas of the country. Despite the diversity of backgrounds, the vast majority of our students are from this region, with a strong cultural attachment to the place.



As teachers we believe that we learn from each other and the surrounding world (FREIRE, 1987). When the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire (1987) proposes an attentive learning (surrounded by the world) it means feeling and looking towards the place where we stand. As such, learning may be understood as a reverberation between the world and our attention on the world, implicating ourselves in the learning process. So, by **sharing collectively** we acquire wisdom.



Jean Houssaye's (1988) pedagogical triangle is commonly used in pedagogical research. This model helps to represent and discuss the complex network of relationships and connections of the main agents and the processes of teaching-learning.

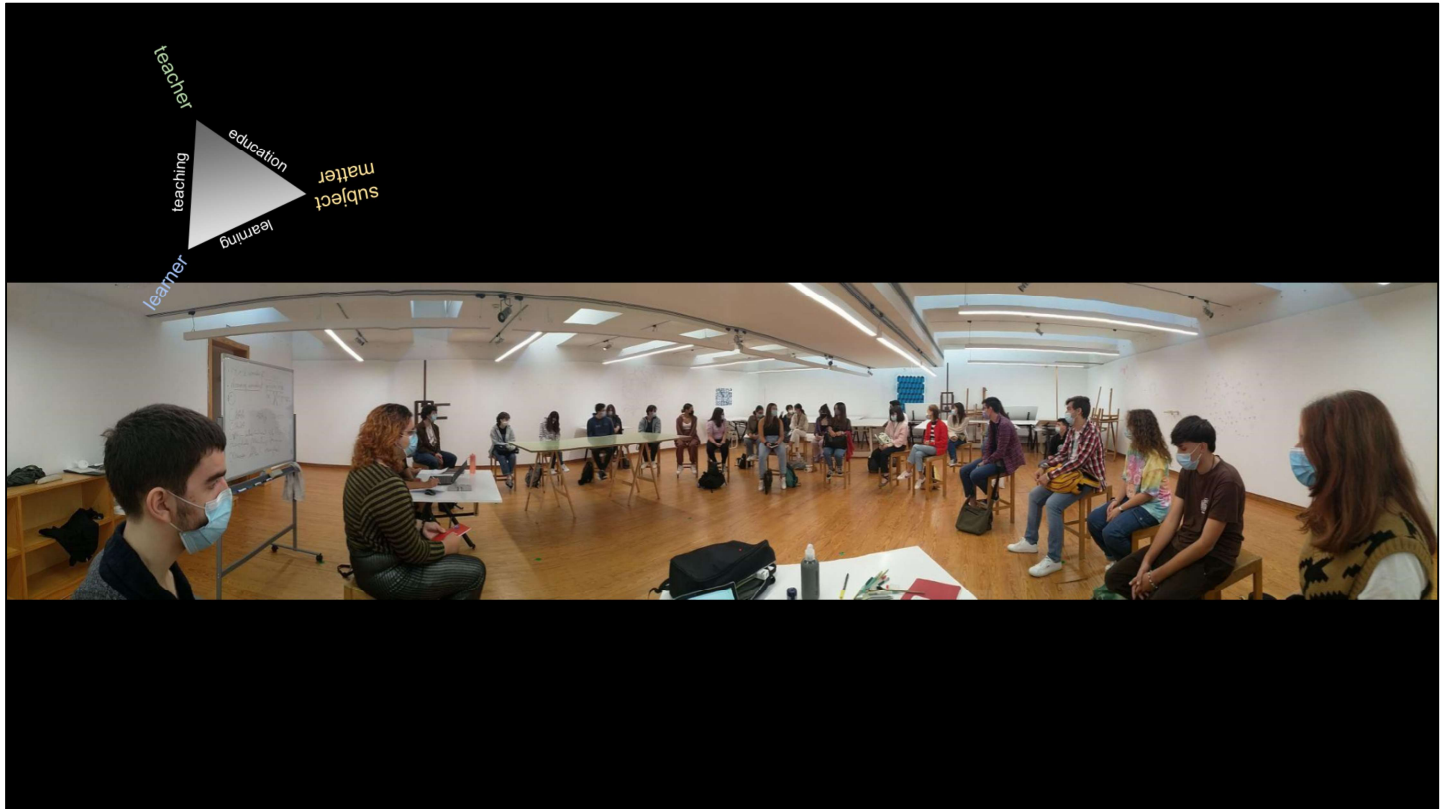
In the pedagogical triangle, the vertices represent, by turn, the teacher, the student, and subject matter. The sides represent the relationships between these actors.

Houssaye designates as: Didactic relationship to the teacher - knowledge relationship; Pedagogical relationship to the teacher - student relationship; Learning relationship to the student - subject relationship.

We are aware that, like all models, it will always have suitable or unsuitable aspects and can always be questioned.

And that, because it is a model, it will always be an abstraction of complex and interconnected actions with exogenous and endogenous factors to which we are subjected.

We will apply this pedagogical triangle, because as a model it synthesises the actors and relations implied in the pedagogical process, representing its dynamics, thus making clearer and more visual the active pedagogical shift that we propose through the practice of walking. Thus, we will seek to evaluate the possibility of unbalancing the power relations that are built in a classroom, assessing its effectiveness by applying this triangle.



So what can we learn while we are seated?

Working sessions within a classroom (or a conference) are conditioned by space. The pedagogical relationship, as we know, adapts to the spatial conditions offered.

In a classroom the teacher controls knowledge, transmitting it in an expository way, keeping, according to the pedagogical triangle, the student in the place of the **dead** (NÓVOA, 1995), inactive and powerless.

It is the teacher who dominates, controlling the content delivery process, the subject matter, and the way in which knowledge is presented.

Little is left to the student, his action is inaction. The person is attentive but a static, still, immobile body.

This practice, as we know, is very widely implanted in compulsory schooling, and is therefore accepted without discussion.



Participating in a physical action, using our hands, awakens the body and alerts the senses.

We learn by doing and not just by listening.

We have to summon up other scientific and technological contents, other knowledge, often not verbalised, no longer under the teacher's total control.

There are qualities and properties of materials and technical processes that are consolidated as something that is learned by doing.

The teacher's expository task is replaced by support.

Didactic interactions change and the student is called into action.

To experiment is to be in contact, to get involved, not knowing what result can be expected. Little by little you acquire knowledge and above all the awareness that you can learn from experimenting. Working in a workshop, in a group, means that we can count on our peers, the companion in the construction of the teaching-learning process and in the sharing of knowledge. Inter-peer learning happens.

No longer we learn from the teacher, but from the apprentice (FREIRE). This implies, in a reciprocal way, that also, as an apprentice, we can teach. Activating the body in learning shifts the power relations among involved individuals.



We have addressed walking in classes, seeking to expose students to exploratory and innovative methods of thinking about art, our time, our geography and our culture. The studio practice tasks happen on the streets through a set of simple exercises, which we adapt from other artistic practices of walking. We want the group to explore walking, and as doing so experience, discover and be nourished with and within the world.

Walking is no longer interpreted merely as moving around, but as an opportunity to broaden our way of observing and relating to others, our environment, our surroundings, as well as underlined political, social and cultural possibilities.

We hope that by doing such, it enhances our relationship with the world, in an engaged way, because through our body, and in a participatory way, because the student is invited to act.

We rely on the students' group initiative to create or think of walks workshops.

In the one we are sharing (in the image), the group built a set of coloured eyeglasses and invited us to walk through the city with this colour filter.

Now, the teacher is stuck in the dead man's seat, no action is required.

The student is called upon to lead the learning process.

If we apply the pedagogical triangle, we can observe how a direct relationship is established between the student and subject matter. The student acquires an active voice and commands the process, the subject matter, and the results.



There is no hierarchy of the senses. As visual artists, we often allow vision to dominate, emphasising representation as a creative solution. Culturally we value what we see and tend to limit ourselves to vision as a tool and output. What we want is to lessen the importance of seeing and to underline the importance of touching (with the epidermis), of feeling (cold, shivering, hot, sweat), of hearing (timbre, noise, melody), of taste (the bitter, the sweet, the acid), and to experiment with all the senses.

The challenge is to stay attuned to all the senses, recognising the body (mind and body) as a unity, and to explore these sensations and feelings in artistic thought and creation. In Walking-sensing, we bring to consciousness all our complex perceptual systems and raise our attention to what is happening inside us. The world goes through us. Life goes through us, and even though we are outside the studio, art can happen inside us (Leonardo Drew, 2014).

From a pedagogical point of view, control (the decision making) moves from the teacher to the student.

In truth we (as teachers) have no other option, since we want each person, each body, to be able to digest life. The student's activity ceases to be an obligation and becomes voluntary and committed.

Has Injeong Yoon-Ramirez, 2021, explains: "The notion of walking-sensing is used to describe not only our physical movement and the sensibilities of our bodies, but also as recollective and communal engagements, such as connecting memories with others, (re)collecting personal and local stories, and imagining the ways of living and being otherwise"



To feel how the other lives, feels, grows, dies, inhabits, moves, is also underlined by walking. To understand what we are, we also do it through the difference, recognising this diversity as an enrichment of us and of the collective.

In this project of the "andas", this group of students brought to the discussion the differences in walking, and playfulness as an artistic action.

As bipeds we move using both our legs, but there are as many ways of moving as people in the world.

How we live in the world is idiosyncratic. But in complement, this project emphasised an important aspect that tends to be undermined in our hyper-efficient and consumerist society: playfulness.

Pleasure as a form of creation.

The impossibility and the unforeseen are summoned into the creative process. Through play and make-believe, learning and thinking are explored, but without an observable end result. Playing is pure pleasure.

The student becomes the teacher. The subject matter is unstable and surprising.

Walking allows a greater permeability of subjects, opening the way to surprising and unexpected themes and interests.



On 5 December 2019 a group of students organised a collective walk for the class. The route allowed us to go through the city, crossing some of the main places dedicated to culture. The culmination of the workshop took place in the gardens of the Vila Flor Cultural Centre, where we wove a web of relationships to connect individual notes of experiences, sensations and observations, building a collective narrative. The relationships among involved individuals became looser and uncomplicated. Things passed from hand to hand, different opinions were heard, we learned to listen and to speak.

Each of us contributes with personal thoughts, and in this variety we discover a very rich panoply of inputs and ways of acting and thinking.

In weaving a web of relationships, we think collectively about a theme (~~in this case, walking as a tool~~). The individual thought is reflected in the collective, and this collective is built in active sharing, attentive in listening.

From a pedagogical point of view, the student assumed leadership. Learning takes place in a diffuse and complex terrain of themes. Teaching takes place in sharing between peers.



Posters from 2019 to 2022. Final show 1th year Visual Art Bachelor. School of Architecture, Art and Design

At the end of each semester, a collective show is proposed. The studio space is stripped of superfluous elements, leaving only the so-called "final" work, where each one is encouraged to materialise what they have learned.

After acquiring some grasp on the act of walking, deriving a set of experiences, individual and collective, it is up to the students to digest the knowledge and unlearn the work.

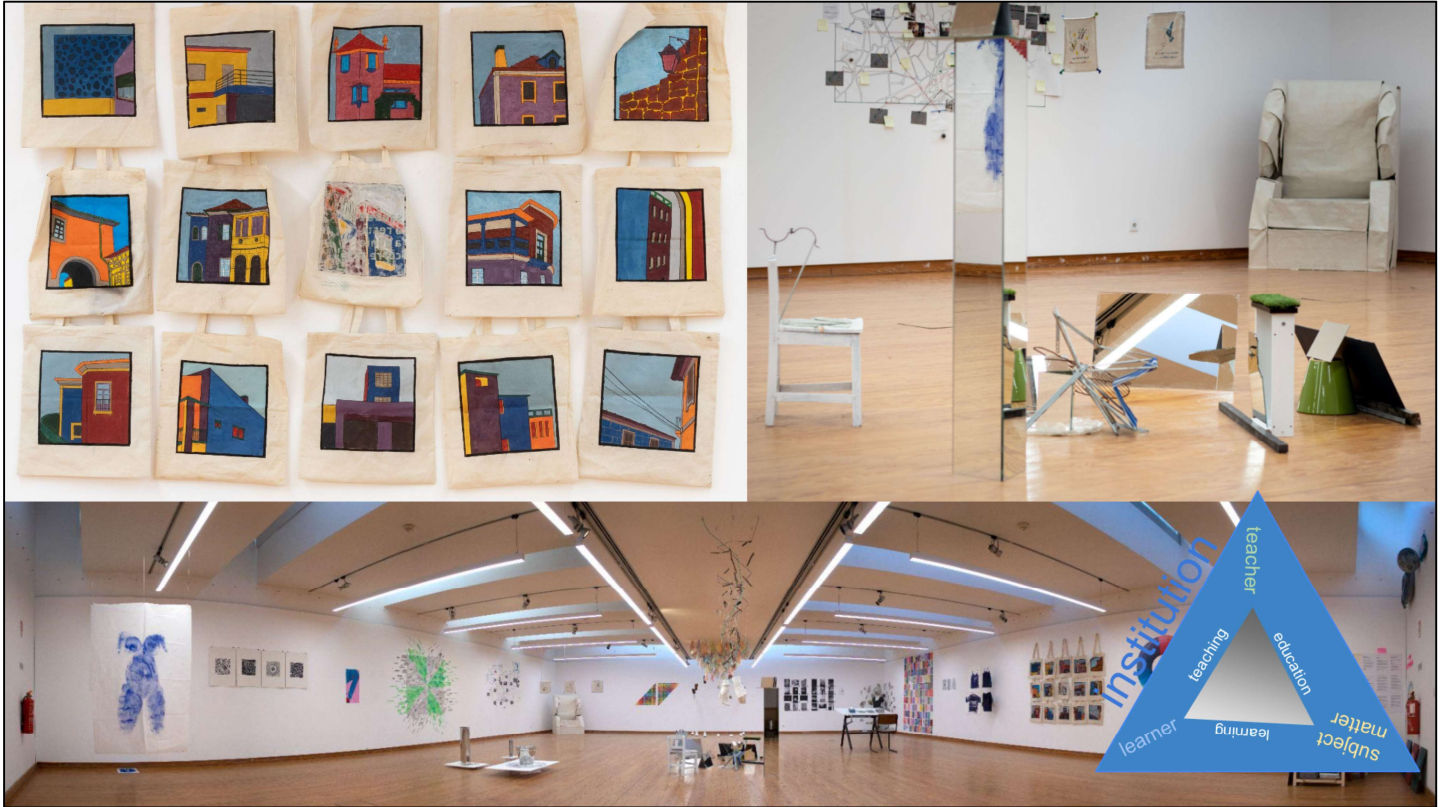


Because wandering or walking are sensory experiences they allow a connection with nature and landscape, as well as a new experience of the self. Simultaneously, they are linked to social issues of global and local scale. This allows empowerment of the student, enabling each one to recognize personal skills, interests, tools, what they carry and feel. This awakening shows how our personal experience is valid, unique, and essential to our connection with the world and artistic production.

This small embroidery work was made by Lara Teixeira. Lara's mother and grandmother are seamstresses and embroiderers in Guimarães. During our walks through the city, Lara discovered that she could attribute aesthetic and artistic value to a craft practice of embroidering handkerchiefs with memories - "Lenços dos namorados" are confessions of love in textiles with a long tradition in the region.

Her work brought together her interests for this object and its symbolism, a strong connection with the surrounding cultural frame, and the opportunity to include her mother and grandmother in the project.

Now, knowledge is not controlled. Learning occurs independently, shared with new actors, being grounded in genuine and authentic interests.



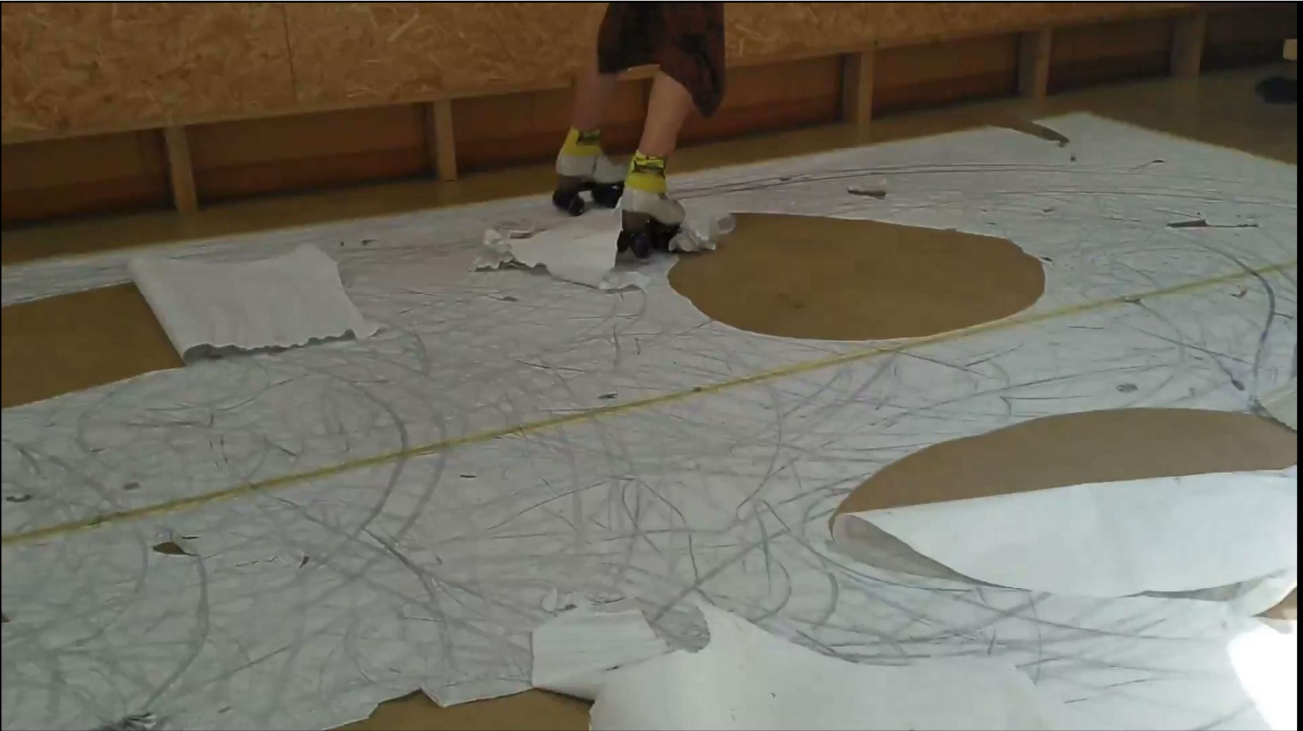
However, as we are enrolled in an academy, it is up to the teacher to assign a grade, and to evaluate the work. We still can't get away from this.

The teacher, once again, assumes the command, but now amplified by the hegemonic power of the school institution.

This trauma activates the school-related reflexes in the students, who see themselves as re-schooling. This transference of mind sets awakens preconceptions such as the representation of the major and minor arts, or of what an artistic work has to be.

Taking on the process, the playfulness, the sharing and the unexpected becomes an act of courage.

This is the moment where we either lose the student or we take a leap to a new pedagogical approach.



"In this sense, education is a matter of leading voices out into the world rather than - as it is conventionally taken to be today - instilling knowledge into their minds." Tim Ingold (2015) The life of Lines

So, to finish, from this perspective we try to unbalance the pedagogical triangle. So shifting power we can share our knowledge, learn with students, systematise experiences and acquire wisdom. An experience that we hope for as a ongoing eco. So walking moves power relations between the actores, questioning their roles and character.

Applying Jean Houssaye's pedagogical triangle as a tool for analysis, we can recognize how walking questions the relationship between teacher/student/subject matter putting all three vertices in a constant rotation, in an action between practice/theory, experience/knowledge and individual/collective.

It is from the walk that we are individually moving as one.

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Thank you

Obrigado



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Thank you very much