ECHOING VOICES OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION EVENTS: A POETIC SELF-STUDY

ECOANDO VOZES DE EVENTOS DE EDUCAÇÃO COMUNITÁRIA: UM AUTOESTUDO POÉTICO

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a poetic self-study based on a community education project in which the author was involved and in which poetry was a process of social transformation. There is a poetic process of weaving between writings produced during the project, occurred years ago, and writings created for this self-study. Its main purpose is to reflect on this poetic process, questioning how it can continue to illuminate our understandings, develop dialogue and transcend contradictions and ambivalences. A few meaningful events are selected where poetry played a relevant part and where poetic writing, combinins sounds and silence to create a singular musicality, is assumed as a way of deepening and transforming understanding and practice. It is a poetic organisation of rhizomatic relations that facilitates the flow of reflexivity and evocation of the movements experienced during the project and identified as important. They are in accordance with the principles of the project, where dialogical and critical approaches are emphasised. In the final sections the author discuss her positionalities and conflicts as researcher, educator and poet assumed along the process, and conclude by reflecting on some of the main contributions of this paper to the poetic self-study field and poetic inquiry.

Keywords: Community education. Reseacher positionality. Poetic writing. Poetic self-study.

RESUMO

Este artigo é um autoestudo poético desenvolvido a partir de um projeto de educação comunitária no qual a autora esteve envolvida e no qual a poesia constituiu um processo de transformação social. O artigo constrói-se no entretecimento de escritas produzidas durante o projeto, ocorrido anos atrás, com escritas criadas para este autoestudo, ecos que amplificam e resignificam os seus sentidos. Seu principal objetivo é refletir sobre esse processo poético, questionando como ele pode continuar a iluminar nossos entendimentos, desenvolver o diálogo e transcender contradições e ambivalências. Selecionam-se alguns acontecimentos significativos, onde a poesia desempenhou um papel relevante e onde a escrita poética, combinando sons e silêncio para criar uma musicalidade singular, se assume como forma de aprofundar e transformar a compreensão e a prática. É uma organização poética de relações rizomáticas que facilita o fluxo de reflexividade e evocação dos movimentos vivenciados durante o projeto e identificados como importantes, em coerência com os princípios do projeto, onde se privilegiam abordagens dialógicas e críticas. Nas secções finais, a autora discute suas posicionalidades e conflitos como pesquisadora, educadora e poetisa assumidas ao longo do processo, e conclui refletindo sobre algumas das principais contribuições deste artigo para o campo do autoestudo poético e da investigação poética.

Palavras-chave: Educação comunitária. Posicionalidade do investigador. Escrita poética. Autoestudo poético.

1 INTRODUCTION

I write in the first person because the voice here exposed assumes the singularity of a mutable synthesis. We are plural beings, inhabiting plural worlds. The "I" who speaks is therefore conscious of the multiplicity of voices it expresses, which are contained within.

To start, and to centre the focus that anchors all surrounding speech, I choose to speak from an experience significant to me, as to many others engaged in this project. It is a thoughtful decision asserted in the epistemological positioning through which knowledge is rooted, placed, and contextualised, built by our subjectivity, and reconsidered through our actions and interactions with others. As I write this last sentence, a few critical questions arise at first, about knowledge and knowing, because a synthesis does not need to be a clean speech, free from interrogation, drifts, and detours, I now unveil this process of thinking where I immediately question the concepts of knowledge, thinking and knowing. I think of a knowing that cannot be crystallised, but moves on its own and moves us along, "within and on the edges" (Springgay et al., p. 905). It's not the ephemeral tatter of ideas that inspire us and soon fades away, nor the collage of unsubstantiated ideas inside ourselves. I speak from those scars that educate and guide us, scars that exist in us and with which we relate, understanding ourselves and the world inside and around us:

This narrative identity, constitutive of self-constancy, can include change, mutability, within the cohesion of one lifetime. The subject then appears both as a reader and writer of its own life, as Proust would have it. As the literary analysis of autobiography confirms, the story of life continues to be reconfigured by all the truthful or fictive stories that a subject tells about himself or herself. This reconfiguration makes life itself a woven of stories told. (RICOEUR, 1984, p. 376)

It is a knowing rooted in experience, which does not mean it is motionless nor enclosed in itself, as Bachelard (1992) highlights in the following excerpt: "Truth, like history, is a perception of reality, admitted today and denied tomorrow. Life is imagined before it is seen or remembered" (p.90). In this regard, we need to be in a constant dialogue for a wider understanding, a dialogue with ourselves and with others, contributing to the collectiveness that defines our humanity together. As Benjamin (1992) emphasises:

> |the narrator| may appeal to his or her own life (which in itself includes not only his or her own experiences but also those of others); the narrator associates to his or her most intimate experiences what he or she learned from tradition. The narrator's gift is being able to tell his or her story (p.56-57).

It is from and about the experience that I speak, revealed in narratives and poems, analysed reflexively, evoking voices from inside the communities involved in the participatory research project

"Urban Boundaries: the dynamics of cultural encounters in community education". Dialogue, intimacy, and liberation processes in this communitarian and participatory project will be discussed and, doing so, I am developing my own processes of dialogue, intimacy and liberation.

In this paper, finished some years after the end of the project, I examine practices, tensions, ambivalences, and contradictions experienced during and after the project and I create new poetic writings, as echoes and expansions of these previous voices. Its main purpose is to develop new learnings, transcend limitations and expand understanding about the poetic processes in education and research.

In this project, I was part of the academic community, participating with the triple role of researcher, educator and poet, in an interconnected process of living inquiry (SPRINGGAY *et al.*, 2005), where poetry was, and continues to be, a tool to develop all these dimensions at the same time.

I selected a few meaningful events (ATKINSON, 2015; IRWIN et al., 2015), where poetry played a relevant part (CAETANO; AFONSO, 2014), and I assume poetic writing as a way of deepening and "transforming understanding, disrupting positionality and improving practice" (EDGE; OLAN, 2021, p. 2). As music in words, it is also a way of enchantment, a poetic state brought into the everyday life of the project and to the present, favouring the "feeling of overcoming our own limits, of being capable of communing with that which surpasses us" (MORIN, 2001, p. 127).

In this paper I integrate and intertwine the theoretical framework and empirical data, beginning with a brief contextualization of the project, followed by a reflection on methodological processes. Afterwards I organise the text in two sections, composed as constellations of concepts. Linguistic prefixes and initials are nodes of conceptual constellations that organise specific events and poetry clusters (BUTLER-KISBER, 2020), guide interpretations, and transform emergent tensions. It is a poetic organisation of rhizomatic relations (IRWIN *et al.*, 2015) that facilitates the flow of reflexivity and reflective evocation of the movements that I experienced during the project and that I identify as important. They are in accordance with the principles of the project, where dialogical and critical approaches are emphasised. I begin with DI – reflecting on the importance of DIalogue, with the DIverse others, to question ourselves and work on our DIlemmas. After I went deeper IN – emphasising the path of INtimacy and INventiveness towards INclusion and INtegrity. In the final sections I discuss my positionalities as researcher, educator and poet in the project and I conclude by reflecting on some of the main contributions of this paper to the poetic self-study field and poetic inquiry.

2 BRIEF CONTEXTUALIZATION

I bring up a few events from the community education project "Urban Boundaries" that involved three communities: 1) an academic community – a multidisciplinary group (eg. education, psychology, history, anthropology, architecture, mathematics, biology, arts) of social actors from different university and non-university institutions, with a common desire to work together with other two communities, promoting emancipatory processes; 2) a multicultural community (*Bairro* Community) in a settlement occupying an agricultural space with precarious and (semi)illegal housing, with a majority of immigrants from Cape Verde, but also with other ethnic groups; 3) a fishing community – originally made up of migrants from other regions of Portugal.

In the scope of this paper, it is not possible to show the richness and variety of experiences we lived together. Nevertheless, it is important to give a picture of the framework and the main tasks of the project. Its development was rooted in Paulo Freire's dialogical approach to critical participation (FREIRE, 1970, 1980) and in the Curriculum Trivium, developed by Ubiratan D'Ambrosio (1999). We structured the fieldwork in three educational tasks: critical alphabetization, multiple cartographies, and life stories (MESQUITA, 2014). Besides these three tasks, we promoted a transversal process, named community mediation – by which, in non-formal and emergent dynamics we organised a mediation web. This mediation web comprised a team of academic and local mediators that all were, in some sort and at some point, mediators of social processes, facilitating intercultural communication, intra and inter-community encounters, school-community relations, conflict resolutions, approximations between political instances and populations, and citizen organisation of local communities (CAETANO; FREIRE, 2014; FREIRE; CAETANO, 2014). Together we claimed for water, for the semi-illegal settlement; supported voice empowerment of the fishing community, and at the same time we exercised our right to emancipatory education. These demands gave rise to multiple participatory processes, in which the three communities cooperated, among themselves and with other partners, that meanwhile were being aggregated to the community movement. Amidst the various initiatives that contributed to the outlined objectives, I highlight the creation of a commission of residents of *Bairro Community,* strengthened by the participatory and investigative processes of cartography; the creation of a community kitchen, with a water point in the *Bairro* settlement; the organisation of meetings in the local community where the voice of fishermen were heard, namely through the recognition of individual and collective life stories; the creation of a *batuko* group (a cultural Cape Verde practice) and the organisation of a popular school, where participants could share their knowledge, according to an ecology of knowledge perspective (SANTOS, 2019).

During those processes, the participant observations contributed to formalise a knowledge that puts in dialogue multiple voices of the direct participants of the research. We chose critical ethnography as the main research strategy (FREIRE, 2014; THOMAS, 1993) and used field note registrations, interviews, video, and photographic reports, production of artefacts, maps to cartography spaces and people. Some of that data is present in previous publications and this paper only gives traces of written data, much with a poetic tone, created with the participants of the project or integrating parts of their discourses produced in our encounters and interviews. This project can be considered transdisciplinary in the sense that the knowledge of fishermen, construction workers, cleaners, artisans, among others, were as relevant as other knowledge coming from the academic community, as all brought their knowledge, constructing their experiences and learning together.

Situated knowledge was shared in multiple forums and encounters, where the academics and locals were co-authors. This knowledge was presented in professional and academic journals, compiled in chapters of books, reports and books, conference proceedings and paper presentations with multiple sorts of participants (e.g. CAETANO, 2017; CAETANO; FREIRE, 2014; CAETANO *et al.,* 2020; FREIRE *et al.*, 2014; FREIRE; CAETANO, 2014; MESQUITA, 2014; MESQUITA *et al.* 2016).

In an intensive activity and in a plurality of forms and moments, we gave space to build a process that transcends the Urban Boundaries project where we were at the beginning, in an expansive Movement that gives visibility to what is normally invisible to the eyes of the scientific arena: the voice and struggle of the poorest, their inner dignity, their beauty, and strength.

This paper constitutes a new layer of this movement that began in 2017 as a chapter of a book and I felt it was time to go back and expand this living inquiry with new layers of poetry and reflection, not only to revisit it and expand my insights, but also to develop my own methodological process of poetic self-study.

3 SELF-STUDY, DIALOGUE, AND POETRY

I present this paper as an individual self-study, where I examine practices, tensions, and contradictions I experienced during and after a community educational and research project. Although for the purpose of this work, self-study is considered a self-dialogue of several 'I' positions for the creation of a 'third position' (HERMANS, 2013), it is important to recognize its 'collaborative ethos' (GRIMMETT, 2016, p.42), understood as a social practice intertwining the different voices of the 'I's' of the author and other participants. However, I cannot assume that is always the result of a direct collaborative "craftwork".

This self-study follows LaBoskey's (2004) main principles of being self-initiated, combining cycles of text production, during and after the end of the project; aiming for self, professional, and authentic learning, and integrating several qualitative methods and text forms.

It is a poetic self-study (PITHOUSE-MORGAN; SAMARAS, 2022), inscribed in a line of poetic inquiry (BUTLER-KISBER, 2020; FAULKNER, 2017, 2019) and literary arts-inspired self-study inquiry (PITHOUSE-MORGAN; SAMARAS, 2019; PITHOUSE-MORGAN, 2021), as arts not only 'foster reflexivity', but also 'facilitate empathy', 'engage others' and 'capture the ineffable, the hard-to-put-into words' (Weber, 2014). It also resonates with a/r/tography, as the identities of poet, researcher and educator are intertwined in an "embodied living inquiry, an interstitial relational space for creating, teaching, learning and researching in a constant state of becoming" (IRWIN et al. 2015, p. 71).

Rather than satisfy artistic quality criteria (without neglecting this concern) I intended to enhance fruition, relational intimacy, inner consciousness, critical visions, commitments and engagements. As Faulkner (2019), I also consider the use of poetry in research as a "liberatory methodology through collaborative work, reflexive engagement as ethical practice, evocative critique and resistance of the status quo" (p.37).

At a first level, during the project, poetry is conceived as a tool for community encounters and alphabetization processes, using previously created poems of participants and other authors and creating collaboratively new ones. Participants' voices are brought to this process, directly or indirectly, to write found poems or generate new ones and write poetic fieldwork notes. This is a first level of poetry mobilisation and creation, during the project, where: 1) Poems existed before and were brought to the project to develop educational encounters – my poems, poems of community members, and of outside authors; 2) Poetic narratives created during our encounters, as individual research mediators to gather, analyse, interpret and represent our experiences, felt and thought as collective creations of the moments we lived together; 3) Poems and poetic narratives presented in our meetings, as a way to give back a subjective mirror of the events. All those poetic writings are also part of previous publication (CAETANO; AFONSO, 2014), compiled in a book about the project, released in a session with the presence of its participants. These are forms to take care of the ethical and catalytic criteria of research validity (KINCHELOE; MCLAREN, 2000).

But a new layer of new poetic texts emerged during the self-study process presented in this paper, elaborated years after the end of the FU project, namely generated and found poems created from previous discourses (BUTLER-KISBER, 2020; EDGE; OLAN, 2021; PITHOUSE-MORGAN; SAMARAS, 2019). With poetic writing I intend to interrogate meanings, expand understandings, transcend tensions and

liberate from assumptions and narrative limitations. Despite the difficulty of giving a detailed description of how I create poetic writing, I assume that what counts as data in this work is not only the fieldwork notes and the former poetic, but also the several later writings, constituting layered accounts (RAMBO, 2005; RONIN, 1995). Trustworthiness, as an important criterion of quality self-study (FELDMAN, 2003) and poetic inquiry (BUTLER-KISHER, 2020), is founded in this interconnected process of subjective and intersubjective construction, when I assume unresolved complexity and make explicit the internal ambivalences. Following the rhizome metaphor (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1997) I consider this movement a rhizomatic weaving and never-ending process, of stepping back and stepping inside, of centripetal and centrifugal movements, of integration and disruption (LIGORIO, 2010), of poetic and non-poetic discourses, of resonance between the sonority of the words and their meanings, trying to go further and each time beyond previous insights.

In the next two sections I organise the layered accounts in clusters, and in each one I present several events, each one with a metaphorical title and where the first and last layers by small marks – '§§§'.

4 DI – DIALOGUE AND DILEMMAS, MOVING WITHIN DIVERSITY

To dialogue is to assume diversity, face the difficulties and eventual misunderstandings that come with difference, but it is also to assume the possibility of convergence. It is a dynamic process that implies, first and foremost: openness and the willingness to listen (Bohm, 1987); confidence that dilemmas will be overcome with the others; non-identification with ideas and feelings; flexibility to create something new.

4.1 ENCOUNTERS OF DIVERGENT EMBODIED VOICES - HOW PREDATORY CAN WE BE?

Dilemmas and questionings emerge from every direction, particularly from the local communities and from the dialogues established in several encounters – two by two, three by three, in small groups, in forums; inside, outside, and among the communities directly involved in the project. Some of those constant interrogations are enlightened in two fieldwork notes of meetings between the three communities, sensed in a poetic tone:

> Multiple voices juxtaposed and listening each other. The tension of divergent visions opens the field of possibilities, towards their integration. Searching for the bridges that connect them by their deepest core and amplifying them, communing them. Architectures emerging from apparent chaos. Channels as roads inside and outside communities, through which the voices travel, in which they can find each other. Marching. Rerouting with every (non)encounter, in the emergency of new movements.

But also born out of the consciousness of older movements entangled with visions of alternative futures. The future is here, in the action that makes it present. The past is here, in the comprehension that makes it present. The present is here, in this encounter of our voices (fieldwork note 1).

The voices are alive. In them, the energy of emotion, love, and fear. In them, the embodiment of pain. In them, the vision that unity is the way. Behind them, stories: of conquests as the voices unite, of destruction as power becomes unbalanced, of incomprehension as backs turn at each other. Inside them, the will to go on, this time, more carefully. So that what has been done is not undone, so that despite adversities the strength to continue is maintained, so that the authority of the voices is not vilified. There is a need for strengthening what is inside. But there is also a need for opening the whole to other wholes. Concentric circles extending. Circles that cross other circles and expand. Unity is sustained in a universe of plasticity, a greater intelligence that goes through it. We need to trustily open up to this movement that has already begun and relies only on us to continue. (fieldwork note 2)

Our consulting members played a pivotal role in the strengthening of our dialogic reflection, by posing questions and dilemmas that made us look through the perspective of those more distanced and less involved, allowing us to assume the process with a more realistic posture, with less militancy and romanticism and more criticism and exigency. I highlight the interpellation and incentive of our consultant, in our annual meeting where members of the three communities, along with our other friend and consultant Ubiratan D'Ambrósio, gathered:

The more we provide them, we develop in them a critical sense of organisation, for them to be less predatory and at the same time more protected from predation (...).
How predatory can the academic community be? (...).
We cannot delude ourselves with the possibility of intervening on a relatively small scale. The personal, familial scale is not the social scale. The logic is not the same, the mechanisms and the values are not the same. (J. P., fieldwork note 3)

Such questionings reverberate in us by the incentive of others, as if we were barometers for the winds that swirls around us, capturing thunders and channelling lightning into the ground.

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At the present time, some years after those encounters, I try to create a found poem, using some past expressions and words with a different organisation, to continue the dialogue and enlighten the understanding of our friend's critical voice:

Your question in me
      how much predatory can we be?
are we deluding ourselves
      or are we not?

a small gesture towards each other
a brief moment

a seed in us
      with you in me
      with me in you

and we keep moving

This poem creates a new meaning that reverberates with experiences, tensions, and dilemmas I have been facing in the academic and day-to-day life, questioning the contradictions between emancipatory values and predatory practices of research as instruments of egoic and institutional interests. The poem opens to the hope of a long-term transformation and autonomy for each one of us, despite other possible less dignifying agendas.

4.2 ARTS-BASED PRACTICES - THE ECHOE OF DISPERSION IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING

Our bodies, emotions, and thoughts give us signs. As a first-person narrative, I bring up another poetic writing of my own that describes one of the days I spent in Costa da Caparica, which started with a workshop on documentaries and ended up in *Bairro*, for a practical photo shooting session:

Why do I get to these meetings and lose myself, forgetting the senses that brought me there? So many dialogues are left out! So many conversations on hold! So many paths are unfinished. Will there be a day when they meet?

Dispersion in search for focus. Loose movements. Fragments. Fleeting encounters.

I feel the movement of the encounter pulling me inside. And the movement of the escape distracting me. Disentanglement, mine and ours. I centrifuge, hoping that the inversion of movement will, one day, come as a miracle when there will be enough of us already inside to create the structure. We need to get there. To an organisation where we can be, keeping us moving. Keeping us from those who dissolute us on the outside and from those who destroy us on the inside. Fine-tuning each other, existing together in harmony.

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A movement both centripetal and centrifugal, expanding and keeping us together with it. No longer loose fragments. Parts of the same whole. Getting closer to what is already underground and invisible (fieldwork note 4)

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And as I read the notes above, in a new layered account, I create a new poem, inviting me to continue my reflections and expand meanings:

loose fragments
centripetal and centrifugal movements at the same time

consciousness in the middle

almost there
never there
already there

will there be a day?

This new poem emphasises the ambiguities and ambivalences I felt and I still feel about the limits of our encounters with one another, the dissatisfaction with fragmented and dispersive movements, revealing the never-ending process of search for intimacy and individuality. The poem creation, with the reiteration of words and sounds, is an invisible movement of entering in our subjective worlds, living the beauty and complexities of our contradictions and difficulties, accepting them as driving forces for resisting, shifting consciousness and becoming (IRWIN, 2013).

4.3 LIBERATING EXPERIENCES IN SMALL MOVEMENTS

This was what I felt in yet another collective poetry session, during our *Bairro school* sessions, when working with a poem that challenged us and invited us to challenge each other:

Who are you? I am... And you, who are you? I am...
And you, who are you? I am... Are you sure? Who would you be if you were not so sure?
I would be....

First in pairs, then all together in a circle, each one of us said a sentence and added a body movement to it, while the others mimicked, in chorus, creating a collective poem that extended itself in our excitement

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to assert and recognize ourselves in a mirror: I am... We are... a river running to the sea, a butterfly, a river running upstream, a rainbow...

§§§

And afterwards, inspired by this self-study purpose, new words gave rise to a new poem of my own, emphasising beautiful small movements:

> movement we are
> a rainbow in the landscape
> a learning journey
> a brief light resisting

The movement continues. Poetry (re)creation is, in itself and at the same time, an intimate, expansive and liberating experience. I hope that is an insightful experience not only for me but also to the readers of these texts, and also for other projects of research and development. These poems are gifts, small movements of intimacy and love that give continuity to the movement begun within this project.

5 IN–INTEGRITY AND INCLUSION THROUGH INTIMACY AND INVENTIVENESS

From the marked invisibility and individualism to the imperative of overcoming barriers, we assume a transversal interdependency in the FU project, through acting, interacting, and timidly entering into intimacy. We strengthen our own integrity and identity in a forever unfinished intercultural and inclusive path, which leaves us with the disquietude and dissatisfaction of an interrupted road, and the desire to return to it.

5.1 FROM INVISIBILITY TO INNER CONNECTION, THE POWER OF ECHOING

I evoke here the poet and disquiet citizen of the world, Guilherme Brito, a member of the Bairro Community who has presented us with a strong social and political criticism in the form of a poem, exposing invisibility, isolation, and individualism (free translation):

> Because they do not know each other.
> Hello!
> Echoes in emptiness
> A greeting stripped of content,
> As they meet.
> They live in the same city
> Same street, same building

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And quite often in the same house.

Hello!
They look but cannot see each other,
They speak but do not know each other.
They exhale "Hello!"
Like smoke rolling out of a chimney
In itself so thin
It dissipates as it reaches the outside
They study in the same school,
They are part of the same class
They spend recess together;
They meet in the elevator
Still, they look but do not know each other
And hence they simply say "hello".
They're strangers living in loneliness side-by-side
They exchange gifts...
Because they have no LOVE to offer,
They're afraid
Of looking each other in the eye,
Of screening the deepness of their selves,
Of putting themselves out in the open
Their weaknesses
Their potentialities
And so,
As they pass each other on the street
They simply say: "Hello!".
Each living
Selfishly in their own world,
Wishing to dominate the other's universe.
They live shoulder to shoulder
A life facing the SELF,
And hence they do not know each other,
And they say to each other
Simply: "Hello!"
As they pass by on the avenue

They stumble on each other!
This is how our world is like!
(BRITO, citado em CAETANO; AFONSO, 2014, p.62)

We see here poetry as a tool for political consciousness and for a sensible awakening to the world, the other, the own aesthetics of life and arts where "the sensible make sense. Not a sensible and remote sense but a 'significance' within and for the lived moment" (MAFFESOLI, 2005, p. XVII). To do that, we need to open to others, listen to them, and listen to ourselves. Through listening and attention, we will awaken to the "sensibility of our whole being, our whole body – our nerves, our eyes, our ears, and our voice" (KRISHNAMURTI, 2011, p.1983). We will therefore be able to enter others' intimacy and allow them to enter ours, in reciprocal communication.

§§§

As a spiral, in a new poem found from the silent, invisible, and at distance encounter, grieving nowadays our long-term departure, I discover a more profound meaning of our previous common experiences, a new intimacy where our identities converge in the same trues:

Hello!
  echoes in emptiness
    a thin smoke exhaling from me

Where are you now?
Do we live in the same city?

  I don't see you any more
  but feel the connection
  more than ever

    with your true echoing my true

Hello, my friend!

  finally I see you
    inside

This second layer of poetry writing is, once more, a transformative experience for me, giving the insightful discovery of an inner connection with this participant of the project, that transcends time and

space. Poetry gives me that sense of empathy as the poet voice echoes in me, his cadence, his sound giving the rhythm to my own.

5.2 POETRY OPENING TO INTIMACY AND INVENTIVENESS IN WOMEN LIVES

For now, I choose to detail another experience, involving a group of six women during our critical alphabetization classes, where poetry was a movement and a pretext for opening intimacy, creating the possibility to talk about love and death in our lives. In a short poetry reading session, amidst punctuations, we shared life and confided our hopes and pains, as detailed in the following fieldwork notes:

> Poetry as a saying from within us, intimate and invisible to the eye. So much condensed in so little. Music with words and stories inside. Transforming us into readers of our deepest core and allowing us to share our humanity with others. Brief marks, punctuation, what they tell us, and how they emerge in sentences – dashes to start dialogues that are read to be understood; exclamation marks to express astonishment and most of all indignation; question marks to go searching for answers.
> Sayings on love, in which we overcome ourselves. And on death, which liberates us.
> This is how I learned they believe that death is a path to a better world, to the other side, where the soul is happier. From where we later return, oblivious, ready to start again.
> This is how I shared the story and poem about my mother's death. This is how we reflected on how important it is for us to free ourselves from the weight of the past, after digesting and learning from it.
> This is how poetry opened us up, in intimacy and enchantment. Mediating our worlds. (fieldwork note 5).

Here, the essence of those moments was a flourishing of intimacy, cared with special attention, because we are aware of the violence that is present when strangers intimidate us and want to enter our most precious spaces. Intimacy, like all social processes, derives from the dynamics of power and, as such, it would be easy for us to incur in such dynamics of domination and ascendency over others, as unfortunately sometimes happened.

For instance, in this women alphabetization group we tried together to write a collective found poem, using these women's previous discourses produced during a focus group interview about their experience within the project, working with the sentences with literacy goals, and then composing a new text:

> The people like batuko together
> Women need wish space
> While God rests

§§§

I am aware that this poetic composition based on their own words is due mainly to my vision and sensibility for connecting meaning. A discomfort that was subliminal and drove me to a deeper look. In a new layered account, a new poem created for this self-study purpose and paper, I enlarge my consciousness of women social constraints and of the liberating power of intimacy:

a wishing space
women we
       inside
never free
but liberated here
       in intimacy

Slowness is needed for us to perceive our likenesses and differences and to open up to each other, in intimacy. Through intimacy and inventiveness, we draw the possibility of reconstructing ourselves and reshaping our identities, as we question the other and see ourselves mirrored in them. Poetry also brings lightness and acceptance, a feeling of ressonance and recognition.

5.3 IN A PATH OF LOVE AND FREEDOM, AS A MANTRA

Love – the ultimate reality, in need to be rescued, for the sake of ethics. In order for love to deepen, we need to set it free – "True love perceives the loved one as equal and free; as Tagore says: 'tyranny excludes as much as hierarchy'" (MORIN, 2004, p.119). And we are still far from it in our societies, as Morin states: "ill-love is everywhere, not only in societies where the submission of women to male authority still persists but also in our individualised society" (p.119). In the same sense, Neves (2008) emphasise the social construction nature of love phenomena and alerts to a romanticised view:

> It seems risky to speak of contemporaneous love as a repository of personal freedom and decisions. Love is a social product not always consummated with a posture of freewill but one of institutional standardisation, as it is a constructed image of a given time and space, inculcated in our collective language (Neves, 2008, p. 103).

Since we were aware of this phenomenon, we strived to be attentive to the relationships that were being established, and we craved this freedom as "it is no longer the unequivocal and abstract freedom that is sought, but the practice of interstitial freedoms" (MAFFESOLI, 2003, p.136). Here we assume a wide meaning and perspective about love, which, in this sense, can be more than caring, implies a commitment to the other, here portrayed as connectedness, closeness, and self-disclosure (STERNBERG, 1988).

This is also the meaning behind the posture and the words of our artist, who visited Bairro community every week to be with the children, as presented it in one of our annual meetings:

> The anxiety was gradually dissolving. I realised that I did not have to go anywhere. I simply need to walk in a loving space. (J.M, fieldwork 6)

§§§

And the statement silently echoes, at this very moment, like a mantra in me:

Walking in a loving space
Walking in a loving space
Walking in a loving space

5.4 (INTER) CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS OUTSIDE DOORS - MOVEMENTS OF LOVE AND SILENCE INSIDE

I recall a particular intense encounter, full of intimacy and commitment to one of the women from the Bairro community with whom I have established a long and personalised relationship. It started during the group work in our critical alphabetization sessions and kept going for various encounters inside and outside the community.

I speak of freedom, of leisure, of pleasure - the pleasure of words, the pleasure of leaving a confined space and taking a chance on the new, the pleasure of being free to decide differently, the pleasure of creating together, the pleasure of affection. We have met at Palace Galveias, at Gulbenkian Foundation and at Cultural Center of Belém, strolling around the gardens, visiting artistic and cultural exhibitions, participating in poetry recitals, leafing through books and catalogues, translating Batuko songs from Creole to Portuguese, and composing, together, poetic texts like the following:

> Poetry is a silent river running as liquid in us
> The poet is an urgency door in the silence of the city (fieldwork note 7, free translation)

Poetry brought us together beyond our cultural differences, weaving increasingly deeper ties. We have followed a path of critical citizenship, as we experienced sites where poetry she never entered before, reversing the excluding process of marginalisation, where society places poor people from the periphery. In the anonymity of our steady steps and the companionship of our affection, we lived a relationship where "love is the fundamental experience of reconnecting human beings. Love blossomed us linking us" (MORIN, 2004, p. 119).

This process was not experienced without ambivalences, due to our restlessness and both willingness to share opportunities, learnings and new challenges with others beside us two. It was an inclusive movement, born out of the feeling of, somehow, constantly excluding other members of the communities, which I perceived as a sign of ethical vigilance and maturity.

§§§

And now, at the present moment, I create a new poem reflecting this ambivalence, working with our own words and of the authors' words with whom we dialogue in this text.

In two   the world
a silent river running as liquid in us
interstitial freedom

outside all
the other we love

margins to flood

       reconnecting in love
           the fundamental experience

I became aware that "if love leads us to the paroxysm of an integrative aptitude towards the altruistic principle of inclusion, it likely captures the egocentric principle of exclusion as well when it takes exclusive ownership over the loved one" (MORIN, 2004, p. 119). This, among other factors, may have induced us to interrupt this individualised process, because "citizenship in an interconnected world leads to ethics and a sense of justice that promotes and encourages the participation of all the elements in a balance of giving and taking" (TITUS, 2005, p. 31).

5 DISCUSSING MY SEVERAL AND CONFLICTING 'I' POSITIONS AND LANGUAGES

I will now reflect on my positionality as an educator, researcher, and poetry writer in this project. As it happens in a/r/tography these three roles and identities bring complexity to the process of knowing, as "an identity is a viewfinder, also a small frame cut out of reality, which orients me toward the world" (RAMBO, 2005, p. 571). These are embodied and situated identities, that emerge and are present not always at the same time nor with equal prevalence.

I think that these diverse identities have been one of the reasons why the project coordinator invited me to participate in it. I accepted the challenge because I always look for places where I can feel more integrated in my various selves and, in that sense, more fulfilled.

But this challenge brought with it many areas of discomfort. First of all, I was confronted with very different ways of researching, thinking about education, and living. I'm talking about the academic community, the Bairro community, and the fishing community. It also brought, among many others, the discomfort and at the same time the enthusiasm of rethinking educational processes, social and community mediation in a very open way and in which poetry could have a relevant place for me and others, facilitating an ecology of knowledge where "knowledge is inter-knowledge" (SANTOS, 2010, p. 49), recognizing, valuing, dialoguing and integrating cultural diversity. This relevance is still a source of tension. For whom was this poetic process relevant? Certainly for some of the participants in the encounters, workshops, alphabetization sessions. Certainly for me, in the way I developed a reflection supported by arts-based research (BARONE; EISNER, 2012; CHILTON; LEAVY, 2014; FINLEY, 2011), breaking with orthodox processes. Certainly, for the project as a whole, because this poetic component was part of educational processes and an opportunity to reflect on ourselves.

But wase I truly listened to? Several times I felt constrained and I didn't develop this poetic dimension as much as I could. This is partially because I didn't feel fully understood by my peers when I gave them back the poems at the academic community meetings. I felt accepted for my singularity in the team, but not truly understood by many of those listening. I was also confronted with some personal difficulties, to find space to return these field notes and poems in the two other communities, fearing it wouldn't make sense to them. This fear comes from the awareness that poetry is not a language easily accepted by many, but also from the apprehension of being misinterpreted in my role as a researcher that portrays in such a subjective way the collective experiences and speeches of others. If this is a problem for any researcher who intend to return their interpretations and reconstruct it with others, in a language that allows for true communication, it is even more so when the researcher's language is far removed from the prosaic register of the daily life and returns in written form an experience that was lived at a sensory level, with the whole body.

More than returning the poetic production that I was carrying out as a researcher, I chose to give priority, in the public space of our encounters, to listen to the poetic production of poets, individually and collectively, from outside and within the community. But even then, the question was raised by my conscient self - am I imposing a process that would not be natural for the people involved in it? I didn't want to stumble into the contradiction of doing the opposite of what I advocate, according to

an emancipatory perspective (FREIRE, 1970, 1980). These concerns were often undone by seeing the enthusiastic reaction of the participants when they felt listened to, recognized, and integrated in a process that opened our doors and windows to a wider world, such as the following testimony of one of the residents of the Bairro:

> the neighbourhood is now much better than before, because before the neighbourhood was disorganised and now it's perfect, it's more complete, in tune... literacy classes, drumming and games, our hearts are full of joy and in the neighbourhood everything was in tune, peaceful and more joyful. Before, the neighbourhood was very dull, disorganised... Before I was home alone and sad, but since I started literacy classes and drumming, my heart is filled with joy...(A, cited by FREIRE; CAETANO, 2014, p.7)

> Now I'm at my school, at the nho batuko, my heart is happier. (V, cited by FREIRE; CAETANO, 2014, p.7)

I would like to add that the writing of this article, in the light of this self-study perspective, allowed me to enter deeper into the reflection on my ambivalences and difficulties.

Being a poetry writer and bringing poems from my books, along with other authors' poetry, to the encounters and the alphabetization sessions was not experienced as a problem. Taking the role of researcher and educator who integrates poetry in the investigative and educational processes wasn't felt as a problem either. But using poetic language to dialogue with other project participants about our interactive processes is still a difficulty that continues to be present. The different roles and languages do not always converge harmoniously, sometimes they are only juxtaposed, generating conflicts within us. Several underground relational tensions emerged, related to integrity, intimacy, identity and inclusion and those tensions had repercussions in the research processes. However, it can be seen as a challenge and a strength, favouring creative dialogues. Poetry and its musicality has the potential to evoke and to go beyond tensions, and to be a transformative mediator for meaningful paths, deepening our understanding and transcending our limits.

Other tensions emerge with new layered accounts, created years later for this self-study. As I am no longer in the field of study, the relationship with the community is just a relationship lived internally by me . Here the identities of poet and researcher are much more present than of educator. These two identities conflict in the sense that I want to find a balance between the condensed and aesthetic form of poetry and the more extensive and discursive form of the researcher's reflection work. I fear that the former prevailed over the latter, but I trust that the new insights that poetry has brought me, as well as those that it may produce in the readers of this paper, will overcome some of these limitations resulting

from poetic condensation. Poetry can favour the relationship at deep levels, but it is necessary to find ways that allow the dialogue to happen, which is not easy. It is always an open process that needs to be thought out, rehearsed, revised at every moment.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

I assume poetic self-study and poetic inquiry "as/in/for social research" (FAULKNER, 2017). Some of the main contributes of this paper concerning poetic self-study field and poetic inquiry are, perhaps, the assumption of the weaving and never-ending creative and conflictive process; the search for a balance between transformative and aesthetic dimensions of the poetic process; the intertwined movements of simultaneously gathering, analysing and creating data in poetic forms; the transdisciplinary learning and knowing encounters with the participants of the three communities involved; the several layers, bridging times and spaces and deepening understanding with new insights. These are layers where "all accounts are simultaneously lived experiences at the time of their productions and ungrasple moments of reflection that escape before they are written" (RONAI, 1995, p.398). The poems elaborated during the writing of this paper are living inquiries with those with whom I relate, even when they are no longer present in my daily life. With its creation, resonating from listening the voices of the past, I experienced inner connections, lived new internal dialogues, and felt the liberating power of intimacy and its driving force to resist. These are some of the important insights I now emphasise.

In addition to the satisfaction of breaking the most commonly established norms, which in itself is an act of resistance, it should be noted that this language has great potential to deepen understanding and to knowledge elaboration with a transdisciplinary vocation, provoking and challenging researchers' beliefs and assumptions (SIMPSON, 2019), avoiding premature closeness (HOPPER; SANFORD, 2008) and making room for inventiveness (PITHOUSE-MORGAN; SAMARAS, 2019; PITHOUSE-MORGAN, 2021).

In the flow of creating new poems I had a tendency to produce smaller and more synthetic texts, being difficult to clarify the process of creation, one of the limits of the present paper. But, as Faulkner develops (2017, 2019), the quality of poetic inquiry blends artistic, scientific and poetic criteria, among which I highlight artistic concentration, embodied experience, mystery and inspiration of the readers for discovery. Here, a balance is needed between implicit and explicit, flux and fragmentation, emotion and reflection, sound and silence. Echoes of sound and meaning resonate as mantras in me wishing to inspire the readers of this paper with the desire and openness to live their research experiences as singular and integral beings.

What this work also emphasise is the potential use of these poetic processes, not only in the deepening of knowledge about ongoing projects, but also their use in community education, constituting a mediator in the strengthening of relationships between communities and between people, where they can meet and get to know each other in their dignity, and value each other in their diversity of cultures, social conditions, experiences and purposes.

I'm aware of the limitations of a work that is based on the subjective experience of the researcher-poet-educator, but the belief and desire of bringing poetic language to the research-field is an imperative that I intend to maintain and develop further and further. We do what we can, knowing that there is always a step to follow the previous one, raising our consciousness in a constant path of becoming.

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