

Encounter pedagogy for a global citizenship



There are many places, people and realities of which we don't know anything. People we don't care about because they are not in our close circle of friends. Unfair situations we don't feel responsible for because they are indifferent to us. The idea of global citizenship is achieved by opening ourselves to the meeting, building bonds and relationships with that doesn't seem to exist in our daily life. That is the reason why pedagogy of transformative meeting is key to the education in said global citizenship.



Daniel
Villanueva SJ

Vicepresidente Ejecutivo Fundación Entreculturas

d.villanueva@entreculturas.org

www.entreculturas.org

 [@danivillanueva](https://twitter.com/danivillanueva)



«We live in a generalized indifference regarding such tragedies, which is a dramatic sign of how that “fatherly responsibility” upon which all civil society is based on is being lost»

POPE FRANCIS (Lampedusa)

When I have the chance to work with a group of teachers I like to show them a picture of a map of the Earth at night and ask them what they would use it for in their classes. I learn a lot hearing that dialogue. There is always someone who would use the photo to talk about energy consumption, population density, colonial history or the impact of climate and orography in human settlements. There is also someone who dares to take another step and sees this picture as a chance to talk about, for example, the differences between the origin of the resources of the planet and how they are used, or about the relation existing between human mobility and development, or about the inequality and the urbanization happening in the world. What impresses me the most is that there is always someone who, by the end, slowly and shyly, suggests we use the picture to ask our-

selves: what do we know about what is going on where there is no light?

Another similar exercise I do is inviting them to examine a blank map of Africa, country by country. What do we know about these places? What do we know about their artistic and intellectual movements, their history, their geography, or about their cultures and languages? There are many places in the world of which we know so little, or of which we just have a general idea, most of the times too simple and stereotyped. I believe we have to accept not knowing hardly anything of that which we don't directly experience; we have to accept that most of our cognitive world map is dark. It is a normal thing. And it would not be a problem if it wasn't for the fact that we usually do not care about what we do not know, what doesn't concerns us, what doesn't moves, wonders or hurts us. And, as a consequence, we don't feel co-responsible for that.

This paradox is what allows us to live with the injustices, inequities and rights vulnerabilities that happen daily in our world without losing our minds, as they usually don't happen before me, I don't



experience them directly. It's as if that made them less real. Have you ever wondered why we identify the injustices that happened throughout the History of Humanity, by looking back, better than we are aware of what is happening in our own present time? Nowadays we are shocked by slavery or concentration camps and we think to ourselves: "how could they live with such situations?" and yet, every day, in our world, we live with situations that are astoundingly unfair and that we don't see or that, when we see them, we don't fully understand them. I ask myself sometimes, what are the collective blind spots of our time that will shock humanity in the future? What should we be more aware of but are ignoring, either for a lack of awareness or lack of perspective?

This concern is what guides most of our educational work, as I believe that the fact that critical analysis can be applied by the student not only to their reality, but also to their own consciousness of what is real is key. That is the reason why I like to take groups of young people to Ceuta so they could see the border fence. It is a really transformative experience. I can

see in their eyes how the perception of the welfare state changes forever as they discover how our backstage is shaped. Discovering the border fence of Ceuta or Melilla is, for many young people, awakening to the complexity of the world, it's to gain another level of depth in the analysis of the night world map, it's enlightening a part that was dark... and once it's discovered, there is no turning back. Once the concern about the partiality and subjectivity of my experience and knowledge of the world is achieved it's a lot easier to accompany the subject in the reconstruction of a more human, humble, co-responsible and open approach to that which is different, unknown and distant, whether it is real or affectively.

The first step is knowing, for example, that in 2016 a horrible record was broke when 7 200 people died crossing borders all around the world. If we make this personal, it's even more shocking to know that 5 000 of this people died in our beloved Mediterranean Sea. I believe we have made a great step if we achieve knowledge and sensitivity towards this fact. However, everything is different when one



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

They analyze the importance of the environment in their lives:

- They talk about the deterioration of the environment at a global scale, using some concrete examples, such as the Amazonia or the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- They analyze the consequences of this deterioration in their environments (loss of natural spaces and endangered species, increase of contamination, climate disruptions, etc.) to be detected.
- They analyze which part of our life style and form of consumption are contributing to this environmental deterioration, and they design personal and collective actions they can promote in their environments to counteract this reality.

is facing the reality and this numbers begin to have faces, names, stories... even more if you create dialogue, exchange or even personal implication.

That is why I believe these types of meetings are key to answer two answer two basic questions in the configuration of the global citizenship concept we are looking for, two frontiers that delimit (or extend) my sense of belonging: who is my family? And which is my homeland? The first question is to understand who my people is, the one I take care of, the one that affect me, with who I involve in a personal way, and the second one is to identify what the limits of the reality of which I feel responsible, to which I belong, from which I understand myself and therefore I don't hesitate in taking part and assuming what concerns it are. If it was someone from my family who is trying to cross the strait in a small boat or if it was our homeland the one that is being threatened by deforestation or political collapse, we wouldn't even hesitate to the need of taking part in such causes. This happens because the size and permeability of these borders of belonging will to a great extent determine the degree of personal involvement with the complexity of the global.

Thus, we can approach these questions in a philosophical way, through reflection and knowledge. And it is a good thing. But we must especially approach through experience and the creation of bonds and relationships. That is why it is crucial to develop pedagogy of meeting, to find a way of creating the conditions of possibility and to facilitate learning experiences consisting of transformative meetings which help to expand my own sense of belonging, expanding and mak-

ing permeable the circles of belonging which shape us.

That is the reason why Entreculturas has been long investigating how to create the conditions so that the experience of meeting becomes that learning source and progressive awareness raising. Basing ourselves on the Ignatian pedagogy and in the Popular Education, the two big pedagogical traditions upon which we operate, and on the framework of the Citizenship Education, we apply it in virtue of the following core ideas:

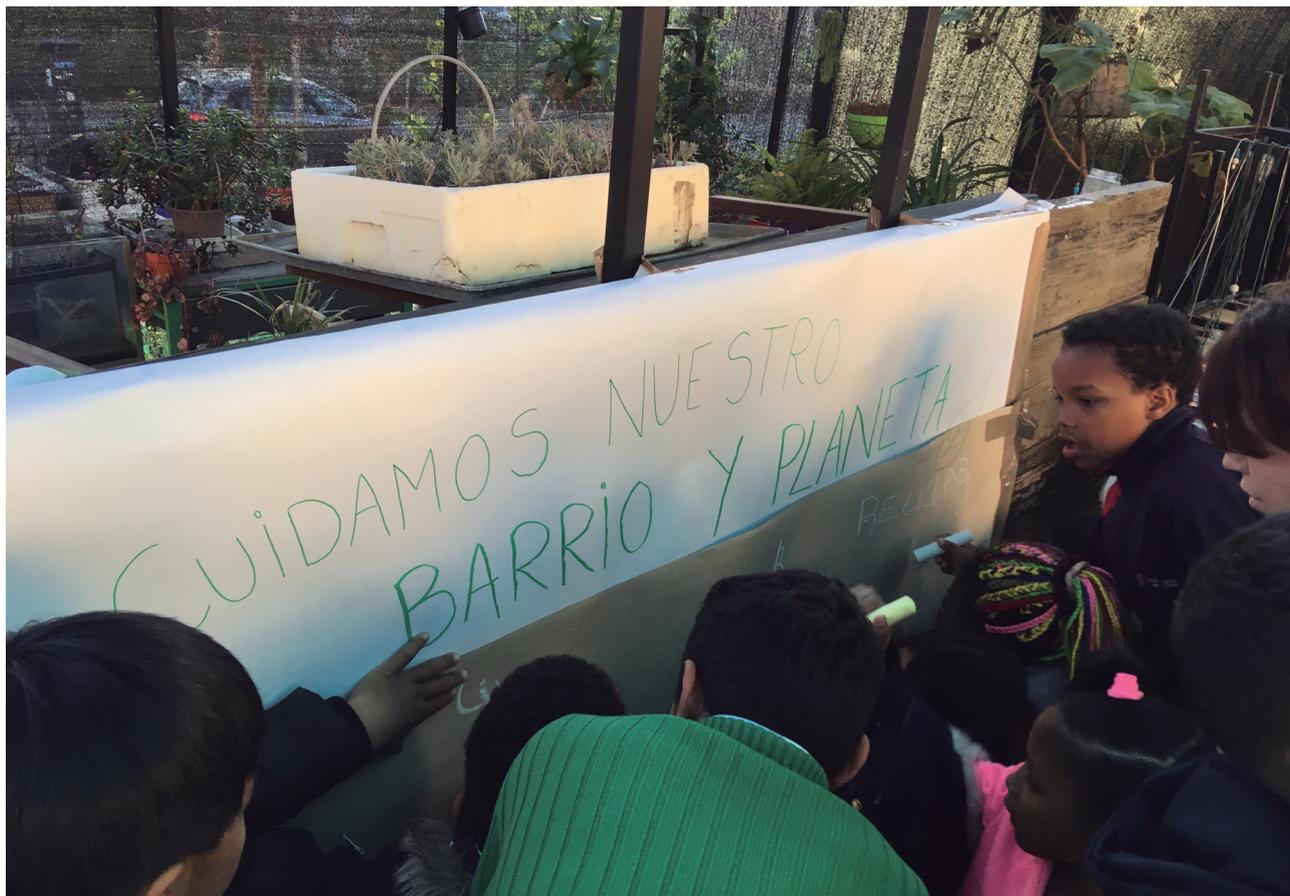
Direct, responsible and with legal implication experience

The more direct the experience is the more involved the whole person is and the bigger his ability to transform is. This experience is lived when someone is near unfair realities, when you cooperate with others, when you solve conflicts, when you are close to nature, when you get acts of solidary commitment started and you exchange thoughts and experiences with people from other countries to build common narratives about the global reality.

This direct experience is not always possible, and in some activities it can just involve a small group of people, which is the reason why sometimes it is necessary to find mediations in which similar conditions happen. Among these we can highlight the testimony of people who have lived direct experiences. This mediation usually works better the bigger the closeness and identification with who is transmitting it (another people of the group of the same age, or someone a bit older in who you can see the next step of their life path); the learning experiences gained through the socio-emotional method, the theater or the game, in which the imagination, the physical, emotional and cognitive aspect get started; and the life stories with an audiovisual support.

Causing unlikely meetings to happen, creating highly diversified groups

The meetings must connect those who would normally not have the chance



to do so; they must transcend the invisible barriers of social exclusion, the ones applied to stereotypes associated to different cultures and ethnic groups, to gender and class. The meetings we cause must be diverse and inclusive spaces, intentionally oriented to benefit inclusion. To do so we must pay attention to who is called to participate in the experience. We must seek this diversity and inspire joint participation of those who normally don't share common spaces in the society, and even less in the exercise of citizenship. If this dimension is taken care of pedagogy of meeting will many times make us see the barrier as a place of experience of that which forever transforms my perception of the world.

Horizontality

And for these meetings to truly be among equals, that is, equally, in inclusive contexts of high diversity, we have learnt a key word: horizontality, unavoidable requirement to develop the intrapersonal relationships from the good self-esteem, respect and recognition of the value of differences. When working with

young people we cannot assume horizontality will happen naturally just because of age similarity. In fact, we must assume it won't happen in a natural way, as the teenagers live with the ethnicity, status and gender cultural stereotypes. We have to break these stereotypes up from the very beginning, from the work prior to the meetings and throughout all the education progress in which these are framed. This many times asks for an accompaniment which allows addressing a situation avoiding biased interpretations of the meeting and helps to delve into the transformative vertigo caused by the experience of that which is horizontal and that which is different. How many experiences and meetings, instead of changing us, end up strengthening our cultural and ideological assumptions due to the lack of this horizontality?

Global-local overview

The last step to learn is how to go from a particular experience to a global look to reality and to the world. It is true we find ourselves accompanied and connected to reality, but we are always



looking through from our own personal perspective. In our information society it is difficult to distinguish between the superfluous and what really is important, and specialty in certain matters is fomented in contrast to knowledge and integral wisdom. It is increasingly hard to have enough perspective to understand my experience from its complexity, and that is the reason why training the glance is one of the keys. The pedagogy of meetings asks for a polite glance so that the point of view is that of someone who feels he or she belongs to a global community, the human family, in where all people are equal in dignity and rights. A historical and off-centered look that is able to identify the light in the History, the progress of humanity towards that horizon of dignity, justice and peace, far from pessimistic or ethnocentric perspectives. This calls for critical capacity so that the experience of meeting can question the local, that which is close, that which is concrete, the area in which we can directly interact; and it also calls

for training in frameworks of understanding which allow us to apprehend the reality and the ethic, politic, economic and social challenges we must face in the daily life and allows us to link it with that which is global, the big causes we address such as human family, the level where the core of global citizenship we wish for is and were that fatherly responsibility of which Pope Francis talked about in the first page develops.

Thus, this article is a narrative experiment to say that, as educators, as families, we must pay attention to the huge ability of personal and social transformation helping to become aware of has, enlightening our personal way of experiencing the world. Not for nothing has acquiring collective awareness been one of the most useful tools throughout history, helping to bringing down walls and barriers that seemed impassable before. What we have discovered through concrete pedagogical practice is that in order to build a global citizenship consciousness that unites and lays the foundations for a fair, peaceful and sustainable society we must create links, through a thought about and self-aware experience of meeting, which allows us to progressively expand our feeling of belonging and our personal existential angle towards that big human family and our common house horizon •

 **TO KNOW MORE**

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 **WE HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT**

Learning by experience; social change; global education; moral consciousness; educational method.

Este artículo fue solicitado por PADRES Y MAESTROS en mayo de 2019, revisado y aceptado en octubre de 2019.



 Spanish version