

Title: Human Rights in Action Project – a ludic and creative way
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“Portugal is a sovereign republic, based on the dignity of the human being and on the will of the people and committed to building a free, just and fraternal society” (Article 1)

*“Sovereignty, whole and indivisible, lies with the people”,
(in the Portuguese Constitution - Fundamental Principles)*

1. Introduction

At present, human and social conviviality is predominantly subjected to the logic of the marketplace and to the efficacy and efficiency of businesses, represented in interactions such as "I win you lose", "what I win you lose", of the kind Paul Watzlawick defines as “the zero-sum game” (1983:118). Consciously or unconsciously, citizens are influenced and manipulated by social systems that are infected with the mainstream “mercantological” logic of utility. Some characteristics of interpersonal relationships appear to be based on omission and consumerism and seem to reveal manifestations of that same logic. That is also the logic underlying many violations of human rights. Therefore, conviviality amongst human beings suffers from disturbances which hinder the creation of positive bonds with others. As a consequence, a Human being’s condition as a citizen is mortgaged to his/her condition as a statistical figure and a producer of wealth.

2. The Human Rights in Action Project

The Human Rights in Action Project was developed as a result of an existing partnership between Civitas Aveiro – an Association for the Promotion and Defence of Citizens' Rights - and the University of Aveiro.

The Project’s activities began in 2001 with the purpose of informing – asking questions - training – learning – giving answers – changing and celebrating. The strategy chosen is based on supporting the construction of active citizenship practices guided by a humanistic culture of cooperation and responsibility. These are the values that underlie the choices made and the co-production of activities with citizens, as well as the reflections on the effects of their behaviour.

The project targets mainly educational communities, which are organised and led locally by kindergarten teachers and other school teachers. The Human Rights in Action Project (PDHA) recognises the importance of human and social quality development agents. It is guided by the concept of Human that underlies the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNO, 1948) and by theoretical knowledge about communication, ludicity, creativity and citizenship. It is a

proposal for cooperative intervention which aims to create a dynamic will to cooperate. And this cooperation is built up slowly through small active participating actions.

Thus, the PDHA aims to contribute to a better democracy by putting the concept of being Human into practice every day. In fact, the inevitability of influences requires ethics and aesthetics based on a dynamic will that is put into practice, generating trust and the desire to cooperate/change things for the common good.

This whole process is developed through building ludicity and creativity artefacts, where it is necessary to combine creative strategies with ludicity and communication, promoting the well-being of individuals and making them feel at ease with themselves, with others and with the world so as to encourage divergent thought, permanent questioning, planning and production of diversified objects. That is to say, it is in doing, undoing and redoing actions, objects and arguments, when each participant asks, answers, agrees with others, thinks critically about the reality, values, learns to learn how to be and live with situations.

2.1. Ludic and creative Interaction Programmes – Active Citizenship Forum

Interaction programmes are very diversified. We will highlight the active citizenship forum, a moment and place where people meet each other and party. It is a way of celebrating the end of the cycle of work of all participants during the school year. It includes ephemeral pieces of architecture that were built in the University of Aveiro campus to encourage ludic and social interaction in the Forum. This ephemeral architecture was designed and produced within the CIEDIA Action Programme – Citizenship in the teaching of academic subjects, where the social learning of human rights issues is part of the learning process of students doing a course in the Human Communication Dramaturgy and Communication and Ludicity in Education subjects as part of two university degrees: Music, Design, Communication Technology and Kindergarten Teaching.

The Active Citizenship Forum is the ideal opportunity for all participants to see each other and cooperate in party activities during one day. Play and games are combined with the formality of non-festive activities where the work resulting from local actions and reflection on human rights is shown.

On this day, the spontaneous social play of children is particularly important because it is the main communication process used by children in their unique form of coexistence. The promotion of ludic conviviality experiences favours the social learning of citizenship and results in mutual understanding.

The day ends with music on the stage. This is also the moment when nominations for the action programme (People and Citizenship) of the year are announced. Winners of the *Gincana* game are given a laurel wreath and participants present the solutions to the problems posed in the Human Rights Register Game, which reveals the reflections and actions of the children, teenagers and their families.

Ephemeral architecture means creative installations which show the guidance, questioning and solutions to the problems included in the Human Rights Register. Their aim is to encourage participants of all ages to play and have fun and to register the symbols of their actions, using human rights in action to make the ludicity and creativity forum more meaningful.

Welcoming architecture

In the reception tent, two Civitas members welcome everyone. A group of University of Aveiro students share the welcome key with kindergarten teachers and other school teachers.

A blue ribbon with the words "Human Rights in Action" acknowledges and records the citizens' commitment to the social learning of responsible and active citizenship practices. It must be placed by each participant on their left wrist. Sitting on the grass, kindergarten teachers turn this moment into an opportunity to enhance the value and importance of what each group did locally throughout the year, which is on display at the Alameda da Universidade on that day. The initial welcome and the ribbon on the left wrist open the children's participation in the Forum.

Architecture – Playing with the meanings of Human – the *gincana* game

Many ludicity and creativity artefacts were designed for the *Gincana*. They represent the five senses, the sensorial receptors through which we perceive, receive and issue information, which we organise into a meaningful whole and which show that we understand and can influence the world we live in. Each team consists of two people who have to stop at several stations, where they will have to answer ten questions. The questions focus on participants' common experience and they were made by kindergarten teachers and by the teachers of the other children and students who take part in the game. To answer is to find the solution to the problems they have to solve along the way.

Each team begins playing by any one of the senses – artefacts which represent the organs that are responsible for sensorial perception in our body and through which we collect data to perceive and understand the world around us, which define our ludic way: sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. They can also choose where to finish.

Answers are more important than speed in this game because the solution and the way are built slowly, very slowly.

Architecture - maze – Light in the human maze

The architecture of the maze is developed from a basic four leaf clover-shaped structure, a ludic allusion to the complexity of being human and to social conviviality. The idea is to show that human life and social conviviality entail not only the pleasure to be, to exist, but also the tension and conflicts inherent to human interactions, and that human rights are the light code that guide people to the problems they have to solve.

There are three reasons why we communicate: to learn to know and to get to know each other in order to be able to live with ourselves and with others and to have fun.

Bearing this in mind, students and teachers of “Communication and Ludicity” and “Artistic Expression in Childhood I”, from the Department of Communication and Art, created and installed this ephemeral architecture, with the different settings and ludic and creativity artefacts it contains, to encourage ludic and social interaction and socio-dramatic activity.

The starting point for this installation was an attempt to find solutions to some of the present social and human problems like exclusion, racism, child labour, war, violence. Each group of participants (children and/or adults) is accompanied through the maze by two university students, who will be with them from the start. Inside the maze, other students/characters will welcome them and children and adults will play with each other using different creative artefacts and music.

Pedalling for the right to be indignant

The idea of pedalling a bike is based on local culture. Aveiro is a flat town, the Venice of Portugal, where boats and bicycles are available for citizens to use freely. We started from the idea of changing the bicycles by creating artefacts and integrating them into the bicycles, thus transforming them by each action and reflection on the need to denounce human rights violations.

The activity “Pedalling for the Right to be Indignant” focused the attention of those who rode the bikes on the joy of movement and of their reflection-action. At the same time, it drew the attention of ordinary citizens, who smiled at the surprising means of transport and asked:

- What’s this?

And the answers came from lively voices singing at the pace of their pedalling. No to indifference, long live difference.

The party and music entertainment

Parties are, in their essence, a privileged occasion for ludic social interaction. This leads the citizens who organise them and take an active part in them to co-produce a situation based on the agreement: - this is for the party – this is partying. From that standpoint, citizens are so bold as to dare make communication possible with other people and experiment feelings and fulfilment together. A particular form of action is evident – a contemplative action which feeds the ecology of the human mind and opens individuals up to the possibilities of inter-understanding.

Music and words, both said and sung, liven up the party that concludes the activities carried out during the school year.

The party is also the moment when children, their kindergarten teachers, parents, teachers and other students present the solutions they came up with for the problems posed in the Human Rights in Action Register. The “citizens of the year” are announced. Vieira de Mello, who was one of 2000 's citizens of the year, is given the Active Citizenship trophy as a sign of public recognition of his activity as a citizen. Laurel wreaths are given to the *Gincana* game winners and all those who took part in the Place for the Arts – the Eye of the Keen Observer are given Diplomas. Finally, everyone gets a certificate for their participation in the active citizenship forum.

3. Theoretical framework

The Human Being, by nature, communicates; he/she is, by nature, *ludicus creative* and a citizen. Each of these realities has different consequences and they all produce a diversity of effects. Communication, ludicity, creativity and citizenship come from the fact of being itself, therefore they must be understood as substance because they *are* the Being which expresses itself through them and which is always previous to those expressions. So, their essence lies mainly in the pragmatics of communication and ludicity. In other words, their essence lies in human beings' relation and interaction processes on different thresholds, such as intra-personal, inter-personal, in-group, inter-group, intra-institution/organisation, inter-institutions/organisations, media-based society; and in many situations that occur in these contexts and in which they participate. As a matter of fact, according to MCOLopes, pragmatic analysis deals mainly with the process which takes place during interaction and with the effects of that interaction on its players. (MCOLopes 2004)

Communication, ludicity, creativity and citizenship are consequences of being Human, which are made possible by Mead's, Blumer's and others' theoretical perspectives on symbolic interactions, and which guide social intervention [Mead34] [Blumer69].

In her study and in her theories on the pragmatics of ludicity, MCOLopes argues that ludicity, just like communication, is a condition for our existence as human beings. She also says that ludicity is a consequence of being human, which shows itself in different ways, namely through games, recreation, playing, leisure and construction of artefact, and which produces different effects.

“The essence of ludicity lies in the relation and interaction processes that human beings are involved in during their life, attributing a ludic significance to their behaviour.” (MCOLopes, 2004)

On the other hand, Csikszentmihaly (1988) defends the idea that studies on creativity should focus on interactions and on social systems, and not just on the individual: “Creativity does not happen inside the individual; it is the result of the interaction between the individual's thoughts and his/her social and cultural context. Creativity must be seen not as an individual phenomenon, but as a systemic process” (Csikszentmihaly,1988).

However, creativity is assumed to be a capacity of humans, just like intelligence, which is not the same in every human being. These capacities are not taught, but they can be promoted and developed through interaction with others, in group, and within the environment and context the individual finds himself.

3.1. Interdependence of communication-ludicity-creativity

The interdependence created by communication-ludicity-creativity is included in the research, training and intervention project of the Human Rights in Action Project.

Common understanding, which is the ideal goal of communication and creativity development, is achieved through complicity and partnership. It is in joy, ludicity and enthusiasm that the mind frees itself from constraints, that some barriers to communication are overcome, and the players involved are more open to encounters with others and with themselves, making way to a kind of harmony that is able to question, communicate and express.

As Carl Rogers (1983) says, three factors are necessary for creativity to develop completely: freedom, communication and means. For him, a person's development can only be achieved through his/her relationship with others; creativity cannot be explained solely as a product of cognitive functions.

We can say that there is no ludicity without creativity, but the opposite is not true. However, ludicity favours the development of creativity. That is to say, manifestations of ludicity, namely play, leisure, humour, partying and the construction of artefacts do not exist outside a creative process, especially in aspects such as imagination, originality, critical capacity and autonomy. Therefore, any study of the ludicity process and model of analysis must be associated with the study of the creative process.

Referring to Quintas (1998) and Watzlawick (1993), MCOLopes and Guedes de Oliveira (2004) say:

“When any Human being closes him/herself away from the reality of the world around him/her and chooses to ignore what is going on around him/her, he/she is also closing him/herself from the possibility to create and from the possibility to develop. As a consequence, he/she will lock the door on ludicity, full communication with him/herself, with others and the world and on the enjoyment of his/her nature and of a happy existence.” (MCLopes e Oliveira 04)

3.2. From learning to change

Change occurs as a consequence of learning. Changing requires that something changes into something else. These can be objects, “things”, concepts or places. According to González, (1981) “Changing is the same as giving, taking or putting something in exchange for something else, varying, altering”.

It is necessary to know that something exists for change to take place.

Now, if what one wants is a change in attitude and behaviour, it is paramount to be aware that what one has learnt is not permanent and that there is not only one truth. It is necessary to be able to question what one knows and keep an open mind to new learning. It is necessary to question received concepts that have been conveyed, which often become social and individual “pre-concepts”

It is necessary to create a new set of references and a new universe which allows us to think and question what we know, giving a new interpretation and meaning to what we have learnt.

Bateson (1977) distinguishes two types of change: one that occurs inside the system and another that affects and modifies the system itself. This change, which Bateson called type 2 change, is the one under study here because this is the type of change which produces a change in mental premises and attitudes. This will only result from a learning process which Bateson (1977) defined as level 3 learning, that is to say, “Learning to learn how one has learnt”.

All change comes about as a result of learning. From what Belliard tells us, we can infer that change occurs as a result of learning new things or rebuilding the reality. And a change which aims to achieve a creative attitude presupposes learning how to question collective and individual stereotypes.

It is important to think that the creative attitude lies in the relationship between imaginary things and those which were actually achieved. Therefore, we need conceptual tools and knowledge of the technique and tools/instruments to change fantasies into deeds.

Let us assume the definition of the concept of creativity given by the author based on theoretical references to Munari (1987), Béllon(1998), Guilford(1963), Csikszentmihaly, Gardner and Amabile, as follows:

“Creativity is a condition of being human, which manifests itself in personal abilities and behaviour, namely cognitive and affective behaviour, in multiple intelligences, in the different creative processes, such as expressive creativity, productive creativity, inventive creativity, innovative creativity and emerging creativity, which produce different effects – creative act, creative product and creative personality, depending on the creative processes where they develop.” (Guedes de Oliveira06).

Promoting the development of creativity means promoting change, a change that should not be the product of a cause-effect relationship where one subject is active and another is passive, but should result from a communicational interaction of the type appeal-response.

The aim is to have a new insight into these issues, to question stereotypes, to change attitudes, and that is only possible in an interpersonal relationship.

The human creativity development process takes place when the individual him/herself meets him/herself and others.

MCOlopes and Guedes de Oliveira (2004) state, referring to Quintas (1998) and Watzlawick (1993)

“When any Human being closes himself away from the reality of the world around him/her and chooses to ignore what is going on around him/her, he/she is also closing himself/herself away from the possibility to create and from the possibility to develop. As a consequence, he/she will lock the door on ludicity, on full communication with him/herself, with others and the world and on the enjoyment of his/her nature and of a happy existence.” (MCOlopes e Oliveira 04)

In her studies and theory on the pragmatics of ludicity, MCOlopes defends that ludicity, just like communication, is a condition for our existence as a human being and that it is also a consequence of being human, which shows itself in different ways, namely through games, recreation, playing, leisure and artefact construction, and which produces different effects.

According to the author, any manifestation of ludicity is always a communicative action developed in a “situational context” and dominated by the logic of interaction.

“The essence of ludicity lies in the relation and interaction processes that human beings are involved in during their life, attributing a ludic significance to their behaviour.” (MCOlOpes, 2004)

Interactions and relations established by players in their manifestations, namely in Spontaneous Social Play (MCOlOpes), are subject to a logic of the non-zero sum kind of interaction and inter-relation, that is to say, a relationship of equality, complicity, freedom and active cooperation with another that is created because, according to this logic, there are no winners or losers.

On the other hand, manifestations of ludicity, namely play, leisure, humour, partying and the construction of artefacts do not exist outside a creative process, especially its imagination, originality, critical capacity and autonomy aspects. Therefore, the creative process is paramount in this process.

And MCOlOpes adds:

“Imagination, originality, human expressiveness are boosted by ludic social interaction. One experiments with the individual and interpersonal capacity to transform and reinvent the (fictionalised) world. And the potential of the effect of learning to learn how one has learnt and its generalisation in non-fictionalised contexts is discovered.” (MCOlOpes 2004)

Another concept that is at the basis of the Human Rights in Action Project and also has implications is the concept of learning. Based on the studies carried out by Gregory Bateson and one of his followers, Edward Hall, our picture synthesises the view of these authors, highlighting, as they do, the constructed intervention methodology of the Human Rights in Action project, whose aim is to promote the social learning of active citizenship and which develops by supporting participated construction of active citizenship practices that are guided by a humanistic culture based on cooperation and responsibility.

Reinventing the world is making it happen by taking part. Changes in the practices of citizenship begin in each person. By making use of their own resources, they generate multiple different individual decisions. They can start in any situational context (Lopes, *ibid*) and their effect will multiply in many other situational contexts in which citizens participate (at home, at school, on the street, at the church, in the doctor’s surgery, at the shop, at the shopping centre, at the cinema, at the theatre, at a concert, at university, in a meeting, in a team and in society).

4. Estimated results

Constitution of a network of local leaders of groups who develop ongoing intervention in schools. Co-production of citizenship practices in the different real life contexts as testified by schools (kindergartens, primary schools and university degrees). Awareness-raising of teachers and kindergarten teachers to the need to include active citizenship training in the learning process and in their interaction with children's families. Creation of ephemeral architecture which has an impact on the street as a way of raising awareness, triggering thought and an active reaction from citizens against violations of human rights and in favour of the human aspect of how they behave. Publicising the active citizenship practices that were developed. Supporting teachers and kindergarten teachers in planning action programmes that target social learning of active citizenship through ludicity and communication strategies.

Human Rights in Action Project.

Technical File:

Author and leader of the project: Conceição Lopes – Aveiro University, Arts and Communications Department, Portugal

Participants – Schools of the Aveiro district and Aveiro University

Workshops - Creative artifacts - Inês Guedes de Oliveira e Conceição Lopes ,

Workshop -Thinking Human Rights in motion – Conceição Lopes e Inês Guedes de Oliveira

Citizenship Celebrations – all participants

Sponsored by - Civitas Aveiro, Aveiro University and for the Portugal Commission for the Human Rights - ONU

Supports: Aveiro University, Schools, Pre-schools, kindergartens and City Hall of Aveiro

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