Public Art, Sexuality, and Critical Pedagogy

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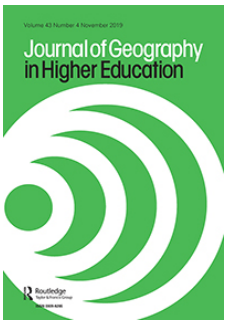

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Abstract

This paper establishes a novel niche by providing an original critical synthesis of the potentials and challenges of using public art to teach about, and "que(e)ry", sexuality, gender and space. The argument vouches for a critical pedagogy that pursues a visual politics for experiential and potentially transformative learning about processes of social inclusion and exclusion, marginalization, and empowerment. It draws from vignettes of first-hand pedagogical methods *in class* (in the form of collaborative class debates coordinated through creative educative content including an infographic and educational film) and *in the field* (in the form of a guided walking tour abroad). The vignettes illustrate how a critical pedagogy aims to instigate "awakenings" and deconstructions of norms (e.g. heteronormativity) and privileged positionalities (e.g. cisgendered, white (gay) male). The analysis indicates multi-sited levels of *praxes*: critical *reflections* and critical *actions* that may stretch beyond the teaching space into "real-world" contexts. The paper demonstrates the value of putting personal experience central by interlocking research and teaching practices. It thereby shows the value of collaborative knowledge production for situated, nuanced understandings of self/culture. This study advocates further "first-person" investigation into the ensuing challenges of negotiating topic sensitivity and the disclosure of positionalities (of both educator and learner).

Keywords

Public art, sexuality, critical pedagogy, queer, LGBTQ, critical geography

Introduction

Geographers have been increasingly engaging public art. The latter may cover a whole array of material or performance-based art forms, including sculpture, painting, photography, video, mixed-media installations, dance, and poetic and experimental practices. They are situated in places that are (ideally) accessible to all members of society, either on a permanent or temporary basis, where public art has increasingly integrated digital dimensions (see Zebracki, 2017). Nascent "art-full", experimental geographical research (see Hawkins, 2015) has been abundantly explored for its potential to "shake up" disciplinary grounds. It has set the agenda for creative transdisciplinary scholarship. It has consequently challenged the norms and borders of geographical theory and practice. Geography's creative and political turns have seen emerging attempts, in both research and teaching, to explain how processes of social inclusion and exclusion operate and are linked to public-art making and community engagement (see Cartiere & Zebracki, 2016). However, the marginalization, yet also empowerment, of sexual minorities have remained less clearly articulated in these efforts so far.

This paper, thus, fills this particular niche. It traverses the themes of public art, sexuality and space and draws from first-hand, and mostly research-based, teaching practices. Hitherto, my research has critically examined how public art may elicit antagonizing debates that address everyday spaces of engagement and the representation of people, place and identity. Such antagonism is especially the matter when artwork is both of a permanent and sexuality-related, or explicit, nature. To this background, I adopt the novel angle of sexuality-inflected public artwork as a queer geographical pedagogy (see Elder, 1999). The latter is in pursuit of questioning, "que(e)ring", norms and hegemonic discourses around sexuality, gender and space. Sexuality is a highly relatable matter for young students in the formative years of their lives and education (Mayo, 2004). I have indeed come to experience sexuality-inflected public art as a compelling "conversation piece" (Kester, 2004) in teaching young adults. This paper undertakes a "first-person" investigation with, as result, a self-reflective presentation style. I explain how I have attempted to use the intersecting key themes of public art and sexuality to ask students to critically cogitate on the(ir) nexus of self/culture, identity, and space. So, I engage public art as a pedagogical lens for developing grounding theories of the geographies of sexuality.

The paper explores how que(e)ring public art through geography might have the potential to act as transformative pedagogy, entailing a focus on nuance and "contextual awareness" (see Browne, 2005). After Rancière's (2013) concern with the politics of aesthetics within pedagogy, I identify a key differentiation – as much as an interrelation between – the *aesthetic* and *political* strategies of teaching public art. The aesthetic (i.e. visual) pedagogy would communicate a particular message through the formal reading of the public artwork. Public art, also, could be employed to learn about its critical operation as a visual politics (Zebracki & Luger, 2019). Such political pedagogy could reveal how interventionist public art might reproduce, or antagonize, social space and norms through self/other confrontations (see Bishop, 2004). This involves the relational aesthetics of a condition that is essentially characterized by adversaries, or dissensus (Rancière, 2015), as a form of "activated" citizenship

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(Bishop, 2006; hooks, 1994). In lieu of an idealized all-pleasing consensus, Mouffe (2004) seizes dissensus as the kernel of public democracy – and hence public pedagogy (see also Biesta, 2012).

This paper approaches public art as critical teaching tool for ruminating over, and thereby politicizing, the content/message, its medium, and its normative social contexts to boot. Such pedagogy should then be regarded as a politics of difference, a type of "border pedagogy" (Cook, 2000), which contests dominate structures and positionalities that govern everyday institutionalized spaces. Importantly, the latter include the teaching space, too. Just as any spaces of the everyday life, the teaching space is imbued with gendered and sexualized norms (Nash, 2010). hooks (1994) argued that it is precisely the political remit of teaching to promote critical interpellation of such norms (for example through horizontal class interaction and collaborative, student–teacher curricular development).

The article proceeds as follows. I first contextualize sexuality-inflected public art as critical lens for (research-based) teaching. I particularly attend to its potential as critical pedagogy for interrogating positionality and privilege, especially through a concern with intersectionality. This section points out how the interface of geographical, arts and educational scholarship (e.g. Browne, 2005; Rancière, 2013; Giroux, 2004, respectively) may provide valuable stock-in-trade for deconstructing gendered and sexualized norms and hegemonic discourses. I subsequently provide a contextual overview along with ethical considerations of my public-art-steered pedagogy. Then, I unpack vignettes of "live", first-hand practices and experiences over the past five academic years of teaching in the undergraduate BA Geography programme at the institution of current employment. The vignettes cover reflections on pedagogical methods applied *in class* (in the form of collaborative class debates coordinated through creative educative content including an infographic and educational film) and *in the field* (in the form of a guided walking tour, as part of an ongoing residential field class abroad). They highlight empirically informed, and mostly research-based, teaching *praxes*. The latter term implicates instructional design that endeavours to stimulate both critical *reflections* and critical *actions* amongst learners (Freire, 2000). I bring this paper to a conclusion with a discussion on the potentials and challenges of a critical pedagogy that uses public art to talk through issues of sexuality and space. Throughout, I explicate how such pedagogy negotiates interlaced aesthetic and political strategies, as well as professional projects and personal trajectories.

Using sexuality-inflected public art for teaching

Critical scholarship has widely acknowledged the educational work that public art can do (e.g. Biesta, 2012; Rancière, 2015). Public-art making traverses diverse places, social contexts and subjectivities. The visual lens of public art may be particularly helpful in visibilizing how it may, or may not, articulate social diversity and inclusion and what it may, or may not, "do" to people and place (Peters, 2016, p. 6). Public art, in this sense, might serve as critical pedagogy that compels awareness-making of both content and context. That is, it asks learners to reflect on how the content/message of public art is socially (re)produced through the subjectivities of

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the self and "other" (see Rancière, 2015). In elaborating such pedagogics, I discuss four intertwined analytic pointers that imply modes of action: moving beyond *binarisms*; "doing" *intersectionality*; sensing *politics* and *ethics*; and engaging *slow pedagogy*.

First, critical pedagogy seeks to question, or "que(e)ry", self/context *binarisms* (see Rose, 1997). After Nash (2010), such questioning also involves the deconstruction of binary positionalities within the teaching space itself, such as: teacher/student, classroom/field, the academe/the everyday, and public/private. Critical pedagogy departs from the tenet of situated knowledges (Haraway, 1991). This notion highlights nuanced, idiosyncratic understandings as well as the acknowledgement that partial perspective is a "privilege", rather than a "deficit" (ibid.). It breaks the hierarchical dichotomy between educator and learner. They should therefore be considered equal agents of knowledge production and usage, and thus co-learners (see hooks, 1994).

Accordingly, situated knowledges should be understood through synergetic relations and the ambiguous positionalities of the collaborative agents involved. Applied to public-art practice, the dominant binarism of artist/amateur should be challenged: everyday users of public art are, intentionally or unintentionally, involved in its *co-creation* (Zebracki, 2017). Co-creation often occurs beyond the presence and intents of "the artist" (e.g. yarnbombing, Photoshopped art content on social media). After Haraway (1991), both the making and mediation (read: teaching) of art implicate embodied capacities. They should be queried from a "subjectified somewhere" rather than from an assumed "objectified nowhere". The use of public art to teach about society, space and norms then implies a project about revealing how situated knowledges are, as Barnes (2000, p. 743) put it, "grounded in the physicality of specific human bodies and their art[efacts]".

Education involves a complex mediation of intertwined public, private and today's proliferating digitally networked spheres. They intersect the interests, thinkings and doings of educators and learners. Just as public art "travels" through diverse off- and online places and modes of mediation, so does pedagogical practice. It navigates between "offline" textbooks, flip charts, lecture slides, virtual learning environments, and so on. And learning is not only confined to the classroom indeed, which can take the forms of excursions and distant learning, amongst others. Such activities can be conducted in individual, collaborative or collective contexts. Examples include, respectively, home-based reading, campus-based group work, and massive open online courses. Learning, approached as a lifelong process, does not end upon formal diplomas (albeit the scope of this paper covers accredited higher education). As hooks (1994) contended, classroom teaching transgresses into the spaces of the everyday life. So these two realms should be valued as interwoven rather than separate realities.

Hence, public art as pedagogical practice, and in extension the use of public art to teach about sexualities, could form one of the possible interlocutors for critical learning about the world. Peters (2016) suggested how it might connect people, place and identity in a fragmented (academic) world through forging trans-disciplinary relations: "[public] art as a pedagogical practice establishes connections between discourses previously held separate from traditional pedagogical concerns such as race, gender, and sexuality" (Peters, 2016, p. 6).

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Second, and correspondingly, an approach that "does" *intersectionality* would warrant nuanced, situated insights into complex power interplays that structure the gendered and sexualized spaces of mundane life (see Nash, 2008). These spaces are socially (re)produced at the broader intersection of identity markers such as class, ethnicity, age, religion, (dis)ability and geographical origin (see Crenshaw, 1991). Classrooms, too, are geographical spaces that are gendered, sexualized, classed, etc. (Nash, 2010). These spaces are inextricably confined by the scripts, norms, roles and beliefs that shape the "real world". The task of a critical geographical pedagogy lies exactly in situating such intersectional realities – as well as in taking lived, place-based (exclusionary) experience at the heart of its pedagogy.

Accordingly, I underline the idea that critical pedagogy has the intrinsic commitment to address real-world problems (such as marginalization, inequality and injustice). In addition, and importantly, it should allow space for alternative, heterodox thought that suggests more inclusive ways forward. Geographies of gender and sexuality are no longer an unheard or sidelined, peripheral subdisciplinary avenue (see Hubbard, 2018). Over the last decades, gender, feminist and queer geographers, amongst others, have made large strides in critiquing hegemonic norms and conditions (including masculinity, heteronormative conformity and white privilege) within scholarship and teaching (e.g. Browne, 2005; Moss et al., 1999; Nash, 2010; Valentine, 2015). They have produced incisive criticism of exclusive, polarizing processes that are often trapped in the detrimental forces of sexism, bigotry, white privilege and supremacy, and the like. This critical branch of scholarship has engendered alternative, place-aware, and socially situated visions for transforming status quos into more inclusive and just societies. However, I recognize significant untapped scope in this area for including the nexus of public art and sexuality as interlocutors of a critical geographical pedagogy.

Third, critical pedagogy is *political* in and of itself (Rancière, 2013). The "reading" of public art especially requires a certain level of visual literacy. That said, the teaching about public art, and the remit of education more widely, should not be focused on literacies only. Instead, critical pedagogy has a commitment to intervening in the real world through *acts* of interpretation. This could, for example, take the shape of an internalized slow pedagogy that directs critique against the contemporary neoliberal academy and the larger social order (see fourth pointer). Critical pedagogy might particularly help to see through the complex antagonistic practices that underlie, and sometimes trivialize, exclusionary processes (see Bishop, 2004).

Hence, building on Rancière (2013), I extend the politics *of* art to the politics *about* art through teaching practice. Here, the visual, i.e. represented artwork, implies the *aesthetic* medium. The *political* medium imports the particular uses of that visual in an endeavour to gender and "que(e)ry" society and space. The aesthetic and political are, therefore, inseparable. Both are part of a project of "critical awakening", or a form of "raised consciousness" (Rancière in Carnevale & Kelsey, 2007, cited in Peters, 2016, p. 4).

Public art has been widely recognized as channel for fostering cross-cultural communication (Wasson, Stuhr, & Petrovich-Mwaniki, 1990) and democratic citizenship (Mouffe, 2004). Not only politics but also *ethics* should be put central in fathoming the motives

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of action (amongst "us" and "them") (Dewey, 1988). Critical pedagogy should, thus, be attentive to political–ethical consciousness and *self*-consciousness (Rancière, 2013). This is the kernel of *praxis*, according to Freire (2000). Praxis necessitates a pedagogical dialogue between critical *reflection* and critical *action*. It marks the propensity for "mobilizing students to question their social conditions and to assert agency or the capacity to self-manage individually and collectively" (Peters, 2016, p. 1). In this context, however, Giroux (2004, p. 69) underscored that critical pedagogy should not simply be "reduced to an a priori set of skills or techniques" but indeed adhere to the rigour of (self-)reflexivity and (self-)consciousness regarding institutional pedagogics:

> "[P]edagogy is deeply implicated in how power and authority are employed in the construction and organization of knowledge, desires, values, and identities … . [It] is defined as a cultural practice that must be accountable ethically and politically for the stories it produces, the claims it makes on public memories, and the images of the future it deems legitimate" (Giroux, 2004, p. 69).

Fourth, and as a corollary of the above, I propagate a *slow pedagogy*. The latter aspires to assure "the critical, creative, and innovating thinking and learning that complex, contemporary problems require" (Garbutt & Offord, 2012, p. 6). Slow pedagogy timely coincides with the current slow scholarship movement. This movement aggregates a growing backlash to the further marketization and increasing metrics for measuring quality of research and teaching at institutions of higher education and learning (Mountz et al., 2015). Profit-seeking models have been driving neoliberal economies of affect. They have overwhelmingly, rather detrimentally, impacted social, personal and institutional values across (semi-)public sectors (ibid.). Higher education and arts sectors, amongst others, have been consequently left in their own crises to overcome competitive market demands (see Peters, 2016).

In today's neoliberal context, we see that artists feel pressured to work as entrepreneurs. Teachers have become vendors of knowledge. Students have become clients. And education has become packaged for its "value for money" as tailored to overstretched job markets (see Angus, 2015). Here, I recognize Hartman and Darab's (2012) critique of how slow pedagogy might, indeed, "become a site of contest in an unequal power relation where students are the absent partners and scholarly endeavour is eroded" (ibid., p. 49). Competitive trends of the neoliberal academy might, therefore, challenge the viability of already marginalized subjects, including gender and sexuality. They might be speculatively regarded as (too) private, "risky", peripheral, or irrelevant altogether (see also Bell, 1997).

Slow pedagogy adopted through my example method of sexuality-inflected public art might provide a creative tool for student emancipation and empowerment. It may put learners in an imaginative position to challenge, and "liberate", hegemonic norms around sexuality and gender. Thus, slow pedagogy is queer. It is an "activist methodology" (Jones & Adams, 2010): it instils critical (self-)reflection and action (i.e. *praxis*) in order to voice those who have remained unheard. It could make students "see" how critical thought is capable of redressing power imbalances. Critical pedagogy does so from within the teaching space. It thereby wants to promote sexuality and gender as "do-able" subjects (Bell, 1997) and might turn, in the words of Simandan (2019), the possible world into a realized one.

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In conclusion, first-hand, situated teaching aims to reconfigure understandings about themes of the life world that both educators and learners can highly identify with. Given by the "que(e)ring" pedagogical rationale, this starts from spelling out the personal (see Browne, 2005; Nash, 2010). It calls for a dialogic process, a sphere of co-learning. This encourages students to collaboratively diagnose problems and opportunities in shared ways of knowing of their immediate social world. This might also assist them in collecting their own distinct learning content that is relevant to them and, in so doing, allow students to take further ownership of their education (see Giroux, 2004).

Context

Before presenting first-hand vignettes of the work that public art can do to teach about sexuality, I briefly frame my teaching practice at my current institution within a combined personal and professional overview. This contextual section, as such, sketches my "queer travelogue" (Elder, 1999) across the roles of educator-as-student and practising educator. I explore how the centrality of situated knowledges, as mostly derived from primary investigation, has helped me in my endeavour to enhance the relatability and "believability" of the content taught. I nevertheless also acknowledge the aforementioned challenge of disclosure and related issues of vulnerability.

My early life and education mostly took place in the Netherlands, where I was born and raised in an overly white middle-class, mid-sized urban environment. I experienced sexuality as a topic that was often openly discussed at school and in public life. However, it took substantial time to come to grips with my own sexuality, evolving into my queer disposition today (entailing an effort to challenge any identity labelling). A lasting memory of my introduction to que(e)ring art *ante hoc* was made through a visual arts class halfway my pre-university education. Through a careful introduction, the teacher screened an artist's image of the sexual practice of "brachioproctic insertion" – as I recall, this concerned an artistic conveyance of homosexual anal fisting. Despite raised eyebrows in the class, in hindsight, this particular moment was an eye-opener for me: how can art challenge the socially constructed borders of sexuality and "normality"?

Issues around sexuality and public art were on the margins of my bachelor's and master's geography programmes at Utrecht University. Nonetheless, I attended both geography and art history courses during a graduate research exchange semester at the University of Florida, US, where educators at that time paved the way for developing my interdisciplinary interest in the geographies of public art and sexuality. My then art history teacher introduced the class to sexually explicit artwork of Paul McCarthy, a leading contemporary American "shock" artist. McCarthy has become renowned, or notorious depending on perspective, for producing a series of large-scale inflatables shaped in the image of an ambiguous Christmas tree (see Zebracki, 2017). But the vernacular bestowed the epithet "butt plug" on this tree. Critical readings of this anal sex toy cast an "up yours" to heteropatriarchal norms and instant satisfaction as excess of the hegemonic capitalist consumer society (ibid.).

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The exhibition of sexually explicit artwork in public space greatly impacted my geographical interest: how is sexuality mapped onto space through public artwork? This culminated in a case study as part of my doctoral research. It focused on social discourse and engagement in the public controversy around McCarthy's permanent bronze Santa Claus sculpture, unveiled in Rotterdam's centre in 2008 (see Zebracki, 2012). It represents a gnome-like father Christmas figure holding a "stylized" Christmas tree, which became colloquially known as the "butt plug gnome" (ibid.). This case provoked debates in my immediate environment: in the classroom, in meetings with peers, and in personal life. I think that my critical pedagogy at the intersection of public art and sexuality started then. I felt compelled to explain what a butt plug-shaped artwork (read: the contestation of norms) has to do with geography (read: socially practised places). It is also here where I realized the combination of humour (as part of the work's aesthetic) and seriousness (as mobilized by its critical, politicizing message) as a tactic for a possible affective and persuasive pedagogy.

In tandem with my personal politics of "coming out", my teaching practice has gradually opened up to art *and* sexuality over the course of lecturing in human geography. Although the geographies of sexualities have an established position at my home institution, neither modules nor module strands have been solely focused on sexuality (at least since I moved there in 2013). This might in part be related to the architecture of large-credit, team-taught modules. That said, I feel supported in my "que(e)ring" pedagogics by an institutional environment that "comes out" for gender equality and inclusion. This has translated too in my continuing collaborative leadership role in this area, in particular regarding Athena SWAN, a charter of Advance HE that aims to advance the career of women in academia in the UK.

In my teaching on foundational geographical concepts, I have steadily paved the way for utilizing, although carefully, examples of public artwork with sexuality content. This has allowed me to conjoin critical arts and urban theory to teach, amongst other avenues, meta-critiques of systemic heteronormativity in urban design and planning and neoliberal entrepreneurialism. I tend to use in-your-face, "sexualized" public-art examples in class debates in an attempt to fire the imagination of students whilst questioning the gendered and sexualized relations of the everyday.

Along the Santa Claus case, I have discussed "non-conformist" examples including Arc de Triomphe by the artist collective Gelitin. This temporary public installation, launched in a public square in Salzburg in 2003, consisted of a plasticine sculpture representing a naked male figure that, in a backwards bending position, pissed (in this case, water) into the mouth from an erect penis. Somewhat similar to Santa Claus, this artwork could be conceived of as an indictment of the "natural cycle" of a capitalist, patriarchal society. I applied examples like these in sketching a much wider critique of norms, customs, moral codes, legal structures, and in particular institutional leeway for creative expression vs. censorship. Critical public art scholars, such as Phillips (1988) under the moniker of the "public art machine", have argued how public-art commissioning has traditionally eschewed critical interventions into the urban environment. Not only can the visual (i.e. public art) be used as an aesthetic teaching strategy for (nearly literally) illustrating the nexus of public art, sexuality and space. It can also operate as a political strategy for que(e)ring commonplace, taken-for-granted gendered and

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heteronormative spaces and orderings, which also apply to the teaching space itself (see Nash, 2010).

Where sexuality is usually taken as a "private affair" public art is often regarded as something that belongs to the "public good", or even a public right to space. Weeks (1995, p. 147) construed such right to space as a pedagogical attempt to "[transcend] the private/public divide [by] the development of the possibilities for private life through the growth of public opportunities" (cited in Mayo, 2004, p. 29). I adopt this notion of the right to space as telos for the que(e)ring use of public art to deepen learnings of whom the city is for.

Ethics

At this juncture, I want to briefly discuss ethics in the practice of teaching and at the level of institutional and personal aspects that attend this work. The politics of disclosure or "outing", which are part and parcel of a slow pedagogy (discussed above), expose some challenges. Knopp (1999) conveyed how they could potentially trouble teacher–student relationships within the oft-dominant heteronormative, closeted teaching space. Nash (2010) highlighted personal and professional vulnerabilities in this context: "making a conscious decision to be visible as a queer academic means making visible very personal aspects of one's life" (ibid., p. 296). This is certainly not only an area of concern for academics (self-)identified as non-heterosexual (or lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, or queer [LGBTQ]). It also affects the "straight" educator (see England, 1999).

Skelton (1997) illustrated the normal(ized) condition of how students often assume their teacher to be heterosexual. But this might change until the point that the teacher touches on sexuality, not necessarily their own sexuality but the sheer theme of sexuality. If sexuality is discussed at all, students might even perceive it as the teacher's "fetishized" gaze (see Moss et al., 1999). The "injection" of personal experience might run the risk of being felt by students as biased, intrusive, or even aggressive (Nash, 2010; see also Browne, 2005). On top of that, any negative student feedback about how the teacher deals with (one's) sexuality might jeopardize career progression (see Nast, 1999). Talking about issues of sexuality and space, thus, demands a delicate pedagogical play of seeking, giving and taking professional and personal space.

At my current institution, I experience substantial autonomy in disclosure and content delivery. The curriculum also reflects this in the freedom provided to students to work on topics of choice in their coursework. Some disclosure tactics of mine are rather tacit. I "out" myself in some of the assigned, self-authored publications with the implicit assumption that my variant sexuality is not (or no longer) a conjecture for students. I suspect that my personal openness to sexuality might have facilitated some students to pro-actively broach sexuality-related topics in class debates, coursework and dissertations at their own will. Over the years, students have approached me, mostly face-to-face in the office space, to talk about sexuality-related project topics. Some of those topics included LGBTQ organizing, gaybourhoods and "gaytrification", gay and lesbian dating through geosocial networking apps, queer safe

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spaces, and the effects of social media on body image and sexual identity. The discussion of sexuality-related topics has largely remained an "offline", cautious, and piecemeal process. This is in contrast with the ease of how some students consulted with me, either by email or in person, on more "conventional" geography topics, such as the creative economy, housing, transport and urban regeneration.

I am wary of topic sensitivity that is implicated by bringing to the discussion table potentially provocative visuals, such as images of the aforediscussed butt plug-shaped artwork. As standard procedure, I introduce disclaimers where viewer discretion is advised. Even in the best institutionally supportive circumstances it always remains prudent to sound out the appropriateness of lecture content. So, what is the right moment for "throwing in" sexuality, especially in this case when visibilized through artwork?

I conclude this section with some ethical considerations that attend this paper. After deliberation, I have chosen not to reflect any details of student feedback. This reason is twofold. First of all, I respect the confidential nature and original purpose of such feedback. In this paper, I therefore refrain from publicizing any student feedback (especially literal quotes), even when ethical conventions would have allowed me to do so. This paper, as said, lays emphasis on first-hand pedagogical practices. Yet, it remains informed by some of my impressionistic insights into patterns of student response and behaviour. This is challenging to systematically capture over time, if possible at all. As this study is guided by the tenet of situated knowledges (Haraway, 1991), I acknowledge the grounded complexity of collaborative educator–learner knowledge production. So I want to give account from "somewhere" (ibid.): I principally want to speak for my own "live" teaching experiences without any intent to objectify the student experience. Accordingly, it is my intent to neither "measure" student feedback, or any concrete "effects" of teaching, nor make any monolithic claims on how relayed student experience is "representative" of a diverse student cohort.

This leads me to the second point of the limits to recording and representing the student experience. Written evidence has been thin, as students mostly imparted feedback directly linked to my teaching beyond formal surveys. Alternative feedback channels included some informal oral feedback and anecdotal notes from students as well as colleagues. Such feedback also encompassed vocal acts or non-verbal/body language, such as chuckling and "silent" cues of enthusiasm, surprise or bewilderment (for example when seeing an apparently witty film episode; see Vignettes). On an ongoing basis, I have appropriated student feedback as "feed forward" towards a dialogic teaching process; one that is based on the principle of teachers and students as co-learners (hooks, 1994). Final-year dissertations have been indicative of how a one-to-one, safe space was constructed for students to reflect on formative moments of learning (including sexuality topics taught by myself throughout the programme). In all, this paper departs from an ethics of reflexivity, wherein I focus on first-hand teaching experience to make sense of educator–learner positionalities.

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Vignettes

This section synthesizes the intertwined aesthetic and political strategies that, as argued above, are an integral part of how I have used public art to teach about the relation between sexuality and space. I attend to both the potentials and challenges of these strategies, drawing from my experience across the undergraduate BA Geography programme at my home institution since 2013.

In the following, I present two vignettes that, respectively, cover first-hand pedagogical methods *in class* (in the form of collaborative class debates coordinated through creative educative content) and *in the field* (in the form of a guided walking tour). These vignettes exemplify "live", mostly research-based, teaching practices. I discuss my teaching efforts and ethics of care, particularly at the thematic crossroads of public art, sexuality and social inclusivity. With these vignettes, I revisit the combined conceptual aim of this work. That is, I want to bring home the significance of "doing" intersectionality as instrumental in the deconstruction of gender and sexual binaries so as to serve a slow, critical pedagogy.

Activating images

I use creative educative content in the figure of the "genderbread person" in my introductory teaching about the geographies of gender and sexuality. The genderbread person is an infographic in the image of a gingerbread. Sam Killerman (2013) popularized it through three key variants. However, "the idea goes far beyond him, and is a creation of the commons" (www.genderbread.org); so, in a sense, it is a co-created art piece. The use of this figure has, at least for me, been a helpful educational tool for "doing" visual politics.

I used this infographic to ponder with students about the differences between sex, gender, sexuality, and identity. I also used it to discuss with students an array of LGBTQ-related terms and definitions that are currently common in scholarship and practice. The list here is by no means exhaustive: cisgender, queer, non-binary, gender non-conformity, genderqueer, intersex, asexuality, and "passing" (i.e. the capacity to become accepted as a member of an identity group different from the assigned identity). The genderbread person worked as a visual aid for thinking critically and imaginatively across such identity markers to make sense of the everyday "fluid" geographies of gender expression, attraction, intimacy, etc. Yet, class debates also attended to how the genderbread person can be criticized for not fully, or adequately, accommodating genderfluid and trans* identities.

Art/images and imaginations might have transformative potential in "que(e)ring" and potentially breaking through (one's own) norms, desires, sensitivities, taboos, etc. (see Gunn, 2018). The pedagogical use of the genderbread person highlights the limits to binary, oppositional logic about sex(uality) and gender. In other words, it demands grasping gender identity from an intersectional perspective. I discussed with students the creator's mission statement for the genderbread person, as buttressed with the following words:

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> Gender is one of those things everyone thinks they understand, but most people don't. Like Inception. Gender isn't binary. It's not either/or. In many cases it's both/and. A bit of this, a dash of that. This tasty little guide is meant to be an appetiser for gender understanding (www.genderbread.org, v3.3).

I have been employing the genderbread person, indeed as a kind of appetiser, in a sexuality-dedicated lecture and seminar as part of a compulsory level-1 human geography module. This is the first series in the programme that introduces students to core concepts in the literature on geographies of gender and sexualities. The lecture attends to how geographers have been questioning sexuality and gender roles and stereotypes as they play out in heteronormative spaces, ranging from the street to private realms. Here, I have used the genderbread person as visual shorthand for explaining different meanings and uses of language and expressions that relate to sexuality and gender.

I screened the genderbread person in seminars as visual elicitation tool for debate. For example, I used this "playful" figure to illustrate, and challenge, patriarchy and heteronormativity in the context of childhood. I did so by a close reading of published material on the gendered and sexualized experiences of playgrounds and their context-specific power structures. Debates took the shape of subgroup brainstorming and brief presentations about the main argumentative threads, commonalities and disagreements as found in the literature. This involved mental mapping exercises; how could the genderbread person be mapped onto public space?

I used the genderbread person to zoom in and out on other cases, too. How could the genderbread person let us "see" how increasing reported incidents of genderbashing relate to everyday norms around gender and sexuality? How do some experience public spaces as inclusive and safe but certain "others" least of all? And what do the gendered regulations of public space tell about the relationship between society and space more generally?

Furthermore, I applied the genderbread person within the scope of the screening of the film Pride (2014), directed by Matthew Warchus, at a level-2 elective on issues of citizenship and identity. This film tells the story of how gay and lesbian activists supported miners' communities in 1984–85, following the government's decision to close the British coal industry. The plot reveals alliance building between communities formerly separated across lines of class and sexuality. Although they fought different battles on the margins of society, they met similar fates of exclusion and oppression. This resulted in the formation of the Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners movement and the concerted organization of a Gay Pride Parade.

In line with the genderbread person, I consider this film a creative method to exercise the imagination of students in challenging key notions in the geographies of sexualities, such as hegemonic heteronormativity, marginalization, and exclusivity. This was done in the context of a seminar that also provided interactive scope for relating these notions to module-specific themes of acts of citizenship, social movements, justice, and equality. Subgroup and plenary class debates were organized around a query sheet that students were asked to complete

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during the film screening to reflect on the intersectional complexities of the notions and themes under discussion.

Starting from the full gender and sexuality spectrum of the genderbread person, the query sheet invited students to project themselves into the main characters and places as featuring in the film. From the concrete to the more abstract level, the interconnected questions asked students to articulate (a) the visual images or scenes that struck them; (b) how situations and places in the film enabled the main characters to empathize and mix with "different others"; (c) the (shifting) positionalities of these main characters; (d) the intersection of gender and sexuality with other identities (such as class, age, ability, ethnicity and geographical origin) as they play out in the pursuit of common goals; and (e) conduct-, identity- and relationship-based issues of sexual citizenship (e.g. Richardson, 2000). These questions aimed to generate multi-sited situated knowledges of the spaces of gender and sexuality as they first of all relate to practised places in the film and, second, resonate with the everyday experiences of students.

The class exercise stimulated students to think through *who* and *what* was visibilized, or invisibilized, and *where* and *how* this took place. Discussions revolved around the use of specific symbols and expressions that are typically associated with LGBTQ pride marches. Students also considered the extent to which such marches can politicize, or reclaim space (by indeed occupying space but also by conquering the hearts of people so to speak), from the overly heteronormative and white patriarchal public domain.

Hence, the in-depth film discussion moved beyond the domination of text-based academic education. In a sense, I used the film as a critical public art piece: I encouraged students to use an "artivist" performance in the guise of an LGBTQ pride as lens for "que(e)ring" everyday norms and spaces of encounter. The take-home message was that creative expressions, including symbols and performance, may play a very significant role in a politics of visibility. This is especially the case when unheard populations want to be heard and give rise to a politics of recognition (see Zebracki & Milani, 2017). The latter could happen beyond, but also within, populations that are already marginalized (think of transgender activism). In mapping the genderbread person onto pride marches, students also pinpointed to increasing evidence of how they can be profoundly exclusionary for trans* people and people of colour in particular. In a way, they were rendered as "hyper-marginalized" others within the already "othered" LGBTQ community. In spin-off debates, students also grasped (self-)exclusionary processes "from within" the LGBTQ community. The given examples included "gaybourhoods", homonormative nightlife and lifestyles, and heteronormative urban planning and public-art making (e.g. the celebrated white male "art hero" Banksy vs. the "unknown" female street artist).

Once I felt that the class gained more confidence with the topic, the pedagogics scaled down. I asked students how the debated gendered and sexual norms hold resonance with their everyday lives, which has somewhat implied a pedagogical tightrope act. I did not wish to draw students (too much) out of their comfort zones; I therefore stressed that relayed experiences could be either first-hand or second-hand. On occasions, a digital collaborative whiteboard provided a helpful visual aid for students to share (anonymously if desired) any

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thoughts, images, news narratives, anecdotes and first-hand experience. Students introduced topics that seemed to matter to them, for example LGBTQ phobia in night life and lad culture and sexism on campus. Some of the discussions implicitly took the form of positionality exercises, or mini role-plays, to read the cases from different perspectives (e.g., victim vs. observer).

Class discussions were scaled up, too. On the basis of wider self-directed reading, the gender and sex(uality) differentiations, as part and parcel of the genderbread person, were used for the construction of mental maps of wider geographies of radical grassroots and "artivist" movements that contest gender and sexuality norms, privileges and hegemonic powers (e.g. Zebracki, 2017). This plumped the depths of the systemic structures (including white male privilege and institutionalized racism) that are accountable for sustaining or underplaying processes of marginalization and belonging/alienation. Debates often came full circle with the crux that gender and sexuality cannot be singled out (see Richardson, 2000). Rather, students were steered towards a mode of inquiry that acknowledges the intersectional nature of social identity markers (see Crenshaw, 1991). Such inquiry elicited the acknowledgement of one's very own privileges, against the background of a Geography student cohort that seems overly white and middle class.

Living images

Where the previous section engaged with critical pedagogy *in class*, this section deals with the use of public art to talk about issues of sexuality and space *in the field*. It is precisely outside of the classroom where we can locate "what geography has to do with it" (Febvre, 1924 [1996], p. 340). I have come to experience the teaching of concepts in the real-world, dynamic "timespace" of a field class as an exquisite opportunity for turning theory into "lived matter", especially when this also integrates first-hand research on the area concerned. This kind of "embodied" fieldwork (see Nairn, 1999) has operated in a dialectic fashion for me: it has helped to put flesh on my empirical understanding of the study area and to "flesh out" a research-based strategy tailored to a student audience.

Next, I highlight the example of a guided walking tour that I have been developing in a level-3 elective on the theme of global cities. The focus of my tour is on the distinctive art deco historic district on Miami Beach. This district comprises 800 buildings in one square mile which were largely built throughout the 1920s until the beginning of the 1940s. Since the first delivery of the field class in 2013, this area has been subject to my study on the unique relations between the role of public art, sexual identity politics, and social diversity in a context of rapid urban transformation. The tour draws from my observations and an extensive number of interviews that I have held with key figures across policy, arts and LGBTQ sectors. Central to my "go-along" argument are the frictions developing between art deco historic preservation, (heteronormative-informed) urban planning, and social (i.e. gay) preservation of the local area (see Zebracki, 2018).

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The course consists of a lecture series at the home institution. This is followed by a week-long residential field class in Miami with guided activities and independent research on topics of student's choice. I explain to students, first in class and then in situ, how the art deco district can be contemplated as a "living", socially practised monument. Looking beyond the local, I argue how this particular area can be employed as window on understanding the city in its wider contexts as a "cool" global arts and (gay) tourist destination that is situated at a US–Latin American interface.

Arrived in the field, I distribute a handout to students, which works as visual support of my walking tour. The paper depicts ten art deco properties. I make clear that this is just a selection made through my eyes. I stress that this is not in any sense intended as a comprehensive overview, or "canon", of local art deco heritage. Instead, I explicate the power of visual politics: how may the depicted properties serve as squared paper realities to relay invisible place complexities and community idiosyncrasies? Put simply, the significance in showing what is out there lies in what remains absent, which is particularly compelling in the image-conscious context of a global city like Miami.

For instance, I explain how the bright, colourful look of the art deco buildings and the conviviality as encountered on the streets today should be put in perspective against contrasting historical and social backgrounds. Whilst Miami is one of the richest global financial hubs, I aim to send students a politicizing message in the field: the directly visible urban assets, including the "art deco capital" in question, are not all-accessible or available for cultural consumption by thepopulation in full. The city faces significant levels of gentrification and social segregation across multi-ethnic populations, which are historically complex and not always readily noticeable. Posited differently, the colourful façades, embodied by art deco architectural heritage, might even mask deeper exclusionary processes.

By drawing from individual fieldwork, the guided tour moreover offers students hands-on insights into research methods, in this case, observation and thick description (Rose, 2016). This combined method involves the situated interpretation of field experiences, acknowledging the contexts of social and cultural relationships that (re)construct places. Students can use such methodological engagement as a source of inspiration for their independent field project as part of the coursework. An important contextual detail is the role that sexuality has played in the aesthetic placemaking strategies of the art deco district. This area, in its recent history from the 1980s, embodies a strong relationship with one of the largest gay and lesbian populations of the US. This has involved partly visible and partly invisible layers. The guided tour has been particularly helpful to me in differentiating both layers to critically address the ambiguous processes of social inclusion and exclusion.

Some layers of placemaking and processes of social inclusion and exclusion are evidently less discernible in the study area and need uncovering through field teaching. Leading artists, overly gay males, have played a decisive role in the local art deco preservation movement, wherein cisgendered, white male norms and privileges have, consequently, worked through in community development. This movement has, to a certain extent, become a victim of its own success. The recent out-migration of gay people is a trend that might be

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attributed to an (overly) entrepreneurial, tourist-centred remaking and further gentrification of Miami Beach (see Kanai & Kenttamaa-Squires, 2015).

The tour deliberately passes through a rainbow-coloured pedestrian crossing, meant as permanent design intervention, on art deco's iconic Ocean Drive. The area's reputation for being "gay-friendly" and inclusive is, literally, converted into paint here. I invite students to ruminate over the extent to which such intervention might stage a "diverse" sexual and gender variant culture – ironically against the background of a reportedly declining gay/LGBTQ population and entertainment sector (see Kanai & Kenttamaa-Squires, 2015). Notably, Palace, an iconic gay and drag bar adjacent to this rainbow crossing, was closed in 2017 (albeit it was reopened two blocks ahead in 2018). The tour wants to uncover small yet significant signs of "gay placemaking" through art-making, thereby, again, alluding to the visual politics of public art. In place, students are encouraged to draw connections with course readings about, amongst others, homonormative urban redevelopment (which might appeal to a rather homogenous, consumer-oriented and exclusionary class within a post-gay rights era; see Zebracki, 2018).

My in-class, introductory lecture argues how the Miami area should be seen as a complex jigsaw puzzle with significant levels of marginalization and segregation, both in the past and present, as I convey in Zebracki (2018). The art deco properties, as unravelled during the narrated guided walk, are not just physical structures with federally recognized monumental value. Such monuments are, in line with Bos (2016, p. 3), social structures to be read a "critical 'documents' of the past". Accordingly, I use the scope of the guided tour as "tick" pedagogy for putting in both place and time stories that students might have read about but perhaps have not heard about or seen in their everyday context as yet.

Notably, as I discuss in Zebracki (2018), Miami Beach, known as a playground for the wealthiest during the roaring twenties, has witnessed episodes of explicit anti-Semitism (notably, Jews were initially not allowed to live north on Miami Beach). The area has also been marked by systemic anti-Black racism (especially before the 1964 Civil Rights Acts) but also by discrimination and bigotry directed at Hispanic people and the elderly. The more recent (gay-led) preservation movement is highlighted within the scope of community and cultural festivals, including the annual Art Deco Weekend. It was the openly gay designer Leonard Horowitz whose pastel-colour palette turned the originally white facades of the art deco properties into the cheerful facades as we can observe today. The facades and neon lights of these properties have lavishly adorned postcards of Miami Beach since their incarnation in the 1920s. Although the gay-led preservation movement is foregrounded, there is relative silence about the AIDS outbreak in the late-1980s. The latter heavily affected the local gay community. Gay parties on the beach and a focus on material restoration made place for a reality of deathbeds and the restoration of social wellbeing (ibid.).

All of the previous social dimensions are embedded in memories and memoirs that overlay the material fabric of the art deco district, stressing all the more the importance of storytelling as integral method of the guided tour. The tour ends at the "official" Art Deco Museum. There, I invite students to judge for themselves to what extent the museum provides adequate scope for exclusionary realities, social fragmentations and lived traumas in the past

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and present. Which objects, pictures and stories are possibly hegemonized and potentially presented in an overly rosy or optimistic manner? And which lived stories are present in their absence?

This walking tour, as a slow pedagogy (almost literally), thus wants to use public art to pause and think intersectionally through local geographical issues. So, it wants to avoid to single out one social identity, such as sexuality, inasmuch as it wants to deconstruct a one-sided image of the area. The art deco scene has seemed to play a unique underpinning role in Miami Beach's visual politics of (selective) representation. I have found the real-life context of a field class a particularly live as well as enlivening pedagogy for providing students with embodied understandings of theory and collaborative learning opportunities to boot. I encourage students to take notes and photos and ask questions to jointly "que(e)ry" the area. Self-collected materials of this kind have appeared to be helpful elicitation tools for revisiting with students the discursive topics of the tour in relation to concepts in the literature as well as for discussing ideas about their individual fieldwork.

Conclusion and discussion: why using public art to teach about sexuality?

This paper has established a novel niche by providing scope for the inclusion of the nexus of public art and sexuality as interlocutors of a critical geographical pedagogy. Just as sexuality and gender are interwoven in complex ways with practices in the everyday life, this paper has illustrated how they can be as much interwoven with pedagogical projects and educational spaces. Central here is the collaborative production of situated knowledges of self/culture through a theoretical "know why" (episteme) and practicable "know how" (techne). Drawn from "live" teaching practices, I have presented two vignettes that have discussed first-hand pedagogical methods *in class* (in the form of collaborative class debates coordinated through creative educative content, including an infographic and educational film) and *in the field* (in the form of a guided walking tour abroad). The vignettes have provided some concrete, concerted ways for critically thinking through, and reconfiguring, norms (which govern the sexualized and gendered dimensions of space) as well as putting sexual and gender variant communities "in place".

In so doing, the paper has extended Rancière's (2013) educational theory on the politics of aesthetics towards the particular use of public art to teach on/in the realm of sexuality. It has illustrated the transformative potential of the latter for "que(e)ring" hegemonic discourses, privileged positionalities, and processes of social exclusion. Indeed, as Peters (2016, p. 1) argued, "critical pedagogy transforms knowledge in the context of an ongoing struggle for social justice". Then, the dual remit of the educator, as implied by Freire's (2000) notion of *praxis*, is to exude (self-)reflective thinking that cultivates an activist movement within the learner.

Thus, the paper has pointed to the dialectics of how public art might be integrated into teaching geographies of sexualities and how sexuality could be integrated into teaching geographies of public art. Accordingly, I have plotted how teaching on public art may function

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as *aesthetic strategy*. That is, material of sexually modulated public art, as mediated through ideas/metaphors, infographics, films, architectural heritage (i.e. art deco), etc., might visually undergird debate and stimulate creative imagination.

Simultaneously, this paper has shown how public art might be pursued as *politicizing strategy*, or project of "awakening" (after Rancière, 2013). This could hold an educational space of possibilities for resisting, and reforming, normative gendered and sexualized world views. This is particularly done through a genuine concern with intersectionality (see Crenshaw, 1991). Such strategy, assembled here as a research-based pedagogy, aspires to enable radical thinking and action (i.e. *praxis*) amongst learners. This might foster learners to put their own or vicarious experience central in comprehending abstract course concepts as well as in developing an "activated" citizenship (Bishop, 2006; hooks, 1994). The latter encloses a capacity for politicizing the(ir) everyday lived spaces through an acknowledgement of dissensus (see Rancière, 2015). Such an experiential approach might also open up the possibility for questioning the teaching content. Here, I recognize the particular importance of an in-vivo, interactive and situated pedagogy, within class contexts and especially within the purview of a field class. A pedagogy like this may allow unpremeditated, "unexpected" content, as directly related to the life worlds of both learners and educators, to enter into the textbook so to speak.

Hence, the vignettes have pressed home how the use of public art to teach about sexuality can work as "slow" and thereby culturally responsive and personalized pedagogy – which, as Mountz et al. (2015) noted, is duly needed seeing the marketization and standardization of higher education. Slow pedagogy pauses and reflects, in the case in hand on gendered and sexualized norms and positionalities. It aims to provide students with a "dictionary" for a transgressive pedagogics; as argued by Bataille (1985, p. 31): "[such] dictionary begins when it no longer gives the meaning of words, but their tasks" (see also Webber, 2006). Slow pedagogy also recalls the duty of "activated" citizenship. That is an "in-here" educational citizenship that can only make an "out-there" impact through pursuing a "University of Life" (Thrift, 2016) – with the teaching space composing a reciprocal "dutiful outcome" (ibid.). So, social transformation may start from within, but, when done successfully, stretch beyond the teaching space (as we know it). That said, caution should be exercised in dealing with any hyperbolic claims in this regard.

Critical pedagogics might provide space for students to redefine relationships with selves/others through intersectional vistas of the real world. This inherently includes the teaching space. As the vignettes have illustrated, such redefinition might come with the determination to visibilize the oft-invisibilized other, as well as to vocalize the unheard sexual other for the promotion of a more inclusive, just society. In some pedagogical contexts, this can be done more powerfully than others; for example, the informal makeup of field classes might in themselves already be more sexualized and intimate than in-class contexts (see Valentine, 1997).

The combination of scholarly and personal reflection underlies a critical pedagogy as engaged throughout this paper. Sentience of the personal, as Browne (2005, p. 352) argued, is part and parcel of "nuanced and contextualized pedagogical politics" – in lieu of "dismissing

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the personal in teaching contexts or reverting to (or even maintaining) traditional disempowering pedagogies" (ibid.). Institutional norms may, nevertheless, pose challenges to disclosure, comfort and confidentiality along the negotiation of topic sensitivity, which indicates an area for further interrogation. Such challenges do not solely apply to teacher–student situations and relations but also to peer and team-taught settings (which may also involve postgraduate researchers as educators-as-students). It is the responsibility of the critical educator to pay heed to varying levels of familiarity, or comfort, of the audience regarding "your" teaching content. The educator should, hence, acknowledge the "limits, inconsistent boundaries, and leaky borders in politics [of] teaching", as put by Elder (1999, p. 91) – and at the same time act responsibly to embolden trust.

In conclusion, this case has used public art as catalyst for evoking heterodox critiques of sexuality, gender and space. I encourage closer critical pedagogical attention to the context rather than to the text (or visual) of the teaching content alone. Prospective studies may further attend to context-aware and place-based teaching for making content more tangible, relatable, and less disembodied. That is a "first-person" pedagogy that puts the live(d) experience of both educator and learner in a dialogic, meaningful place.

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