

# Policy, politics and North-South relation: strategic architectures in music education

Diretrizes, política e a relação Norte-Sul: arquiteturas estratégicas na educação musical

**PATRICK SCHMIDT** Westminster College of the Arts of Rider University ▶ [pschmidt@rider.edu](mailto:pschmidt@rider.edu)

## abstract

This article introduces the concept of strategic architecture as a way of understanding and developing policy thinking in music education. It presents the concept by way of a comparative analysis of the current situation of music education in the United States and Brazil. The author utilizes a conceptual-philosophical structure for music education practice based upon authorship, mislistening, communication and authenticity as a basis for policy discussions, drawing cautionary elements and presenting available models for analysis.

**KEYWORDS:** strategic architecture, authorship, North-South relations

## resumo

Este artigo introduz o conceito de arquitetura estratégica como uma maneira e possibilidade interpretativa para que educadores musicais melhor entendam e possam desenvolver um pensar político dentro da profissão. O artigo apresenta este conceito através de uma análise comparativa da atual situação da educação musical nos Estados Unidos e no Brasil. O autor utiliza uma estrutura conceitual-filosófica para informar uma prática educativa que é baseada nas noções de autoria, “mislistening”, comunicação e autenticidade. Estas servem como base para discussões de políticas, enquanto apresentando elementos cautelares e modelos para análise.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** arquitetura estratégica, autoria, relações Norte-Sul

The global conditions for an education in and through music are in flux today. The imprint of economic maximization is seen in societies in both North and South, bringing with them ideological and pragmatic requests for close scrutiny, the generation of critical and careful discourses and analysis, the imperatives of data-based decisions, and promises of educational growth that are tantalized in the tension between the desire for innovation and the demand for self-sustainability. In Brazil after a decade of cultural policy that reached educational outcomes by edging formal structures and focusing on Non-Governmental organizations (Gouveia; Daniliauskas, 2010), the center for economic incentive has been, at least rhetorically, re-focused upon the formal structures of schools. In the US, where primary and secondary education have been formalized to the extent of becoming ossified, the last decade – as recent and current national policy makes clear – has placed greater political emphasis and moneys upon ‘alternative’ structures for schooling; privileging ‘charters’ for example and the argument that they, at least in paper, provide a more open and entrepreneurial vision for what schools ought to be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Ravitch, 2010).

All in all, pragmatism, cost-benefit analyses, and the commodification of educational processes seem to be irretrievably part of the project of governmentally supported education today. As is often the case, however, on-the-ground practice has different rhythms than the one presented by macro politics. And while the pulse of micro-level educational action obviously cannot afford to be in full dissonance with macro characterization and trending, it presents a greater complexity that macro policy cannot fully subsume in its selective, partial and bullet-point-like narrative.

In the US, one of the current tensions between the macro and the micro can be represented by policy efforts placed upon Charter Schools – privately run school structures that are financed by public moneys. Indeed, charter schools in urban centers such as New York City, where I currently live, have raised the teachers’ salaries, presented less cumbersome bureaucratic structures and developed the kinds of focused learning proposition that are in consonance with 21<sup>st</sup> needs and realities. It is also the case, however, that charters are dismissing experienced teachers and contracting young ones to work 10-hour-day minimum. Charters present internal structures based on hyped hierarchical relations between faculty and administration – with less due process and greater top-down accountability – and often actualize *alternative* curricula in the form of narrow specialization based upon functional goals – reading, doing well on national tests or providing narrow vocational training.

In Brazil, one example of the tension between the macro and micro can be identified inside the political movement toward full-term schooling, or *turno integral (TI)*. Indeed, full term schooling can make the daily educational context more complex for students. It can generate a social environment where learning becomes more integrated, and can mitigate the social ailments of after-school idleness, extending this important governmental arm of protection upon a segment of the population that is most vulnerable, our children<sup>1</sup> However, as much research in the sociology

1. As it is known *escolas de turno integral* have a long history in Brazil, from the 1950s ideals of Anísio Teixeira to the CIEPs to the new plans articulated by education minister Fernando Haddad in 2010.

of education indicates, schooling is not without problems (Nespor, 2008). The expansion of time in school can also lead to a focus on mere content, rather than understanding, placing greater emphasis on repetition and generating a 'custodial' relationship between teachers and students – as it is harder to emphasize creativity amidst a structure of 'intensified' labor (Carlson, 2005). The formal school structure setting – its ambient and internal logic – can also generate disconnect from cultural, ethnic, social and emotional needs, becoming less open to a porous relationship with the communities that surround the school. Lastly, the inflationary role of schooling – particularly as a custodial space for youth – can have deleterious impacts upon the deliberate action of civil society and organizations that are developed *in loco* (Garrison, 2000).

This brief comparative analysis is therefore an introductory attempt to bring our attention to two things: 1) the perceived differences between North/South – or developed/ developing – segments of our globe face a new reality where the nature of such differences is no longer of kind, but rather of degree. In my view, the distance between core educational challenges in the US and Brazil – be they musical or not – are a matter of the conceptual and political direction; 2) if premise number one is truthful, then comparative analyses and transnational initiatives ought to be fomented (Schmidt, 2011). Despite the gloss of structure and tradition, fundamentally, our challenges are similar. Consequently, US educators and policy makers have much to learn from the innovative alternatives Brazil has construed – particularly in cultural-educative terms. And Brazilian educators would also profit from serious analysis of the – at time blind or rhetorically disingenuous – fascination found in the US, with the power of this place called school.<sup>2</sup> These two examples and observations serve as the entry point for a conversation as well as a proposal for an approach to music education policy in the country. This is, of course, only one possible outline for strategic thinking in the field.

This article focuses on policy thinking and argues that an expansion of the impact of music education can take place by merging the pregnant possibilities inside schools, and the best *third sector* initiatives can offer. Before this however, I would like to argue for a conceptual-philosophical basis upon which political and policy motion in the field ought to be based. The goal is not to establish universal premises, but to advocate for one *preferred pathway*, clarifying that when considering policy, points of departure matters a great deal.

To be clear, my goal here is not the institution of norms, but rather the formation of *framings* that may serve as a *strategic architecture* aimed at developing greater interaction between the development of music education inside and outside schools. The notion of framings (a concept that inhabits a meaning between *enquadramento* and *engajamento* when translated into Portuguese) is understood not simply as a capacity to appreciate and value<sup>3</sup>. Rather, a framing provides a

## **establishing a non-functional premise for educational strategy**

2. Schooling remains at the center of the discourse of every single politician in the US as well as those in other 'Northern' countries. Even a cursory analysis of the speech patterns of leaders in the US, England, Australia, Germany, and others, will show the constant rhetoric that conflates educational achievement and economic success and national pride. The recent changes in the educational structure of England, led by the Cameron administration are a prime example. See Schmidt (2011).

3. In the sense of clarifying appropriate or normative ways of doing or behaving.

personal-conceptual-pedagogical interaction with tradition, innovation, dissent and choice. As a construct, *framing* is linked to the notion that “since ideas are provisional responses to particular situations, their survival depends not on their immutability but on their adaptability” (Menand, 2001, p. 54).

My aim is to highlight a consciousness of transitivity (i.e. *consciência de transitividade*), the adaptability Menand mentions above, which must function alongside clearly structured policy planning in today’s globalized world. This is what might happen when strategic elements present in micro practices – by nature adaptable and contextual – meet the architecture of long-range considerations – central to planning and collaborative engagements consistent enough to engender growth and development. As I have argued elsewhere (Schmidt; Robbins, 2011, p. 99) *strategic architecture* standpoints view “learning and teaching as a delicate ecosystem where educative acts are seen as complex, interrelated, erratic and emotional”. Strategic architecture is consequently another name for *empowerment* and a focus on the development of “the capacity to influence the range of available choices and the social settings in which choices are made and pursued” (Bauman, 2008, p. 145).

This is significant in Brazil and the US for distinct but related reasons. Brazil has a historic chance to construct a kind of music education that can reach across organizations such as schools and NGOs – politically and practically loosening the divide between the formal and informal. The US needs alternatives for the expansion and humanization of standards and teaching sequences – and the undue stress they place on education as the “science of instruction.” To think in terms of a strategic architecture then, is a *modus vivendi* that reaches and attempts to approximate organizational spaces (ABEM and MENC for example) to civic (NGOs and CBOs)<sup>4</sup>, programmatic (teacher preparation, professional development and therefore Academia) and political spaces (the interaction with policy thinking and legislative action).

The troubling homogeneity of music education in the US and the variegation found in Brazilian NGOs inform to their own constituency and to global audiences alike that formal/informal divides are no longer conceptually meaningful nor practically helpful. While notions of informality (Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2002) indeed provided a platform for critique and analysis of established practices in our field, they have also fostered the propagation of their own ideological positioning. As the 21<sup>st</sup> moves into its second decade however, we seem to feel a global pull requiring musical practices and concepts to become better integrated with wider social needs, while placing less stock upon internal didactic disputes. My contention is that the continued codification of music education as a didactic dispute placed upon formal/informal divides prevents other arguments to take shape.<sup>5</sup> As long as *didactics* are the center of our concerns, there is little air for a complex *strategic architecture*, and unless our discourses (in music education) fully connect to their wider

4. Non-Governmental Organizations and Community Based Organizations.

5. The significance of thinking in terms of strategic architectures comes out of the argument that one could easily find a direct correlation between the rise of interest in concepts such as informality in music and the political economy developed by globalization. The return to conservatism in the North (for instance, the new British policies under Cameron or even the conservatism of Obama in the US) certainly presents similarities to the Southern alterations about to hit the ground in Brazil, despite the difference in political nomenclature (for example, the shift in economic support from the Ministry of Culture to the Ministry of Education under Dilma’s government).

educational and political counterparts, we have no chance of becoming a protagonist in the policy scene – that is, a role that goes beyond mere advocacy or external lobbying.

Constructing a strategic architecture that approximates policy and practice requires that we conceive the maximization of music education's impact while keeping true to its ethical and educative imperatives. Firstly then, I would argue that to bring ethics into what we do would require a focus on *authorship* and not simply on musical 'doings'. This pushes us beyond praxial or practical-aesthetic views famously advocated by David Elliott (1995) and Keith Swanwick (1999), respectively. An ethical commitment to authorship would imply constant attention to musical, technical, and contextual aspects of music education – as these authors suggest – but also and further a concern with personal, economic, communal and societal aspects. It could be said that only a focus on something like *musical authorship* would bring together the functional (serving the development of skill as well as the generation of income) and humanistic aspects of music (fostering capacities for self expression, growth, interaction with community, among others).

A *strategic architecture* for musical authorship then could be conceptually and curricularly structured around the construct of *music production* – rather than simply music making or experiencing. *Music production* – defined primarily as a myriad set of processes and interactions, which *also* encompass products or outcomes – could help expanding the terms upon which music is made feasible in our environs, while linking together – in the eyes of the general population – the significance of music in emotive, economic, cultural, and artistic ways (Denora, 2000). The work presented by Bryce Merrill (2010) and his *recordists* is a version of what is possible, as is the research work developed by the *Musical Education Everyday Study and Research Group* at UFRGS. The initiative named *Music as a Natural Resource* (MANR) is another example, working to place music education within the larger discourse of the United Nations and its Millennium Development Goals (see United Nations, 2010a) Music education thusly framed upon music production becomes that which pedagogically and conceptually strives for *ingenuity toward an adaptable environment*, rather than for *applicability toward a preexisting context*.

Secondly, I would highlight music education's role in inciting more productive listening as well as, what I have call *mislistening* (Schmidt, In press-a). If ingenuity and adaptability are of interest in an education in and through music, then we must pay attention to how Listening, as the central enabler for musical doing and musical recognition, is consistently taught as a narrow 'ideology of knowing' in western societies. For example:

1. Listening is enforced by parents and teachers alike, who praise their budding 'musicians' at any sign of prowess in pitch recognition.
2. Listening has sustained music studies as a race toward properly and promptly adjusting one's ears to the sonic needs of others.
3. Listening as detection of mistakes mystifies musicianship replacing it for acuity.

This is not simply an educational issue, however, as "studio workers are often explicitly charged by their owners with the production of a local sound for global consumption" (Borgo, 2005, p. 72) thus exemplifying how industry and commerce also perpetuate functional understandings of listening.

## four key constructs for framing a strategic architecture in music

I acquiesce that listening is also benign; as listening grants individuals the aptitude to consensually navigate clearly established musical forms and interactions. At other times, however, listening can be more troublesome, heavily handedly defining what is appropriate and deviant in music and music education. Mislistening, on the other hand, is the act and capacity to hear “wrong”, which leads to a commitment to adaptation, to lessened *ownership*, to collaboration and fragmentation. Defined as a purposeful deviation from accepted norms or the act of deferring classification, mislistening is often discouraged in classrooms, pressured back toward normality or rejected as ineptitude; unless it comes from authoritative sources (who would contest Cage, Gould or Miles Davis?). My interest in mislistening, as a conceptual element, is then twofold: 1) to highlight and acknowledge it as a current practice, particularly in hybrid music or those that aim at borrowings and collective projects; and 2) to highlight the curricular implications of mislistening as a disposition in today’s media and technology saturated youth.<sup>7</sup> In a strategic architecture for music inside and outside schools, *mis-listening* is then an ethical goal in education and is perfectly matched with the conceptual and curricular goal of fostering *authorship*.

Any music education that concerns itself with ethical parameters must also address the challenge of interaction interfaced by technology. Communication is then the third *framing* element I suggest here. While in the 21<sup>st</sup> century this is a basic notion in any field, in music communication is framed by one’s capacity to ‘remember’ and alter. The challenge is that without authorship and mislistening, communication becomes about reproduction and technique. Christopher Small (1977, 1999) has made a similar point, arguing that in a culture where authorship is distanced from the musician, and where we overvalue performances of the works of ‘distant others’, communicative skills are inevitably focused on ‘perfecting reproduction’. If on the other hand, my focus is on authorship and mislistening, then communication is manifested through adaptive work, versioning, splicing and ‘mashing’.

The challenge here is to foster communicative interaction which supports practices that reflect the manner in which,

Technology makes alternative literacies in music possible, retaining otherwise ephemeral information and helping us to remember what once had to be put down in paper – aiding in the development of complexities previously only available through notation. Now I can re-construct music out of ‘remembered’ bits and might no longer feel guilty of musiking differently – fostering a ‘letting go’ of the oppressive concern with ‘getting it right.’ In this sense a ‘good take’ is always behind or ahead of me. It does not need to be internalized through repetition or bettered through the external guidelines of directors or musical ‘leaders’. (Schmidt, In press-b)

6. I detail this concept in an upcoming article in the *Philosophy of Music Education Reviews*.

7. Projects such as Opera by You in Finland, where the whole production is constructed through global and virtual collaboration is one example here, as is the Glee Project in the US. Of course, practices developed by rappers, such as Little Wayne or *Girl Talk*, exemplify the pervasiveness of ‘borrowing’. The increasing import of *creative commons* laws and practices add to these specific musical engagements, presenting a policy representation of Professional/educational realities.

This can be exemplified by *home music recording* practices developed by *recordists*, where listening alone is said to be limiting and at time inconsequential. This is so once all sound is recorded and the aim is constant 'tweaking'. This is developed by "techniques of personal production, such as storing", which require "a constant reinvention of original material, or a constant listening 'away' from what is produced and replayed" (Merrill, 2010, p. 465).

In terms of cultural and educational policy, this highlights to music educators how we have entered a phase of globalized engagement with music where,

Revisitation does not need to be about 'improvement' in the traditional sense of technique. The result of such pedagogical framework is that students might be more comfortable in altering or disrupting their own work and those of others, might feel more confident in improvising for and on their own, taking on mislistening as a possibility and as part of who they are as music producers. (Schmidt, In press-a)

This is already true to the musical lives of many professional musicians – from rappers like Little Wayne, to DJs like Girl Talk, to the dispositions found in garage bands, to the practices of many multicultural communities – and it is surely becoming part of the lifeworld of students, particularly outside schools. This postmodern disposition is also present in the diasporic strategies developed by migrants, refugees and immigrants, where the hybridity found in much of their music production requires "capacities for simultaneity and heterophony (and thus pastiche, irony, multivocality, and the embrace of contradictions)" (Stokes, 2004, p. 62). This has implications at almost every level of the educational enterprise:

- At didactic level, with a lessened need for replication and repetition as mode of musical learning;
- At the pedagogical level, with greater need for interactive, constructive or dialogic approaches;
- At the environmental level, de-centering the learning space as contiguous – based on sequence – and temporal – all interactions happening at the same time;
- At the interpersonal level, de-emphasizing instructional relations but augmenting collaborative needs;
- At the curricular level, creating restrictions on long-term planning and the requirement of short cycles of revision (never more than 3 years);
- At the policy level, pushing for the exploration of innovation 'on the ground' as models for strategic planning.

While the practical implications are too broad to be addressed here, one way forward would be to reposition our conceptions regarding *authenticity*.<sup>8</sup> This is the final element in the *framing* I am

8. Huib Schippers (2010) in his book *Facing the music* eloquently addresses and problematizes the issue of authenticity from an ethnomusicological standpoint.

outlining. While the search for the authentic, in the sense of original and truthful, has spurred much cultural development, authenticity has also played quite a heavy hand as that which regiments appropriate and legitimate practices, establishing itself as the thought we “silently think” in music (Foucault, 1984). Such views of *authentic* thought and practice, disrupt innovation and real face-to-face encounters, and are in dissonance with a more *productive* vision where – after Paulo Freire – authenticity is connected to what is produced in the moment, in response of contextual demands, and in consonance with the creative propositions of those ‘in the room’. While critical lenses have indeed become a constant in music and education (Benedict, 2009; Bradley, 2009; Dimitriadis, 2000; Giroux, 1981; Valenzuela, 1999) school environs continue to present great resistance to authenticity that is not heavily marked by tradition or outside expertise; and those are issues we must contend with in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Thus far, my aim was to establish a step forward in comparatively looking at practices, discourses and policy action, suggesting ways to establish a conceptual *framing* upon which to entertain change in our field of action (Bourdieu, 1999). Embedded in this goal is a four-part vision for practice based upon authorship, mislistening, communication and authenticity, supported by the policy notion of strategic architecture. Together they are a reflection of complex but feasible models already at work as domains for interaction and learning in music (Schmidt, 2009).<sup>9</sup>

## matching policy initiative to conceptual vision

As we move forward, it is important to acknowledge that much educational practice – general as well as musical or artistic – already stand upon broad concerns with aims such as pluriformality (Banks, 2004), civic democracy (Dewey, 1916), social justice and ethical education (Althof; Berkowitz, 2006; Nussbaum, 1999), critical pedagogies (Apple, 1990, 2006), among others. These by and large represent educative pursuits based upon two premises: 1) education cannot be limited to the transfer of standards and values – although it includes it; and 2) the expansion of education beyond itself, indefatigably provides a struggle with the formation of conventions, the establishment of power, the construction of ethics, and the understanding of one’s interactions with others and with the *other*.

What is then implicated in matching larger policy planning with a conceptual pedagogy that challenges standards of thinking for music education practice? For me, the implication is a focus in seriously addressing strategic architectures, where macro policy architecture is established in light of and in tandem with, strategic goals guided by practice. This is of particular significance in Brazil today, as great efforts are being place in the consolidation and *de facto* implementation of the law number 11.769 of 2008. As the Revista ABEM of March 2010 shows, many and significant are the academic and political actions undertaken. I too, have witnessed the exciting manner in which students, scholars, politicians, legislative and other civil servants are coming together in

9. As Stephen Ball (2003) articulates perhaps the most significant challenge in policy enactment is the development of dispositions toward adaptability rather than toward replicability. Effective policy in a multivariate environment of 21<sup>st</sup> century underlines that policy guides adaptation – which implies a capacity by those responsible for policy enactment to understand local context while limiting the urge to re-draft policy.

Rio Grande do Sul to pragmatically articulate the professionalization of music education and the establishment of its rightful place inside schools.

As a Brazilian living and working in music education in the US for the past 15 years, my concern with the current political expansion of music education into the realm of schools, is that the economic professionalization of our field should not be overplayed. That is, it should be accompanied by careful considerations of how mass music education in schools might impact – negatively and positively – the quality and variance of available musical practices, as well as the social, cultural and economic role music does and can play in the education and life of young Brazilians. Of course, it is appropriate to seek the political opportunities and the legitimacy (through salaries and stable working conditions) that come from school employment. It is also appropriate, however, to be aware and critical of the homogenizing effect that school music can have on students and teachers alike – consider the US case as an example (Benedict, 2009). It is further appropriate to consider the rich, if not always consistent, set of experiences provided by NGOs and other community structures where music plays a critical role in educational as well as civic development.

Matching policy planning and pedagogical practice in a strategic architecture then can start simply by accessing micro models already in existence and matching them to macro goals. Below are examples of the diverse understandings I find particularly captivating in the current reality of Brazilian music education. They are organized in three simple policy directives that seem pertinent to the current juncture:<sup>10</sup>

1. *Political Action*: As mentioned above, the political conjunction that is now in place in Porto Alegre, where various constituents are meeting inside the Legislative Assembly, is a model for policy practice and leadership, and represents a clear strategic pathway to be replicated elsewhere. In micro terms, the RGS case also presents diversity of input quality and variance in terms of constituency, a fact I personally experienced during a visit in May. This is indeed the basis for the complexity that I suggest must be present in a strategic architecture.

2. *Linking Music and Larger Social Concerns*: The work developed by the NGO *Shine a Light* and its director Kurt Shaw is, to me, an example of how music education can play a role in social transformation. *Shine a Light* concerns itself with vulnerable populations and is committed to understanding and promoting change in what I would call the total environment of individuals. By working to ‘map’ several of the most impoverished communities in Recife, they create, through videos and virtual links generated by the residents themselves, a concrete as well as cultural sense of their community. Here one sees informal music interaction that is based upon valuing communal spaces, innovation, and social consciousness as essential for the education of individuals. Their work with another NGO, *Pé no Chão*, further models how to constantly cross over between formal and informal structures working with government, private entities, schools and street spaces.

10. The space available for this article limits the amount of examples and policy frameworks I can offer here. What follows then serves only as exemplification.

3. *Focusing on Teacher Preparation and Fomenting Partnership*: My recent visit with the faculty at Universidade de Brasília (UnB), with staff members at the UnB *Incubadora de Arte*, as well as with the director of the group *Batucadeiros* (a former music education student) provide a strong example of how universities can foment important vision for change in music education – contributing another element for policy thinking. Here we have three segments: A teacher preparation program focused on improving the undergraduate experience. Another segment, the Incubator, works with elements of the artistic community by developing capacity for strategic, legislative and communicative thinking. And finally, university graduates becoming educational entrepreneurs and bringing together a commitment to education, an ethical concern with children and their growth, and a passion for artistic enterprises that also create social and economic outlooks. While the three elements could be in greater synergy, the model is present.

These cases clarify that significant parts of the conceptual framing I outlined earlier, are taking place in Brazil today. In fact, in just 40 days in three cities in Brazil this last May and June, I experienced many other models where music education action propelled by NGOs intersected music education in schools. It is also clearly abundant that as policies toward turno integral become established, more and more NGO-based projects and know-how will ‘enter’ the school environment in a ‘prestação de serviço’ kind of structure. While this comes as no surprise to this readership, what seems less obvious is how and through what constructs organizations, but also individuals in leadership position are examining these realities. What are the policy initiatives that are being developed and from what frameworks? Are attempts to bring these diverse discourses to the same table having an impact on organizational policies, such as those developed or supported by ABEM? Further, could a systematic interest in concepts such as strategic architectural become part of and have an impact upon the policy adaptations that will be necessary and inevitable, as the law 11.769 is further implemented and institutionalized?

## the danger of a single focus

At the macro level we see that “the world is rapidly moving toward maximum urbanization” (United Nations, 2010b, p. 3). This is complicated by the fact that technology and capital have created a ‘thinning out’ of the richness that urban agglomeration once offered. Consequently, we also see a growing digital divide that creates barriers between organizations and institutions that could and should be working together. School structures are an example as alone they are insufficiently prepared to attend the demand of a growing population, as well as to fully address the complexity of interaction necessary in preparing individuals to be more than functionally literate. Music educators, as well as educators or cultural workers in general, could find maximization of their own valence and impact by fortifying and developing points of convergence and network distribution. This would mean greater interactions between universities, communities, schools, civil organizations, government, and private enterprise. As we saw above, there are already examples of how this is taking practical form.

The challenge, however, is not simply to guarantee that diverse porous set of musical spaces will not easily ossified. It is also important to foster teacher leadership, which is key in preventing “structural marginalization” and teacher exclusion “from decision-making processes” (Grossman, 2010). In the US contexts, I have suggested a focus on the following areas: 1) More attention on curriculum development capacity; 2) Development of an inclusive assessment culture; 3) Fostering growth in critical dispositions; and 4) Developing the capability to match choice of content to

social/cultural/racial/gendered representations in classroom contexts (Schmidt; Robbins, 2011). This is continuous struggle in the US, due to decades of teacher 'training' based on 'entry level skills' and it seems imperative in Brazil where a professional culture is more nascent and faces an important political moment.

Consequently one of my concerns with the temptation to focus educational life solely inside the structure of schooling is that a 'didactic paradigm'<sup>11</sup> is easily *imported* into teaching; and overtime, made commonsensical and logical, deemed effective and appropriate. This process is formalized by regimenting practices that are externally articulated as necessary – as standards are in the US, for example – establishing a co-dependence with the State which is not easily untangled (Schmidt, In press-a); for while it places contingencies on teaching and represses teacher agency, it also offers teachers greater economic safety and less incentive toward curricular and pedagogical risk (Popkewitz, 1998). Consider momentarily the United States' National Standards for Arts Education and the manner in which it often caters to teaching that is prescriptive and safe. While one could maintain that these standards are a responsible way to foster minimal parameters of practice in the profession, it is not difficult to note the lack of connection between the practices codified by these standards and the learning realities of today's 'creative societies' in a 'flat world' (Florida, 2003; Friedman, 2005). US schools provide abundant examples where acuity, reproduction, and rote learning are preferred over authorship, mislistening, communication or authenticity. And the result is a practice void of the musical adaptability present in everyday life, and therefore inconsequential in economic and cultural terms.

Regardless of the issues presented above many NGOs and school programs do show that music and culture can provide *transitioning* possibilities toward a language of power, toward economic viability, and toward personal transformation. Peter Block argues eloquently for the need of greater *associational life* – the set of connections I spoke earlier – which depends on the increased capillarity of relationships (Block, 2008). That is, what I do in my space can and should be closely connected, watched, copied, modified by others in different or similar context, thus fostering interactions that are reciprocal, aimed a low thresholds of hierarchy, and based upon loosened understandings of ownership (Lessig, 2008). And here is where constructs such as *strategic architecture* invite us to conjecture upon a more *holistic* or *ecological* view where we attempt to address achievement and growth for our urban youth. In many ways what I am proposing is an integrated view where education, and music education in specific, would not stand alone, but rather placed in partnership for the construction of social life.<sup>12</sup>

The formation of *transitioning* possibilities where youth could *slide* between formality and informality – in social as well as cultural and economic terms – is crucial to the development

## lingering elements

11. Didactic here is placed in English sense and not the more complex German or Scandinavian understanding. The implication is one with focus on content and delivery where education is turned into 'instruction'.

12. This is the theoretical and ethical role that Dewey (1916) has place upon schooling in *Democracy and education*. It seems to me that school alone cannot deliver it and consequently we need to devise more collaborative and complex systems that go beyond schooling, and not exclude them.

of 'life chances' both in the North and the South. A more clear view of how pervasive cultural signifiers are to larger societal and economic signifiers, which mediate gains from community cohesion to personal empowerment, should become more central to the conceptualizations of music educators. Yet, music education leadership often fails at recognizing that "policy and legal frameworks, regulatory authority, planning authority, human skills, accounting and accountability are as much in demand as raw land" (United Nations, 2010, p. 8) In other words, if we are to think music as a real player in the geopolitics of social and educational development, we need to understand the power of *strategic architectural* thinking, realize that capital is no longer located simply in tangible products, and that over-emphasis on didactics will keep us, at best, as a sub-profession.

The UN report asks: "How are the developmental trajectories of discrete cities dependent upon expanding the possibilities of transurban interaction, while elaborating complementary and niche functions within a larger nexus for regional growth?" (United Nations, 2010b, p. 50). The policy challenge is the same in our field: How can we imagine local growth by creating greater connectivity? An alignment with larger thinking not only places music education as a socio-educational player in a serious arena, but as a positive contributor to *social cohesion* – widening the discourse available to us when advocating to sustain and expand music in various realms or spaces – as well as promoting the notion of *cultural impact* as a critical indicator in policy evaluation and analysis.

The conceptual and practical capacity to imagine the advantages and forms in possible partnerships and to envision a space where formality and informality are drawn through less visible borders, could lead toward better synergy, public efficiency and community participation. The task is not easy but feasible. It would not mean to change the internal functional goals of our profession but also to raise its status as a civic contributor and apt innovator.

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