

ANDRI SAVVA

4. KHÔRA, TOPOS AND PRAXIS

Diverse Concepts and Meanings of Contemporary Art Education

INTRODUCTION

Khôra (meaning space) and *topos* (meaning place)^{xviii} could be described as concepts with multiple and diverse meanings in which personal, social-cultural, historical, and aesthetic dimensions coexist. It seems that no single theory or conceptualisation could exhaust the diversely rich implication of these concepts, especially in what might inform art education theory and research. This seems to remain the case even when most scholars who have done extensive studies of the concept of *place* (as being *khôra* and/or *topos*) would possibly agree that understanding the multiple meanings of such concepts is key to understanding wider concepts about the world, including: our relationships with ourselves, with each other (across generations, distances, cultures) and with our surroundings.

This article situates art education in contemporary discourse where *khôra* and *topos* are considered essential aspects of Mediterranean art and art education as praxis. It is argued that both concepts should be considered as essential components of Mediterranean art education as they have the potential to create a dialogue and form an independent voice. In the first part, philosophical considerations of *khôra* in a sense of belonging, based on *Timaeus* (Plato 1975) and its current formulation by Jacques Derrida is discussed. Space-place is also examined in relation to its social cultural perspectives to support the human potential to transform spaces and places. It is argued that if according to Derrida et al. (1997) *khôra* is “the spacing which is the condition for everything to take place” (p. 9-10), space and place are fundamentals for art and learning. Various perspectives connecting place, identity and cultural experiences put across the contextuality, subjectivity and multiplicity of meanings of *khôra* and *topos* that are exemplified through the work of three Mediterranean artists: Kyriaki Costa, Khalil Rabah and Maria Pademitiou. The second part of this article refers to *khôra* and *topos* and their value to art education through learning processes that are based on praxis. An argument is made of an alternative “*third space*” in the Mediterranean area, giving the potential for a dynamic creation and recreation and its prospective to reinforce Mediterranean art education, creating the necessary conditions for change to occur.

A SENSE OF BELONGING

Khôra has been an object of considerable philosophical reflection. In *Timaeus*, Plato (Malpas 2004; Casey, 1996; Kymäläinen & Lehtinen 2010) uses the *khôra* in

J. Baldacchino, R. Vella (eds.), *Mediterranean Art Education 00–00*.

© 2013 Sense Publishers and *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies*. All rights reserved.

a sense that is close to a receptacle space or place in space (as a way in which things come to be). For Plato, becoming involves three elements: ‘that which becomes, that which is the model for becoming and the *khôra*—the place for becoming (Cresswell 2009; Plato 1975). Derrida (1995) deconstructs the notion of *khôra* by negotiating concepts of spatiality, place and placing and by re-approaching and transforming previous meanings. When it comes to engage with the concept of *khôra* in art, the issue moves on that of creation and how art can be seen as a cultural form produced and reproduced in specific places and spaces (because it cannot be assumed as placeless). As Gregoriou (2005) explains, what “Derrida’s deconstructive reading of Plato’s *khôra* suggests is neither natural nor pure. The receptacle of cultural forms where the meanings of culture and cultural claims take form already bears previous imprints.” (p. 596)

Khôra and *topos* could be regarded as abstract, but at the same time, also as concrete concepts that are interrelated and that invariably coexist. Accordingly, both terms provide a common property for every presence. It could be a place of appearance and disappearance, for the familiar and the unfamiliar, a terrestrial (visible) and a celestial (invisible) space or place. Plato introduced *khôra* to explain the passage from the intelligible to the sensible, that is, from the perfect world of unchanging forms and ideas to the imperfect world of change and becoming (Kymäläinen & Lehtinen 2010). By going beyond the antithesis of intelligible and sensible, *khôra* establishes binary oppositions...it becomes a passage between the one and the other, and despite the various determinations and discourses that it receives “it is characterized by non-determination” (Kymäläinen & Lehtinen 2010, p. 253). This is exactly what makes *khôra* function as a ‘third space’, a space ‘in-between’. While according to Derrida et al (1997) *khôra* “is the spacing which is the condition for everything to take place” (p. 9-10) and thus it can be assumed that it is a prerequisite for art creation to take place, the question is whether art can provide an alternative for binaries and conflicts, a third space – another way of seeing life or “another way of changing the spatiality of human life” (Soja 1996, p. 10-11).

Plato’s *khôra* is acknowledged as significant condition for creation (Casey 1996) and signs of it can be traced to humanistic thinking—taking the form of *an aestheticising* of a place or landscape (Tuan 1974), and is identified by Derrida (1995) as a source of identity and life connected to motherhood, memory and community. Phenomenologically speaking, places provide a ground for direct human experience. This is supported by Merleau-Ponty (1962, p. 55) who argues that place is embodied: “the sensible world is described as active, animate and in some curious manner alive...so that we may ultimately describe perception as mutual interaction and intercourse, a coition, so to speak, of my body with things”. Similarly Casey (1996) suggests that, “we are not only in places but of them” (p. 19)—meaning that human beings are *placelings*, denoting a sense of place as the sense of belonging, where one knows others and is known to others (Relph 2000). Places are important as they represent sources of security and identity for individuals and groups (Judson 2006). Our knowledge of being in the world emerges across generations by representing every person’s practical engagement with his or her own surroundings in each space and place. It is not transmitted as

readymade information. Rather, it is experienced through a continuous regeneration, a contextual rebirth.

Contextuality, subjectivity and the multiplicity of meanings reinsert *khôra* and *topos* as philosophical concepts, and as such influence artistic and educational thinking. In contemporary art, *khôra* and *topos* along with time have a connotation of location, history, politics and creativity respectively, implying an understanding of context and an attempt to enter or even create alternative sites or locations.

In her work *From roots to routes* (2008) (see Figure 1), the Cypriot artist Kyriaki Costa states: “I never saw myself as one of those women who should sit around circles, nattering and sowing. ... My grandmother in particular, was exceptionally skilful ... a master of the craft ... It appears that the traditions were there, the roots were there, in my family and ... It became the motive for turning roots (of knowledge) into routes (of artistic exploration). The old-new duality thus remains a central element of my work and is translated into a variety of symbolic and literal juxtapositions” (Costa 2010, p. 32). Indeed, the artist’s interest in places and time represents aspects of her national and personal identity, all these through juxtapositions of old and new, reality and imagination, tradition and innovation. Artists create and recreate spaces that allow channels between the one and the other, spaces that are in-between. In this case Costa’s work opens up space to a more contemporary vision of traditional craft, a vision that is more about routes than roots.



Figure 1. Kyriaki Costa, *My land* (2008) Embroidery. 95 x 68 cm
(Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist)

The study of *khôra* and *topos* from the humanistic and social-cultural perspective can be related to the study of the sense of human spatial feelings and the ideas that emerge from within the stream of experience. Experience is the mean by which we come to know the world: we know the world through sensation (feeling), perception and conception (Oakeshott 1993). This is exemplified by Kyriakis Costa’s work (*My House* 2009), (see Figure 2) which distinguishes the outside from the inside world by bringing them together. The walls are “essentially a material and symbolic boundary” between the outside and the inside, and also

SAVVA

“contributing to the definition of the bounded unit the family” (Costa 2009,p 10). On these walls one finds a depiction of a certain part of the world that lies outside, which also forms part of the *Green Line* that divides the island of Cyprus into distinct spatial units.^{xix}



Figure 2. Kyriaki Costa, *My house* (2009) Tapestry. 60x40 cm.
(Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist)

Kyriaki Costa used the inside of her house to depict the political, outside place, representing herself in between the “inside” and the “outside”, the absence and presence, the happiness and sadness, allowing passages and translations between the one and the other. It is the excluded middle, the third space, that deviates from the assumptions that “everything that cannot be included in binaries has to be excluded” (Emig 1996, p. 16) or “that nothing can be one thing and its opposite at the same time” (Olsson 2007, p. 88).

Places have been studied from historical and literary-artistic perspectives. A neighbourhood may become alive through those art practices that are combined with narratives, photographs and drawings. Art practices based on memory allow reflections, ideas and commodities that bind one place to another and create connections to the rest of the world. Places and spaces have also been studied as a necessary condition or medium for creation. This is what is evident in Plato’s description of the receptacle as a space in which things happen and appear including the process of creation itself –how things come to be. Thus, while there are a number of meanings associated with *khôra* and *topos*, both concepts have been deemed necessary for creation and recreation (Casey 1996).

MEANING AND CONTEXT

Khôra and *topos* are valid and dynamic, reflecting multiple meanings, realities and values that result from philosophical, social, cultural and political processes.

Meanings can be personal and connected to individuals and their personal biographies, but meanings are also shared and, in some ways, they are social (Cresswell 2009).

Recent theorists have suggested that place is a concept that gives meaning to what we call space. Judson (2006) explains that, “an example of space is the physical structure of the house. In contrast, place applies to those spaces which are meaningful to individuals and to which they attach a sense of belonging”(p. 230). Clifford Geertz (1996) comments that “no one lives in the world in general” (p. 259). The locations of daily life through which human beings experience the world are centres of meanings. Gruenewald (2003) identifies the relationship between individuals as place makers and their lived spaces and places: “people make places and places make people” (p. 621). Making places or spatial meaning construction is a process in which all are engaged: “we are all place makers as we construct spatial meaning and thus create place through our interactions within and encounters and the terrain of our daily lives” (Judson 2006, p. 231).

The connection between place, identity and cultural experience, as recognised by philosophers, historians, cultural theorists and artists is still a challenging concept in the Euro-Mediterranean region which embraces a multi dimensional tradition and diverse artistic practices by various Euro-Mediterranean communities (not just European traditions). Although it seems easier to find commonalities between Europeans than to determine who is and who feels Mediterranean (Rim 2012), artists in the Mediterranean produce and reproduce art expanding their understandings of becoming and of being with others. The Mediterranean landscape is defined by its multi-layered interactions between physical, cultural, social, economical geographies and thus it becomes a critical space and place (Mongeli et al. 2012; Chambers 2008). It is a place where one can trace the continuity or interruption of Western civilization but it can also consider a place among oppositions and contradictions, west and east, conflict and resolution, democracy and authoritarianism, war and peace, hope and tragedy, serenity and storm.

The Mediterranean area is much more than a geographical reference, it was and still is a crossing, an open gate, a constant changing milieu of ideas, meanings and appearances. It can appear as a place in-between opposing places, following from the assumption that “everything that cannot included in binaries has to be excluded” (Emig 199, p. 16). That is why the Mediterranean area has the potential and dynamics for creation and recreation. To make available a space for such processes means to support participation and give voice to diverse groups and their interpretations, to address the concerns and needs of the people of the Mediterranean and allow these to co-exist among others. Mediterranean art and culture should be based on its authenticity and must be enacted by “active participation, creativity and actions” from “the full array of traditions presented in the Mediterranean communities” (Pace 2005, pp. 428-429).

Take for example contemporary Mediterranean visual artists and their practices. The Palestinian artist Khalil Rabah works exclusively with installations, live and performance art. His installations have used objects emblematic of Palestinian identity: olive trees, olive oil, stones, silk embroidery threads, etc. He is the

SAVVA

founder of The Palestinian Museum of Natural History and Humankind (2003-ongoing). In his video installation *The 3rd Annual Wall Zone Auction* organised in 2004 by the Palestinian Museum of Natural History and Humankind, he investigates an enormous catastrophe for life on earth. Eight items containing natural and unnatural material from the wall zone were auctioned in order to seek support for their preservation, developments and presentation in a show in the museum. Much of his work is focused on understanding the context of contemporary events that characterise the history of the earth and its inhabitants (*The Mediterranean Approach* 2011, p. 11).

Khalil Rabah's work is about his biographical story and at the same time it is expanded to wider ideas ...those of humankind, humans' relation to nature and suffering. His work it is national and political and at the same time is global and moral. "The overriding themes of displacement and replacement, context and identity are at once part of Rabah's personal history and that of his country" (Milan 2003, p. 1). While Rabah's work is motivated by his motherland and its suffering, Maria Papadimitriou represents the pain of humans on the move. In her installation *Apparatus 2011* (see Figure 3) composed of glass sculptures and a stylise Revenue Guard Corps boat (taking up almost an entire room at Palazzo Zenobio), the Greek artist Maria Papadimitriou represents a metaphor of the travels undertaken by migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea: "a beach made with glass fragments evokes the often tragic destiny of the many lives broken in search of a better future" (*The Mediterranean Approach* 2011, p. 10).



Figure 3. Maria Papadimitriou, *Apparatus* (2011). Murano glass and boat.
(Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist)

The artist addresses another conception of place, a place through its relation to mobilities—to the dynamism and flow of objects and people (Cresswell 2009). People who choose or are forced to live mobile lives (e.g. refugees, immigrants, travellers) may led to desperation or even death, and may appear out of place.

While both artists hold a humanistic perspective – developing rich ideas of place (in the Mediterranean region) they also have much to say about how power and

politics is implicated in the construction and contestation of places and their meanings. Visual arts are practiced in places, and as such they carry and are attached to historical, cultural meanings embedded in those places. Artists also bring into being their aesthetic and ethical emotions linking their work to dilemmas and metaphors.

A space according to Cresswell (2009) becomes a place when it is used and lived in, and the meanings associated with these places are shared with others, and might also be assigned meanings by forces of power. Sociologists assert that places are social constructions (Gruenewald 2003), and point out that we do not think of these places as cultural products, and likewise we fail to recognise that a place is an expression of culture and representing the outcome of human choices and decisions.

Recognizing that places are what people make them—that people are place makers are a primarily artifact of human culture—suggests a more active role for schools in the study, care, and creation of places. If human beings are responsible for place making, then we must become conscious of ourselves as place makers and participants in the sociopolitical process of place making. (Gruenewald 2003, p. 627)

Kamler (2001) states that power is present in the creation, possession, operation and control of space and in this sense these are never neutral. In most cases people develop an unconscious attitude toward place; they familiarise themselves with what is around them without thinking of the roles that they and others play in constructing them, and ignore the transformations and the realities that occur in a multi-blended present. Educationally, this means developing the connections with places that allow us to explore how they have been created and investing them with particular kinds of meaning.

One can trace artistic geographies in the Mediterranean region in order to map the places in which art was found, and how this was transformed through time, to focus upon the issues of meaning and the reasons behind their creation and how people interact with these creations in their everyday life. On many occasions art provided consciously or unconsciously, juxtapositions on what we count as beauty and by which we provoke discussions on democratic or social justice, as it allows creators and viewers to interact individually and collectively on ideas of the past, present and future and by which they construct their own meanings. Perhaps a new aesthetics will not be found anymore in museums (Gablik 1991) as it has now moved and to some extent “given itself” to its environmental contexts by acknowledging the multiple relationships that might exist between artwork, artist, space, site, locality, exhibition and context (Morris & Cant 2006). The Mediterranean region often contains contradictions and divergences and requires a social-spatial process, in which artists and viewers will be able to interact and search their inner space in relation to the outside space. That is why any attempt to create requires the ownership of the effort and opportunities for everyone to participate.

For Freire (1987, 2000, p. 90) human beings and learners exist in a cultural context: “People as beings in a situation, find themselves rooted in temporal spatial

conditions which mark them and which they also mark.” He asserts that acting on one’s situationality—what Gruenewald, (2003) calls *decolonisation* and *reinhabitation*—makes one more human. Both terms can be considered as aspects of situationality and both are dependent on each other. Learning processes require a new frame of mind so that people would recognise the disruption, by which they would identify and change those ways of thinking that injure and exploit other people (through *decolonisation*), and by recovering and creating material spaces and places that help them learn how to live well (by means of *reinhabitation*). The process of decolonisation and reinhabitation enables artists to reframe, reconsider and recompose new images of the world they live in.

As a participant in the travelling exhibition *United States of Europe*, the artist Kyriaki Costa (2011) states: “The fact that I live in a country with a complex and perennial political problem is inevitably reflected in my work... I believe, however, that sometimes it is important to take a distance from one’s own specific setting – in my case a small and relatively new country - and to interact, share views, exchange opinions, personal concerns and agonies within a wider artistic forum.”

Similarly art education must be rooted within the concrete reality of individuals so that it invites learners to read and decode the images of their authentic-situated experiences with the world (Green 1993; Trimis and Savva 2005). This would allow learners to move outside of classrooms and take on the larger tasks that *reinhabitation* and *decolonisation* demand in order to think and act in ways that would ameliorate their lives. It also creates a new frame of mind that would require forms of democratic and interactive contexts within which art learning is engaged at local and global levels.

In discussing the political dimension of place, Gruenewald (2003, 2004) asserts that educational treatments of place must be attentive to the life of the margin. In contemporary times, certain people, parts, places and ideas of the world are excluded, either because they are considered to be out of place (places are too fixed to accept heterogeneous identities) or because they are considered to be in the middle. Art, especially in the Mediterranean, participates in both parts of dichotomies: south and west, majority and minority, Muslim and Christian, poor and rich, literate and illiterate. By reinforcing art creation in the Mediterranean, it is possible to initiate and develop communication beyond the local. By supporting Mediterranean art education is possible to stimulate the thinking of people and expose their voices.

To enter into the political sphere of the margin, one needs to engage with the context of our places, regions, cities, neighborhoods and schools. In other words, one needs to become more conscious of the spatial dimension of social relationships by continually asking: “Where are the margins?” and “What kind of place-makers do we educate through art in our schools?” Critical theory and critical pedagogy in art education calls attention to the situationality of a place and its social transformation (Atkinson 2008; Addison 2010; Burgess 2010; Graham 2007). I argue that perhaps the best thing emerging from such an approach in art education is the particularity of a place (Greenwood 2008) and the different people that inhabit the place and who provide a diverse platform of art inquiry and

practices. What happened here and what is happening now? What needs to be restored and what needs to be transformed? Art education provides room for all those educators who are concerned deeply with humans to put their curriculum practice into context, blending local and global, environmental and aesthetic, social and cultural into a whole where art learning is above all meaningful. It suggests concrete and pragmatic ways based on different subjectivities, a parallax offering different and complex perspectives and standpoints, in order to create the necessary learning contexts and procedures for creative transformation and change to occur. For this reason, in the Mediterranean region it is essential to reinforce art education as praxis, through a collaborative-communicative effort with the civil society, and not to impose practices through a western perspective action plan. The process requires us to proceed by facing *khôra* as a space of belonging, in association with the Greek polis and the political and cultural life taking place in agoras (Olwig 2006). As such, space is becoming *an* active place – polis, where art experiences become political and/or cultural, creating the conditions of a democratic dialogue. In this sense, Mediterranean art education is a learning space that has the potential to become a creative zone where differences interact and prepare people for dialogue and transformations in their lives.

ART EDUCATION AS PRAXIS : CURRICULAR SPACES FOR EXPLORING, CREATING AND REFLECTING

In their different ways, philosophers, phenomenologists, cultural critics, and educators show that places and spaces teach us who, what, and where we are as well as how we might live our lives (Addison 2010; Green 1993; Boughton et al 2002; Kymäläinen 2003; Merleau-Ponty 1962). The sense of space-place can be grounded by students in a sense of familiarity with the spaces they inhabit and the surroundings that define them. This is also where in art education courses this sense of familiarity could inform learning by fulfilling students' sense of security and belonging, to develop a spatial interaction with their environment, and where they are given the opportunities to create aesthetic juxtapositions (which turn the familiar to unfamiliar).

By looking at, and ultimately locating the concepts of *khôra* (space) and *topos* (place) as concepts of the art curriculum, we (as teachers and learners) would recognise the role of art in society and the role that schools play in the production of space (as a social context) through the education of students as place-makers (as citizens). This will further enhance the role of art education in the development of critical creators-viewers (Gruenewald 2003; Ministry of Education 2010).

As Judson (2006) asserts, neglecting spatial issues in curriculum studies ignores the role of schools as active agents of place-making. Place-making is in essence a democratic process that allows critical reflection on the social, cultural and political nature of school spaces. It is also concerned with the individual's role as a place-maker in terms of the construction and enhancement of democratic ideals, forms of equality and empowerment. Those art educators who place the child at the centre of learning, acknowledge that learning experience is situated (Greene 1993; Merleau-Ponty 1962). This situatedness also confirms that art praxis is not a

coincidence. Rather, it provides connections and attachments to certain conventions, experiences and ideas that take place in certain spaces, such as rooms, locations, sites, regions, and countries. In this sense, I would make a strong argument for curricular spaces that are open and flexible to change; which are grounded to a sustainable and social-cultural perspective; and where our curricular understanding is based on viewing and producing art in specific localities and through an interconnection between place, people and objects. In this way discourses become *contextualised* – that is, “they are bound by our senses of locality, our histories, our language, our place.” (Cheney, in Doll 1993, p. 180)

This recalls Sobel (1996) who proposes a framework for a place-based curriculum that begins with fostering empathy for the familiar and moves out toward an exploration of the home range, leading to social action and reinhabitation. He regards acting on one’s place for the sake of learning experiences as connections that could lead to inquiry, thinking and action. An art curriculum framework is also suggested by Trimis & Savva (2009) based on the concept of *chorotopos*.^{xx} *Chorotopos* is linked to the school itself and its surrounding area, meaning the space inside and outside the school. It starts from the inside of the classroom and extends to the neighbourhood, the village, the community, and the town.

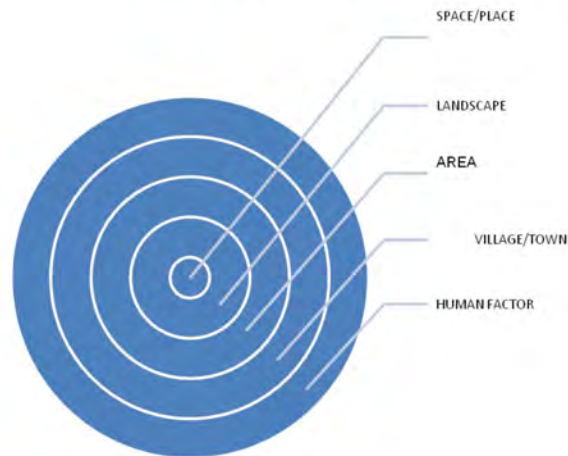


Figure 4. The concept of *chorotopos*

In a broad sense *chorotopos* refers to the place, the landscape, the neighbourhood, the region, the area, the village, the city where the school is situated, and the human factor that ultimately emerges from it. More specifically it refers to the natural and manmade environment of the immediate space-place of the school (Trimis 2004; Trimis & Savva 2009). It enables students and teachers to observe, search, reflect, and criticise their place-space, how it is made and used. Ecological, social-cultural, political aspects could be explored during the

implementation of artistic activities and actions in specific settings, but these are determined by the *chorotopos*. Generally, it aims to help teachers to involve themselves and students in artistic activities in various contexts and stimulates learning through art in order to enable them (a) to construct their knowledge about the world they live and experience; and (b) to reposition themselves within the environment by consciously reflecting on their surroundings (Trimis & Savva 2009).

It is argued that place meanings have a remarkable value in education (e.g. Baldacchino 2009; Kessler 2000; Savva, Trimis & Zachariou 2004; Sobel 2004; Trimis & Savva 2009; Riley-Taylor 2002). Art is often a way of communication. It is about relationships and what happens when it is embodied in place (Gradle 2007). The concept of *topos* is therefore important as it applies to those spaces which are meaningful to humans. It is a fusion between our surroundings, perception and artistic actions, offering a space for exploration, reflection and creation. This exploration has validity, because it deals with what we and others actually feel and think about the world (Anderson & Milbrant 2005). Art experiences help us remember the history of our homes, to see the ties that bind one place to another, motivate our engagement in thinking and act in favour of our lives. The sense of place has been widely accepted as a special component of art learning (Anderson & Milbrant 2005; Boughton et al 2002; Graham 2007; Neperud & King 1995). Graham (2007, p. 377) introduced the ingredients of critical place-based pedagogy in art education “that combines the ecological forces of place based education with the social focus of critical theory”. Boughton et al (2002, p. 1) state that visual culture “reflects and contributes to the construction of identity, knowledge, history, sense of place, notions of citizenship and agency and quality of life”. I argue that as significant as *khôra* is for any art creation, it is equally important for art learning. It is the “spacing which is the condition for everything to take place” (Derrida et al 1995, p. 94-95). The creative processes taking place in *khôra* and *topos* can be the place of the excluded middle, the third space and they may include the reconstruction of binary oppositions: the local and global, tragedy and hope, male and female. Such approaches in Mediterranean art education should be based on a search for meanings and alternatives and include the traditions and ways of life, the artefacts of everyday life and visual culture as contenders for study. (Bowers 1993; Lai & Ball 2002)

To take an example, that of digital stories produced by students and the reflections that emerge from such stories. These refer particularly to those authentic places that are linked with feelings, narratives and physical spaces and always include others, usually family members, grandparents, mother, and friends.



Figure 5. Photo, 10x15cm. Figure 6. Photo, 10x15cm.
(Produced with the kind permission of the participant students from the Department of Education, University of Cyprus)

As one can see from these students' reflection on their art work:

"... I grew up with my grandparents ... my home was near their home ... everything was linked to my grandparents and their own place. Their house was filled with real stories (funny and horror stories), a space filled with objects, tools and handicrafts that I play with ... And those were crazy and playful places that I enjoyed." (Student 1. See Figure 5)

"I know those places physically ... The yard has been covered with concrete cement but they left a large part where we had trees and plants ... I remember myself on a bicycle going round and round a big table ... on the concrete floor cement. I remember myself hiding behind the bush and play with water and soil ... then I remember the smell." (Student 2. See Figure 6)

But how could art education address this kind of art learning? How could we envision an art education that cultivates the sense of *khôra* and *topos* allowing multiple meanings and ways of belonging to be apparent?

The process requires an awareness of how place is created not only by a scientific or technical process but through human narratives and practices. This requires that we depict what is observed through one's own and through other individuals' perspectives. In this way one's emotions, experiences and questions are incorporated and fully engaged with what, how and why we experience such emotions and questions.

For instance, reflecting on her art, Student 3 shared and expressed her views on how others are placed in a traditional Cypriot bazaar as follows: "Old and Young, Christian and Muslims, green-red and yellow ... Parts of what has been left ... Doubts of its future existence." (Student 3. See Figures 7 and 8)



Figure 7. Photo, 10x15cm. Figure 8. Photo, 10x15cm.
 (Produced with the kind permission of the participant students from the Department of Education, University of Cyprus)

In *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold (1966) wrote:

No important change in ethics was ever accomplished without an internal change of our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections and convictions (p. 246) ... Art has the potential to redirect attention and to educate our capacity to care. This capacity to care and act responsibly is cultivated culturally (p. 333).

Art enables us to remember our histories and discern the ties (historical, biophysical, social and political) that bind one place to another. The ability to care is learned and culturally mediated through art experiences. Situated cognition studies tell us that people come to know in relation to human and environmental contexts, where emotional relationships between people, space-place and objects play a central role in how they construct their knowledge and identities. (Freedman 2003; Lave, & Wenger 1991; Smith-Shank 1995)

Key processes in art learning are based on the interactive character of viewing-observing and making. These enable individuals to interact with specific spaces-places, objects and humans, while awakening them to their surroundings. For example, when a group of students were given the opportunity to reflect on their immediate place by documenting observations of their own environment (the city centre in Nicosia, Cyprus), their reflections reveal processes of identifying, questioning and expressing meanings of their world (see Figures 9, 10 and 11).

“We often pass through those places that existed in our history centuries ago so quick, we live through them and we never imagine ourselves apart from them ... In any case when you freeze the image you realise that you are also part of what have been left there, across generations and cultures. I am asking my self – What happened ... where do you belong?” (Student 4. See Figure 9)



Figure 9. Photo, 10x15cm. *Figure 10.* Photo, 13x18cm.
(Produced with the kind permission of the participant students from the Department of Education, University of Cyprus)



Figure 11. Photo, 10x15cm.
(Produced with the kind permission of the participant students from the Department of Education, University of Cyprus)

Another student said: “Sometimes I wonder if you are what ‘dominant others’ want you to be ...” (Student 5, Figure 11)

These processes enable individuals to empathise with the (natural, human, social) world around them, by which they discover that they can affect this through their actions (Savva, Trimis & Zachariou 2004) and by which they are in turn engaged in a dialogue about their values and choices. Here it becomes clearer how art praxis could help us develop a sophisticated awareness of our *khôra* and *topos*, not only by approaching nature but by engaging with those stories that are embedded in the world around us, by acquiring an identity, by exploring and doubting, by giving form to our thinking, by making meaning of the past in the present and by creating and recreating belongings and social communities through democratic engagement.

Leading educationalists like Vygotsky (1986) and Freire (1970, 1995) have long recognised that learners live and learn within a cultural context that is in a continuous state of change, as new experiences are mediated through social contexts that are encountered and interpreted (Lave and Wenger 1991). Vygotsky argues that in most cases learning is not only affected by the specific context but is driven by it. Freire (1995) though does not thoroughly explore the spatial concepts demonstrated by the importance of “situationality” in critical pedagogy. He advocates “reading the world” as his central pedagogical strategy (Freire & Mocado 1987).

A central strategy that art educator must adopt is to read art as a “text” where students and teachers are asked to decode the images of their own concrete, situated experiences. In this context, teachers and learners alike are challenged to read the text of their life, to question themselves and others, and are urged to look for those marks, imprints, origins and codes of meaning which these images represent. This process requires a strategy for inquiry, where juxtapositions, play and wonderment remain crucial. In practice, philosophical concepts such as spaces-places, identities, images, society and communities could include concrete aspects of individuals’ realities. They would serve as entry points and make connections with cultural, historical, personal, political and environmental issues. They can infuse concrete ideas about our spaces (such as homes, forms of shelter, the neighbourhood, and the landscape) and our selves (us as corporeal presence, our bodies, and others, such as the people one meets in a public space). These will serve as motivating points for making, inquiry and action. As Gruenwald (2003) argues “reflecting on ones situation corresponds to reflecting on the space(s) one inhabits, acting ones situations often corresponds to changing ones relationship to a place”.

This is a process which moves one’s thinking from the concrete to the symbolic and the conceptual; from the simple to the complex; from the narrow to the wide, from the superficial to the critical. It is a process where one creates com-positions and as one’s thoughts consciously or unconsciously. For example, drawing an image of oneself on a document (such as a newspaper, report, or book cover) may well include concrete, abstract, multimodal, real or imaginative qualities (see Figures 12 and 13). A placed art practice would include forms of expression, acts that intervene, an ability to deconstruct previous or accepted notions (see Figure 14).

“Who am I? I am my religion ... I am asking myself: Is it valuable? ... It belongs to the concrete parts of myself and it is inside and around me.”

“Who am I? I am a story living in a world that makes me wonder what is real and what is not real.” (Students 5 and 6. See Figures 12 and 13)

“What is democracy if you feel that your thoughts cannot be expressed? ... if you must comply with actions that are unfair to others? If the different is not acceptable because is different? ... if your country is not defined as your place, if you don’t know what is true and what is untruth?” (Student 7. See Figure 14)

SAVVA



Figure 12. Photo images, watercolour, 21x29cm.

Figure 13. Photo images, charcoal and watercolour, 30x42cm.

(Produced with the kind permission of the participant students from the Department of Education, University of Cyprus)



Figure 14. Photo, 13x18cm.

(Produced with the kind permission of the participant students from the Department of Education, University of Cyprus)

From these examples one can see how art education becomes a vibrant force in society, as it offers opportunities to viewers and creators to be in-between spaces, ideas, thoughts or meanings, to approach and re-approach their selves—their inner space and in relation to their *khôra* and *topos*, and to construct or reconstruct meanings of one's everyday living in the world by critically reflecting on human actions and values. In order to move from what we call “art experiences” to “art praxis” we need to “incorporate reflection upon the idea of experience and then translate it into purposeful action” (Breunig 2005, p. 111). Art praxis is meaningful and contextual but it is through reflection and action that it becomes alive. This view is corroborated by art educators who view art education as forming part of a dynamic field. In this context, these art educators also contend that art can

significantly contribute to the world by influencing perceptions, behaviours and actions.

CONCLUSION

Increasingly, theorists and philosophers in a wide range of fields of study continue to refer to learning as an activity that is grounded within artistic thinking and practice. This has never been more obvious than in contemporary society where values, concepts, meanings tend to privilege subjective views that remain dependent on time, place and context (Sullivan 1993). The complexity of contemporary art cannot be included under any universal principles. This raises a direct awareness of those contextual factors that are implied in any critical approach. In this sense, Mediterranean art education should not imitate the worldwide conventions but should be given an independent voice and space. It should be recognised for its entity and links to so many aspects of people's lives in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Khôra and *topos* embrace the experience of being human in connection with others and the world (human, natural and manmade). It is thus essential to create experiences where people can build relationships with others and the places they inhabit; where they can reflect and envision a transformation (by which they can restore and transform the world for future generations). What I am here calling a placed art education has the potential to create the necessary democratic and therefore situated experiences and visions by which individuals can think and act in a broader cultural, social and sustainable way (Hicks & King 2007). Artistic concepts that emerge from the articulation of *khôra* and *topos* could offer an opportunity to art educators to engage with a more meaningful art learning. It can be significant for awakening people in the Mediterranean region to what happened and what is happening around them. More so, it would help people establish and identify who is taking the role of a *place-maker* (physically, geographically, and historically) and how we would then create places for ourselves and for each other. It opens up a third space for dialogue in the Mediterranean region and introduce people to something that is relevant to their lives and identities.

If art education is to be connected with art and life it has to be meaningful to each student. It has to be grounded to authentic practice, connected to Mediterranean cultural life and it should create the necessary space for those art learning communities who can be critical-reflective and can act in the future as agents of change.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to the artists, Kyriaki Costa and Maria Papademitriou for their permission to use the images of their artworks, and to those students (Maria, Panayiota, Eleni, Chara) whose artistic work has been an inspiration for thinking and learning.

- ^{xviii} “Etymologically *Khôra* is rooted to the Greek place, homeplace, habited place or marked place in particular” (Kymäläinen & Lehtinen 2010:252). *Khôra* is still used in the everyday language implying the town (polis), the village, castles, monasteries, birth place. According to Lukerman (1961) *Khôra* should never be translated as space (*choros*), instead it entails meanings related to area, region, country, landscape, country “which does not exclude the presence of a body or things *chora* may receives.” (Lukerman 1961, p. 252).
- ^{xix} *Green Line*: Since Turkish invasion in Cyprus 1974, the United Nations buffer zone has functioned as a barrier between the Greek and Turkish population. The Green Line is in fact a double line with an area, no man’s land between two parallel fences. In April 2003 Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots were given the opportunity to see their homelands through specific crossing points-borders. However, the political situation didn’t change. The green line still exists, and citizens from both sides act as visitors to their places.
- ^{xx} The term chorotopos originates from the same Greek roots of *chôra* (*khôra*) and *topos*. It is linked to the school itself and its surrounding area meaning the space inside and outside the school.

REFERENCES

- Addison, N. (2010). Art and Design in Education. Ruptures and Continuities. In Addison, A., Burgess, L., Steers, J and Trowell, J. (eds.), *Understanding Art Education. Engaging Reflexivity with Practice*. London: Routledge
- Adams, E. (1990). Art & Environment: Making art work/s. *Australian Art Education* 14, 12.
- Anderson, T. & Milbrandt, M.L. (2005). *Art for Life: Authentic Instruction in Art*. New York: Mc Graw Hill.
- Atkinson, D. (2008). Pedagogy Against the State. *International Journal of Art and Design Education*, 27(3), 226-240.
- Baldacchino, J. (2009). *Education Beyond Education: Self and the imaginary in Maxine Greene’s philosophy*. New York: Peter Lang
- Boughton, D., Freedman, K., Hausman, J., Hicks, L., Madeja, S., Metcalf, S. Rayala, M., Smith-Shank, D.L., Stankiewicz, M.A., Stuhr, P. , Tavin, K. and Vallance, E. (2002). *Visual Culture Advisory*. NAEA: Reston, VA: The NAEA.
- Burgess, L. (2010). Learning as a social practice in art and design. In Addison, A., Burgess, L, Steers, J and Trowell, J., (eds.), *Understanding Art Education. Engaging Reflexivity with Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Breunig, M. (2005). Turning Experiential Education and Critical Pedagogy .Theory into Praxis. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 28(2), 106-122.
- Bowers, C.A. (1993). *Education, cultural myths and ecological crisis*. Albany NY: State University Press.
- Casey, E. (1997). *The fate of place: A philosophical history*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Casey, E. (1996). How to get from space to place in a fairly short stretch of time. In K. Basso & S. Feld (eds.), *Senses of place* (pp. 13-52). Sante Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Chambers, I. (2008). *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of Interrupted Modernity*. Durham NC: Duke University Press
- Clement, R.W. (2012). The Mediterranean: What, Why and How. *Mediterranean Studies*, 20(1), 114-120.
- Cresswell, T. (2009). *Place*. Philadelphia PA: Elsevier.
- Costa, K. (2010). *Roots to routes*. Nicosia: Aegean
- Costa, K. (2009). *Presence in Absence*. Nicosia: Diatopos
- Costa, K. (2011). *United States of Europe* (November 14). Retrieved from <http://www.gou-use.eu/en/artists/kyriaki-costa.html>
- Derrida, J. (1995). *On the name*. Stanford University Press. Stanford CA.

- Derrida, J., Eisenman, P., Kipnis, S., Leiser, T. & Rizzi, R. (1997). Transcript One, In Kipnis, J. & Leiser, T. (eds) *Chora L Works: Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman*. New York: Monacelli, 7-32.
- Doll, W. (1993). *A post-modern perspective on curriculum*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Emig, R. (1995). *Modernism in Poetry: Motivations, Structures and Limits*. London: Longman
- Freire, P. (1995). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum (Original work published in 1970).
- Freedman, K. (2003). *Teaching Visual Culture: Curriculum, Aesthetics and the Social Life of Art*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Freire, P & Macedo, D. (1987). *Literacy: Reading the word and the world*. Westport, CT: Bergin and Gasrvey.
- Gablik, S. (1991). *The reenchantment of Art*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Gradle, J. (2004). *Balance: Art and Nature*. New York: Black Rose.
- Graham, M. (2007). Art, Ecology and Art Education. Locating Art Education in a Critical Place based Pedagogy. *Studies in Art Education*, 48(4), p. 375-301
- Greene, M. (1993). Reflections on postmodernism and education. *Educational Policy*, 7(2), 106-111.
- Geertz, C. (1996). Afterword. In S. Feld & K. Basso (eds.), *Senses of Place*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Gregoriou, Z. (2005). Debating cultural heritage and borders in “the island for all seasons”/ Reclaiming transculturation. *ACTAS del VII Congreso cultura Europea*. Pamplona, 26-9, Oct. Univesidad de Narvana Centro de estudios Europeos.
- Greenwood, A.D. (2008). A critical pedagogy of place: from gridlock to parallax. *Environmental Education Research* 14(3), 336-248.
- Gruenewald, D.A. (2003). Foundations of place: A multidisciplinary framework for place-conscious education. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(3), 619-654.
- Gruenewald, D.A. (2004). The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place. *Educational Researcher*, 32(4),. 3-12.
- Hicks, L.E & King, R.J.H. (2007). Confronting Environmental Collapse: Visual Culture, Art Education and Environmental Responsibility. *Studies in Art Education*, 48(4), 332-345.
- Judson, G. (2006). Curriculum spaces: Situating Educational Research, Theory and Practice. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 40(3), 229-245.
- Kamler, B. (2001). *Relocating the personal. A critical writing pedagogy*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Kymäläinen, P. (2003). Topologies of Becoming: Deferred Presences in Writing. *Space and Culture*, 6, 235-248.
- Kessler, R. (2000). *The soul of Education*. Alexandria, VA: Atlantic Books.
- Kymäläinen, P & Lehtinen, A. A. (2010). Chora in current geographical thought: Places of co-design and re-membering. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 92(3), 251-261
- Lai, A. & Ball, E. L. (2002). Home is where arc is: Exploring the places people live through art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 44(1), 47-66.
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lukerman, F.(1961). The concept of location in classical geography. *Annals of the Association of Classical Geographers* 51(2), 194-210.
- Leopold, A. (1966). *A Sand County Almanac: With essays on conservation from Round River*. Oxford University Press.
- Malpas, J.E. (2004). *Place and Experience. A Philosophical Topography*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of perception*. New York: Humanities Press.
- Ministry of Education and Culture (2010). Analytika Programmata gia ta Demosia Sholia tis Kipriakis Demodratias. *National Curriculum for Cyprus Public Schools*. Nicosia: Ministry of Education and Culture.
- Mongeli, A.; Scardigno, F. and Merico, M. (2012). The Mediterranean: A Challenge for the Sociology of Education. *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education*, 2, 120-130.

- Morris, N.J. & Cant, S.G. (2006). Engaging with place: artists, site specificity and the Hebden Bridge Sculpture Trail. *Social and Cultural Geography*, 7(6), 863-888.
- Neperud, RW & King, H.K. (1995). People who make things: Aesthetics from the ground up. In R.W Neperud (ed.), *Context, content and community in art education: Beyond postmodernism*. New York: Teachers College Press, 141-168.
- Oaceshott, M. (1993). *Experience and its modes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Olsson, G. (1991). *Lines of power/Limits of Language*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Olwig, K.R. (2006). Global Ground Zero: Landscape and nothingness, in Terkenli, T.S. and Hauteserre, A.M (eds), *Landscapes of a New Cultural Economy of Space*. Netherlands, Dordrecht: Springer.
- Pace, M. (2005). Conclusion: Cultural Democracy in Euro-Mediterranean Relations? *Mediterranean Politics* 10(3), 427-437.
- Plato, (1975). *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. IX. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rim, A. (2009). Unity and Diversity in Euro-Mediterranean Identities: Euro-european and Arabo-Mediterranean Dimensions. *Proceedings of the first Emuni research Souk: Unity and Diversity in the Euro-Mediterranean*. Center EMUNI, Sončna pot 20, SI-6320 Portorož, 178-200.
- Rolph, E. (2000). Geographical Experiences and being-in-the-world: The phenomenological origins of geography. In D Seamon & R Mugerauer (eds.). *Dwelling, place and environment: Towards a phenomenology of person and world*. Malabar, FL: Krieger
- Riley-Taylor, E. (2002). Ecology, spirituality and education. Vol 201. *Studies in the Postmodern Theory of Education*. New York: Peter Lang
- Savva, A; Trimis, E & Zachariou, A. (2004). Exploring the Links Between Visual Arts and Environmental Education: Experiences of Teachers Participating in an In-service Training Programme. *International Journal of Art & Design*, 23(3), 246-255.
- Sullivan, G. (2003). Art Based Art Education: Learning That is Meaningful, Authentic, Critical and Pluralist. *Studies in Art Education*, 35(1), p. 5-21.
- Smith-Shank, D. (1993). Semiotic Pedagogy and Art Education. *Studies in Art Education*, 36(4), 233-241.
- Sobel, P. (2004). *Place-based education: Connecting classrooms and communities*. Barrington, MA: The Orion Society.
- Soja, E. & Hooper, B. (1993). The spaces that difference makes: Some notes on the geographical margins of the new cultural politics. In M. Keith & S. Pile (eds.), *Place and the Politics of Identify*. New York: Routledge, 183-205.
- Soja, E.W. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other Real and Imagined Places*. Blackwell, Malden, MA.
- Trimis, E. (2004). *Cultural and Aesthetic Education: A curriculum programme for second chance schools*. IDEKE, Institute of Continues Adult Education: Ministry of National Education and Religion (Greece).
- Tuan, Y-F. (1974). *Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective*. *Progress in Geography*, 6, 211-252.
- The Mediterranean Approach*. (2011). A project by art for world. Venice, Palazzo Zenobio. Retrieved from <http://www.artforthe world net>.
- Webster, C. & Dallen, T. (2006). Travelling to the other side: The occupied zone and Greek Cypriot Views of Crossing the Green Line. *Tourism Geographies: An International Journal of Tourism, Space, Place and Environment*, 162-181.
- Vygotsky, L. (1986). *Thought & Language*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.