Guest Author

Invitation from the Amazon: The Quest for Sustainable Good Living

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Introduction

In 2015, the Brazilian Network of Arteducators (ABRA), won a national award from the Brazilian Ministry of Education to develop the first Forum of Good Life, in the Brazilian Amazon.

ABRA had already developed and carried out in 2010 the VII IDEA World Congress (International Drama/Theatre & Education Association) in Belém, capital of the northern State of Pará, in the Brazilian Amazon and contributed to developing the area (and then pedagogy) of Culture in the World Social Forum since 2001. Then from 2009, it supported the development of the Pan-Amazonian Social Forum and participated in the co-founding and chairing of the World Alliance for Arts Education, since 2006. Increasingly mindful of the critical need to demonstrate the pri-

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mary importance of 'living community culture' to all sustainable and democratic social transformation, of the grave destruction of the Amazon, and of working through sustainable 'intimate' processes, rather than massively through events, in 2014, ABRA chose the anonymous city of Marabá, location of the largest deposits of iron-ore and gold in the world, in Pará state, location of the world's largest aquifer of drinking water, to mount an intervention, to prevent the construction of a hydroelectric plant.

ABRA was to spend another 2 years evolving its methodology of its Good Life Forum. In the year of corrupt political-juridical-media processes that led to the impeachment of re-elected President Dilma Rousseff in August 2016, the forum funds were continuously delayed and threatened, and the original date of execution was delayed from November 2016 to June 2017, to coincide with World Earth Day. In November 2016, when the funds were suddenly released, ABRA reset its dates to 28 July-04 August 2017, and its *Invitation from the Amazon* was sent to 40 partners and their partners, to extend a network of confidence.

During 2017, political assassinations and urban violence in the region increased, creating the populist will for military repression, and then all state education teachers in Marabá lost 50% of their salaries, suffering brutal physical police repression in the City Council when questioning the proposed austerity policy. ABRA held its nerve, but rescheduled to 31 August – 04 September, to ensure the forum occur during the new school-university semester so that teachers could have a vacation break and participate in the forum. The forum culminated on September 5, World Amazon Day.

Invitation from the Amazon is published here in its original form to document this key history and ABRA's response to it. Perhaps the most notable, the period from sending out the invitation to realizing the forum, is the continuous quest to name the arts-based, eco-pedagogic forum, to accompany a logo conceived to symbolize diversity, openness and the reintegration of the natural and social. After the Invitation was emailed, its title changed from 'Forum of Good Life' to 'Good Life Forum'. This subtle change of use of the pre-capitalist indigenous, contemporary post-capitalist 'Americas' concept reveals the perception of the difference between an experiential-practiced rather than debate-about pedagogy. In Portuguese *(Fórum Bem Viver)*, this shift from noun to adjective is perhaps more evident than in English, but the website was changed. 'Good Life' was changed to 'Good Living' after the forum, to give the concept a verbal resonance. This is still to be altered in the website at the time of writing, but is already documented in the first *Reflections* that follow the forum, an interview included at the end of this 'article.' *Reflections* is accompanied by images from the forum itself.

Invitation from the Amazon

Let's Re-Imagine?

Greetings from the *Rivers of Meeting* project, in the Afro- Indigenous community of Cabelo Seco, Marabá city, Pará, between the Itacaiúnas and Tocantins Riv-

ers. We belong to the Brazilian Network of Arteducators (ABRA). Together we are organizing *Rivers of Creativity:* cultural action for life, which includes 'Future Now!' (exchange of projects, February-July 2017); 'Worldwide Wave' (solidarity action with the Amazon, 27-30 May 2017); and 'Forum of Good-Life' (2-5 June 2017). We invite you to re-imagine the future and collaborate, at home and even here in the Amazon!

Figure 1. logo – Cultural Action for Life.

Why?

It has rained here only once in the last 9 months. Tributaries are drying. We live respiratory crises every day. This is already impacting on you, as the *invisible river in the sky* created by the Amazon's forests, generates water for the world and regulates every ecosystem on the planet.

In Paris, December 2015, 177 countries promised to try to hold *global warming* to 1.5C above pre- industrial levels, until 2030. That limit has already almost been reached. Yet 29 hydroelectric plants are planned for the Amazon alone, by 2030. The scientific community knows we are sprinting towards ecocide. Why does it not speak out more? Would it provoke a tsunami of global panic? Rivers of Creativity is more than an invitation. It is a call for us to act together, in time!

One hour from Marabá, 40 kilometres of huge rocks protect the River Tocantins. The Lourenção Rocks will be dynamited in June 2018 to deepen the river, to ship timber, beef, GM-soya and steel from the largest mining project in the world, powered by Belo Monte and Tucuruí Hydroelectric Plants, and by the planned Marabá Plant. Can we intervene to change this future?

Marabá's population of 240,000 is governed by extreme social inequality and absence of human rights and justice, sustained by a drug-regulated civil war and the worst state high-school education in the country. We live above the largest deposit of iron-ore in the world. The current multinational exploitation will strengthen the corrupt, unelected elite that has just taken power in Brazil.

Figure 2. Cultural action to protect the River Tocantins, filmed and posted!

In these circumstances, what acts of solidarity and partnership will inspire Marabá's poor to look beyond survival and risk choosing hope? In times of systemic collapse, what act of solidarity will touch the powerful in the Pan-Amazon region and the 'developed' world to look beyond power and risk choosing life for all? Can we transform the impossible into the everyday?

Three Objectives to Re-imagine the Future

We want to popularize already existing mature projects throughout the world. And we want to begin 12 international partnerships here in the region, around Marabá, in 2017-18. In this way, we will demonstrate sustainable ECOnomic development and inspire Marabá as an intelligent city of Good Life, entirely sustained by solar energy by 2022.

If Marabá, supported by the world, chooses good life over the socio-environmental tragedies of hydroelectric power, and protects the vital, renewing global power of the Amazon, it might turn itself into a symbol of global popular will.

Figure 3. Logo for ABRA – the Brazilian Association of Arteducators.

ABRA was founded in 2004 and was a Co-founder of the Latin America Network of Living Community Culture, Pan-Amazon Social Forum and World Alliance for Arts Education. Creator of IDEA 2010 World Congress, Belém, Pará.

How Will We Do This?

We have already created a platform to popularize exemplary projects throughout the world. Now, to transform a pessimistic future into an open horizon of hope, active questioning children take centre stage!

Worldwide Wave

We want to generate a *glocal wave* of solidarity for the Amazon. Between 29-30 May, cultural actions in solidarity with the River Tocantins and all the waters and forests on the planet, co-organized with young people for children, will be posted as 30-60 second clips on Facebook, on 01 June, World Day of the Environment, and connected on our platform, generating waves of hope and proposals for the future.

Forum of Good Life

This wave of solidarity will launch an arts-rich forum in Marabá, 31 August-03 September, on a boat on the River Tocantins, exchanges between 12 international and 12 local partners that are already creating projects (in education, health, economics, leisure or security), powered by solar energy.

Network of Resources

In this way, you (here or from a distance) and communities in this region can participate in a symbolic action (worldwide wave), a collaborative project (forum), or exchange of resources (network), so that the Southeast of Pará can reimagine itself and contribute to the evolution of good life cities, free from the devastating exploitation by megaprojects.

Timetable of Participation

Identify and invite networks and projects to participate in Rivers of Creativity
Send links/emails of projects about the future, relevant to Rivers of Creativity

February - May 2017
From 05 June 2017 (World Environment Day)
Participate in the Worldwide Wave of Solidarity and post clips, poems, music, songs, fotos etc (hashtag #RiosDeCriatividade).

28 July - 04 August 2017
Participate in the Forum of Well-being
in Marabá or from a distance (sending clips, poems, songs, stories, etc: hashtag #RiosDeCriatividade Detailed program in construction
.
Join us and the Federal University of South and Southeast Pará in this vital project, funded by the Ministries of Culture and of Education of 2015.

If you are interested in participating, please fill-in the formula on our site: *http://riversofcreativity.com*

Thanks for your interest

Dan Baron Cohen, President of ABRA

Reflections on the Good Living Forum

• Number of participants
The month of circles and workshops pre-forum ensured that the 50 guests of the forum directly reached more than 5,000 people from five generations, in Marabá, São João do Araguaia, Tauari (Itupiranga) and Belém, and hundreds of thousands of people through the media.

• Number of participating countries
The Good Living Forum has inspired parallel actions and virtual contributions in solidarity institutions in 42 countries. In the forum, participants attended from Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, USA, Wales, England,

• Main organizations
AESSPA, CEPAGRO, CNE, GAETE, Instituto Casa Común, Grupo Xama Teatro, Federal University of Pará, Federal University of Paraiba, FotoActive Institute, Polis Institute, International Rivers, Instituto Somos, Instituto Sobreação, Movement of Affected by Dams (MAB), River Madeira Vivo, River Itacaiúnas Basin, River Vivo Xingu, River Tapajós Vivo, MST (Landless Peasants Movement), Health and Happiness Network, Teatro Piollin

• Organizers
Instituto Transformance / Rios de Encontro; ABRA (Brazilian Network of Arteducadores)

• Partners
Ministry of Education (2015), Unifesspa (Federal University of the South and SouthEast of Pará), UEPA, Military Police of Pará

• Event dates
Forum (31 August to 5 September 2017)

• Other relevant information
Pre Forum (June 30 to August 30, 2017)

What is the main legacy of the 1st Good Living Forum and the impacts for the future of Brazil and the world?

The Forum had two main objectives, activist and nurturing. The activist objective was to idealize and execute a collective and innovative cultural intervention to prevent the construction of the Marabá hydroelectric power plant (UHM) and the industrial mega-project of the mining water-highway. The nurturing objective was, and continues to be, to cultivate a methodology capable of fostering a network of good living, of alternative projects, powered by solar energy. The two objectives are interconnected, extend beyond the Amazonian territory and rely on the help of global solidarity to carry out an intervention here in the Amazon.

One of the legacies of the forum was the awareness of some fifty activists about the emergency realities in Amazonia - south and southeast of Pará State. By joining the collective experience to nurture intervention nuclei in Tauari and São João do Araguaia (which both carried out a Good Living Festivals in December 2017), the forum also deepened the trust of its members in an 'artistic-ecocultural' pedagogy both as a political intervention and as an eco-pedagogic methodology that can be applied in the nurturing of community projects and participatory democracy. After so many decades of authoritarian and exhausting forums that have produced the inevitable and unrealistic 'collective charters' written by a few in the name of the "people," the main legacy is perhaps the hope that an indigenous-contemporary, flexible paradigm already exists to cultivate inclusive and participatory democracy.

Tell us a little about the project to make Marabá a reference in living well

We invited a diversity of coordinators to participate in the forum in 'caravan format' as a pilot experimental action that brought all sectors of civil society around a paradigmatic project. The experience was socialized here in Marabá City, in the southeastern region of Pará, and in social networks, confirming the motivating force of this methodology in popular communities. From this pilot experience, we are now launching 'good living' micro-forums, symposia, festivals and collabora-

tions in Marabá to inspire international collaborations focused on the redefinition of Marabá. In practice, our main objective is to acquire 40,000 solar panels by the end of 2019, to supply viable alternative projects. Thus, we hope that Marabá will re-imagine itself as a good living city, becoming an inspiring example of sustainable life in the Amazon, the Americas and the world.

What are the strategies for influencing public power for sustainability at a time when the federal government is seeking to increase the commercial mineral exploitation of the Amazon?

Public power here in general is corrupt and has bought by the elite of the predatory paradigm, resulting in the "contamination" of institutions and even social movements. The renewal or transformation of public power implies the emergence of building a new cooperative paradigm of good living, rooted in the creation of ethical and co-responsible communities.

We are developing all of this with some key strategies: to practice good living instead of talking about it; use all artistic languages to stimulate multiple human experiences; integrating "opponents" or "unlikely" protagonists to practice and symbolize the paradigm of good living; and to use these processes and public policies to live well to cultivate participatory democracy and thus to replace failing representative democracy.

At the same time, we are informing regional parliaments, networks of international professionals, NGOs and major governments (in particular in Europe, Africa and the Pacific Ocean) about the catastrophic socio-environmental effects of deregulated industrialization and commercialization of the Amazon and the impact on the violation of rights in the region, which violate United Nations treaties and agreements. We are also studying and advocating an international 'good living tax' to leave minerals in situ in the Amazon, to keep this biome of "flying rivers" intact, and to promote the use of clean and renewable energies, particularly solar energy, in everyday life, not only in the industrial and commercial sectors.

How do the Forum's proposed actions help in improving the life of the local population in favor of social justice?

They help by promoting understanding of the meaning of the Amazon's vulnerability and by informing about the need to incorporate environmental care into the preservation and development of the region. Without this care and its socio-economic implications, no social justice will occur or can be sustained.

Links

facebook.com/redeabra.br
riosdeencontro.wordpress.com
redeabra.org.br/idea2010/english