

**Performing the soul of our WAAE paradigm project
on the thresholds (*in flames*)
between the industrial and information ages...**

What was it that made the WAAE Joint Declaration so focussed, resonant and powerful at the UNESCO 2006 world conference of arts education, in Lisbon? Why did it send self-confident excitement and hope rippling out from arts educators and policy-makers to marginalized practitioners throughout the world?

Did my unscheduled song and brief workshop contribute? *Policy-makers must live art education*, we had agreed but as the conference opening ceremony approached collective doubt set in: *just read the declaration, Dan. Please turn to the person seated beside you, I guided and answer the question: when did art first enter your life?*

A seemingly eternal, tense silence followed my direction. I began to doubt. I picked up the Joint Declaration... And suddenly, an explosion of five thousand dialogues! UNESCO's meticulously-planned opening ceremony had been transformed from formal public monologue into the intimate confidence of a workshop dialogue!

Was it the pedagogical clarity of our bold language? I still have Doug's annotated original academic version that Gary and I transformed into the early hours to affirm our decades of experimental preparation and relevant paradigm project to humanize a world of acute, endemic violence and no horizon!

Was it our tone of newly-declared political leadership that prompted a dawn phone-call from UNESCO? *We need a closed, pre-breakfast meeting, urgently to replace your verb "challenge"¹ with "request".* Even a pioneer arts educator present pressurized us *Let's change that verb*, I replied, *when our dialogue begins.*

¹We challenge UNESCO to fulfill the responsibilities of its founding mandate by joining us to make arts education central to a world agenda for sustainable human development and social transformation. (Joint Declaration, 2006)

But what was it, in how we implemented that Declaration during a global financial crash and neo-liberal austerity that inspired the desire, confidence and political trust in the governments of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Britain to pledge USD 100,000 each to guarantee equality of gender, race, generation and region at our first three world summits?

What processes accelerated the time to build the confidence to give up formal, institutional, arts-specific powerpoints and join intimate, story-based, mixed-arts circles and transform uncertain dialogue between an experimental World Alliance and formal UNESCO diplomats and ministerial advisers into a transparent partnership and second world conference?

Within the Alliance summits, we chose tested arts pedagogies that enabled us to hear the diverse voices and contexts within ourselves and within our own organizations and to turn outwards, to stop speaking just to ourselves to develop the skills to explain an education paradigm project of cooperation and sustainable development, for all.

We invited military commanders, bankers and entrepreneurs to question our evidence and challenge our claims. We invited industrialists and statisticians to our summits and with UNESCO, jointly coordinated a 2^o world conference supported by a new generation of arts education activists, creative policy-makers, dialogic leaders of the new paradigm.

But who in 2006 could have anticipated that behind a critique of corrupt elites and their expensive international institutions, the oligarchs of free-trade competition, their banks in crisis would manipulate emerging technological convergence² to elect charismatic populist presidents to privatize education, industrialize culture and market creativity, to mine ocean beds in the name of consumer democracy and homeland security?

Who in 2010 could have imagined that in the 'war' to control a lethal pandemic, and in the 'battle' for health and safety, artificial intelligence and biotechnology would be used to mine

² In a visionary agenda in the aftermath of the World War II, UNESCO recognized the unique role that arts education can play in the creation of a culture of peace, international understanding, social cohesion and sustainable development. However, at that time, few could have anticipated the socio-cultural needs that would be generated by the accelerated technological change during the intervening decades; and today few can imagine the impact and challenges of technological convergence in the immediate future. (Joint Declaration, 2006)

our needs, desires and fears, at home, at school and at work
turning us into self-consuming partners of surveillance capitalism
refugees inside our homes, locked-down within our own subjectivity
unwilling traders of our freedom and rights, for virus-free isolation?

*I trust the new generation of arteducador activists from Hong Kong
China, the Amazon and every region of the world are best prepared
to perform their responses to these unprecedented challenges
in the quest for a paradigm of cooperation and sustainable futures.*

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