Introduction

How does the pressure of global culture affect to children's culture? Have the artistic expressions of children and adolescents changed as a result of the global visual culture? Does this influence of the media, video games, brands, consumer culture can be observed in distant places, with different local cultural contexts?

As we were deeply interested in these subjects, in 2008 we began a research project entitled "Culture and identity in the children's art in Madrid, Japan and Taiwan". The project
itself was conceived within the group EMIPE (Interdisciplinary Team for the Improvement of Educational Practice), from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of the UAM (Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain). Several members of this group, belonging to the Department of Plastic and Visual Arts Education intended to investigate the children and adolescents’ drawing in cultural contexts long distance away from each other in order to test the impact of global visual culture in child and youth culture\(^1\).

We wondered about the meanings depicted in drawings of children from different cultural backgrounds, what type they are, how often they appear, etc. We also wanted to know about the practice, methodology and curriculum of Art Education in different cultural contexts, the kind of procedures that it uses, etc. In short, we wanted to know in which way those (cultural, curricular) does determines the children’s artworks in each cultural environment. The objectives that we intended were: 1. To demonstrate the importance of children’s drawings for visualizing cultural concepts, 2. To achieve a deeper understanding of the children depiction of oneself and their self-local culture in primary and junior high school, 3. To compare the children's artworks from different cultural backgrounds, looking for differences in the formal, stylistic and procedural features that could be attributed to specific cultural context, 4. To determine the presence and frequency of depictions related to the global visual culture as well to the local cultures.

The project has been accomplished with the addition of teachers and researchers from Japan and Taiwan. The contacts established with the professors of the Faculty of Human Development, University of Toyama (Japan), the Kibi International University Junior College, Okayama (Japan) and the National University of Sciences and Technology, Yun Tech, Douliu (Taiwan), co-authors of this text, allowed us to make the data collection for this research as well as to pay attention to different cultural (global and local) issues.

METHODOLOGY

The project had been developed with a first phase of data collection and analysis of drawings, and we have tried to obtain the data from different sources with the purpose of triangulation. The data collection included also, in addition to schoolchildren’s drawings, pictures and videos from the visual environment of schools (interior and exterior architecture, decoration), curriculum materials, and goods of global visual culture collected in each country.

---

\(^1\) The Project entitled “Culture and Identity in Children’s Drawings in Madrid and Japan” had been supported from the Madrid’s Autonomous Region and University Autonoma of Madrid, Ref. CCG07-UAM/HUM-1705/07
For the data collection stage, in order to collect on the spot drawings of children aged 9-12 years (last year of primary) and adolescents aged 13-15 years (junior high school), a Spanish team's member traveled to the following cities in Japan and Taiwan: Toyama (North-middle of Japan, 500,000 inhabitants), Okayama prefecture (West-middle of Japan, 2,000,000 inhabitants), and Taichung (North-middle of Taiwan, 1,000,000 inhabitants). Accompanied by our colleagues from Japan and Taiwan, Dr. Romero visited 13 classrooms in 10 schools. The task was completed recently with the visit to Madrid by Professor Sumi (University of Toyama), when we have collected drawings from Primary and Secondary schools in two schools and 3 classrooms. Children and adolescent were asked to make a drawing according to the following questions:

- **Me in my favorite place doing what I love to do** (hobby, leisure)
- **Poetry’s illustration.** Students were encouraged to illustrate, choosing between different poems from Machado (Spain, XX century), Ryokan (Japan, XIX century), Hujiwara (Japan, XII century), and ??(Chinese).
- **I do introduce myself to a friend from overseas.**

In total, we have achieved 1762 drawings done by 545 children and adolescents from the three countries.

The drawings collected has been analyzed by methodologies based on visual content analysis and visual discourse analysis (Rose, 2001; Van Leew, T. and Jewitt, C., 2004). We have tried a triangulation of findings through on-site interviews with teachers and local teachers and with colleagues in each university in Spain, Japan and Taiwan.

Subsequent revisions of the children's drawings from Japan, Taiwan and Spain help us to find, on one hand, traces of global visual culture, and on the other hand, traces of local culture. Our research does point out that some proposals indirectly promote "remakes" of traditional local styles and representations of culture, meanwhile other’s does facilitate depictions of topics and styles that clearly show the pressure of global visual culture.

<Kids depict a globalized life in a globalized world. Globalization, Consumption and Leisure in Teenagers’ Drawings>

---

2 Mail Art project still in progress.

3 The children made two poem’s illustration: one from their own culture and one from another culture. The amount of collected drawings (1762) do not match exactly with the number of schoolchildren (545) because some of them made more than three drawings.
Global culture, as we appreciate, involves all those meanings, concepts and productions
developed by the hegemonic culture, which are shared by several countries. Its massive
distribution is facilitated throughout the mass media, especially the iconic way (Sanz,
Romero, 2010). In this global culture, images have an important place as an ideal vehicle
for the transmission of meaning. Within this global culture there is a wide place for
children's popular culture, transmitted and distributed through television, films, toys, video
games, magazines and a variety of related merchandise. Commercial and advertisements
plays the main role in the rise of global kinderculture, strongly related to consumption.
Thus, children from different countries share a common iconography on global culture, but
with changeable adaptations to their local culture.

Our proposal, "Me in my favorite place, doing that I love to do" was conceived to show how
the pressure of global visual culture is obvious in the every day’s live of adolescents. But
also it allowed us to realize the main options of leisure of schoolchildren in the three
different cultural contexts (Sanz and Romero, 2009).

Figure 2: Spanish teenagers (13-14 years old female gender) depict their leisure: shopping

Many adults, responsible for the education of adolescents, are concerned about the
increase of consumption as an expensive kind of leisure for youth people. The culture of
leisure consumption has become a global culture linked to the industry, brands, and
international companies. There are, therefore, categories and consumer entertainment
icons that are similar in different countries far away each other. The students are defining
their identity in the context of the global consumer entertainment, which is combined with
elements of local culture. Cultural spaces where we have been researching: Spain, Japan
and Taiwan have in common the developed economy and consumption, while they keep some of their traditional cultural characteristics.

Figure 3: Japanese (left and middle) and Spanish teenagers (right), male-gender (13-14 years old), depicts their leisure: video-games

The analysis of these drawings were made attending to the following criteria: 1. They were valuable representations of the stages or places where leisure took place (*my favorite place*) and 2. The kind of activities displayed in it (*doing what I love to do*).

In the graphic poll drawing’s, the children and adolescent showed a wide variety of recreational spaces. The spaces where the entertainment is displayed determine the quality and type of it. The spaces are important in order to develop the personal and cultural identity. People need special places, special sites where they could feel attached for, as these sites allows the well-being and personal growth within the urban layout (Spencer and Woolley, 2000). In the culture of entertainment related to consumption, between these special places for children and youth (as we refers before), there are shopping centers, theme parks and amusement parks and other "non-places" (Augé, 2005). The city and its surroundings offer new identity spaces where is difficult to distinguish public from private: commercial spaces, private spaces for public use, etc (Benach, 2000).

Around the 45% of graphic poll drawing’s represents entertainment in public spaces ("open air, field, park"^4," urban, street, etc.", "sports fields", "cultural endowments"^5). Public leisure

---

^4 The text in inverted commas is related to categories for content analysis.

^5 About local differences, we point out that categories related to “open air” and “urban, street” are chosen more frequently in Spain (29,8% y 4,47%, respectively) and Taiwan (23,2% y 1,7% respectively), maybe as a result of weather condition when drawings where made.
spaces of consumption ("theme parks", "amusement parks" and "shopping malls restaurants") are represented only in 6.4% of cases. The private sphere, domestic ("living room", "other rooms" and "bedroom") is the choice for leisure in 31.8% of cases.

Figure 4: Taiwanese teenagers (14 years old) depict their leisure: computer; but they choose an outdoor place too (see the apple logo on the lap of the girl sitting at open air).

Regarding the activities chosen as favorites, the non-consumptive leisure ("free play indoors," "free play outside", "going out with friends", "going for a walk", "artistic or cultural activities", "sports competition" and "entertainment culture") were depicted in 55.5% of the drawings. That means a greater percentage comparing with consumer leisure activities ("shopping centre", "restaurants", " playing video console and PC"," theme parks", etc.) represented in 28.5% of the drawings.

Other categories appeared attached to the imagination and creativity of their authors, but not about preferences for leisure or for elements of local or global culture, which we have grouped as "imagination" ("going to the moon", "being a fairy", "training dinosaurs", etc.). Another category to point out in this survey, surprisingly in the three countries, was "sleeping in my room."

In spite of the belief according to teenagers as spending too much time watching television, just only 1% of the drawings in this sample, they choose to represent themselves watching TV. Why? Is there some kind of "self-censorship"? Or perhaps, so to speak, is watching TV another daily routine for them?

In our research, we do notice that leisure consumption appears under-depicted in the drawings collected, both in relation to the spaces as to the favorite activities. Nevertheless, spaces and activities suitable for personal and creative development are much more frequently chosen. This fact contradicts the usual belief that appreciates the youth’s leisure as revolving around the consumer entertainment, television and video games and occupying entirely their free time. We could conclude that children and adolescents do
not perceive their leisure according to our beliefs, or at least, they don’t depict it in this way.

Figure 5: Taiwanese teenagers depict their leisure: drawing, music. Topic: *Me in my favorite place doing what I love to do*

<Localism, Tradition and heritage in teenager's drawings>

The drawings based on poetry illustration (Spanish, Japanese and Chinese traditional poems), frequently showed features linked to cultural heritage and traditional styles, but also attached to global visual culture.

We grouped both options (traditional style and visual culture) in two categories: *style* (coming from comic’s visual codes -mainly manga-, videogames, traditional pictorial models…) and *topic* (characters from movies and video games, famous singers, self-portraits playing with game consoles, shopping malls, scenes of festivities and traditions, local representations of the natural environment and its seasonal changes, etc.).

Figure 6: Japanese teenagers depict seasonal changes to illustrate a Japanese poem
Thus, in the poetry illustrations appear localism related to the following:

- Natural environment (e.g. red maple leaf for autumn’s depiction, insects related to season, snow, specific types of plants, etc.)
- Traditions (e.g. red sun in Japan, pipes made of bamboo, the shape of ships or buildings, customs, games, festivals, etc.)
- Depiction’s style and procedures throughout traditional references (e.g. mountains, rivers, clouds)

Figure 7: Mountains depicted by Taiwanese (12-13 years old) and Spanish (11 years old) teenagers, left and right respectively. First drawing shows a clear reference related to tradition. First depict a Chinese poetry and second, a Japanese poem.

In poetry illustration we also notice some globalism related to:

- Goods of global culture (e.g. clothes, toys, devices, and a variety of consumption stuff)
- Depiction’s style (manga and comic’s conventions, illustrations of story books for kids, etc.).

Figure 8: Spanish (left) and Taiwanese (right) teenagers using manga to illustrate a Spanish poem.
We must to pay attention to the fact that in the illustrated poems, our young artists resort to traditional imagery in a greater percentage than the global one, and both references sometimes appears in the same drawings together. Generally their artworks prove the children and adolescent’s knowledge of traditions and local culture, as they usually depict festivals, customs and beliefs.

<Conclusions>

The global visual culture is strongly established in everywhere, as a result of the cultural globalization, as a dubious legacy of the economic, political and social development of our time. The school system cannot ignore this reality; it should not take the option of censure the visual culture’s traces because there is another setting, much more powerful than schools: the mass media, where it will display freely its power over the current culture. We should encourage children and teenagers to use the current resources and procedures, these that match up with the global visual culture ones (styles, cartoon characters or video games, etc.). This would make Art Education the pedagogical setting to build creative people and to enable critical distance, that will provide tools for thinking, appreciating, proposing alternatives, changing, and finally, improving the world.

How could art education contribute to a better world? According to our regard, we must to balance the role of the hegemonic visual culture with the local cultural heritage when teaching young people. In that direction, there are art education strategies that promote the use, the recovery and flowering of their own visual elements of traditional culture, and besides, it promotes the depiction of physical or natural environment and local traditions.

Therefore, as Art Educators, we can contribute to preserve the richness of cultural traditions, as well as to manage in a critical way the assimilation of global culture. As Art Educators, we could conceive methodologies and class practices in order to empower student’s development of their individual and collective identities in a changing, globalized and crosscultural world.
References:


