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Dias & Riedweg: "I like life"

– second knowledge in the borderland between art and politics

"Second knowledge" is a term touching multiple dimensions, referring to various ways of contradicting, challenging or complementing established knowledge and the habitual ways of producing knowledge. It is also variable in the sense that it is defined in relation; what is seen as "second" knowledge from one position may be seen as "first" knowledge from another. Seen from the centre of power, that which is at the periphery or off-centre is "secondary" and *vice versa*, this not being an equal relationship. In one way or another, second knowledge refers to something that is secondary, subordinate to the first one. What our dreams reveal is forgotten in our daytime activities and given a subordinate role. What adults speak is primary and what children speak is secondary. The same may also be true in relationships between men and women (the "second" gender), and between experts and citizens or clients. The relationship between first and second knowledge has also undergone dramatic changes in the course of history. The Enlightenment placed the ideal of objective knowledge in the first position. In post-modern societies, market, technologies and natural sciences are in competition as to whose view of the world will attain the first position.

"Second knowledge" can be understood as a complementary and even corrective alternative to the "official knowledge" of strong institutions, particularly as far as the situations of socially disadvantaged people are concerned. "Official knowledge about social disadvantage is general rather than detailed, artificial rather than based on experience, cross-sectional rather than localised, self-evident rather than ambiguous." The aim is to analyse the scope for other kinds of knowledge and knowledge production as a challenge to official knowledge and as complementary to it. (Hänninen *et al.* 2004).

In my article, I approach "second knowledge" from the field of art. I will describe the art projects that Maurício Dias from Brazil and Walter Riedweg from Switzerland have carried out mainly with population groups living in the shadow of the majority population, such as street children, asylum seekers, immigrants, night watchmen and male prostitutes. The artist duo have implemented projects both in their homelands and many other countries around the world. In Finland, their exhibition *Possibly talking about the same* was presented at Kiasma, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki, from 30 October 2004 to 16 January 2005.¹

My curiosity was aroused by my very first meeting with their work. They explore relationships between the individual and the community in an unconventional way, unfolding life from near and also from beyond the customary. In their works, they examine *relationships between the private and public* by opening spaces and providing tools for people to give accounts of their everyday lives, history, living conditions and dreams. Encountering people and at the same time listening to them has given rise to stories that are presented in images, mostly as video installations. A more thorough study of Dias & Riedweg's art is demanding. The themes of their works are surprising and multi-dimensional, presenting concrete here-and-now situations that discuss with philosophy, science and art, and especially politics. I do not intend² to give any exhaustive description of their art, but to analyse it from the perspectives of "other ways of knowing".

1. Way of being in the world

Dias & Riedweg's works do not relate to reality in an arbitrary way, but the relationship is well-thought-out, and has its own history. A precondition of other ways of knowing is obviously that one has *an awareness of where one is and from where one wants to depart*.

In addition, in order to be able to take a new direction, it is necessary to find response to one's own thoughts that may still be quite obscure. If actors do not make clear their points of departure and their way of being in the world at least to some extent, is doing things otherwise on the whole possible? Is it possible to do anything with awareness and devotion unless one knows one's own place in the world? Kieslowski (Stock 1994) told his students to look at their own life very carefully, not in order to make movies of their life but to know why they make them. The same applies to other professions as well, say for example teachers (see Sava 2004).

Maurício Dias was born in a middle-class family as an almost white Brazilian Indian. He was sent to different schools. He graduated from the Fine Arts School of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro in 1986. Like many of his generation, he left Brazil in search of the "beyond", and picked grapes in France, oranges in Italy and olives in Greece. In Basel, he again took up art studies, trying to find his own approach to art. He worked with cows in the Alps, and liked it. He got meningitis, and that helped him realise what he wanted to do. Walter Riedweg, in turn, grew up as the second youngest of five brothers in a farmer family. He explains that he grew up slowly and was obstinate enough to resist becoming everything that was planned for him. After having graduated as a teacher, he studied at Musik-Akademie Luzern and later at a theatre school in Italy. Later, he directed theatre plays and concerts in several countries. When he returned to Switzerland, he met Maurício. Both of them wanted to do something new. Since 1993 they have together been implementing public art projects. (Dias & Riedweg, 2003, 247, see also Rolnik 2003, 216).

They moved away from institutions, their work cutting across different art forms. They started to work with people who were not professional artists or audiences of official art forms. Working together, they have been able to make use of their professional skills in fine arts, music and drama. This "*out and beyond*" approach moved their art to a new path, resulting in their own peculiar way of being in the world and making art, which could perhaps be described as a politics of knowledge and skills. Underlying their work is also their *particular conception of being human* (to which I will return below) and of *developments in society*.

They have a critical attitude towards the prevailing mania for simplification. As pointed out by them, the trend in the media and education and in civilization as a whole is towards instant classifications and summaries; instant knowledge and interpretations are used to domesticate phenomena in order to make them understandable. And yet: "*nothing is finished, nothing is equal*", as emphasised by Dias & Riedweg, citing the key idea of Milton Santos.³ The world is not finished but *permanently unfinished*, and it is neither the same for everyone nor equal (see Sennett 2004). Among other things, being unfinished means *choice and alternatives*, whatever those in power like to assert. There is a long-standing tradition of using knowledge to govern people; "**we lose a lot of sensitivity for fear of being ignorant**", they say (26 Oct. 2004).

They want to move on the ground of *complexity*, enabling life to be "restored" without simplifying reality. Phenomena are complex, and everybody as an individual is a complex being. All their works centre on a *social tension*, which they make visible in collaboration with each target group. What is important for them is to pinpoint complexity, tensions and contradictions, and to make the different levels of complexity more observable. Of importance is also seeing that there is not necessarily a sense or meaning to everything.

Dias & Riedweg do not want to produce works of art for public consumption, being disgusted with the consumption-oriented relationship to life and art. Life is not consumption and performance; the world is unfinished and complex, and has a *history*. Their works make reference to history, as a background to the work and its themes. Accordingly, reference can be made to an ancient story known in major religions of how sacrificing children to the gods came to be replaced by sacrificing animals; to the myth of Romulus and Remus; or to some civilisation-bearing icon, such as Venice. The works dealing with asylum seekers, immigrants and low-income workers make you think of the similarities between economic globalisation and earlier colonialism; "**what happened in**

history is happening again under different names and with new forms", they say (25 Oct. 2004)

2. Loosen control and say "Yes!" to life

Dias & Riedweg's way of being in the world and making art can be put in three small words: "I like life"⁴ (25 Oct. 2004). Liking life is brought to the fore in place of consuming, presenting, controlling or even understanding life. It is not important to live a correct life in the controlled rhythm of short-lived slogans. The artists want to help life emerge from obscurity; through their art, they act as some kind of midwives in creating situations where people are able to explore the past, present and future in their lives. They want to get to grips with reality, and to live inside phenomena, in the heart of the complexity of life.

Pier Paolo Pasolini⁵ has praised the vitality arising from his love of reality when describing his relationship to the cinema. He calls this somewhat irrational love of reality the "underground root" of his attitude. The cinema became a personal ideology for him as movie making brought him amongst people and objects in the midst of life itself. Pasolini's way of being in the world took him towards reality, not away from it. You can say "Yes!" to life, and join the creative harvest festival as Nietzsche's Zarathustra did.⁶

Dias & Riedweg's relationship to reality also makes me think of the philosophy of Michel Serres (1994), perhaps the artist duo's soul mate from the earlier generation, however different their fields of action are. Serres speaks about our alliance with nature as the "nature contract". We need to contain our urge to control ourselves. This containment is demanding in a fundamental way as it means *giving up the pressure of taking into possession and a militant relationship to reality*. The idea of the "nature contract" is to make understandable the absolute interweaving of nature and culture, says Serres, who has described himself as a sailor, mathematician and poet.⁷ He believes that *we cannot enjoy knowledge or feel comfortable within it if we do not look for answers to questions about our origins*, such as "who am I" and "where do I come from", and look at our own life in the light of the millennium tradition of history. What is of prime importance to us is an understanding of human limitations, moderation in material pleasures, reciprocity and the enjoyment of the endless possibilities of spiritual life, suggests Serres. In other words, to protect life and let it unfold.

But should not liking life be something that comes naturally and thus effortlessly! Dias & Riedweg's philosophy and works also make known that nurturing a love of life demands special skills. They say that *poetry and eroticism* can be found everywhere, independent of economic conditions (Dias & Riedweg 2003, 15).⁸ It is important to create spaces that make the body "speak", that encourage creative generosity and that call forth poetry and eroticism, that is, spaces that are conducive to expressing and perceiving poetry and eroticism and narrating them.

The artists say that in their work they aim *"not to be too sure but to be sure"*, that is, to capture the simultaneity of fragility and certainty. Certainty is needed with regard to what one intends to do, but it is also necessary to be open towards it in order to be able to hear and see the other and to be ready to changes that mean giving up the original certainty. Speaking with certainty "it is such" creates unreal compulsion "such it should be" (Drewermann 2000, 97), as a result of which the alternative options opened up by the unfinished nature of the world may be closed. The title of Dias & Riedweg's exhibition, *Possibly talking about the same*⁹, also suggests that there is no certainty. It seems to say that the people who participated in completing the works and the audience of the exhibition may meet each other at some point, whereas it does not say that this is what is going to happen or even what should happen, although it is hopeful about that.

In Dias & Riedweg's art, liking life means an attempt to capture the different aspects of life, however rough, complicated, difficult and even intolerable they are. In order to make social tensions really visible, a *fundamental conflict* should be reached. The stories told by male prostitutes (*Maximum voracity*, 2003) explore tensions created by money, power and desire in the complex relationship between economy and sexuality in prostitution.

The artists want to display tensions and conflicts "*without coming to any calming conclusions, without easing off restlessness, while avoiding banality and control*" (26 Oct. 2004). The works simultaneously display *concentrated presence*, joy, desire, warmth and trust. This combination opens up a creative relationship to the world with a criticism that is not so much unaggressive as non-contradicting, and with a humanism that is neither protective nor evasive but shows dignity and respect. How, then, can this be achieved?

3. Evidence provided by the senses through experience – and the creation of situations

"*The Other begins where our senses meet the world*" (Dias & Riedweg 2003, 15).

This sentence concerns everyone, on equal terms. It offers a solution to the thorny question: which was first, I or the Other? (cf. Levinas 1996). Both were first and at the same time. For both, the Other begins where the senses meet the world. No doubt the sentence is an important key to the artists' philosophy and art. However, it is not readily understandable on the sensorial-intellectual level. Is it not ultimately so that I and the Other are "islands" of their own, more or less distant from each other? The sentence becomes less intangible when Dias & Riedweg define the focus of their works: It is relationships where there is the Other and I in a given time and place. *Inevitably, the relationship is always both social and subjective*, and the artists' focus of interest is the interlinking *passage*. (In other words, there are bridges, boats and ferries between the "islands", and it is also possible to swim.) The inseparable simultaneity of the subjective and the social means that there is no social without the subjective,¹⁰ and perhaps also *vice versa*.

With the interlinking passage between the social and the subjective they emphasise the significance of all senses.¹¹ The human body is the place and medium of interaction. They remind that "*we have seven openings in our head*",¹² and the flow is inwards and outwards, here and now. It should be no news that we have five senses. However, it makes you think. To see, hear, smell, taste and touch, and to be seen, touched and heard – without the constant pressures of organising, collecting, packing, having a say, presenting, showing, changing and developing: to like life.

It is within the passage between the social and the subjective that the Other is defined, through the seven openings in our head. "*The ways in which we define one another's singularity are complex and under tension*", they say. Naming takes place as a constantly changing resonance (Dias & Riedweg 2003, 15). They create a "*poetic field*", and in their every work they create a tool kit that allows each theme to be explored in such a way that singularity, estrangement and otherness can be approached in new ways and analysed both micro- and macropolitically. In the process of making a map of reality, the Other is approached by sensory perceptions, thus making the Other a subject (see Rolnik 2003, 217–218).

In the creation of the poetic field, they use, for instance, *sensorial workshops* aimed at making the senses more perceptive in order to call up memories, ideas and observations to make a dialogue possible. In the workshops, objects important to the participants are looked at or prepared, and stories can be attached to them. The artists also use "staged encounters"¹³ where the theme of the work is dealt with as if on stage, and others are then met in this consciously prepared set-up. The degree of staging varies between the works, and the thematic workshops also form part of it. A poetic field is not concerned with presentation or disclosure of the self or evaluation of others. It enables themes that the target group finds significant to be dealt with dialogically and creatively.

In a poetic field, each person's specific worldview may become questionable. And in that field it is interesting to listen to the Other. The dignity of every person is based, among other things, on the fact that only he/she sees the world as he/she does. And therefore it is interesting to hear. To be heard, to say something, to attain a presence in life, an individual needs to find him/herself in a position in which the flows between inner/outer and outer/inner are ensured. Without this, existence stagnates (Dias & Riedweg 2003, 15). To put the mind into motion, to hear and to be heard.

"Oh God! I'm so nervous. I've never been able to think about one thing at a time and now these two strange artists are asking me loads of things and expecting me to answer them, one at a time. They are so strange. They are paying the same as my clients, but they don't want what everyone wants. They only want me to tell them things. I want to tell them a lot, but I am afraid to talk about myself. *They are not normal* clients. (emphasis by the author) They are not normal hustlers. I don't know what they are, but I want to talk to them. --- They have asked me to wear a mask with the face of one of them on it, the face of the one who talks to me. --- I don't know what this all means, but I understand that what they are looking for is something like what I am trying to look for without even being able to name it. --- Maybe that's why I trust them.--- Within these mirrors and this mask I don't recognise myself anymore, and so I can tell the truth. They say they are making art. I don't know what that is, but they are kind and talk to me in a different way, which makes me think that I have known them since a long time ago on the Island. But Barcelona is not Santo Domingo. --- they seem to know what they are doing. --- The other one asks me things, one after the other, so slowly that I end up saying things that I never thought, but I will be able to think from now on. --- while all the others with whom I spend my days force me to forget who I am, this guy politely asks me to remember it... Antonin (Maximum voracity, Dias & Riedweg 2003, 185–188)

Meetings with the Other, the strange and the different are at the core of the works. The prostitute finds the artist duo a strange visitor, not normal, in the same way as the customer officers, prisoners or street children. But the same is true the other way round. The people of these worlds represent the Other and strangeness to the artists, and they need to step over a threshold into a strange world. Although it is the artists that take the initiative, the strangeness of the people in their works puts the artists in the same position; for all of them the Other begins where the senses meet the world. In order to spur dialogue between the inhabitants of the safe and the unsafe world, Dias and Riedweg have given careful consideration to their *method and strategy*.

The artists acquaint themselves with the target group's everyday life and living conditions by living with them and gathering information about their situation from statistics and research. On this basis, they create a concept that helps specify the theme and find the right tools. After the elaboration of the theme, work is started on a manuscript, and people, places, materials and tools are chosen. Strategies are developed for interaction with the group in order to create spaces that favour the sharing of experiences, such as a series of workshops or staged encounters. Further, strategies for communication with people outside the work are planned specifically for carefully defined groups, such as the art audience and a wider and more diverse public. (Rolnik 2003, 217–218). The work has a *clear structure that is also open*.

4. Ethical principles

The projects are based on various processes. Some are more planned when they are implemented, while others are given shape by the participants. All projects are based on negotiations with the participants. "There's a lot of talk of democracy but after all it's basically realised in relationships between people, which may be shifting and variable". (26 Oct. 2004).

Dias & Riedweg's art is concerned with interaction and relationships, displaying the dialogue taking place therein. The artists describe their works as processes where a group of people come closer to one another and where reactions to meetings and their outcomes are stored as individual and/or societal stories and images. Themselves they describe as *translators, organisers of meetings, and story carriers* who move the story to other places, to other audiences.

They want to create a field of action where meanings and state of things can be continuously revised; the unfinished nature of things offers plenty of alternatives. They are

interested in hearing of the periphery, so an issue of particular concern is to avoid both *stereotypes and indoctrination*. To overcome stereotypes, tools from the poetic field become necessary. When individual statements and feelings are allowed to emerge from a subjective basis, there will be no stereotypes. The subjective-social field is always related to place, locally and globally, although the relation varies with distance and proximity, inner and outer.

Meetings with the Other bring together aesthetics and ethics. Polemic follows poetry and art and makes the singularity of each individual visible. The works create an action field that makes it possible to investigate how private psychologies affect public space, and *vice versa*. (Dias & Riedweg 2003, 15). It is necessary to take off uniforms and rituals—with regard to speech as well as dress—in order to reveal the complex, interesting personality. Speaking without forethought often obscures things, reproducing what is already known and what has already been said. Then it may be better not to speak at all but to make use of some other means of expression instead. "People have courage to start working with us though we've nothing else to offer than reflection; they find it interesting and are ready to come along" (26 Oct. 2004). When the circumstances are favourable, people are willing to hear and be heard, even in new ways and to their own surprise.

The ethical principles of Dias & Riedweg's art include two strong denials. They strongly emphasise that their work is not concerned with *speaking for others*, or giving a voice to others or representing them. The works do not aim to describe the reality of other people in any comprehensive way. They describe and give an account of *things that matter for each target group* (26 Oct. 2004). These denials can be understood as respect for the singularity of each human being, the diversity of reality, the unfinished nature of the world and the loosening of control. It can, of course, also be seen as the definition of their basic mission, and as a wise self-protection strategy. It is not indifference or neutrality. They concentrate on showing what an aesthetical meeting with the social gives rise to, taking into consideration that their poetry is deeply political.

"Our work does not aim to judge, classify, teach, cure, improve or even change anything in the Other's life." (Dias & Riedweg 2003, 15). Who is able to change even themselves!? The artists want to create a space where the unique personalities of the participants can be brought out. In this way, the artists, participants and audience are given access to other kinds of knowledge. If we want to change something, it is something in ourselves and in our audience, they say. The aim is to provide the audience with viewpoints that media constructions usually fail to reveal. Each one of us is constantly interacting with others, amidst the hum and throb of life, taking no heed of political correctness. In other words, allowing life to unfold.

5. The politics of relationships – in the subjective social

In the artists' works, one shifts from one world to another, with a humble curiosity that allows life to speak, and to be seen and heard. All the works¹⁴ tell us about people, their relationships and activities. They show people concentrating on a specific theme so that they have a strong presence in the images and speech while at the same time they seem to have forgotten themselves, working on the theme without self-presentation, without making themselves important. Moving from one world to another, one is able to wonder at and admire the diverse intensity and mysteriousness of life, with reflections on one's own place in the world. One is able to think of one's own stereotypes and the ways in which the picture of a stranger and the Other is formed. Below I will describe their works in a few flashes although words alone are not enough to conjure up this world of images, stories, movements and voices.

The exhibition at Kiasma showed bodiliness – its sensorial aspects and movement – at the intersection between the private and public. One possible way to go through the exhibition was "from mouth to mouth". In the first space, there was a whispering installation *My name on your lips* (2000), which brought one close to the human body and skin: close-ups

are shown of people's mouths, lips, teeth, pores, one after another, while the lips slowly whisper the names of those these people have slept with. *Intimacy is anonymous*, everybody but nobody in particular is present. The second section of the installation displays a sea of bed sheets consisting of sheets which the participants have brought with them and on which they have lolled, made love and slept. The sheets have been washed, dried and folded in different homes. The last section shows human faces half-asleep, combined with the sound of messages left in answering machines about encounters, cancelled appointments and conflicts.

At the other end of the exhibition *God's lips* (2002) were speaking, the mouths of power and reassurance (priest, judges, politicians, rock singers), stupefied or enchanted people listening to them in their fervent desire to believe in something. As one of the openings of the human head, the mouth is a means of the basic act of receiving, of receptive desiring, and of expressing the self, and can be used effectively in many ways in both the intimate and the public sphere. Sound is a central element in both works, in the form of a meditating silence in the first, and a mad hubbub in the second. Even the public humming is confusing in its anonymous intimacy. It bustles with desire and hope, promises and demands, redemption and judgment...

Nearness and distance are repeated through the different versions of the work (David 2003). A project carried out with 30 doormen or janitors working in Sao Paulo¹⁵ aimed to explore how people coming from the poor North-Eastern Brazil to a metropolis in the south live with the city and how the city lives with them in the context of "ethnic cannibalism". Memories from the home area live strong. "My father wouldn't let us study --- When I came to Sao Paulo, my father sold an entire truckload of beans to buy this radio. --- That's 32 years ago. Do you think it won't talk...? It talked, see? And it talks even louder now. Do you want to hear?" The men from the north-east are physically close to, but socially distant from the residents whom they serve. "The doorman has to like the tenants, everyone, equally and without distinction. I do my best to please everyone. .. --- I do what the tenants want." Ethnic conflicts are not always visible, but nearly always difficult. In Brazilian metropolises, the borders are more clearly defined by social classes than by geography, Dias & Riedweg say (2003, 69–75).

The physical proximity and the social distance are even more shockingly interweaved in the work *Maximum voracity* (2003), where 11 male prostitutes, *chaperos*, give accounts of their life and work. They are illegal immigrants from different parts of poor countries, such as Brazil, Cuba and Columbia, and form part of the global immigration flows.

The interviews take place in dressing gowns in a *sauna* room. In the exhibition, the images are reflected as mirror images on opposite walls, over the whole area of the walls. To protect privacy, the interviewees carry a mask with the interviewer's face on it, and the artists, who wear no masks, alternate as the interviewer. The interviewer is physically close to the interviewee, and guides the discussion in a relaxed manner. The discussion goes on in a peaceful, trusting atmosphere, meditating. Mirrors and two persons in dressing gowns, the other wearing a mask with the other's face, in images larger than the size of human beings ... intermittently the camera takes close-ups of different types of skin – hairy, smooth, light, dark – and of the body which the interviewees sell for their living. The staging of the situation makes it abstract. The audience is invited to come near, and at the same time kept at an appropriate distance.

The *chaperos* tell about their homelands, family and the place that they left and why they left it. They tell about their choices and everyday life, and their views about life and sexuality. The stories have features in common, such as an escape from misery. At the same time they are unique and personal, created on a subjective basis. Some find prostitution unpleasant, others engage in it with willingness and joy, still others find it pleasant to be able to meet different kinds of people, without trying to avoid mixed feelings. They describe their clients, well-to-do men older than them, the power of desire, and the use of power. This gives insight into both groups, the prostitutes and those who buy their services. Accordingly, there are two groups of people "present", each one living a double

life in the entanglement of sexuality, emotions and money. Social tensions and conflicts rise from the entangled relationship between sexuality and economy. Prohibiting prostitution, making it legal or illegal is not a simple question of morality, and the artists ask why a male prostitute should look for a poorly paid job? (Dias & Riedweg 2003, 170).¹⁶

The work *Beautiful is also that which is unseen* (2002) challenges the assumed supremacy of the eye in perception. Beautiful is not only that which is pleasant to the sense of sight.¹⁷ In a series of sensorial workshops, blind people made exercises to stimulate memory and imagination. The aim was to create possibilities to make visible ways in which blind people see and perceive a space. On the video, blind people describe the colours of different smells and scents, without difficulty. The visitor listens spellbound what the mirror means to them. "My hands are the mirror". Or if there is no mirror around, "I can imagine it". For some, the hand tells if the hair is well. To see one's own image, one "only has to close the eyes". The blind swivels round in front of the mirror to check if he/she looks alright, "I need it to know how I look like".

The work also includes a massive chest of drawers containing a high-relief map of a Brazilian region. It originates from "The Imperial Institute of Blind Boys" from one and a half century ago. Beside it, in a wall-size video image, a blind woman in a gorgeous dress reads, in Braille, texts by the blind writers Homer and Borges, sitting on the red carpet of the steps of the National Library in Rio de Janeiro. The visitor hears a subdued voice and sees the moving fingers and the text that the woman is reading. In the same space, blind people play football on video. Information is produced and the beautiful is shown by a touch, a movement, the nose and the ear ...

6. It is always possible to hear

The work *Devotionalia* (1994 - 2003) consists of casts of feet and hands. It is perhaps the most explicitly political work of Dias & Riedweg (2003, 18–33). They went around with a mobile studio in the slums of Rio de Janeiro, with more than 600 street children participating in the project. All of them made a wax, clay or plaster cast of their feet and hand, and attached *a personal wish* or message to the cast. The preparation of ex-votos is based on an old Catholic tradition. An ex-voto, which can be bought from a religious items shop, is a copy of a body part, such as the heart, made of plastic or other material to represent a pain or complaint. It is offered to God, praying for healing. Street children often carry a protective amulet, so the votive tradition was familiar to them. In the case of street children, copies were made of feet (that are for running) and hands (that are for grasping things). *They were not taken to a church, for God, but to a public space, an art museum, for society*, as it is the state that is responsible for street children. Their simplicity and anatomical shapes, and the huge number of them were impressive, even in photos. More than 3000 guests participated in the opening of the first exhibition, half of them slum inhabitants who were visiting a museum for the first time.

In addition to the castings, the installation allowed the visitor to listen to and see children and young people narrating how they ended up living in the streets, how they cope, how they live their everyday life and what kind of dreams they have. One of them wanted to be an alligator, the other wanted to get friends. Or that mum had a job and a house so that he could live with her. Somebody wanted to become a sailor, so that he could not be found. Quite a lot of them wanted to get a bike. Some wanted to become a secretary. One youth wanted to become an artist, thinking that art is what one does with one's heart, and a museum makes it possible to see so many different worlds. The children and young people are subjects in image and narrative. The *camera* does not just rush past or gaze blind, it *lives with the children* on the street. The artists listen to and make specifying questions, and they are present. The visitor sees people with different personalities, living faces that are sad, grinning, brave, alive, evasive, depressed ... This aesthetic encounter with the social, showing the singularity of each person, gives rise to a compelling criticism. For these children, as well as for those of mine, yours and the rest of the art audience, the Other begins where their senses meet the world.

The children knew from the very beginning that what they were doing would become public. The project became popular among both street children and the adults working with them.¹⁸ Social workers and civic activists are heard in the work. The artists do not come out with demands or programmes, but give space to these people who are devoted to their work and whose firmly-held views of how the situation could be improved are based on experience. The project also included a video conference with politicians, human rights lawyers, etc., and the street children were also invited to participate. The Federal Government granted some aid, which, however, was suspended later on. The street children's ex-votos ("feet and hands" and wishes) were moved into a store. In 2003, the artists traced the children who had participated in the project. Over a period of eight years, about half of the children had died; they had been killed or died in some other way.¹⁹ Those who were still alive told the artists what had happened to their friends.

While it may be difficult to change the circumstances, *it is always possible to hear*, Dias & Riedweg say (26 Oct. 2004). The sentence may sound laconic. However, its strength lies in the notion that one can change the world by hearing.

7. Other ways of knowing in meeting the social through poetry

That it is always possible to hear is a heavy claim, especially where meetings with the strange and unfamiliar are concerned. Such meetings are particularly difficult. Who is good at it? Or able to sustain it for long? That one hears the Other and avoids the trap of simplification, fear or naivety. Hearing takes place through the self in relation to others. It means never-ending work on one's way of being in the world so as to protect oneself against the dissimilarity and strangeness of the Other.²⁰ A loosening of control helps towards life, but in a controlled manner. The ways in which Dias & Riedweg move on the interfaces between the safe and the unsafe world constitute a structure that is well considered yet open to uncertainty, enabling us to hear and have a bold attitude to phenomena around us. *Respect* is shown in interaction.

In the following, I will deal with the notion of "second knowledge" with the welfare policy implications of the artist duo's work as my point of departure and Richard Sennett's work *Respect in a World of Inequality* (2004) as a bridge. *A lack of respect* will result when a great number of people are treated in society in such a way that they are not seen as human beings whose "presence matters", says Sennett. He believes that the lack of respect people experience in social welfare is due to the fact that they have ended up as consumers of assistance and outsiders in matters concerning their own needs. Drawing on the history of social work, Sennett identifies two different ways of looking at the Other and the unfamiliar, namely that of a Catholic nun and that of a socialist.

The socialist represents the characteristics of democratic social work, underlining objectivity, keeping to the background, using professional jargon, and aiming at collaboration. Reserve may be an indication of respect, recognising how difficult it is to cross the gap of inequality. At the same time, the verbal contact remains thin, and the interaction is characterised by silence, caution and the fear of insulting the other. The embarrassment of the privileged may lead to a chain of emotional states that blocks interaction. Especially as the social honour of the person in the client's role may be so fragile that it has to be re-affirmed daily. *The nun*, in turn, represents hierarchical social work characterised by the naming of problems, the personal nature of care, and determined counselling and guidance, with the authority of motherliness or fatherliness. In this case, one is not afraid of knowing and acting on behalf of others. The privileged does not need to feel embarrassed as all are equal before God. The capacity of compassion to wound, the controversial motives and consequences of generosity and charity, the puzzling entanglements of compassion and solidarity form each part of the history of social work, in the same way as evasiveness is part of democratic practices.²¹

As stressed by Sennett, respect consists of expression and action, and requires expressive events through which *the innermost is touched*. Being touched as such does not involve justice, truth or goodness, but creates power and movement that enable these

things to be pondered upon. Where changes have undermined safety, to rebuild that safety requires a special kind of interaction that allows paralysing group images to be called into question and broken, and each party's underlying forms of tacit knowledge to be scrutinised, says Sennett. To avoid becoming stale calls for a shift from tacit to explicit knowledge – and back, and here stories are our only hope (*op. cit.* 223–227). Sennett is not overambitious but points out the endless task of seeking to recognise reciprocity and to experience, act or behave on equal terms in a world of inequality.

Dias & Riedweg's works open up new approaches midway between the nun and the socialist, with neither evasiveness nor authority, but pointing towards the spaciousness of the poetic field. What if development (whatever it may be) bubbles with possibilities when the senses and all doors of thinking are open. Welfare policy, teaching, rehabilitation or social work cannot be seen as the making of art. However, they require skill and other ways of knowing. Knowledge derived from a relationship that values sensorial qualities and experience could be conceived of as the "first" one, considering that it precedes the classification of phenomena and the objectification of knowledge and its generalisation and detachment from its origins. In our civilisation, it is regarded as inadequate and undervalued, and therefore ranked as "second" knowledge.

An important element of Dias & Riedweg's way of knowing differently is that they see the subjective and the social to be inextricably interwoven, through the senses, in the constant flow inwards and outwards. This introduces a subject into the social. It contests conventional categories that keep external conditions and the workings of the mind apart from each other. Their works are not determined by the boundaries of sectors of government or the dividing lines of art and science. They are characterised by an attempt to cope with concretes things, that is, working with several different things that have grown together. People are approached as acting, feeling individuals who use their senses and have their desires in all circumstances. And this always occurs in relation to place, social relationships, and conflicts within them. The creation of the poetic field is necessary in order for the things that matter to groups of people to be made visible in their complexity and significance. This is done without simplification and in a personal manner, presenting intimacy anonymously, interwoven in the social.

Dias & Riedweg's works can be seen as free spaces or open places (*agoras*) between the public and private. Free spaces are necessary for meeting people and creating new things. In post-modern societies, people have an intense yearning and need for such spaces. Bauman (2002), for instance, has strongly stressed the importance of free space in order for people to be able to share their joys and sorrows, and in order for life politics and politics to meet each other.

In Dias & Riedweg's art, developing the concept of each work requires careful background work and close interaction with the target group. Their tool kit includes some tried-and-tested methods, such as sensorial workshops. The basic principles and methods can be applied in different situations. However, what happens after that is not reproducible as it arises in each specific situation from the singular relationships between people that cannot be anticipated or reproduced. Neither is this the aim, which is rather to offer new, varying vantage points for observing the diverse forms of reality while at the same time participating in it and creating it. Accordingly, it is also necessary to move the "horizon of expectations"²² in order to avoid stereotypes, simplification and unifying classifications.

The other ways of knowing presented in Dias & Riedweg's works offer a critical counter-image to "official" knowledge, also regarded as the "first" – and at the same time provides complementary and corrective alternatives. A typical feature of first knowledge is the notion of its generalisability and transferability. The present dominant ways of producing knowledge have their origins in the market economy and the natural sciences. When this way of knowing penetrates all areas of life as all-pervasive norms, the ambition to control the world by measuring turns into a tyranny that is independent of place, has no body, spirit or subject, and is asocial. This kind of knowledge is not capable of showing the way towards life.

The positivist view of knowledge disregards the biggest part of life, or yields distorted knowledge, as the tool kit is not able to reach the core of phenomena. Even public welfare services are managed using information collected with the logic of the market, although such information remains aloof from why the services are produced, why we need them and what is happening within them. The significance of evidence-based knowledge obtained using experimental designs²³ is not reduced even if it is not applied in every area of knowledge. If we recognise that all knowledge is ideological,²⁴ the dividing lines between the first and second knowledge would perhaps be less marked. Knowledge cannot be theorised in terms of rationality only, as it is fundamentally related to pleasure, desire and different conceptions of being human, as well as different ways of being in the world. Basically, ways of producing knowledge are ideological choices.

It is quite possible that the omnipotence of the ideal of objective knowledge will be challenged in post-modern societies, if not immediately, then later on – and art will be restored as part of practical and social activities in communities (see Shusterman 2001).²⁵ To outline the future, Sennett (2004) looks for musical metaphors, and Bauman (2002) turns to poetry for insight. "Poetry is perhaps the only way to express something real without compulsion".²⁶ Meeting the social through poetry²⁷ reveals the possibilities for regenerating civilisation; our approach to reality becomes less militant and our love of life gets stronger, at least, one hopes so.

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¹ I thank Maurício Dias and Walter Riedweg for the inspiring exhibition and the accounts they gave of their work during a public lecture at the Academy of Fine Arts on 25 October 2004, and an interview on 26 October 2004. The press conference and opening of the exhibition on 29 October 2004 allowed me to follow their presentation of their work. Later on, I visited the exhibition several times in order to study the works. I thank Maaretta Jaukkuri (Kiasma) for familiarising me with the art of Dias & Riedweg, and Kati T. Kivinen (Kiasma) for making it possible for me to interview the artists. I am also grateful to Sakari Hänninen for commenting on my work in detail.

² One of Dias & Riedweg's works is called *This is not Egypt*, emphasising that the work does not intend to represent Egypt, but to express the perception of two Westerners. Similarly, I emphasise that this text does not intend to represent Dias & Riedweg's art but to give a Finnish researcher's account of it.

³ The citation is from Milton Santos' most recent work, which I have not been able to get. One of his earlier works, *Diveded Space* from 1978, explores the relationships between the geographical centre and the periphery in economic and social (under)development, putting the emphasis on the fierceness of social change in the periphery, and the importance of knowing the coping strategies that emerge in that context.

⁴ Walter Riedweg on 25 October when lecturing at the Academy of Fine Arts.

⁵ **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**

⁶ Nietzsche 1995, 27.

⁷ Vähämäki 1994, 7.

⁸ They believed that this argument would provoke discussion among sociologists while they also regarded it as an important consideration with regard to second knowledge (the interview on 26 Oct. 2004).

⁹ *Possibly talking about the same* at Museu d'Art Contemporani in Barcelona, from 20 November 2003 to 1 February 2004. The exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Kiasma, Finland, was based on the works presented in Barcelona, in addition to which the artists implemented the work *Throw!* together with Finns. Throwing as a basic movement. The work dealt with civic activism, and it was located on the glass wall at the back of Kiasma, facing the Finnish Parliament.

¹⁰ In general, when speaking of the social, there is no subject, but the social and the subjective are in a way regarded as separate spheres.

¹¹ Marita Muukkonen (2004, 19) has put the same idea as follows: For if we do not use all our senses, we amputate ourselves from each other and the world." Then there will be no promise of "the experience of *canto jondo*, the 'deep song' that Lorca hailed".

¹² Maurício Dias in the interview of 26 Oct. 2004. During their art studies, both artists learned to study and work with the human body, as is typical of modern art.

¹³ Kaitavuori 2004. 2-5.

¹⁴ Here, as is often the case in modern art, a more profound insight can be gained into the works with the aid of the written descriptions.

¹⁵ In Os Raimundos, os Severinos a os Fransiscos (1998). Dias & Riedweg 2003, 68 - 77.

¹⁶ The artists have described this work in more detail and written an analysis of it, see Dias & Riedweg 2003, 167-208. The analysis also includes excerpts from the interviewees' narration and pictures.

¹⁷ Dias & Riedweg 2003, 140-147.

¹⁸ The artist duo toured Europe with the exhibition, and local children and adults at their workshops sent messages concerning the street children's works. They brought these messages with them back to Rio and continued their work with the street children.

¹⁹ Rolnik 2003, 227.

²⁰ see e.g. Kristeva 1992 and Irigaray 1996.

²¹ Sennett 2004, e.g. 132–137.

²² Jauss (1990) uses the term to refer to the trinity formed by the author, the work and the audience in determining the amount of esteem enjoyed by a specific work in the relationships of aesthetics and history. He underlines that works of art are not monuments that would reveal "monologisesti ajattoman olemuksensa yksiäänisesti".

²³ see Leiman (2004); the assessment of the outcomes of psychotherapy is difficult and ambiguous due to the fact that evidence based methods are not able to capture the interactive processes that nevertheless affect therapy outcomes significantly.

²⁴ see McLaren 1997, 45.

²⁵ In recent years, a wide range of culture- and art-based development and research projects have been implemented in various different ways. These have been referred to as community art, socio-cultural activities, applied artistic activities and formation of creative communities. See e.g. Cleveland 1992, Common Threads 2003, Liikanen 2003, Sava *et al.* 2004, Bardy *et al.* 2005.

²⁶ Drewermann 2000, 97.

²⁷ David (2003, 9) stresses that Dias & Riedweg's works are not pseudocritical art that strengthens social or political clichés by aesthetic means, or art that is used for social purposes to quieten or discipline people. Rolnik (2003, 244) says that Dias & Riedweg's art acts as a vaccine against a virus that separates the subjective from the body and the body from its political and artistic potential.