



REVISTA DE ESTUDOS EM ARTES CÊNICAS
E-ISSN 2358.6958

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Para citar este artigo:

SILVEIRA, Juliana Carvalho Franco da; FIALHO, Vinicius Macena Santiago. *Global Water Dances in Viçosa/MG: dance and environmental activism*. **Urdimento** – Revista de Estudos em Artes Cênicas, Florianópolis, v. 3, n. 48, set. 2023.

 DOI: 10.5965/1414573103482023e0207In

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Global Water Dances in Viçosa/MG: dance and environmental activism¹²

Juliana Carvalho Franco da Silveira³
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Abstract

This research aimed to analyze the impacts of the actions of an extension⁵ project in dance whose proposal was to participate in the international event *Global Water Dances* 2021 – involving participants in the planning process, rehearsals, production, and presentation –, to raise awareness and sensitize about the importance of water for the preservation of life. Dance was approached in this context as an articulator of the body-environment relationship and in its political character, in the sense of enabling the opening to new social configurations. Based on the analysis of the impacts of the project's actions, dance was recognized as an epistemology that enabled awareness and social mobilization, as well as the construction of a sense of community.

Keywords: *Global Water Dances*. Dance. Water. Environmental preservation. Collaborative work.

¹ Spelling and grammar revision of the translated article by Bernardo Yukyo Takayama Colli – Teaching degree in Linguistics and Literature from the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF).


² This research was awarded a grant from the Institutional Scientific Initiation Scholarship Program (PIBIC/CNPq) of the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV), from 2020 to 2021. The extension project, which was the object of study in this research, received financial support of the GWD 2021 Site Impact Fund provided by Global Water Dances and by the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies.

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⁵ Extension in Brazilian higher education involves extracurricular activity, which is an interdisciplinary process that promotes transformative interaction between higher education institutions and other sectors of society, through the production and application of knowledge, in permanent articulation with teaching and research (Ministério da Educação, 2018)

Global Water Dances em Viçosa/MG: dança e ativismo ambiental

Resumo

Esta pesquisa teve como objetivo analisar os impactos das ações de um projeto de extensão em dança, cuja proposta foi participar do evento internacional *Global Water Dances* 2021 – envolvendo os participantes no processo de planejamento, ensaios, produção e apresentação –, no intuito de conscientizar e sensibilizar sobre a importância da água para a preservação da vida. A dança foi abordada nesse contexto como articuladora da relação corpo-ambiente e em seu caráter político, no sentido de possibilitar abertura para novas configurações sociais. A partir da análise dos impactos das ações do projeto, a dança foi reconhecida como uma epistemologia que possibilitou sensibilização e mobilização social, assim como a construção de um sentido de comunidade.

Palavras-chave: *Global Water Dances*. Dança. Água. Preservação ambiental. Trabalho colaborativo.

Global Water Dances en Viçosa/MG: danza y activismo ambiental

Resumen

Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar los impactos de las acciones de un proyecto de extensión en danza cuya propuesta fue participar en el evento internacional *Global Water Dances* 2021 – involucrando a los participantes en el proceso de planificación, ensayos, producción y presentación –, con el fin de sensibilizar y sensibilizar sobre la importancia del agua para la preservación de la vida. La danza fue abordada en este contexto como articuladora de la relación cuerpo-ambiente y en su carácter político, en el sentido de posibilitar la apertura a nuevas configuraciones sociales. A partir del análisis de los impactos de las acciones del proyecto, la danza fue reconocida como una epistemología que posibilitó la sensibilización y movilización social, así como la construcción de un sentido de comunidad.

Palabras clave: *Global Water Dances*. Danza. Agua. Preservación del medio ambiente. Trabajo colaborativo.



Introduction

Global Water Dances (GWD) is an international event that connects and supports dancers and choreographers from different countries to conduct a global collaborative action around water-related issues. Its mission is to unite local and global communities through interpersonal relationships and to create and develop bonds through dance. Participation is open to anyone interested in moving (GWD website)⁶.

The international event, held in 2021, took place in four parts:

Section I. Ritual: An opening, specific to each site.

Section II. Local Dance: It is open to the choreographer's creativity. You can use locally-based music, and use a local water issue as a theme for your dance.

Section III. Global Dance: Simultaneous choreography done by all the performers worldwide to the same piece of music, connecting participants and audience globally. [...]

Section IV. Participatory Dance: Audience participation in a very simple movement sequence. Some sites will teach the moves right during the event, while at other sites the audience will have learned prior to performance (GWD website)⁷.

In order to participate in the GWD 2021, we developed a university extension project, run by the Grupo Rascunho⁸ – linked to the Dance course from the Universidade Federal de Viçosa (UFV)⁹ – in partnership with the Instituto Socioambiental de Viçosa (ISAVIÇOSA)¹⁰. A total of 18 people took part in the project, ranging in age from 15 to 54, including dance professionals and people with no previous experience in the field¹¹.

⁶ <http://globalwaterdances.org/dances/whydance/> Accessed on: 15 Mar. 2021.

⁷ Available at: <http://globalwaterdances.org/dances/for-choreographers/>. Accessed on: 13 Feb. 2023.

⁸ Rascunho Group.

⁹ Federal University of Viçosa.

¹⁰ Viçosa Socio-Environmental Institute.

¹¹ List of extension project participants:

Grupo Rascunho: Juliana Carvalho Franco da Silveira (coordinator), Bernardo Yukyo Takayama Colli, Hester Paes de Freitas, Marina Alves Facundo, Vinicius Macena Santiago Fialho.

The main purpose of the extension project was to approach dance as embodied knowledge and as an articulator of the body-environment relationship, in a process of raising participants' awareness of the importance of water for the preservation of all life forms. To this end, the participants were involved in the processes of planning and carrying out the activities, as well as in the rehearsals, production, and presentation at the event.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meetings were virtual (Figure 1), via the Zoom platform, from October 16, 2020 to June 18, 2021, held once a week, with each meeting lasting two hours. We also had three outdoors meetings at the ISAVIÇOSA headquarters (Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 1 - Participants in the extension project at the 1st virtual meeting
 Source: Juliana Carvalho Franco da Silveira's archive



Instituto Socioambiental de Viçosa (ISAVIÇOSA): Pedro Christo Brandão (director), Felipe Salgado de Senna (director), Bráulio Furtado Alvares, Daniela de Ulysséa Leal, Isabela Knup Barros, Júlia Christo Brandão Timo, Marcela Ottomar da Silva, Uriel Laurentiz de Araujo.

Other participants: Amanda Moura Souto, Bernardo Peixoto Gandra Ferreira, Gabriela Salles Franco da Silveira, Jasmim Ferraz Barbosa Pereira, Juliana Rodrigues Cancio, Nina Maria Alves Martins Oliveira, Vinicius Izidoro Damasceno, Vitor Thomas Sant Amaro.

GWD 2021 Event Guests on Jun. 12, 2021: Alyx de Oliveira Dantas Cruz, Carolina Barros Gazal Rangel, Gustavo Luca Lima Donato, Maria Eduarda de Carvalho Silva, Monique Pereira de Azeredo, Peterson Dos Reis Jaffar, Júlia Dornelas Moura, Juliana Campos Costa Souza.

Figure 2 - Meeting at ISAVIÇOSA headquarters (bank of the dam), in Palmital region
Source: Juliana Carvalho Franco da Silveira's archive



Figure 3 - Figure 3 - Visit by members of the Grupo Rascunho to the ISAVIÇOSA headquarters
Source: photograph provided by Júlia Christo, a member of ISAVIÇOSA



Throughout the project, we dedicated the work to the different sections of the GWD 2021, namely: opening ritual, local dance, global dance, and participatory dance. Rehearsals and filming for the local dance had a greater workload at the meetings, as we jointly developed the process of creating the *videodance Caminhos do Ribeirão São Bartolomeu* – accessible, in full, at the link: [Caminhos do Ribeirão São Bartolomeu \(2021\)](#).

The São Bartolomeu Stream was the "body of water" (as proposed by the GWD 2021) approached in the project, as a field of study for the creation of the local dance, because it enters our bodies, homes and the surrounding environment. The degradation of this stream in Viçosa caught the attention of the project participants. In addition, Pedro Christo (verbal information)¹², one of the directors of ISAVIÇOSA, said that the São Bartolomeu is 100% within the city of Viçosa, has already supplied 100% of the city's water and is responsible for supplying 100% of the UFV's water. It was also significant to learn that environmental recovery actions are being carried out at one of its springs, which is located at the headquarters of the socio-environmental institute, as will be explained below.

Figure 4 - Images from the videodance showing the São Bartolomeu stream on the UFV campus
Source: Juliana Carvalho Franco da Silveira's archive



The research

Next, we present the research, which aimed to analyze the impacts of the extension project's actions. To this end, we investigated how different experiences with dance, as an articulator of the body-environment relationship, impacted the process of raising awareness among participants about the importance of water

¹² Information shared by Pedro, in the 1st virtual meeting with GWD 2021 project participants, held on Oct. 16, 2020.



for the preservation of all life forms.

To register and organize the data produced throughout the project, all the weekly virtual meetings were recorded on audio and video, and designated participants created written records of each meeting, which helped to organize the data. A form was also applied, sent via Google Forms, at the beginning and at the end of the project, with questions about the participants' habits regarding environmental preservation, previous knowledge on the subject and previous experience with dance.

The analysis of the impacts of the project's actions was based on organizing, reducing, and interpreting the data from the records mentioned above. The data was organized by selecting recurring themes that emerged from the meetings. After analyzing the videos and successive reflective readings of this material, the following impact-related themes emerged: the power of dance for environmental activism, knowledge about the water situation in Viçosa, collaborative processes, and community building. These themes were transformed into analysis categories, which formed the basis for interpreting the data and will be presented in topics in this article.

The partnership with ISAVIÇOSA was vital for carrying out the project. Throughout the meetings, the institute shared information on the water situation in Viçosa and the region, public policy impasses in the city, regenerative practices in nature, as well as information on environmental degradation caused by human activities. With this information, combined with a literature review on the subject, we had the opportunity to analyze aspects of the environment in which we live, since Viçosa, in Zona da Mata Mineira, is the city in which most of us involved in the project live.

Viçosa is supplied by São Bartolomeu stream and the Turvo Sujo river. The development of the Federal University of Viçosa appears to be intrinsically linked to the development and urbanization of the city, whose population growth in recent decades has led to increased demand for natural resources, such as water (Dias, 2010).

Grupo Rascunho's approach to the project was to act as artists/activists,



understanding dance as an agent for transforming our collective. Therefore, one of the main topics of this research was the sensibility promoted by the artistic practice of dance, integrated with critical and reflective thinking around the importance of preserving water and the environment.

Another point that we consider essential in the relationship between dance and environmental preservation is the articulation between ethics and aesthetics. Aesthetics, considered as sensory knowledge, can enhance sensitive aspects of experience, and help us connect with ethical issues, which demand empathy and solidarity.

For this reason, throughout the development of the project, we considered, like Shapiro (2016), that aesthetic activism can help create a more empathetic community. Furthermore, "[...] pedagogic practices that draw upon the body and aesthetic processes as ways of understanding the world and ourselves can be a starting place for dance educators to contribute to a more humane, just and loving global community" (Shapiro, 2016, p. 12).

Thus, in this research, we consider that "activist art means community or public participation as means of effecting social change and promoting social justice", as proposed by Rosenberg (2009, p. 5 apud Shapiro, 2016, p. 19). In our context, the community created was formed of project participants who, as mentioned above, total 18 people aged 15 to 54 years.

Below, we present, in topics, the main themes that emerged from the analysis of the impacts of the project's actions, which were the main guidelines for interpreting the data.

The power of dance for activism

The dance work involved practices from contemporary dance, based on a somatic approach to movement, and improvisation practices for the collaborative creative process. We explored bodily sensory aspects and considered the importance of the sustainability of the body in connection with that of the planet. We also addressed the connection between our bodily fluids and the water in the environment.

At each meeting, there was an initial warm-up (led by members of the Grupo Rascunho) which, in general, included self-perception practices and simple movement sequences to mobilize the joints of different regions of the body. We then conducted improvisation practices, using stimuli related to water and body fluids, to develop choreographic materials for the collaborative creative process, or even offered small movement cells that could be used in the montage.

The work on self-perception was based on an anatomical, kinesiological and physiological approach to the body. This proposal aimed to refine self-perception and facilitate better organization of the body, aspects that are so important for movement health. As an example, we carried out a practice inspired by Cavalcanti (2019), for which we suggested that people showed, on their own bodies, where the spine is located.

When we visualized each person's perception, we noticed that, in many cases, it didn't correspond to their structural reality. Therefore, we worked with various practices that promoted the conscious mapping of the body – through verbal mediation, self-touching, self-massage, relaxation practices, stretching and focusing on breathing – so that everyone could locate structures, recognize tensions, pleasures, pains, among other sensations and perceptions that could arise. There was also an invitation to perceive body fluids through narratives that provided information about where they are, their functions, etc. We discussed, for example, intracellular, interstitial, cerebrospinal and synovial fluids, blood plasma, sweat, saliva, among others.

This approach aimed to sensitize and, at the same time, disturb the blind adherence to habits and modes of perception in order to open up new ways of relating to one's own body and the environment. In this context, we consider that "art is inherently political, because it is an activity that renders inactive, and contemplates, the sensory habits and gestural habits of human beings, and, in doing so, opens them up to a new potential use"¹³, as proposed by Agamben (2008,

¹³ A arte é inerentemente política, porque é uma atividade que torna inativos, e contempla, os hábitos sensoriais e os hábitos gestuais dos seres humanos, e, ao fazê-lo, os abre para um novo uso potencial.
Note: This and all other translations in this article were made by the first author.

p. 204 apud Lepecki, 2012, p. 44).

In this scenario, we valued a critical pedagogy of the body, as we agreed with Shapiro (2016) that including an embodied language in dance education requires the ability to reflect on oneself and the world:

To begin to include an embodied language in dance education would mean more than students sitting at desk learning historical facts taught from one perspective, or memorising poems. It would be a pedagogy that involves the student in critical reflection of their world in terms of issues of power, control, and moral or ethical sensitivity, much of these understood as mediated through the somatic lives of individuals. It calls for a critical pedagogy of the body (Shapiro, 2016, p. 9).

For the choreographic creative process of the local dance, we brought in stimuli linked to the movement qualities of water and body fluids. We considered, for example, that water in its liquid state has resilience, the ability to shape itself and adapt to the environment, which led us to explore the idea of liquid bodies (Figure 5), which shape themselves and adapt to the environment (in this case, our homes). We also critically addressed the logic of consumption and disposal (Figure 6) that is so present in our daily lives, as well as the pollution and degradation of the São Bartolomeu stream. We also took into account the regenerative practices of nature, such as those carried out and presented by ISAVIÇOSA, as an opening to new possible worlds.

Figure 5 - Videodance excerpt, developed from the idea of liquid bodies
Source: Juliana Carvalho Franco da Silveira's archive

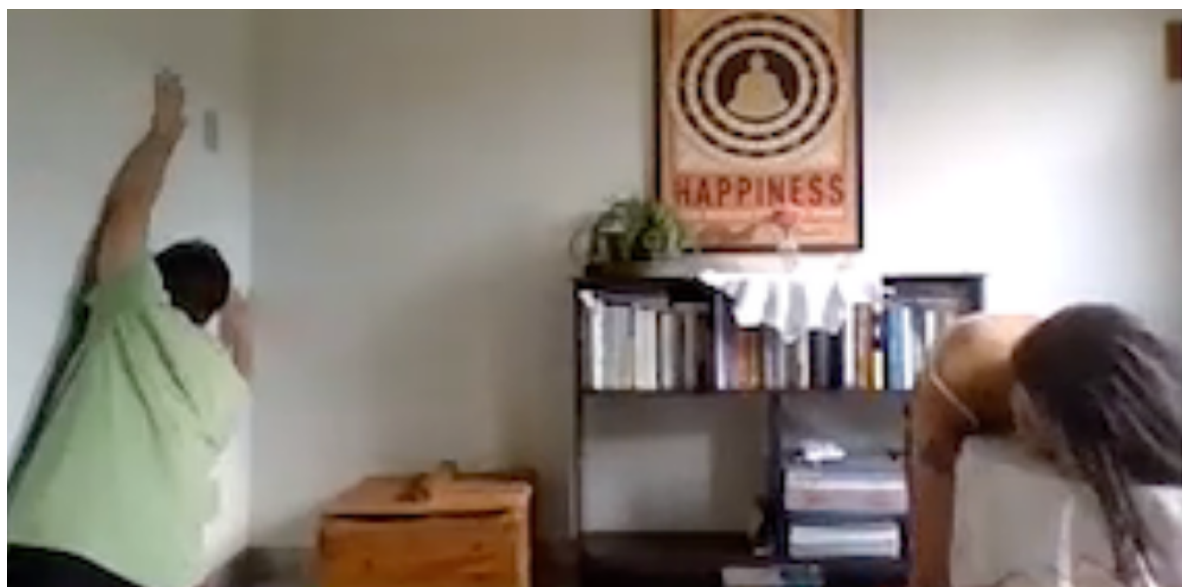


Figure 6 - Videodance excerpt criticizing the logic of consumption and disposal
Source: Juliana Carvalho Franco da Silveira's archive



The collaborative work involved all the participants in the project, which was fundamental for connecting with each other and for exchanging knowledge and experiences. In this way, the conception, development and finalization of the local dance film was carried out with everyone's participation, in a process in which we aggregated ideas and built the work together.

Among the ideas suggested by the participants, we had: showing the paths of the São Bartolomeu stream within the city of Viçosa; portraying the "paths of water" to people's homes – with the aim of denaturalizing the notion that water is available easily and automatically for the population –; and addressing the confinement of the river and its appearance as a sewer as it passes through Viçosa. We discussed the individual use of water, as well as its use in industries and agribusiness. We also reflected critically on the capitalist logic of consumption and disposal.

Regarding previous dance knowledge, the project involved dancers and people with no experience in the area. Out of a total of 18 participants, 13 had previous experience with dance before the project. We observed that the majority had recently been in contact with some practices. Three people had danced

before, but were not practicing, and three people said they had no previous practical contact at all (data from the Google form sent at the beginning of the project)¹⁴.

The answers to the question "Have you noticed a change in your relationship with dance as a result of the body practices conducted by Grupo Rascunho?"¹⁵ reveal nuances of learning for those involved in the process. We observed that even participants who had a long history in dance experienced new connections with it. Bernardo comments on this:

As a member of the Grupo Rascunho, conducting various practices throughout the project brought me a more pedagogical relationship with dance. Also, the involvement with water awakened other sensations and perceptions of the body, movement and dance, encompassing somatic, physiological and artistic knowledge. As a result, memories (including bodily ones) of these experiences reverberate daily in my contact with water and dance (Google Form)¹⁶.

Indeed, we had the opportunity to broaden our relationship with dance. Jasmim's answer also touches on this point:

My relationship with dance became even more sensitive. Even though I have a lot of experience in the field, I was surprised by the interaction of such diverse bodies through dance, with different backgrounds. The way in which the videodance [created during the project] was constructed shows this, with each body contributing individually in a collective space. In addition, I was able to see how it is possible to embrace important themes in artistic productions in a very effective way (Google Form)¹⁷.

Gabriela shared that, although she had already experienced different ways of

¹⁴ Form completed in Oct. 2020 by project participants.

¹⁵ Question presented in Google Forms at the end of the project.

¹⁶ Answer filled in on the Google form applied at the end of the project in June 2021:

Como integrante do Grupo Rascunho, a condução de diversas práticas ao longo do projeto me trouxe uma relação mais pedagógica com a Dança. Também, o envolvimento com a água despertou outras sensações e percepções do corpo, do movimento e da dança, abarcando conhecimentos somáticos, fisiológicos e artísticos. Com isso, memórias (inclusive corporais) das vivências reverberam diariamente no meu contato com a água e com a dança.

¹⁷ Answer filled in on the Google form applied at the end of the project in June 2021:

Minha relação com a dança se tornou ainda mais sensível. Mesmo tendo grande experiência na área, eu me surpreendi com a interação de corpos tão diversos por meio da dança, com diferentes bagagens. A forma com que a videodança [criada ao longo do projeto] foi construída mostra isso, cada corpo contribuindo de maneira individualizada num espaço coletivo. Além disso, pude perceber o quanto é possível abraçar temáticas importantes nas produções artísticas de maneira muito efetiva.



looking at dance, the approach based on a greater perception of our body and our presence in the space around us enabled new understandings:

I think that's why I've become more aware of certain issues, not always measured by octaves, but in relation to the way I understand myself in space and [to] the movements that I make not only intentionally in dance, but also those that are present in my body unconsciously (Google Form)¹⁸.

Vinicius M. pointed out that the approach to dance without judgments and hierarchies had an impact on his experience:

[...] I was in a relationship during the project with a dance that was non-judgmental, without hierarchy and that valued me as a human being. In addition, I was able to have experiences of somatic education applied to dance through practices with concepts brought in to facilitate our understanding and propose a new body organization, as happened in the example of biotensegrity brought in by Juliana S. (Google Form)¹⁹.

Comments from participants who had little or no previous contact with dance also highlighted interesting contributions from being involved in the project. Uriel, in the initial form, commented that he would feel uncomfortable to dance in the project; however, he took part in the videodance and, in the final form, he shared: "[...] Grupo Rascunho helped in an exceptional way [in] my reconnection with my body, respecting my limits and difficulties" (Google Form)²⁰.

Julia pointed out that the project's body practices were like "[...] a call to reconnect with the body"²¹ and that the feeling was one of overcoming, as she observed that even those who weren't dancers played a significant role in the local videodance.

¹⁸ Answer filled in on the Google form applied at the end of the project in June 2021:

Acho que, por isso, passei a tomar mais consciência de certas questões, nem sempre medidas por oitavos, mas com relação à forma como me entendo no espaço e [a]os movimentos não só intencionais que eu faço na dança, mas também os que estão presentes no meu corpo inconscientemente.

¹⁹ Answer filled in on the Google form applied at the end of the project in June 2021:

[...] estive em um relacionamento durante o projeto com uma dança sem julgamentos, sem hierarquia e que me valorizava enquanto ser humano. Além disso, pude ter experiências de educação somática aplicada à dança com práticas com conceitos trazidos para facilitar o nosso entendimento e propor uma nova organização corporal, como ocorreu no exemplo de biotensegridade trazido por Juliana S.

²⁰ Answer filled in on the Google form applied at the end of the project in June 2021:

[...] o Grupo Rascunho auxiliou de forma excepcional [na] minha reconexão com meu corpo, respeitando meus limites e dificuldades.

²¹ Excerpt from recording made on June 18, 2021:

[...] um chamado mesmo para essa reconexão com o corpo.



Isabela reported, "[...] the project changed a lot my relationship with dance, for sure, for the better"²², and said that she hopes to continue practicing a freer, more intuitive dance.

In this sense, the inclusion of all the participants in the different stages of the project made it possible to democratize access to dance, which helped to broaden the understanding of dance itself and who can dance.

Amanda commented that one of the things that really caught her attention was the possibility of dancing from small and more gestural movements and observing how this composition of gestures can form a sequence of dance, which she considers to be very powerful and beautiful. She said that she had wanted to dance like this, but had never had the experience, and that she really enjoyed it.²³

Amanda's statement points to the expressive charge of our gestures, understood here as movements that are not reduced to actions, as proposed by Lima (2013). Our gestures are permeated by subjective aspects and reveal the singularities of the dancer. In addition, they are always related to the context, as Launay (2013, p. 106) reminds us when she says: "[...] it is the context that gives meaning to the gesture and this context is both within us and outside of us, the gesture is the fruit of an ever-changing relationship between a subject and their environment"²⁴.

At the Global Water Dances 2021 in Viçosa event, which we held via the Zoom platform on June 12, 2021, we presented the project and the videodance we had produced together. On that day, Felipe, one of ISAVIÇOSA's directors, gave a speech in which he asked: "What water are we cultivating within ourselves?" (verbal information)²⁵. He said that he thought this reflection was necessary so that we don't trivialize the use of water. He added:

²² Excerpt from recording made on June 18, 2021:

"[...] o projeto mudou muito minha relação, assim, com a dança, com certeza, para melhor"

²³ Excerpt from recording made on June 18, 2021.

²⁴ [...] é o contexto que fornece sentido ao gesto e esse contexto está tanto em nós quanto fora de nós, o gesto é o fruto de uma relação sempre em transformação entre um sujeito e seu ambiente.

²⁵ Excerpt from recording made at the GWD Celebration with GWD project participants and guests on June 12, 2021.

Today, around planet Earth, we have approximately more than 2 billion people who don't have access to water. So, in other words, for every three people [approximately] around the planet, one person doesn't have access to water. [...] We have this opportunity, and what value are we giving it? What relationship do we have with water? So we try to encourage and activate everyone's relationship with this element, which is present, it's part of us, it's not something that's outside, an element that's just passing by, that's in the tap, in the pipe, no. It's an element that's part of us. It's an element that is part of our being, part of our physical structure, literally (verbal information)²⁶.

After Felipe's speech, we had a guided meditation practice, led by Marina, whose objective was to sensitize the participants to pay attention to the water inside their own bodies, present in bodily fluids, and the presence of water in our daily lives. One of the guests commented on this practice:

When she said, "what was your first contact with water?", I thought of the womb, [...], so at the moment of meditation, I visualized myself inside the womb, moving around in that water. And then, when she said "wet your forehead", it reminded me of something you do with a baby, when you wet their forehead, when the baby is hiccupping. And when she said "wet your neck", I remembered, like, me taking a bath in the tub and my mother running her hand over my chubby little neck to clean it. And I was shocked, because a simple question she asked gave me this feeling of retrospection, of introspection and, as it appeared in the video, you said several times, "water is life", I thought that was quite significant (verbal information)²⁷.

Maria Eduarda's speech highlights the meaning of water in our lives beyond the physiological need, as it is an element that triggers affective memories of

²⁶ Excerpt from recording made at the GWD 2021 Celebration event on June 12, 2021:

Hoje, em volta do planeta Terra, nós temos aproximadamente mais de 2 bilhões de pessoas que não têm acesso à água. Então, ou seja, a cada três pessoas [aproximadamente] em volta do planeta uma pessoa não tem acesso à água. [...] Nós temos essa oportunidade, e qual é o valor que nós estamos dando a isso? Qual é a relação que a gente tem com a água? Então, a gente busca incentivar e ativar essa relação de cada um com esse elemento, que é presente, é parte de nós, não é uma coisa que está fora, um elemento que está ali passando, que está na torneira, no cano, não. É um elemento que é parte do nosso ser, é parte da nossa estrutura física, literalmente.

²⁷ Excerpt provided by Maria Eduarda de Carvalho Silva at the GWD 2021 Celebration with the extension GWD project participants and guests, on June 12, 2021:

Quando ela falou "qual foi o primeiro contato de vocês com a água?", eu pensei no útero, [...], então, no momento de meditação, eu me visualizei dentro do útero, me mexendo dentro daquela água. E aí, quando ela falou "molhe a testa", e aí me lembrou um negócio que [se] faz com o bebê, quando você molha a testa, quando o bebê está com soluço. E foi me dando isso, e, quando ela falou "molha o pescoço", eu lembrei de, tipo assim, eu tomando banho na banheira e minha mãe passando a mão, assim, no pescocinho gordinho, para limpar. E eu fiquei em choque, porque uma simples pergunta que ela fez me trouxe esse sentimento de retrospectiva, de introspecção e, como apareceu no vídeo, vocês falaram várias vezes "a água é vida", eu achei que isso é bastante significativo.

experiences that constitute us. She also shared that she found it meaningful to see images of the GWD in various countries alongside images of Viçosa, which showed the importance of occupying the spaces that are there.

At the end of this event, after performing a participatory dance – led by Hester – with everyone present, we invited the participants to express themselves about the project. People highlighted that they had strengthened personal relationships and met people from different regions of Brazil and the world, each with their own story, but all together for the same cause. They felt a closeness between dance and their own lives and enjoyed practicing different ways of experiencing the body. They felt welcomed and their desire for face-to-face meetings grew (we were online due to the pandemic).

There was recognition that we often feel little involved, little responsible for environmental issues. Monique, who lived in Amazonas for four years, recalled the indigenous peoples' relationship with water, which is very different from the one we generally have in cities today. About the meeting, the participant shared that she felt that the perception of water as a constant presence and inseparable from life came to light.

Thus, throughout the project, we felt the capacity of dance to reveal the lines of force of a given social context and its particular critical force, aspects highlighted by André Lepecki, when he says:

In fact, dance's immanent ability to theorize the social context in which it emerges, to question it and to reveal the lines of force that distribute the possibilities (energetic, political) of mobilization, participation, activation, as well as passivity, would bring a particular critical force to this art. It could therefore be said that, in addition to the traits it shares with politics (ephemerality, precariousness, the identification between the product of work and action itself, the redistribution of habits and gestures, the increase in powers), dance also operates as an active epistemology of politics in a context (Lepecki, 2012, p. 45-46)²⁸.

Lepecki (2012) also points out, as Hewitt (2005) and Martin (1998), that

²⁸ De fato, a capacidade imanente da dança de teorizar o contexto social onde emerge, de o interpelar e de revelar as linhas de força que distribuem as possibilidades (energéticas, políticas) de mobilização, de participação, de ativação, bem como de passividade traria para essa arte uma particular força crítica. Pode-se dizer assim que, para além daqueles traços que partilharia com a política (a efemeridade, a precariedade, a identificação entre produto do trabalho e ação em si, a redistribuição de hábitos e gestos, o aumento de potências), a dança operaria também como uma epistemologia ativa da política em contexto.



choreography should not be understood as a metaphor for politics, which reverberates in our understanding of dance in the context of the project. In this sense, we approached dance as an epistemology in context, which articulated the body-environment relationship in its artistic, political and social aspects.

Knowledge about the local water situation in connection with the global situation

The fact that we developed an interdisciplinary project involving artists, environmental activists and people from the community was a determining factor in connecting artistic practices with issues related to the environment.

A central point that crossed our minds throughout the project was the destructive impact of human actions on nature. This impact and the inability to understand and find solutions to the serious risks we run and cause to the planet has been called Anthropocene.

Quilici, Okamoto and Moraes (2021, p. 1) understand the Anthropocene as "a new geological era marked by human action and its destructive impact on nature, especially since the Industrial Revolution"²⁹. The authors pose some perplexing questions:

How can we understand and overcome the human incapacity, especially of the powers that be, to act efficiently and swiftly in dealing with the serious risks we face? What is the role of the performing arts in criticizing and deconstructing the mechanisms of denial of the crisis and our contributions to the process of reinventing hegemonic forms of life, including dialogue with other cultures and modes of existence? (Quilici; Okamoto; Moraes, 2021, p. 1-2)³⁰.

Rios Neto (2021) comments that humanity is facing its first crisis on a planetary scale and that the Anthropocene has been considered one of the processes of mass extinction that the Earth has experienced in the past, due to

²⁹ Uma nova era geológica marcada pela ação humana e seu impacto destrutivo na natureza, especialmente a partir da Revolução Industrial.

³⁰ Como compreender e superar a incapacidade humana, especialmente dos poderes constituídos, de agir com eficiência e celeridade no enfrentamento dos graves riscos que corremos? Qual o papel das artes performativas na crítica e desconstrução dos mecanismos de denegação da crise e nossas contribuições para o processo de reinvenção das formas hegemônicas de vida, incluindo o diálogo com outras culturas e modos de existência?



the accentuated and accelerated loss of biodiversity.

Today, in fact, we are witnessing various processes of environmental destruction. Learning about the degradation of the São Bartolomeu stream in Viçosa impacted us, especially knowing that the city has faced water crises on several occasions and that, according to Viana et al. (2019), the forecasts for the coming years are not optimistic.

There are also other issues that intertwine with possible water problems within the municipality, as Uriel, from ISAVIÇOSA, noted at the second meeting of the project:

These include the deforestation of riparian forests, erosion in rural areas, soil erosion, the lack of planning of roads – both paved and rural –, the deforestation of vegetation cover – not only in riparian forests, but also in other areas – [...] poor waste disposal and the lack of planning for agricultural activities (verbal information)³¹.

As a reaction to the scenario of environmental degradation, ISAVIÇOSA has been working since 2007 to guarantee the preservation of drinking water in Viçosa. It develops environmental education and nature recovery practices, such as water planting³², as well as ecological alternatives for the sustainable use of natural resources, with the aim of conserving the soil, riparian forest, and water in the region of the São Bartolomeu springs (verbal information)³³.

Gabriela, the youngest participant in the project – 15 years old in 2020 – reflects on her learning:

I got a lot of information about the water supply in Viçosa and I found it incredible how everything is interconnected, and even the smallest spring is part of a whole system that supplies an entire municipality and indirectly impacts many others. I've learned a lot about the pathways of the São Bartolomeu river and how important it is that we become aware

³¹ Excerpt from recording made at the 2nd virtual meeting with GWD 2021 project participants, on Oct. 30, 2020:

Entre elas, o desmatamento das matas ciliares, a erosão na zona rural, erosão do solo, a falta de planejamento das estradas – tanto as asfaltadas como as rurais –, o desmatamento da cobertura vegetal – não só na mata ciliar, mas também nas outras áreas –, [...] a má disposição do lixo e a falta do planejamento das atividades agrícolas.

³² "Water planting" is a technique used to capture rainwater, which, instead of running off, allows the water to infiltrate the soil (verbal information shared by Bráulio at the 1st virtual meeting with GWD 2021 project participants, on October 16, 2020).

³³ Excerpt from recording made at the 1st virtual meeting with GWD project participants, on Oct. 16, 2020.



of the way it is being treated, so that instead of lamenting so many problems, we can think of ways to solve them from the root, in the longer term. I've also come to resemble these learnings and apply them to other similar contexts, such as those I see in the city where I live (verbal information)³⁴.

When analyzing the data from the Google form, which was sent for completion at the end of the project, it was significant to note the answers to the question: "Did you learn about sustainable actions in Viçosa when you took part in the project? Which ones?". Of the 13 respondents, all said they had learned about sustainable actions in Viçosa from the project, and all the answers included knowledge shared by ISAVIÇOSA members.

Among the sustainable actions cited by the participants, there were: the Microbacia Escola³⁵ project, planting water, recovering springs and degraded areas, working to create the São Bartolomeu Environmental Protection Area (APA), reforestation and water reuse – all projects and actions developed by the institute. The answers also included the work of the Grupo Rascunho and their own experience in the project as ways of promoting sustainable actions. Other sustainable actions mentioned were those of garbage collectors and ACAT (Association of Recyclable Material Collectors of Viçosa).³⁶

Therefore, we identified significant impacts on the project participants, as most of them did not know what the city's water supply is like, where the water comes from, how it reaches their homes or even that the water in the UFRV reservoirs comes from the São Bartolomeu. We also learned about nature's regenerative practices and reflected on how our consumption and eating habits

³⁴ Excerpt from Google form filled in at the end of the project in June 2021:

Obtive muitas informações acerca do abastecimento de água em Viçosa e achei muito incrível como tudo está interligado, e até a menor nascente faz parte de todo um sistema que abastece um município inteiro e, indiretamente, impacta muitos outros. Aprendi bastante sobre os caminhos do Rio São Bartolomeu e de como é de extrema importância nos conscientizarmos acerca da maneira que ele vem sendo tratado, para que, ao invés de lamentarmos tantos problemas, pensarmos em formas de resolvê-los a partir da raiz, a um mais longo prazo. Também acabei assemelhando esses aprendizados e os aplicando em outros contextos parecidos, como os que eu vejo na cidade onde moro.

³⁵ Microbacia Escola is a project that promotes social environmental education activities with a view to regenerative practices in nature, involving school groups that include teachers, elementary school pupils and university students. Most of the time it takes place at Sítio Palmital, the headquarters of the socio-environmental institute.

³⁶ Answers on the Google form completed at the end of the project, in June 2021.



can impact on the environment.

In terms of what he learned, Uriel shared that he changed the way he sees and observes water. He said he trained his eyesight by attending to one of the tasks suggested in the project, which was to record the water on audio and video. He said that, on rainy days, he went out to watch the water drip and to observe the shapes it took over a lake, a leaf; and he also paid attention to the sounds. "And all this, I think, through this project, which had water as a central theme, contributed to changing this way of seeing – didn't it? –, feeling [...] shapes and sounds" (verbal information)³⁷.

Another aspect observed was that we built a sense of community among the project participants, which was enhanced by the sharing of knowledge, collaborative work and dance creations. The feeling of belonging to a social group sensitized us to act with more respect for the environment, as will be detailed below.

Collaboration and the sense of community building

Collaboration and mutual support were central aspects of the project's work. We created an environment in which there was learning from the exchange of experiences. Our working method has points in common with what Richmond and Bird (2020) describe as a "student-centered approach", as we value individual experience and self-discovery, as well as co-creation, active participation, and collaboration in a democratic and supportive environment.

The validation of individual experience allows for the development of necessary critical thinking skills (Burnidge, 2012) which increase performance abilities by being able to investigate, question and discuss one's own thoughts and feelings (Raman, 2009) (Richmond; Bird, 2020, p. 136).

The work was therefore conducted in such a way as to prioritize socialization, as well as feelings of inclusion and being with others. The collaborative work involved students and professionals from different areas, so, depending on the

³⁷ Excerpt from recording made on June 18, 2021:

E tudo isso aí, acho que, através desse projeto, que teve a água como um tema central, contribuiu para mudar essa forma de ver – não é? –, de sentir, [...] as formas e os sons.

activity carried out, different people took on the role of facilitators. Dance classes were led by members of the Grupo Rascunho, lectures on Viçosa's water situation were given by members of ISAVIÇOSA, and video editing skills, among others, were shared by different participants.

Figura 7 - Momento de socialização dos participantes no contexto das filmagens
Arquivo de Juliana Carvalho Franco da Silveira



On the closing day of the project, we asked: "What was it like working with collaborative processes?". Uriel replied that he had been involved in collaborative projects since he arrived in Viçosa and that, in some cases (when there were many teachers and graduates), it was common for a lot of work to be delegated to trainees and students, so he noticed a lack of organization. However, in the context of the project, he felt that the organization proposed by Grupo Rascunho helped to distribute tasks, which made the work lighter.

Vinicius M. talked about what it was like to see the profile of each participant and their respective collaboration within the work. He commented: "that's why I think it's very interesting to feel like a protagonist, to feel important, and not just be passively receiving, but you can have the chance to speak" (verbal information)

³⁸.

Juliana C. talked about learning and diversity in collaborative work:

³⁸ Excerpt from recording made on June 18, 2021:

Por isso, acho muito interessante você se sentir protagonista, se sentir importante, e não estar recebendo só passivamente, mas você pode ter a chance de falar.

I think it's good to always work in this way; I believe the group grows in this way, in this collaborative manner. The collective becomes more powerful, and we can include more information and also learn more. This group is very diverse, with various fields, various ages, and different experiences. So, the more people speak, the more we learn as well (verbal information)³⁹.

Amanda⁴⁰ commented that, in contrast to environments that encourage competition and individualism, collaborative work can contribute to humanizing people.

When reflecting on the meaning of cooperation, it was very significant to see how Chilean biologist Humberto Maturana emphasizes the importance of recovering essential aspects of human evolutionary history, such as mutual care and love. According to Maturana (1985, p. 223), "the anthropological origin of *Homo sapiens* did not occur through competition, but through cooperation; and cooperation can only occur as a spontaneous activity through mutual acceptance, that is, through love"⁴¹. It is important to clarify that Maturana proposes a very specific meaning for the word love, which, as Rios Neto (2021) notes, is related to the notion of mutual care and not to a Christian or romantic connotation. Maturana (2014, p. 221) considers that "love consists of opening up a space of existence to another in coexistence with us, in a particular domain of interactions"⁴², and adds:

Finally, love is the source of human socialization, not the result of it, and anything that destroys love, anything that destroys the structural congruence it implies, destroys socialization. Socialization is the result of operating in love, and it only occurs in the domain in which love occurs⁴³ (Maturana, 1985, p. 221).

³⁹ Excerpt from recording made on June 18, 2021:

Acho bom sempre trabalhar dessa forma, acho que o grupo cresce desse jeito, dessa forma colaborativa. O coletivo fica mais potente, a gente consegue incluir mais informações e também consegue aprender mais. Esse grupo é muito diverso, são várias áreas, são várias idades, várias experiências diferentes, e aí quanto mais pessoas falarem, mais a gente vai aprendendo também.

⁴⁰ Excerpt from recording made on June 18, 2021.

⁴¹ A origem antropológica do *Homo sapiens* não se deu através da competição, mas sim através da cooperação, e a cooperação só pode se dar como uma atividade espontânea através da aceitação mútua, isto é, através do amor.

⁴² O amor consiste na abertura de um espaço de existência para um outro em coexistência conosco, em um domínio particular de interações.

⁴³ Finalmente, o amor é a fonte da socialização humana, e não o resultado dela, e qualquer coisa que destrói o amor, qualquer coisa que destrói a congruência estrutural que ele implica, destrói a socialização. A socialização é o resultado do operar no amor, e ocorre somente no domínio em que o amor ocorre.

Our experience of working with dance through mutual care and cooperation strengthened the bonds between the participants. Like Houston (2008, p. 13 apud Richmond; Bird, 2020, p. 139), we noticed that valuing "collective ownership of the dance work, equal opportunity to dance, [and] inclusion of participants from diverse backgrounds and abilities" contributed to collaborative work.

We also recognize that we need to continue searching for ways to act through our work as artists, because

[...] we need to continue to think critically, engage in a dialogue of resistance and solidarity, call upon our lived experiences and find avenues to act through our art in ways that speak out and find commonalities to resist oppressive and harmful situations. All of this brings us to call upon our powers of connection across borders, to develop compassionate as well resisting communities, and to act through our work as artists and teachers in the spirit of love and justice (Shapiro, 2016, p. 31).

Another aspect that strengthened the sense of community was the GWD 2021's proposal to connect the group of local participants with those from various other locations around the world. We observed that this connection could be a significant aspect in strengthening our demands for water conservation, because we know that planet Earth is a living organism and we are aware that what happens in one region affects other locations, just as what happens to the planet reverberates in our bodies.

We often feel a certain helplessness in the face of the destruction of nature and realize how difficult it is to really mobilize the population in defense of ecology. At the end of the project, when we evaluated the proposals developed, Marina (verbal information)⁴⁴ commented that she was happy to learn about the São Bartolomeu stream and, at the same time, was very bothered by the feeling of not being able to do anything to change the situation of its pollution, even though she understood that awareness-raising work is possible. Julia then reflected on the issues raised by Marina, when she said that:

[...] this project could be the start of a bigger movement, to expand all this study and care that we need to have for the municipality of Viçosa; and to expand this. So, in this sense, I see it as a reaffirmation of the importance of the work that is already being done here at the springs,

⁴⁴ Excerpt from recording made on June 18, 2021.

which we have already started here at ISAVIÇOSA. But in such a way that it can expand to the whole municipality and really mobilize people, right? You can see that this group has already been touched, can't you? (verbal information)⁴⁵.

Julia also commented that taking part in the project had an impact on her relationship with water planting, a practice developed by ISAVIÇOSA. She said that she got much closer to the springs and spaces that were already being worked on by the institute. When she realized this, she had a different understanding, she could see that they have a water bed, water being born, cultivated and cared for, which affects an entire ecosystem that forms around it.

Another point highlighted in our final conversation was the importance of raising people's awareness of environmental causes. Uriel commented on this: "Marina had said that she felt powerless, that she couldn't do anything... But, sometimes, even those in the environmental field feel this way. I say this from personal experience [...]" (verbal information)⁴⁶. He said that sometimes he is at ISAVIÇOSA, working, but when he looks outside, around him, he feels an impact. He said that, at the beginning of the project, he questioned the idea of dance addressing the issue of water, but that, over time, he realized how important it is to raise awareness:

I saw that the path is the individual. So, this sensitization that the project brought, I think that anyone who sees the video will feel it, you know? I think that's the way to go [...], it all depends on the people who are there. So, this sensitization is much more important [...], with people's sensitization, we can reach other levels. So, my perspective has changed a lot too, because of this whole social aspect of artistic sensitization, and that's it (verbal information)⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ Excerpt from recording made on June 18, 2021:

[...] esse projeto pode ser um início de um movimento maior, de expansão mesmo de todo esse estudo e esse cuidado que a gente precisa ter para o município mesmo de Viçosa; e expandir isso. Então, assim, eu vejo que nesse sentido foi uma reafirmação mesmo da importância desse trabalho que já está sendo feito aqui nas nascentes, assim, que a gente já começou aqui no ISAVIÇOSA. Mas de forma que isso possa se expandir pro município todo e mobilizar mesmo as pessoas, não é? Você vê que só esse grupo aqui como que já foi tocado, não é?

⁴⁶ Excerpt from recording made on June 18, 2021:

A Marina tinha falado, não é, que sente impotência, de não poder fazer... Mas, às vezes, até quem está lá na área ambiental também sente isso. Eu falo isso por experiência própria.

⁴⁷ Excerpt from recording made on June 18, 2021:

Eu vi que o caminho é o indivíduo mesmo. Então essa sensibilização que o projeto trouxe, eu acho que qualquer um que for ver o vídeo vai sentir, entendeu? Eu acho que isso daí é o caminho mesmo [...] tudo depende das pessoas que estão ali. Então essa sensibilização aí é muito mais importante [...] com essa sensibilização das pessoas, a gente consegue alcançar outros patamares. Então mudou muito a minha visão

Vitor commented that we are planting an idea and that this idea can grow and be applied in the classroom as well:

And a lot of what I've learned here I see can easily be applied in the classroom, you know? To sensitize, because, unfortunately, the didactics that are used to, for example, deal with river basins, which is a content within Geography, is something like this: "ah, we have the source, we have the riverbed – which is the entire length that goes to the banks –, we have the mouth – which is where the river flows –, and we have the oceans". No! You know? I don't think it's like that. You know? I think that when we sensitize, we attract more people to the content, in this case, river basins, for example. But sensitizing attracts more attention, doesn't it? It draws more attention, it connects the person's body, their mind, their senses to the water, which is what we're working on here (verbal information)⁴⁸.

Another aspect brought up by Vitor was the importance of the continuity of the project's actions, which resonated in several of the participants' speeches. He continued:

I really wanted to be part of the continuity of the local dance project in Viçosa, you know? I don't know if everyone is in the same "vibe", but it's something that emerged in me and it's emerged with something else, isn't it, to continue having dance practices anyway [...] (verbal information)⁴⁹.

Like Vitor, we believe that the continuity of the project's actions is vital, in order to bring about more lasting change. In this sense, the project coordinator took part in the Global Water Dances Educational Program in 2022 and Global Water Dances 2023, which will be the subject of future publications.

também por toda essa parte social de sensibilização artística e é isso.

⁴⁸ Excerpt from recording made on June 18, 2021:

E muito do que eu aprendi aqui eu vejo que pode ser facilmente aplicado dentro de sala de aula, sabe? Trazer essa sensibilização, porque, infelizmente, a didática que é usada para, por exemplo, tratar de bacias hidrográficas, que é um conteúdo dentro da Geografia, é uma coisa assim: "ah, a gente tem a nascente, a gente tem o leito do rio – que é toda extensão que vai até às margens –, a gente tem a foz – que é onde o rio deságua –, e a gente tem os oceanos". Não! Sabe? Acho que não é assim. Entende? Acho que quando a gente sensibiliza, a gente atrai mais para um conteúdo, no caso, bacias hidrográficas, por exemplo. Mas a sensibilização, ela atrai mais, não é? Ela chama mais atenção, ela conecta o corpo, a mente da pessoa, assim, os sentidos dela à água, que é o que a gente está trabalhando aqui.

⁴⁹ Excerpt from recording made on June 18, 2021:

Eu, de verdade, queria estar participando da continuidade do projeto da dança local em Viçosa, sabe? Não sei se todo mundo está nessa mesma vibe, assim, mas é um negócio que nasceu em mim e nasce junto com uma outra coisa, não é, de continuar a ter práticas de dança mesmo assim [...].



Final considerations

Throughout the project, we observed that dance, as embodied knowledge, was an epistemology that promoted self-transformation and enabled new social configurations, as it awakened people to self-knowledge and created openings for more sensitive relationships with others and the environment.

We also found that taking part in the Global Water Dances 2021 gave those involved in our project a sense of local and global community. There was also a broadening of knowledge about Viçosa's water situation and regenerative practices for nature, which was enhanced by the presence of ISAVIÇOSA members. Another aspect observed was awareness of the relationship between water, consumption, and eating habits.

Once the project is over, as people move on with their lives, subject to many demands and alienating information, some of the immediate impacts of the process may be lost. However, as Shapiro (2016) comments, once questions are asked and connections are made, embodied knowledge remains with transformative power. In this sense, each participant can become an agent propagating ideas in defense of the environment, an aspect we consider essential, as we understand that major changes can start from interpersonal relationships.

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Received on: Dec. 02, 2022

Approved on: Sep. 03, 2023