

Research and inquiry on educational thinking amidst capitalism and globalization in Asian slums, and the creation of works of performing art

1. Overview

In order to deepen the concepts, motifs, and content of my work, I started by extracting customs, ideas, and educational thinking in the daily life of slum inhabitants by staying in, researching, and interviewing inhabitants of slums outside my base city, including Manila in the Philippines, Bangkok in Thailand, and Medan in Indonesia. Based on this research, I then conducted further research, interviews, cohabitation, and workshops in the slums of Jakarta, Indonesia in order to identify differences and commonalities, and understand the fundamental structure and problems of slums themselves while searching for the true essence of my works. Next I created works based on my experiences and thoughts in those locales. Finally, I performed my works in the form of workshops and lecture performances at IKJ (Institute Kesenian Jakarta), also known as the Jakarta Arts Institute.



2. Research and Collaboration with Yola Yulfianti

Collaboration with Yola was done from a different perspective than research in Manila or Bangkok, with a balance of myself working officially and Yola working freely, which complemented each other very well. However, the gap between them grew large when working on creation after returning from Jakarta. Distance from the slum is part of the real world for her, and I realized that for myself, I can never close the distance as an outsider to the slums.



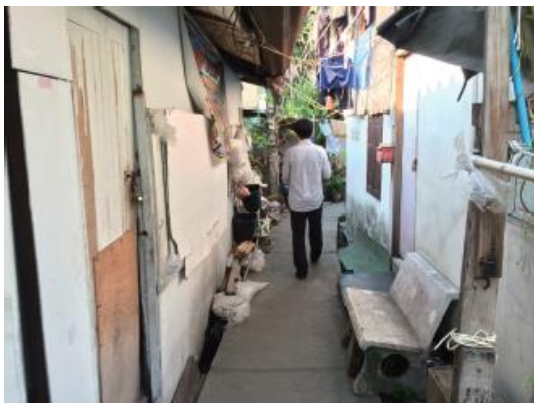
However, this is the reality of modern Japanese people, and the fact that I became aware of a part of the essence of international exchange through my own experience may be one of the biggest gains made from this research. Rather than synchronizing with my collaborator, seeing things I can see because I am an outsider, and working subjectively on what I can do from that position (which I should have done unconsciously during joint creation) constitute the very act of recognizing differences in values, and I feel that they are very important as a way of facing the world of the future.

3. Record of fellowship activities

I have compiled reports until now as a way of finding shared features, but in this item, I intend to recompile differences in each place.

Manila, Philippines: This city had the greatest poverty of any of the locations I visited for this research. As you may realize from seeing the incident in Mindanao in April, the infrastructure level which can barely keep the people fed is symbolic of the current situation. As such the people had the wisdom and grit needed to survive, but their energy was spent just getting by from day to day, and it seemed like it would be impossible for them to achieve long term thinking.

Depending on the area, they were accustomed to NGOs, and accustomed to receiving support, and I felt that there was great distance between them and the NGOs giving support.



Bangkok, Thailand: Of the three countries, modernization has made the most progress in Thailand, and the slum problem is becoming a thing of the past. Even when I asked artists about their interest in this problem, they answered that my approach to the slums was anachronistic. I felt that the link between religion and manipulation was weakest with respect to the fact that temples provide free support to slums because Thailand is a Buddhist country. Life in the slums of Bangkok appeared to have the highest level of the three countries, as the employment rate during the school period was high. However, while this is visible to the government depending on the gap in citizen's consciousness, such as the organized state of the slums and skepticism of the military region, I think the gap is the largest.

Medan (Indonesia): I felt that the inhabitants here have a somewhat easier life, are easy going, and are warmer to people, as it is a provincial city blessed with fertile ground and business opportunities due to connections with Chinese companies.

This town welcomed us warmly with hardly any introduction from anyone, and although it is known for having a high crime rate, I felt the most stable here of any of the cities I visited.



Jakarta (Indonesia): Of the three countries I visited on this trip, the gap between the rich and the poor was greatest in this city. Due to the size of the country and its vast population, the influx of people to the capital is extreme, and I felt that many people who come to Jakarta cannot find a satisfactory job but neither are they capable of going home. However, the major difference with Manila is that because Jakarta has fertile earth, they have little sense of crisis regarding hunger. I felt that they do not have much of a habit of thinking individually, as they appeared to be unaccustomed to moving actively, and many people try to move in groups.

4. Globalization and Capitalism

As I mentioned in my interim report, I started conducting this research from the point of “Mothers’ educational thinking in the slums”, but as I advanced my research, it was clear that their “Educational plan to survive in the present without consideration for the future”, “Vicious circle from uneducated parents to their children”, and “Helplessness in regard to their environment and circumstances” came from a greater background. Thus I had to face practical thinking (seeing the whole picture of things which are not seen overall) amidst globalization and a capitalist economy and society, and the structure of manipulation and exploitation. These problems are a microcosm of the global structure in which the wealthy exploit and consume other people, and are extremely large-scale themes. Yet, by not directly approaching these problems, and facing the problem of slums instead, I felt optimistic about the potential to approach problems of this scale, and they gave me the new perspective of conducting a lecture for young students IKJ, who are the closest to me.



5. Mothers in slums

While mothers living in slums can be seen as the most oppressed, having no choice but to accept the results of various events that occur to them, it could be said that improvements due to approaching this could be a source of hope for the future. It is no exaggeration to say that life in the slums where many men cannot find full-time jobs is supported by these wives and mothers, and forced to face this reality, they have both a certain sort of strength and resignation at the same time. Most of the people who left an impression on me in this research were women. More than anything else, these women’s reassuring smiles under any conditions were an impressive experience that I cannot put into words.



6. Meaning of education

As I continued research on education, I had to consider what essential education really is.

Initially, universal support of NGOs made me envision the problems of the side giving support, but when I became aware of the formidability and experience of the people who are “waiting for support as a matter of course”, I came to realize that a fundamental problem exists in the side receiving support, who are simply passive, neither thinking nor acting on their own.

Because of this, while I felt that individuals developing the ability to think is a common solution, when I reflected on what was different between the countries I visited, I found that the only real difference was the attitude or circumstances of the people using slum dwellers.

So, what about Japan?

Have we as individuals in Japan developed the ability to think? Are we able to make choices facing our happiness? In the initial question of “Facing something that we in developed countries have lost which can be found in life in the slums”, these problems occurring in slums are in the end a question for our lives as Japanese people.



7. Presentation of Results

Based on these findings, I performed my work in the form of a workshop and lecture performance at IKJ.

At first I held my workshop as a lighting workshop. The content of the workshop was intended to enhance thinking focused on thoughts toward concepts and works, in order to develop communication and the ability to think for oneself. In the lecture performance, I started from questions about the picture to the left of Yola, and made a 20 minute performance launched from this research. In the second half, I presented imaginary answers to slums as an outsider, and faced my own ideas counter to the discomfort in the audience.

After that, I made time for Q&A and feedback for over 1 hour, and presented the results of this fellowship.



When I took this picture of this little boy, I was wondering what was on his mind. Then I said to myself, oh maybe he was talking to God, "Dear God, why don't you let me choose where I want to be born?" And once again I thought to myself, "If God let him choose the place he wants to be born, where would he choose?"



8. Concluding fellowship activities

Having completed this research, I realized that the composition of the problems I faced this time, “slums in cities” is simply a microcosm, and in essence, it represents the relationship between “the few rich people” and “the countries exploited by a capitalist economy” in our world.

Yet simultaneously, the answer to the question “Are these people unhappy?” is in some other dimension. One other essence is that the happiness felt by individuals comes from their daily lives, and cannot be determined by others.

The greatest finding from this research was the simultaneous realization of the macro and micro perspectives I described above. For this very reason, I was reassured that there is meaning in each individual facing their own world and nurturing the ability to think for oneself.

Based on these experiences, I believe in the fundamental potential of the performing parts, and will develop activities that allow people in more countries to participate in “experiences” including theater. Specifically, I plan to make a creative work of the culmination of this research as a framework, and go further with creative works with Yola, so that I will be able to tour while hiring local performers in each country.

