

Ethnography, visual narratives and learning ecologies. The 'Universidad Rural Paulo Freire' case.

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INTRODUCCION (600w.)

In this paper, we present some of the results of the R&D Project called "Ecologies of learning in multiple contexts: analysis of expanded education projects and citizenship configurations" funded by Minister of Economy and Competitiveness (Spain).

The interest of this project arises after considering that much of the individual and organizational learnings have been turning invisible in different educational spaces. Therefore, our purpose is to study the different socio-educational mechanisms that individuals and organizations put into play in different scenarios: schools, associations, virtual academical contexts, etc.

On this occasion, we present some of the methodological issues and results of a specific case: "La Universidad Rural Paulo Freire de la Serranía de Ronda" (onwards URPF), a rural socio-educative organization. The ethnography is being developed in Benalauría (Ronda mountain range). This organization is focused in the recovery of traditional learnings that people used to have around the rural world. It is settled in a critical perspective that connects their educational actions under the approaches of sustainability, dignity, feminism, etc.

The general objectives we consider for this project are the following:

- To know life style of people in Benalauría context.
- To understand the configuration of URPF group and its impact in the territory.
- To promote learning communities of practice with other organizations.

As specific objectives, we emphasize:

- To review the conceptual frameworks those allow us to understand the practices of invisible learning in this experience.
- To generate visual narratives those evidence the work and identity features of the URPF.
- To analyse the life stories of the people who are part of this experience (as well as the collective story), for the understanding of socio-educational action in

rural contexts through dialogue of knowledge, generation of democratic practices and collaborative participation.

- To generate spaces for dialogue with other organizations, groups and people for the creation of networks and learning communities.

Theoretical framework

The beginning of the ecological metaphor started with the intention of a new paradigm of understanding knowledge. The first findings were about plant and animal ecology (Burgues, 1920), later on political ecology (Club de Roma, 1972), which went to human ecology and to urban ecology (Nicolas, 2004). This metaphor was also crossed with the ecosystems approach. Consequently, the concept is extended to characteristics of adaptation, evolution, and self-organization of communities with common interests (Martínez-Rodríguez, 2015).

Initially, the ecology of learning is considered in formal educational contexts in order to generate a structure that exceeds the transmission of unique knowledge. In this paradigmatic transition, the ideas of Ecology of education (Cobo and Moravec, 2011) and Ecology of knowledge (Sousa Santos, 2010) begin to coalesce. "No medium acquires its meaning or existence alone, but only in constant interaction with other meanings" (McLuhan, 1964: 43).

In this point, the concept of learning ecologies emerges from two theories of learning: constructivism and connectivism. It also manages to integrate and extend elements beyond teaching and learning models. It allows the consideration of knowledge in the service of the construction, adaptation and self-sufficiency of the subject in a context of real educative action. For this reason, formal contexts are not the only focus of this perspective.

Finally, for the case that we are dealing with, it is necessary to refer to the concept of Ecology as learning communities that is an analysis of social networks as a community (Siemens, 2003). That makes sense in the actions carried out by the URPF, the nuclear agent of our ethnography.

METHODOLOGY (400 w)

In order to draw on these general purposes and after an agreement process with the URPF collective, we designed an ethnography (Sparkes, 2017; Ellis, 2004), based on personal accounts.

This research started on January 2015 to the present. It was proposed as ethnography focused on the experience of the participants in the URPF collective and of the neighbours and other village agents. We focus on experiences as a means to understanding larger structural problems on rural

contexts: exodus, productive model, educational models, rural knowledge, social participation, etc.

Methodologically the research is structured in three phases:

1. **Negotiation.** Our entry in the field was possible from our relation with any of members of URPF. So, we proposed our aims and proposals and ask them for their interest in relation to our research. A preliminary document was elaborated, that was discussed with all participants in a meeting. Jointly we agreed objectives, procedures and particular interests. This agreement included: life histories of URPF members, their participation on result's discussions, local ethnography and the elaboration of audio-visual documents to make visible the actions of URPF.
2. **Life histories of URPF members** were elaborated in order to understand the personal processes and their implication and commitment in the project. The objective was to understand the reality through the theory that different participants have constructed according how they read their environment and their experience as members of URPF
3. **Local Ethnography of the context** in which URPF works. We interviewed different inhabitants of rural context; video records were doing; and we made participant observations along different stages in the context. We are interested to know how these people live, their experience, their ways of life, how they interpret their reality and how they are understanding the work of URPF

After this data collection process, several meetings were held in order to back data analysis and to discuss them with all participants. So, we built different papers, which were put into debate. Along first semester of 2017 we pretend held several meetings with this proposal, and elaborate a shared report, a documentary film and a virtual cartography to show where are located RRPf actions.

CONCLUSIONS (300 W)

Today the framework of ecological learning and the processes of building citizenship are perceived as an invisible, generative or rhizomatic learning. However, the almost unlimited possibilities of communication (relationships) open the universe to other forms of learning that **contributes** to the processes of personal and collective development.

We are observing that narrative work through stories and life stories is allowing us to visualize and understand part of that hidden learning. They are on the experiences of the subjects that make up the territories.

It goes beyond the results that URPF as a socio-educational organization produce, in order to delve into knowing what happens behind the visible, behind the scenes. In some ways, the repercussions of these considerations are understood to be political practices in themselves, which humanize the

educational actions that are carried out (Freire, 1990; Van Manen, 1998). On the contrary, we observe how the significant learnings and the causes and drivers of collective actions have to do with how they are interpreted intersubjectively through experience (Ricoeur, 1999). This position allows us to enter where actually the educational act resides: experience, relationship, contradiction, love, disagreement... (Meirieu, 2006).

In the case that concerns us with the URPF, we see how in the individual stories that deal with the trajectory of each member, the proper meaning of the collective is clarified. Each experience is reflected, in turn, in the act constituting the collective. All this, inevitably transfers to the treatment of other issues of equal importance and that have generated significant learning: family relations, parenting, participation in socio-political organizations, social movements, social contexts, etc.

Specially, we will talk about the followings emergent categories as result of the research process: social and political context and family context, ideologists, beliefs and conflicts, activism and rural word, life project vs. solidarity and education training.

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