



INTE 2014

For a city's pedagogy

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Abstract

How and where do we educate ourselves? This question has made possible to link together reflections about spaces not as inert scenarios but rather as instructive materiality, the bodies and field managers of educability. Thus, it is our objective to discuss the role of the city as an educator in order to (re-)establish the pedagogy of the city. This is expressed not only through the urban life style, the learning of civility and the entitlement to the city, but also in pedagogical functions expressed in urban and school projects, in the relationship existing between the urban body/citizen body, urban hermeneutics and a sensible stance in face of the urban.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Sakarya University

Keywords: Pedagogy; City; Education; History.

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1. Reflections on city and education

Is it possible to establish a pedagogy for the city? This line of questioning reveals our audacity in taking risks in relationship to the most varied areas of knowledge, even though that is not a recent stance, and *with some care*, it can be traced to 1929, when the magazine *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* was founded.

The city as object of study and reflection is present in the trade of educators, historians, geographers, architects, urbanists and literates among others. Multiple ways of looking at cities and their histories can be found in that space itself, in accordance to the different uses of men, women and children.

Therefore, city's pedagogy can be perceived, if one takes as a starting point, the understanding of educability as an investigative demarcation, since “[...] the city's educative action is full of representations which are defined in the confrontation between population's everyday practises and the actions of technicians and politicians.”¹ (VEIGA, 1997, p. 107).

In this way, the city is invested with a pedagogical orientation which is expressed in its *modus Vivendi*, its different scenarios, its ritualizations and institutions and, the educability is a constant of that orientation, since “[...] the educational process does not take place only or even mainly in our schools' banks.” (ARROYO, 1997, p. 25). According to this, what interest us is to conceive a city's pedagogy, since we understand that urban dynamic as a whole is educative.

2. Conceiving a pedagogy of the city

The city is “[...] a mediation among mediations” which “[...] has always had relationships with society as a whole, with its composition and the way it functions, with its constitutive elements [...], with its history.” (LEFEBVRE, 2001, p. 46). Hence, the city is the holder of a socializing education and is invested with a pedagogical function, which moulds different values and models of conduct, since we can say that the city holds a social function resulting from the experience of urbanity, the personal experiences, the city's projects and practises themselves, for the city has “[...] an history; it is the product of history, i.e., of well determined people and groups which accomplish that production in historical conditions.” (LEFEBVRE, 2001, P. 47).

So, city's pedagogy starts to be defined from the power which, as stated by Michel Foucault (1981), is a set of relationships between forces that build singularities and inserts itself wherever particularity prevails, becoming then more of an exercise than a possession and, it is not a granted privilege, but only the outcome of its strategic positions thus being, then, pertinent to the analysis of the formative processes of the citizens inhabiting the *urbe*. With the implementation of socio-cultural practices, the city becomes involved in power machinations substantiated through actions or deliberations in constitutions, laws, decrees or stances which serve not only to regulate the links between the *urbe* and the life in society but also the structuration of the urban space itself presented in a textual form, in the field of the visible as well as in the invisible, thus making possible to understand the city as “[...] something which is talked and written about.”

Therefore, city's pedagogy expresses itself not only through the urban life style, the learning of civility and the entitlement to the city, but also in pedagogical functions expressed in urban and school projects, in the relationship existing between the urban body/citizen body, urban hermeneutics and a sensible stance in face of the urban. Thus, city's pedagogy might very well be defined in the search for answers presented in the questionnaire carried out by Roche (2000): *why and in what way can mankind live the way it does and why is that acceptable?* In fact, city's pedagogy starts to be drafted from the relationship between the urban life style and the learning of civility, insofar as pedagogy occurring in the urban social universe is intertwined with paraphernalia, institutions and distinct spaces.

Considering that “[...] urbanity was characterized [...] by the complexity of social relationships and the manner they rearrange themselves [...] imposing on the constant disparity of the social face-to-face [...]” In these terms, we would like to emphasize that public and private constitute the citizen in a process of constant educability, or in a broader form of pedagogy whether at home with the family, or in schools, or even during civic and religious ceremonies, since as Coulanges (2007, p. 248) points out, the city is a social organization with diverse beliefs and customs and the citizen, is subjected to all of it without reservations, entirely belonging to it.

The citizen comprises the city and simultaneously it is comprised by it. Such is the relationship that allows a given pedagogy by and in the city. This pedagogy is only possible because, as Castells reminds us (apud ARROYO,

1997), cities are live systems, generated, created and transformed by human beings and, for that reason the cities roots are the citizens themselves.

Therefore we might say that the city acts as a pedagogic factor while it exerts a civilizing influence as well. Such a civilization's project is made possible through the development of political, collective and social space cultures. Nevertheless, this has been a slow and strained process (ARROYO, 1997), since the city as a civility reference, was built in opposition to the rural world, bestowing on the law different functions such as organizing, classifying and collecting the urban territories, attributing meanings and generating notions of civility and citizenship directly proportional to the way of life and the family micro politics of the different groups which were more involved in its formulation (ROLNIK, 1999).

The building of the urban and civilized life style is done through and proportionately to the education, since the modern city has become *locus*, par excellence, of these changes arising from transformations occurring in the economy as well as in political life, not as a passive receptacle, but as the producer of new forms of sociability and social interaction. (VELHO, 1995).

Pedagogization through civility starts with understanding that individuals deal and move themselves among differentiated codes and universes concerning values, orientations and classification systems. Those codes are measurements of the cities' projects for their inhabitants and their customs. Thus, it is in the dimension of the culture of the urban that the manifestations, the actions and customs of the inhabitants of the *urbe* (de-)limit their social conscience. Accordingly, educative processes are present in urban dynamics which,

[...] as a whole educate or dis-educate, form new behaviour patterns, civilize or stultify, depending on the humanizing or dis-humanizing virtualities inherent to the existential forms of production that city-dwellers are submitted to. (ARROYO, 1997, p. 25).

The city as the holder as well as simultaneously being the producer of pedagogies for its inhabitants is a possible construction since there is a relationship between the city and its dwellers. Therefore, to transform “[...] the interests and social values present in the forms and functions of a historically determined city is a social tension due to the values and interests which rule the space production as well as its services and occupation.” (ARROYO, 1997, p. 25). This *pedagogization* also occurs in the urban experience once new possibilities of assembly, communication, as well as the comparison between life conditions and the (re)construction of consciences have been achieved.

Concerning the city's pedagogy defined, to start with, from the urban life style and the learning of civility, we should render visible the production and the intensification of the *right to the city*, since that right “[...] manifests itself as a superior form of entitlement: right to freedom, to the individualization of socialization, to the habitat and to inhabiting. The right to the *task* (to the participating activity) and the right to *appropriation* [...] are implied in the right to the city.” (LEFEBVRE, 2001, p. 135).

According to this perspective, the right to the city passes through the re-appropriation of the spaces and the apprehension of the urban passes through claiming the city in its broader forms and materialities since this right “[...] affirms itself as an appeal, as an exigency” and can only be formulated as a right to *urban life*, transformed and renewed. (LEFEBVRE, 2001, p. 116).

Learning the right to the city occurs through claiming that right itself, as space, as spatial structures, living quarters, school, water, leisure, among other claims. As a consequence, city's pedagogy is grasped through, and also by the understanding of the city itself, since they carry their own symbols, their cultural identities and values, enabling new social meanings to the urban experience.

In effect, city's pedagogy is woven by its citizens' movements which explore and translate the city and the fact of living there. The city is defined by its own citizens, but, along this process, the urban that comes from the outside to break off with the city's physical limits, becomes an imaginary effect that produces an impact on its dwellers. “Urban life, urban society, in a single word “the urban” cannot dispense with a practical-sensitive basis, a morphology.” (LEFEBVRE, 2001, p. 49).

The pedagogical function expresses itself through urban and school projects which (de)limit the contours of pedagogization in and through the *urbe*. In order to have a better understanding of this pedagogical function, I shall revert to Ítalo Calvino (1997), and recall the passage related to Marco Polo's visit to the city of Zoe, where Marco

Polo highlights the idea that cities have their own motives and characteristics, have their own functions. But, what is the city's motive? Veiga (2002) help us to reflect upon that question and highlights that the modern city's motivation suggests delimitation and demarcation of functions. Thus, "[...] city and education keep between themselves, the tensions arising through modernity's gestational process." (VEIGA, 2002, p. 14).

The city is the boosting and materializing agent of the dimensions of citizenship and education, considering that the urban and school projects are responsible for building up models for the urban body as well as the citizen body, inasmuch as "[...] planning the city is simultaneously to think real's *plurality itself* and to give *effectiveness* to this same thought of the plural: it is to know and being able to articulate." (CERTEAU, 1994, p. 172).

The relationship between city and education is indeed a tense one, since "[...] the modern pedagogical project and the urbanists' projects touch each other: both plan to build a type of ideal human being as a civilized social being." (VEIGA, 2002, p. 19). This relationship is built on conflicts, but does not lose sight of the purpose of its very social function: to educate towards new models of modernity. (VEIGA, 1997).

This formation of the subject occurs by and through socialization, but "[...] the city's educative action is full of representations which are defined through the confrontation between the population's quotidian actions and the actions of technicians and politicians." (VEIGA, 1997, p. 107). The subjects concerning the city are rights and duties and are immersed in the urban as educative space.

The urban as educational has been a *locus* where men exercise power and claim their rights. As Rama (1985, p. 27) reminds us, the city has an order, it is literate and administered, modernized as well as politicized, is, therefore, an *haven of intelligence*, a dream of an order, a project with a rationalizing conscience able of setting an order to men within a repeated urban landscape, ultimately, it is the [...] the translation of a social order into a physical reality [...]."

Hence, we can then highlight that city's pedagogy is intrinsic to an order and implies a hierarchy which is not only disciplined but also disciplinarian. Thus, the city educates through different and superposed networks: "[...] a physical one, on which the common visitor roams over until getting lost in its multiplicity and fragmentation, and a symbolical one, which sets an order and interprets it." (RAMA. 1985, p. 53). Even more, it is

Through the ordering of signs [...] [that] the literate city articulated its relationship with power, which has been serving by means of laws, regulations, proclamations, cells, propaganda as well as through idealization destined to sustain and justify it. (RAMA, 1985, p. 55).

The city is, then, a dream of an order, a project with a rationalizing conscience which organizes men within an urban landscape through a planned form and according to administrative, military, commercial, religious and scholastic guidance.

Thus, city's pedagogy expresses itself in a broad sense in the relationship between the urban body and the citizen body. To think city and citizen is to compose a vivid, pulsating and moving landscape through which the city's pedagogy arises according to the sensitivity expressed in the urban organization starting on quotidian aspects of life, such as: social customs of men and women, hygiene and speech habits, since "[...] relationships between urban bodies in spatial terms determine their mutual relationships, how they see and hear each other, how they come in contact and distance themselves." (SENNETT, 2003, p. 17).

This pedagogization has accentuated contours, since the city is a network of signs to be read by its dwellers, it has its own hermeneutic as it has been pointed out by Lepetit (2001) that holds temporalities' rhythms as well as spacialities. Each fragment of the *urbe* holds its own spellings and orientations.

Urban hermeneutic exists, mainly, in the acts of walking, reading, sense and see the city as a text with a given grammatology. The act of walking is for the urban system as the enunciation is for a language or for the verbalized utterances. The act of walking has a triple enunciating function: it is a process of appropriation of the topographical system by the pedestrian; it is a spatial realization of a given place; it implies relationships between differentiated positions. Thus, the act of walking seems to imply a first definition as a space of enunciation.

The enunciation through the speech of steps is, then, a language related to city's pedagogy expressed by a language which is a type of practise of the space, a way to make sense of it, since "the quotidian or literary accounts are our public transports" (CERTEAU, 199, p. 200). Every account is a practise of space even though it is not simply a supplement of pedestrian statements, it is not only a question of transporting steps and senses, but a way of

organizing the walks themselves; walks are, therefore, “narrative actions” as well as pedagogic ones through which the city’s user extracts fragments from the account in order to update them secretly. According to the enunciation frame, the walker constitutes, in relationship to his position, a close and a distant, a here and a there.

A sensitive posture in front of the urban is also one of the possibilities in relationship to the pedagogy of the city. In fact, this one expresses itself through the political education of senses and its relationship with political-cultural as well as relational practises, in which the notions of subject, culture and education do not restrain themselves to rational dimensions, but also incorporate sensitive ones. (GAY, 1988).

As highlighted by Pesavento (2007) city is *sensitivity*, is a cultural phenomenon which presupposes the construction of an *ethos*, implying the attribution of values to whatever was agreed to call *urban*. Thus, a sensitive posture of the urban enables a pedagogy ruled by feelings, affections and emotions in *urban living*, but also by the expression of utopias, hopes, wishes and fears, individual and collective, favoured by the fact of living in proximity.

This dimension of sensitivity bestows on pedagogy the condition to attribute reasons and meanings to space and urban time and also to apprehend its visible and experienced frame of references. This pedagogy of the sensitive is also imaginary, since it is constructed by a thought process which identifies, classifies and qualifies the trace, form, volume, practices and actors of that urban space. (PESAVENTO, 2007). This sensitive posture in face of the urban is linked to human experience which “[...] participates in the creation of objects of interest and passion, gives form to still incipient cravings and removes barriers as well as ominous anxieties. (GAY, 1988, p. 19).

In a more assertive way, city’s pedagogy expresses itself through the concept of *educative city*, diffused from the 1970’s onwards, with three possible dimensions for the relationship between city and education; learn in the city, learn from the city, learn about the city. (TRILLA, 1999, p. 24-37). In order to do that, it is required the full comprehension of the city’s pedagogical intentionality. Thus, the city is recognized as an educating agent as well as a true space for learning which organizes, systematizes and deepens the informal knowledge we acquire spontaneously through quotidian life.

An educating city presupposes that we learn how to read it and that constitutes a dynamical system in continuous evolution. Even more, it also presupposes that we learn how to cohabit, how to live together and to interact with others and that we learn also, the minimal skills on how to circulate through the city and the rights as well as the obligations whilst city dwellers. (BRARDA, RIOS, 2004). As per that perspective, city’s pedagogy would be associated to the more ample understanding of educative city and the dimensions of learning in the city, learning from the city, learning about the city.

Learning in the city or the understanding of the *city which contains education* presupposes the urban environment as a framework of multiple educative events such as: a stable pedagogical structure constituted by educative institutions in the fields of formal and informal education; a set of equipment and stable citizen institutions but not specifically educational; a set of occasional educative events; a spread out and permanent set of educative spaces and experiences, not pedagogically planned but that would nevertheless comprise quotidian’s life informal education. (TRILLA, 1999).

Learning from the city presupposes the city as an educative agent, i. e. the environment as education’s informal agent, since it is in the city that people, as well as ideas, objects and techniques get together. Finally, learn about the city is to understand the *city itself as educative topic*, since the informal knowledge generated by urban environment, is, per se, knowledge about that very environment itself. The city which teaches itself.

The educational city harbours and interrelates educative institutions and places such as schools and universities, informal educative interventions organized for teaching and training aimed at specific objectives and also a set of educating experiences such as shows, promotion and diverse social relationships such as friendship. On those terms, as highlighted by Brarda and Rios (200) the most significant contributions of urban pedagogy are as follows: broadening of pedagogy’s field of action, construction of democratic-participative values, give new signification to citizenship and also the multiplication of educational and cultural networks.

3. Considerations

Pedagogy of and in the city is possible in function of citizen's movements and urbanity, as well as by monumentalizing the city, thus becoming responsible for the transmission of acquired knowledge. And, even more, in order to enable a city's pedagogy, we have to put aside a perspective of the educative phenomenon reduced to spaces, epochs, processes and scholastic interveners. In fact, every city opens itself as a privileged focus for the *Concentration of Powers* of the most varied kinds (from institutional and repressive to micro powers which rule the quotidian life of its inhabitants). (BARROS, 2007).

Thus, the pedagogization in and by the city it is constituted through the learning of a urban and civilized life style, the right to the city and its pedagogical function expressed through urban or educational projects, in the city and its hermeneutic, its norms, behaviours and its sensitive posture. All these expressed different forms of learning and pedagogical functions corroborate a broad dimension of pedagogy, the one belonging to the city.

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ⁱ Much of the literature used for the construction of the text is the translation into Portuguese of Brazil. To better understand the text citations were also translated into English.