

The possibility of transforming a speeded and unfriendly city in an educating city^{1, 2}

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ABSTRACT. This article presents the discussion about the city as a field of discovery and experimentation, in which the school becomes a partner in the transformation of the uses and appropriations of its territories. Authors such as Milton Santos, Lourdes Atié, and John Dewey made it possible to anchor issues of school, city relationships, citizen participation, and the role of education as a way to change those relationships. The experience of the United Educational Centers (CEUs) leaves traces of how the school can be integrated into the territory. The city as the greatest human creation is a reflection of this way of being in the world and establishing relationships, so that it becomes a field of exchange and learning, or an educational city.

Keywords: educational city, civil rights, school, CEU, John Dewey, Milton Santos, Lourdes Atié

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG. Die vorliegende Studie präsentiert einen Diskurs über die Stadt als Entdeckungs- und Experimentierfeld, in dem Bildungseinrichtungen zu Partnerinnen für transformative Prozesse urbaner Lebenspraktiken werden. Autoren wie Milton Santos, Lourdes Atié und John Dewey ermöglichten eine Sicht auf die Beziehungen zwischen Stadt, Bürgerpartizipation sowie auf die Rolle der Bildung, die zum Katalysator für urbane gesellschaftliche Veränderungen wurde. Die Erfahrung der „Vereinigten Bildungszentren“ (CEUs) gibt Hinweise darauf, wie eine pädagogische Institution in ihr Umfeld integriert werden kann. Die Stadt als menschliche Schöpfung spiegelt Formen des Beziehungsgeflechts wider, das in etablierte Sozialität mündet. So gesehen, wird sie selbst zu einem treibenden Faktor der Bildung.

Stichwörter: Stadt der Bildung, Bürgerrechte, Schule, CEU, John Dewey, Milton Santos, Lourdes Atié

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“Above all, never lose your desire to walk. Every day, I walk until I reach a state of well-being and stay away from any illness. I walk towards my best thoughts and I don’t know any thoughts that, as difficult as it may seem, cannot be removed when walking.”

_____ Sören Aabye Kierkegaard, Danish philosopher (1813-1855)

What can we consider as a citizen space?

Can cities, as they are configured, be considered as spaces that really make subjects into citizens?

“The city understood as a place of encounter and civilization” (Gómez-Granell and Villa, 2003, p. 17). The meeting of people and their cultural, emotional and political expressions. The way in which this meeting takes place needs study and reflection, as it can be looked at from different perspectives and conceived within conceptions that will determine the physical and political place that each subject will occupy in society.

Milton Santos links the idea of citizenship with economic issues, and points out that, in Brazil, the place that the citizen occupies is directly linked to this relationship:

[...] economic activity and social inheritance distribute men unevenly in space, making certain established notions, such as the urban network or the system of cities, not valid for most people, because their effective access to goods and services distributed according to the urban hierarchy depends on their socioeconomic place and also on their geographical place. (Santos, 2011, p. 75)

For Santos, both the economy and the geography of space will give more or less possibilities for the inhabitant of a given city to become a citizen with more or less rights. The author argues that it is necessary to reverse this logic of the economy defining what rights a citizen may have; the ideal of the concept of citizenship is that it should shape the economy. In other words, the way of life that would be good for people should be the basic principle for determining the economic plans for that society.

Likewise, the geography of places can influence the quality of life and their rights. The different territories that exist in a city like São Paulo, for example, show citizens’ rights, which are not always respected. The time that people who live on the outskirts of the city spend on their daily commutes is much longer than those who live in the regions around the center, according to data pointed out in the survey carried out by the organization Nossa São Paulo, in partnership with Ibope, in August of 2019. It reveals that the paulistano spends daily, on average, 1 hour and 47 minutes to commute from home to work and from work to home. The same survey indicates that residents of the East and South zones spend more time than those in the center (Ibope and Nossa São Paulo, 2019).

Could this matter of the territories where we live be so defining of living conditions? Is it a question that is posed or can be changed? In order to understand the possibilities of change a little more, it is necessary to better understand the territories we inhabit.

What paths do we take every day?

We walk almost daily through the city of São Paulo to go to college, to work, to shop and simply to exercise. Sometimes the hikes are far from home, other times very close, like going to the bakery, the supermarket or taking the bus. In general, it is a hurried walk, that runs after a rushed time, a little anesthetized, which does not feel the city and the people. The perception only notices an intense flow of people, who push us towards a collective rhythm of the life of a big city. Our gaze only aims at certain targets; what is around is blurred, without visibility.

What is our look of the city?

What is it like to have a tourist look towards your own city? Being able to visit the center of São Paulo with time for observation has opened up a possibility for a very interesting experience. To look differently at

something known. The center of São Paulo is vibrant! Agitated! When looking with more focus, we receive a lot of information, a lot of colors, a lot of interferences from the urban landscape. Old buildings side by side with new constructions, some revitalized, others dying, some with bars and others giving space to those who have no home. The many people walking around, the noise pollution that stuns, an impression of dirt, strong smells and stinks build some tourist images for this well-known place. Some memories gain contour when looking at the old Mappin building, the stairs of the Municipal Theater, the Viaduto do Chá, but the impression of dirt, discomfort and insecurity is stronger. The most refined look focuses on the many homeless people, street vendors and hurried people who do not look at each other.

For Milton Santos (1987), citizenship is established in the subject's relationship with the territory; it is in the appropriation of their being in the world, their spatial place within systems that guarantee a dignified way of living and capable of integrating the subjects in their community that the citizen with rights is established.

For this author, "No selfishness helps to purify social life, and it is only in a truly human society that individualities fully flourish" (Santos, 1987, p. 78).

An unfriendly city? Is it really unfriendly? What do the thousands of immigrants and migrants have to say that continue to arrive in São Paulo in search of new opportunities? At the same time that it receives, the city does not welcome, as it is enough to walk through the streets to find many of them living in very precarious situations, trying to earn a living in underemployment. What city is this? Can it become an educating city? With these questions, the need for this text opens up, to reflect on the city of São Paulo and its relationship with schools and their educational spaces. Is it possible, through schools, to transform this city? The relationship of its inhabitants with its territory?

From one hour to the next, that look was crossed by a pandemic that put everyone closed in their homes. The city and the streets became restricted places of circulation, and we were forced to observe life in the city through windows, through cracks and with more closed angles. What has this experience provided us?

Our lives have been turned upside down, we have lost the ground, we are disoriented, not knowing how life will be going forward. A great opportunity to rethink the role of the school in the formation of citizens and their relationship with the city. Among other things, a break, so dreamed and desired, to rethink the school at this moment.

What paths have schools taken in the city of São Paulo?

To think about the paths that schools have taken over the ages.

Returning to the walk to downtown São Paulo, the Caetano de Campos school building draws our attention. A school that is part of the history of São Paulo, which, since 1978, lost its initial function and started to house the State Department of Education, according to the website of the department itself. Looking at that imposing and important building leads us to think: what role do schools play in a city like São Paulo? Even if you look carefully, you hardly see children in the frenzy of people. Just as you can hardly see leisure spaces, the old rivers that cut the city and parks or wooded squares. This is a city in the stone jungle. Irene Quintáns, Spanish urbanist, writes:

Some urban planners use the presence of children in the public space as an indicator of urban success. The absence of children, as well as negative health indicators in early childhood, point to flaws in our cities. (Quintáns, 2017, p. 1)

What classification would a city like São Paulo receive? It would almost certainly fail, as Rodrigo Moura suggests:

But what I see is a city silenced with children's voices, emptied of its presence. The interval between the green - yellow - red of the traffic light is the time that children have to see and feel the city until everything starts moving again, and they see a „passing city“ again. (Moura, 2015, p. 4)

This passage from the book *O Glicério por suas crianças*, carried out with testimonies from children in the neighborhood of Glicério, shows very properly how our children feel in a big city that does not look at them. Children who live being hit by the time of adults. Children who do not have time to investigate the world around them.

The city as a public space has been going through a deep crisis, not only here in Brazil, but worldwide. Gómez-Granell and Vila (2003, p.18) point to a study by the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) that says that three fifths of the world population will live in cities during the 21st century and that they will probably concentrate on twenty-one megacities. This concentration of people can lead to unemployment, social exclusion and violence. In a way it is what we already see in the city of São Paulo today. When walking through the center we can see very clear signs of this fact when we notice the number of street vendors, homeless people and beggars scattered throughout the streets. According to these authors, the crisis in cities is due to their community, educational or civilizing function. Lourdes Atié who wrote material for teachers on the role of the city in the education of children illustrates this situation:

The urban child is the main victim of socio-spatial segregation. They are seeing life through the window of a vehicle. The city is just a place to pass and not to stay. There are no public spaces with adequate security for children. Not on sidewalks, squares or in gardens. Brazilian middle and upper class children have marked a growing lack of autonomy in relation to mobility in urban areas. Children from popular groups, on the other hand, explore the streets and spaces close to their homes, which constitute children's territories where they exercise significant control, however, only in these mapped spaces, which are generally exclusive. (Atié, 2015, p.8)

The city of São Paulo fits into this description, which has long been known as a city that never stops. That never sleeps, that there are always people working and running out of time. A city of contradictions: of great wealth and extreme poverty. It has a pulsating center with many people during the day and the night scares people away. It is experiencing a crisis in defense of its revitalization, as it has been the subject of a campaign by several government officials, but has made little progress. Two years ago, we witnessed another tragedy that reveals the inability of the public authorities to make the center a place of good housing: "The invaded building collapses in a fire in Largo do Paissandu, downtown SP, on May 1, 2018", according to the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* the building belongs to the Union and was the headquarters of the Federal Police, it was assigned to the city of São Paulo and has been occupied by homeless people since 2002. Seventeen days later the residents of the building were still camped in the square with nowhere to go. Is it a city that mistreats people?

Jan Gehl (2015), Danish architect and urban planner, author of several urban development projects points to the change that occurred in the way that city planning was thought after 1960. At that time, according to him, cities were thought for people and that over the years, other priorities have gained strength, such as the issue of car traffic. In addition, the growing construction of buildings that privilege each person's individuality has also contributed to the isolation of people and the loss of living spaces. As a result, cities have lost their community and educational functions according to Gómez-Granell and Vila (2003, p.18) which has led to more marked marginality and inequality. They conclude: „the crisis in the city is somehow an educational crisis.“

São Paulo can fit into this scenario, having grown up around large avenues favoring the car as individual transport, its many vertical buildings and the creation of condominiums in neighborhoods furthest from the center end up isolating its residents from a greater coexistence. A city that grew in a disorderly manner, creating several pockets of poverty and segregating part of the population that ended up marginalized. According to Bauman (2007), these places with a high concentration of people in cities have generated a feeling of insecurity and fear. A city that transmits insecurity and because of this feeling was trying to create protection behind walls built around houses and schools that were then hiding and isolating themselves from the city, distancing themselves from the society and the context they are inserted. They were settling in a non-place, in a place of passive receiver of what society thinks it lacks. Bauman (2007) comments on the insecurity relationship that has been established in urban centers:

We can say that the sources of danger have now moved almost entirely to urban areas and settled there. Friends, but also enemies, and above all the elusive and mysterious, foreigners who wander menacingly between the two extremes now mix and walk side by side on the city streets. The war against insecurity, and particularly against the dangers and risks to personal security, is now waged within the city, where urban battlefields are established and the front lines are drawn. Heavily armed trenches (impassable access) and bunkers (fortified and strictly guarded buildings or complexes) designed to separate, maintain distance and keep out strangers from entering are quickly becoming one of the most visible aspects of contemporary cities - although they take many forms, and although its creators do their best to mix their creations with the city's landscape, thus „normalizing“ the state of emergency in which its residents, addicted to protection but always unsafe in relation to it, live their day-to-day lives. (Bauman, 2015, p.78)

Many schools in São Paulo adhered to this fear by closing themselves behind high walls and bars, seeking to protect their children from the city. A school that hides itself through high walls, that selects who enters and who leaves and how it leaves proving what Jerome Bruner (2001) affirms that to know the schools it is necessary to understand the city and the community in which it is inserted. How can we get to know the city if we run away from it?

Schools cannot be isolated from what happens around them, they are part of a whole context that has to be looked at and thinking about in partnership. By hiding behind high walls, we have the feeling that they are turning their backs on their community and their main objective, which is to form citizens. Atié (2015, p.3) points to the need for schools to resume their commitment to citizenship that would imply opening up to cities even physically, breaking down their walls and proposing a new way of learning interacting with the community and the school surroundings giving new meaning to learning.

The pandemic brought us the possibility of meeting the city in another way. When we looked at it through cracks, we discovered new places, details and started to value simple things. When we were prevented from walking freely in public spaces, it brought us other forms of relationship with people and places.

And schools also had to reinvent themselves and somehow ended up being exposed to having to give online classes to children who were accompanied by their parents. A situation of visibility of part of the school's work was created. What has somehow opened the school's doors to families, the next step needs to be for the community. And who knows in the future they will not change their relationship with the city.

But the city of São Paulo is plural and does not stop. In the same way that we see schools hiding behind walls, we find manifestations and desires of others who want to open up and make a difference in this search to form true citizens. Even before the pandemic, some public schools located in the center of São Paulo started to organize themselves around the Movement of the Educational Territories of Travessias that involve four schools in the central region of the city. One of the actions was an activity that caught the attention of the media and ended up having good visibility, was the tricycle ride through Praça da República. The experience worked so well that it became a routine activity. Teacher Lívia Arruda reports in the interview for TV Cultura that, out of her desire to give children back the right to citizenship, she thought of a project that would open the school gates to the city. His proposal was to organize a tricycle ride through Praça da República. That by taking children to stroll through the square it was also possible to break the rhythm of the city, that the fact that they had children playing in the space aroused curiosity in the people who passed by. Those people who used to walk without looking at their surroundings were awakened to see the square in another way. And for children, the experience has also served them to discover new opportunities for relating to the space around their school

Which, from the point of view that we are presenting, makes sense when showing that it is possible to change what happens in a territory and thereby give back or create new possibilities for action that were not defined a priori.

Who builds a city that educates?

Education is not neutral, we must be aware of our active commitment to the society we intend to have. In the search for an education that aims to exercise citizenship, the school needs to interact with the transformations of the world and the context in which it is inserted. From the school, it is possible to create a citizen culture and from the local community, education is made and teaching, content and educational values can be discussed. In line with this idea, Jaqueline Moll (2008) proposes that the city be thought of as a place of education through the role of fundamental social and political actors and that the school be re-signified as a place for building local identities and solving social problems. What place does the school need to occupy in the current context? What is the purpose of the school? One of the possibilities is that it, the school, develops a large part of people's capacities to provide answers to the problems that life in society poses. Therefore, we need to maintain a permanent dialogue between the different actors in the school community in order to better understand our responsibility as educators. Community understood as a space for the collective, communion, doing together, belonging.

Today we need to understand that we train individuals for an uncertain and increasingly complex future, especially from the point of view of social relations and the speed of knowledge change. According to Bruner (2001, p.16) „reality is represented by a symbolism shared by members of a cultural community“. Within a community cultural symbols are created and shared that pass from one generation to another, thus the image of this symbolism that is born in a given community is preserved and shared by future generations. Therefore, the idea that we are going to build on childhood will be the result of the culture of the community of which we are a part. For the concept of education that we believe is directly related to the experiences that we bring within us and that were lived within a context. Schools need to reflect on this issue and be aware of their responsibility in transmitting, reframing and creating cultures. To understand the need to listen to your community, to work together with it and to be really part of it. And ask themselves about what is the relationship between the school community with the environment, with its surroundings? It is in the school community that cultural models, values, norms and ways of relating are worked on. The school community and the local community are interdependent and are influenced by each other. The school needs to seek new forms of relationship in the world. Society can help the school solve some of its problems. The school cannot close itself.

For Isabel Alarcão (2011), in today's school, students and teachers do not feel motivated; it does not form citizens. Students spend years studying concepts unrelated to their daily lives, which do not enhance a reflective experience and whose main objective is that they pass the exams to get into university. It is a school that does not live in the present, that thinks about the final goal, that values only academic education. It is a school disconnected from the real world, which lives in an artificial context that only serves the school world. Still according to Alarcão (2011, p.15), “the school that thinks and evaluates itself in its educational project is a learning organization that qualifies not only those who study there, but also those who teach in it”. For this author, we need to rethink the learning spaces, which can be in various places, and not only at school. A space that favors coexistence, since reflective learning needs to be shared, it takes place in the collective. However, this change will only happen if the school becomes a space for reflection and forms reflective teachers. Education that thinks about the integral education of children will only make sense with teachers and other educators of the school involved in their education and who have their practice valued, considering that there is a knowledge, a knowledge that comes from experience. Knowledge cannot be only academic, which is outside the school. According to Strozzi (2015), the school needs to be “an open system to political and social transformations, simultaneously capable of accepting the contributions of scientific research and of being a place of research”. A school that values the learning community.

With the distance from the city streets, because the danger is everywhere and circulates invisibly, the pandemic brings the city from the perspective of the window cracks and the desire to be on the streets. The city as an occupied territory gains the possibility of being rethought, of being desired again; confinement brings the hope of building a gentler city.

We believe that this is the possible way to make our city more educating, through the movement that is born within schools, transforming what we understand by citizenship and how our relationship with a living city, understood as an organism, should be. In this relationship, it is necessary to consider the paths and paths of each subject involved.

Within the city space there are links between people and space, and between them and other people. This set of links and exchanges forms a large network, which shapes the city. It is because of this network of relationships that space is transformed, takes on meaning and becomes a place. (Moura, 2015, p. 11)

A possibility of libertarian education at CEU Butantã - São Paulo - Brazil

What is the origin of the Unified Education Center?

The concept of the integrated school is brought to Brazil by Anísio Teixeira in the mid-1920s, with an approach to John Dewey theories, triggered from his studies at the Hull House in Chicago in the USA between the years 1927 and 1928. This proposal was implemented in Brazil initially in the federal district, at that time the city of Rio de Janeiro, later consolidated in the city of Salvador in Bahia, with the construction and realization of the project of integral school Carneiro Ribeiro, or Escola Parque.

In this sense, integrated schools in Brazil show their power when they were displaced in other projects in later decades, such as the CIEPs (Integrated Center for Public Education) in Rio de Janeiro implemented by Darcy Ribeiro with architectural design by Oscar Niemeyer (1983-1987), later the CAICs (Center for Attention to Integral to Children and Adolescents) federal project in the early 90s, built in some states in a punctual way, without a structured educational project, which made it difficult to remain as an integral and integrated school, and the CEUs, initially carried out by the Municipality of São Paulo, today existing in other Brazilian municipalities.

It is worth mentioning that the concept that underpinned the CEUs Project was born well before its implementation and originates on the premises of the Department of Buildings of the City Hall - SP (Edif), carried out by a group of architects who sought a sophisticated and bold project that could mobilize the city and reconnect its human dimensions by means of polarizing equipment, from which this proposal would emanate, the Unified Education Centers.

The CEUs project rescued the essence of the Parque School proposal, which was anchored in the platoon system, defended by Anísio Teixeira and propagated through architectural projects by Hélio Queiroz Duarte, which took place in São Paulo through the School Agreement (1949-1959), moment in which the state and the municipality come together to build and implement schools in the city and also sought to rescue the essence of the Children's Parks, a project by Mário de Andrade (1935) when he was in charge of the Municipal Secretary of Culture.

One of the goals that guided the projects of the integrated schools was the platoon system of education. The platoon system (or platoons, groups of children) was born in Detroit, in the United States through the ideas of administrative organization of one of the most progressive educators of the time, Ellwood Patterson Cubberly (1868-1941) and later John Dewey (1859-1952), through a refined scientific organization, sought to promote progressive education for the American elementary school. Dewey also proposed that the new demands of life and the progress of society be incorporated into the school, and Cubberly understood that education was not only knowledge, but knowledge as useful, that contributed to life.

This process of building the concept of integral school derives from an initial project and takes new forms as it transforms in later decades, with CEUs being the most recent version.

According to Alexandre Delijaicov and André Takyia, two of the architects responsible for the architectural design of the CEUs, they point out that the project came about, rescuing in the first place the posture of the civil servant architect, more humanist and less mercantilist; thus, there was a search through the collective project of the initial conception of the educational equipment square, which over time has become clearer.

As an architectural conception, it can be said that the original CEU project is pretentious: due to its large size, it stands out in the landscape by printing a significant reference contrast, which reveals and signifies its characteristics.

Especially the architectural design of CEU meant that the school for the periphery does not need to be small like the majority of those that exist in neighborhoods far from a megalopolis like São Paulo. When installed in a peripheral neighborhood, CEU generates the experience of living with the beautiful and the good, changing the references and standards of demand of everyone in that territory.

There is a concern in this equipment square with the insertion of the community. In the initial period of its implementation, there were many projects aimed at students' parents and residents of the neighborhood; such as community radio, professional courses, art studios and other possibilities for integration, however, with the changes in municipal management these projects were being abandoned.

Another important aspect is the coexistence of the residents with the CEU spaces, all passersby could use some internal passages as a route to other areas of the neighborhood, an extension of the streets, creating a close relationship, coexistence and the appropriation of that space.

Integrated spaces

Due to its large dimensions, CEU allows multiple experiences, we will present below some activities carried out with the children of the CEU Butantã Early Childhood Center.

One of the spaces that young children like to play is the side patio of the early childhood education building, as it has a large linear extension, it gives the child the perception of open and free space, spaces that promote motor and perceptual experiences. This type of experience alters the appropriation of space, which is no longer a restricted experience inside a room and starts to gain a large dimension, with mutual coexistence in large and open environments. These experiences are fundamental for the construction of knowledge that involves cognitive and social affective issues of children with space, which evokes the concept of Milton Santos, a geographer, who understands the citizen space through its appropriation.

The educational space in the perspective of the architect Mayumi Souza de Lima, who worked in the city of São Paulo was that, "For the child there is the joy space, the fear space, the protection space, the mystery space, the discovery space, in short, the spaces of freedom and the spaces of oppression." (1989, p.30)

Spaces that can be considered as educators for enabling learning relationships that favor new knowledge constructions. According to Lella Gandini (2016, p.148) the relationships between children and adults happen in interaction, flexibility and the possibility of changes in the environment creating possibilities for knowledge construction.



Fig. 1 Lateral patio



Fig. 2 Forest

The original nature of an integrated school, a guideline cultivated by Anísio Teixeira based on the ideas of Dewey, has fertile land in the CEUs proposal in the city of São Paulo, its architectural project is the materialization to sustain an emancipatory educational proposal, which provides mutual interaction.

The pools have an area bounded by railings to prevent accidents, but there is the permeability of being able to see the pool and go to play in the shallow pool, suitable for small children, resembling a water mirror, allowing water in contact with sun to stay warm and pleasant for younger children.

According to one of the architects who created CEU, the Aquatic Park, as he called the set of pools, was thought of as a provocative element, one that appears in front of the school attracting looks from inside and outside.



Fig. 3 Pools



Fig. 4 outdoor area

The outdoor area as a possibility for experimentation: in it, children have the possibility to exercise their creation in playing games.

Children almost always create a challenge game, teachers observe, it is allowed to experience situations that have the possibility of going wrong, learning must be constituted in the particularities, hypothesis, trial and error of each one.



Fig. 5 and 6 External area of the CEI / All Photographs by Ingrid Hötte Ambrogi.

They organize themselves in games and groups, discuss rules, propose games among themselves and develop their power of argumentation and leadership from an early age, an important possibility in the education of these boys and girls who learn to exercise citizenship.

In addition to finished and ready-made speeches, justifications from different areas of knowledge, the mobilizing action of coexistence is what makes learning, autonomy of thought and action effective. It is worth remembering Paulo Freire, one of the most recognized Brazilian educators, who is always in the act of love that promotes the best of human beings.

Experience, subtleties, sensitivities, experiments and personal perceptions certainly give the possibility of getting in touch with a peculiar, differentiated universe that is in the set of transformative experiences that seek to broaden the reading of the world and its senses.

Let the territories stop being placed in the place of verification, determination and plastering of social roles and start being considered as spaces for reflection on society.

Here is an invitation to reinvent the city we live in and its relationship with people, children and education, to become an educating city. The city needs to be pulsating, alive!

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