



PEA – PEDAGOGY, ECOLOGY
AND THE ARTS CONFERENCE

POLIS

A CURA DI
SABINA LANGER
EVI AGOSTINI
DENIS FRANCESCONI
NAZARIO ZAMBALDI

FrancoAngeli 

 ECOLOGIE
DELLA
FORMAZIONE



ECOLOGIE DELLA FORMAZIONE

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 ECOLOGIE
DELLA
FORMAZIONE

PEA

Pedagogy Ecology and the Arts conference

Euphur

Euregio Platform on Human Dignity and Human Rights

University of Trento | Free University of Bolzano Bozen | University of Innsbruck

Accademia di Merano | Akademie Meran

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Polis. PEA – Pedagogy, Ecology and the Arts

Sabina Langer, Evi Agostini, Denis Francesconi, Nazario Zambaldi

PEA conference

The first *PEA – Pedagogy, Ecology and the Arts conference* took place on 8 and 9 September 2023 in Meran-o (Italy) and was attended by researchers and practitioners from all over Europe: Italy, Austria, Germany, Greece, and Denmark.

When we – the curators – first started thinking about a conference that would bring together our interests and expertise, “pedagogy”, “ecology” and “the arts” were the first keywords that emerged. The aim of our conference was to bring together learning and education, ecological thinking and the visual and performing arts in order to discuss in an innovative way the human and more-than-human conditions on our planet from an individual and societal perspective. Therefore, there are three main themes on which the conference – and now this book – are based:

- Pedagogy, with learning, education (*Bildung*) and upbringing (*Erziehung*) in their inclusive, empowering, and developmental sense at its centre. The focus is especially on the science and practice of pedagogy, which find ways to shape processes of learning, education and upbringing in differentiated dialogues with others and the world.
- Ecology and ecological thinking, in which we link experiences, lives and systems (classrooms, places, institutions...) in a systemic perspective. The focus here is on reflecting on ecological aspects and perspectives, whereby the interplay of personal processes, individual lives and lived experiences is perceived and described in relation to the respective systemic prerequisites.
- The arts, in the sense of a qualitative enquiry that incorporates artistic processes and dimensions of experience, as well as creativity and a critical stance. We especially include aesthetic and artistic approaches that have the potential to generate surprising insights about oneself, others and the world, to open up new possibilities for perception, experience and research.

The first letters of these three words form the word “PEA”– a legume, round and green. This also reflects the logo we have chosen: a pea is never alone; it grows and lives in a pod, attached to the plant, in a garden, and thanks to the water, soil and sunlight. We like this play on words because of the irony, the humility of intent to be small yet together like peas growing in pods. And last but not least, there is the connection of the pea with the green of plant world. Like a single pea, humans can achieve very little without the support of the community, society, and the rest of the world.



Figure 1. The logo of PEA – Pedagogy Ecology and the Arts

From the outset, the organisation of the conference was informed by an ecological perspective, i.e., the promotion of a dialogical, listening-orientated ecological niche (Bateson, 2000; Maturana & Dávila, 2015) – open to the local community and in communication with the networks we have already activated in our personal and professional journeys. Through the annual PEA conference, we curators want to foster a convivial human environment (Illich, 1973) in which researchers, artists, teachers, educators and practitioners can meet and confront ideas and perspectives that are also, or above all, different.

We want to provide a space for the exchange of projects and experiences and encourage people to connect with each other in order to create generative links and networks (Francesconi, Symeonidis & Agostini, 2021; Langer & Zambaldi, 2022; Francesconi, 2023). These should promote transformative energy and hope for those worlds and realities, which can become an alternative to the mainstream narrative of the dream of infinite progress. In the hope of a paradigm shift towards a perspective that seeks positive visions for humanity and the planet, we would like to see the creation of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) in which people from different backgrounds can

share actions, thoughts, research and language, and work together to inhabit the world in an ecological, democratic and peaceful way.

The opportunity to relate to each other and engage in a careful and participatory dialogue was facilitated by the location of the conference and the limited number of participants. Meran-o is a small town in South Tyrol, once a health resort of the Habsburg empire, which has belonged to Italy since 1918. In the Middle Ages, it was the capital of the whole Tyrol, which is also the name of the village (“Tirol-o”), which can be reached by means of a chairlift from the centre of Meran-o and is home to the castle of Meinhard II. The local history of South Tyrol in the twentieth century is marked by the divisions of a borderland between Italian-speaking and German-speaking areas, which suffered as a result of the agreements of the Nazi and Fascist allies in the first part of the century. After the Second World War it underwent an ambivalent solution that protected minorities within the framework of local legislation, but which has at times been perceived as divisive even almost a century after the events of the war.

The choice of the conference venue is no coincidence. The Academy of Italian-German Studies provides a welcoming space for dialogue in the Villa San Marco (since 1949), which was initially founded as *Schwabenvilla* (“Villa of the Swallows”) at the end of the nineteenth century. The street in which the villa stands was originally dedicated to the favourite daughter of the Empress Sissi, who was a regular guest in Meran-o, but now bears the name of the primary school teacher Franz Innerhofer, who was the first local victim of fascism on Bloody Sunday, 24 April 1921, at the Bolzano fair. The funeral procession that carried his body from Bozen-Bolzano to Marling-Marlengo near Meran-o was attended by all the South Tyrolean democratic parties and thousands of people from all language groups.

The Academy of Italian-German Studies is home to EUPHUR, the *Euregio Platform for Human Dignity and Human Rights*, a joint initiative of the Universities of Innsbruck, Bozen-Bolzano and Trento, i.e., the “Euregio”, one of the European regions created after the Second World War to promote cross-border cooperation. The aim of EUPHUR is to scientifically examine and reflect on the fundamental issues of human dignity and the central themes of the current human rights debates in order to initiate and promote social discourse. We would like to thank Robert Simon, coordinator of EUPHUR, for the collaboration.

The Centre for Culture is the other venue where the conference takes place and where workshops and exhibitions are held in the theatre and other rooms. This is home to the cultural association *Teatro Pratiko* which organises the conference together with *CRAT – Centre of Research in Arts and Theatre*. In 2023, “CRATere”, the *small review of theatre, arts and humanity*, shared the

title “*polis*” with the PEA conference and curated and hosted the artist Michelangelo Pistoletto, as well as the exhibition dedicated to research cinema by Bruno Munari and Marcello Piccardo, which was also part of the conference programme.

Starting in spring 2023, a series of events on the conference theme were organised in cooperation with *CRATere* and other local institutions, including the *Fondazione Alexander Langer Stiftung*, to create connections between PEA, its participants and local citizens. The curators’ intention was to open up a dialogue between the worlds of art, culture, politics and research, particularly involving the University of Vienna.

Polis. The conference theme

The idea of focusing on the *polis* for the first edition of PEA stems from our strong emphasis on the social dimension and from our interests in a pedagogy that is convivial, communitarian and ecological in an intersubjective and political sense. We understand *polis* in a very broad sense: living together in a complex world and society where all differences can find a way to coexist, where there is conviviality, good politics and active citizenship, as well as personal and shared responsibility arising from concern for the common good. Ecology and art-based research can provide a framework for individual and collective learning, with the aim of defining and constructing an inclusive and sustainable *polis*.

The events and activities that prepared and preceded the conference were organised along these lines: the workshops in schools and in the region were based on bell hooks’ books, in particular *Teaching Community. A Pedagogy of Hope* (2003/2022) together with the Ippolita research group, which also deals with pedagogy and network ecology and publishes the “Culture Radicali” series (Meltemi), in which hooks’ books have been published in Italian; the presentation with Michelangelo Pistoletto, master of the historic “Arte Povera movement”, concerning his latest book *La formula della creazione* (2022) on the theme of the “Third Paradise” project, which focuses on care for the environment, ecology and the commons; the presentation – together with the publishing house Alphabeta – that represents a bridge between Italian and German-speaking cultures, of the German edition of *Lettera a una professoressa* from Milani’s school of Barbiana (*Brief an eine Lehrerin [Letter to a Teacher]*, 2023) translated from Italian by Alexander Langer, a founder of European ecogism and the green movement, who also inspired this conference.

The keynote speakers helped us to present different perspectives of the concept of *polis* and its various – desirable – forms. Marijana Grandits is head of the “Master of Arts and Human Rights” in Vienna; together with Alexander Langer, she founded the “Verona Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in the Territories of former Yugoslavia”, which reinvented a *polis* from the bottom in the 1990s in order to collect hypotheses and initiatives of civil society in the war-torn Balkans to present to the European Parliament. Siegfried Baur, former professor at the Faculty of Education at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, reviewed for this book the history of the concept of the *polis* and its relevance for civil society and the community. Hans Karl Peterlini, Professor of Education at the University of Klagenfurt, Austria and founder of the “UNESCO Chair on Global Citizenship Education – Culture of Diversity and Peace”, outlined the same idea of civil society as an educational force. Moreover, he reflected on the challenge that we no longer allow ourselves to be touched by the world. Ines Giunta, a researcher at the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage at Ca’ Foscari University in Venice, expanded on the idea of the *polis* by introducing ethical thinking about coexistence between human beings and the world.

Other invited speakers included Paolo Landri from the CNR National Research Centre, who participated in a panel discussion on network ecology and presented the Italian edition of Biesta’s *The Rediscovering of Teaching* (2017/2022) together with his co-editor Francesco Cappa, Professor of Pedagogy at the University of Milano-Bicocca; Heidrun Demo and Michele Cagol, both from the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, who participated with a dialogue, the former on democracy and participation, the latter on the ecology of wonder; Andrea Piccardo, who presented the experience of the exhibited *The experience of the workshop in Monte Olimpino: cinema as research*, opening a dialogue between him and the participants of the conference; The art organisation Kunst Merano Arte offered the art tour to the exhibition entitled *Multiplicity. Stories from the post-migrant society* which contributed to creating community even after the conference. The transversality of the conference between the arts and the humanities was also evidenced by the DJ set by Raffaele Virgadola, an organisational psychologist with a doctorate in psychiatry who follows in the footsteps of Franco Basaglia in Trieste.

The curators’ perspectives on the *polis*, as previously mentioned, reflect personal paths:

Sabina Langer (PhD) has made democratic, active citizenship and participation her research focus; she promotes civic education curricula designed and constructed in a participatory way and conducts workshops to empower students for the common good. She has contributed to projects for peaceful coexistence in Bosnia-Herzegovina for over twenty years, is co-founder of the

Casa delle Donne of Milan and co-curator of the Italian *Scuola Sconfinata* movement.

Evi Agostini, Associate Professor at the Centre for Teacher Education and the Department of Education at the University of Vienna, is fundamentally concerned with the possibilities of sustainable learning and teaching and the associated and changing views of self, others and the world. Her main research interests lie in the areas of phenomenological learning and teaching research, responsive teacher education and school development, aesthetic education, ethics and sustainability.

Denis Francesconi, senior scientist at the Centre for Teacher Education at the University of Vienna, specialises in the field of educational theory with a focus on embodied education, cultural evolution and systems theory. His research targets sustainable wellbeing and learning networks.

Nazario Zambaldi (PhD) is artist, director and curator of theatre projects (*Teatro Pratiko* and *CRATere* in Meran-o). His previous work, in psychiatry and more recently in centres for asylum seekers, understands art as a way of creating awareness, relationships and change. He teaches in high school and leads theatre and arts workshops in schools at all levels as well as in other social spheres. His arts-based research is focused on embodied education through theatre and the arts.

The book

The papers were presented in a dialogical and convivial way during the PEA 2023 conference. They took the form of oral presentations and workshops, which have been adapted and compiled into this book. All the authors have succeeded in combining either two or all three pillars of PEA, i.e., pedagogy, ecology and the arts. For this reason, we have decided to structure the book by dividing the contributions into the three thematic areas, emphasizing the main area of each contribution.

We want this publication to be more than a collection of papers from the presentations and workshops: we are very pleased that the final contributions have been enriched by the dialogues and exchanges of ideas that also took place in the convivial moments of the conference, hopefully overcoming any possible language barriers. We hope that this book succeeds in conveying to readers the uplifting atmosphere that resulted from the pleasant and deep connections and relationships established at PEA 2023. For the next event in 2024, again in Meran-o and this time with the focus on *peace*, we hope that the positive atmosphere will be recreated, and that the spirit of conviviality and creative industry will be maintained at future events.

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Keynotes

From the development of equality in difference to an education for the future

Siegfried Baur

Abstract This article outlines the ancient Greek concept of polis as a constitutional society of free citizens. The concept polis, however, lacks equality in the sense of modern democratic constitutions, since women, slaves and other dependents belonged neither to the state nor to society, but to the property of free citizens. Therefore, the constitutional principle of equality, which is not a privilege but a right, shall be outlined in the historical span.

Von der Entwicklung der Gleichheit in der Differenz zu einer Erziehung für die Zukunft

Einleitung

In diesem Beitrag geht es zuerst darum, den altgriechischen Begriff der *Polis* als Verfassungsgesellschaft freier Bürger zu umreißen, in der Staat und Gesellschaft miteinander identifiziert wurden. Teil dieses Systems war auch das Hauswesen als Lebenswelt der Familie, *Oikos* benannt, eine Lebenswelt privater *und* ökonomischer Interessen, die aber rechtlich eng mit dem öffentlichen Raum verbunden war. Die *Polis* und der dialektisch damit verbundene *Oikos* waren aber aus politischer Sicht vom heutigen Begriff der Gleichheit weit entfernt. Daher soll das Prinzip der Gleichheit in der historischen Entwicklungsspanne von Perikles über die Französische Revolution zu Abraham Lincoln und bis zur Moderne exemplarisch umrissen werden.

In einem zweiten Schritt soll die dialektische Spannung zwischen Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft, Staat und Zivilgesellschaft dargestellt werden.

Im letzten Abschnitt sollen, Edgar Morin (2015) und Hans Küng (2001) folgend, die wesentlichen Fundamente für eine Erziehung der Zukunft fokussiert und ein Ausblick versucht werden.

Die Entwicklung der Gleichheit in der Differenz von der Athenischen Demokratie (*Polis*) bis zum Nationalstaat

Perikles, einer der führenden Staatsmänner Athens, hält im ersten Kriegswinter des Peloponnesischen Krieges (431-411 v. Chr.) eine Gefallenenrede, die uns von Thukydides (454-399 v. Chr.) überliefert worden ist. In dieser Rede stellt er neben anderen Aspekten, wie die genealogische Beziehung zu den Vorfahren, auch das Konzept der Polisgemeinde Athen in den Mittelpunkt: «Die Verfassung, nach der wir leben, vergleicht sich mit keiner fremden; viel eher sind wir für sonst jemand ein Vorbild als Nachahmer anderer. Mit Namen heißt sie, weil der Staat nicht auf wenige Bürger, sondern auf eine größere Zahl gestellt ist, Volksherrschaft» (Thukydides, S. 140 – II, 36).

Damit spricht er aus heutiger Sicht das Konzept der Demokratie an, zu der Freiheit und Gleichheit gehören und in dem Staat und Gesellschaft eng miteinander verbunden sind.

Der *Polis* und dem damit verbundenen privaten/öffentlichen Raum des *Oikos* fehlte es allerdings an Gleichheit, da Frauen und Sklaven keine Bürgerrechte hatten, sondern, vor allem, was die Sklaven betraf, zum Besitz der freien Bürger gehörten. Ohne Bürgerrechte waren auch die zugezogenen Metöken, die vor allem im Handel und im Handwerk arbeiteten.

Wer sind aber nun diese Freien und Gleichen? Ich zitiere Jansen (2006): «Die Polis ist die Gemeinschaft der Politen. Nur Männer sind Politen. Frauen haben kein Bürgerrecht. Nur Freie sind Politen. Sklaven haben kein Bürgerrecht. Nur ‚Hiesige‘ sind Politen. Fremde haben kein Bürgerrecht. Die Beisassen oder Metöken sind also keine Bürger. Nur Männer mittleren Alters sind Politen im vollen Sinne» (a. a. O., S. 9).

In der bereits erwähnten Gefallenenrede steigert sich Perikles dennoch zu einer Verherrlichung der attischen Polis-Demokratie: «Nach dem Gesetz haben in den Streitigkeiten der Bürger alle ihr gleiches Teil, der Geltung nach aber hat im öffentlichen Wesen den Vorzug, wer sich irgendwie Ansehen erworben hat, nicht nach irgendeiner Zugehörigkeit, sondern nach seinem Verdienst; und ebenso wird keiner aus Armut, wenn er für die Stadt etwas leisten könnte, durch die Unscheinbarkeit seines Namens verhindert» (Thukydides, S. 141 – II, 37).

Brunkhorst (1994) meint dazu treffend: «Das entspricht zwar nicht ganz den Tatsachen, aber schmeichelt den unteren Volksschichten. Perikles mag sich hier an Platons Diktum gehalten haben, im Wissen um das Gute sei es ganz in Ordnung, die Unwissenden um des Guten willens hinters Licht zu führen und ihnen etwas vorzumachen» (Ebd., S. 150).

Zusammenfassend kann Brunkhorst (1994) folgend gesagt werden: «Für Perikles und Aristoteles ist demokratische Gleichheit (...) ‚substanzielle

Gleichheit'. Diesem Gleichheitsverständnis zufolge kann die Gleichheit des Gesetzes nur bei Gleichheit von Geburt und Macht gelten» (Ebd., S. 146).

Und dies hat spätestens seit der Französischen Revolution nichts mit Demokratie zu tun.

Wenden wir uns nun kurz einer weiteren Gefallenenrede zu, die Abraham Lincoln am 19. November 1863 nach der Entscheidungsschlacht des nordamerikanischen Bürgerkrieges gehalten hat, die sogenannte Gettysburg Address. In dieser kurzen Rede schaut Lincoln in die Zukunft und erhebt die Gleichheit aller Menschen, die Schwarzen und alle anderen Ethnien der nordamerikanischen Union miteinbeziehend, zum (künftigen) Verfassungsgrundsatz. Wie Brunkhorst (1994) schreibt, war die nordamerikanische Union «ganz in der angelsächsischen Tradition der *Bill of Rights* – ein Verfassungsstaat ohne Gleichheit... Erst nach und nach musste den seit 1776 bestehenden Institutionen (Unabhängigkeitserklärung von Jefferson vom 4. Juli 1776) die Ergänzung um die Idee der Gleichheit abgerungen werden» (Ebd., S. 147).

So Lincoln: «Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal» (Lincoln, 1969, S. 734).

Brunkhorst (1994) sagt dazu: «Vor diesem Hintergrund war Lincolns (...) Rede ein eklatanter Verfassungsbruch, genauer ein Bruch mit dem *substantiellen* Verfassungsverständnis, das die Sklavenhaltergesellschaft Virginias und Athens über alle historischen Differenzen hinweg geteilt hatten» (Ebd., S. 148).

Dies ist, in die Vergangenheit und in die Zukunft blickend, nicht mehr das Konzept einer Demokratie der Herrschaft der größeren Zahl, sondern der komplexe Prozess der *Selbstorganisation des Volkes* und der Gewaltenteilung im Staat.

Die kurze Rede Lincolns endet mit der berühmten Definition von Demokratie: «It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us (...) that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth» (a. a. O., S. 734).

Aber kehren wir nach Europa zurück, nach Frankreich in die Zeit der Französischen Revolution von 1789. Die der französischen Verfassung vom 3. September 1791 vorangestellte *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* kann als eigentliche erste Erklärung der Menschenrechte verstanden werden. Diese Erklärung bringt gegenüber den amerikanischen Erklärungen von 1776 und den Bill of Rights von 1791 in den einzelnen Artikeln kaum etwas Neues, sie ist aber bei der Betonung der Gleichheit wesentlich radikaler.

Die ersten Artikel haben folgenden Wortlaut: 1) Die Menschen werden frei und gleich an Rechten geboren und bleiben es. Die gesellschaftlichen

Unterschiede können nur auf den gemeinsamen Nutzen gegründet sein. 2) Der Endzweck aller politischen Vereinigung ist die Erhaltung der natürlichen und unabdingbaren Menschenrechte. Diese Rechte sind die Freiheit, das Eigentum, die Sicherheit, der Widerstand gegen Unterdrückung. 3) Der Ursprung aller Souveränität liegt seinem Wesen nach beim Volke. Keine Körperschaft, kein Einzelner kann eine Autorität ausüben, die nicht ausdrücklich hiervon ausgeht.

Hinzugefügt werden muss allerdings, dass die Frauen keinerlei politischen Rechte hatten. Sie erhalten das Wahlrecht erst im Jahre 1944. Weiters ist erwähnenswert, «...die Teilung der Bürger in Aktiv- und Passivbürger, die die politischen Rechte auf die Steuerzahler einschränkte» (Hartung, 1972, S. 15).

Im Hinblick auf eine Erziehung zu einem demokratischen Bewusstsein, ist es nun notwendig kurz die Begriffe der Gleichheit, Differenz und Inklusion zu umreißen.

Dazu ein Zitat von Alexander Langer aus *Miteinander, Nebeneinander auf Südtirol* bezogen (1986):

Es lässt sich nicht gut zusammenleben, solange die Überzeugung verbreitet und gefördert wird, es ließe sich im Grunde ohne ‚die anderen‘ besser leben, man sei ‚ohne sie‘ eben unter sich und ungestört...Wie soll das Zusammenleben wachsen und blühen, wenn auf beiden Seiten die stillschweigende oder gar ausdrückliche Vorstellung besteht (und genährt wird), es sei im Grunde das Beste, die ‚anderen‘ würden verschwinden - oder sich aufsaugen lassen? (a. a. O., S. 180)

Dazu nochmals Alexander Langer, wenige Monate vor dem Massaker in Srebrenica vom 11. bis 19. Juli 1995 in *Zehn Punkte für das Zusammenleben* (1995):

Insofern ist es besonders wichtig, dass dort, wo mehrere Volksgruppen, Konfessionen usw. gemeinsam leben, die lokale Selbstverwaltung möglichst weit geht, damit alle zusammenlebenden Menschen und Volksgruppen gemeinsame Verantwortung und gemeinsame Zugehörigkeit zu dieser besonderen gemeinsamen Heimat entwickeln können. Gerade ein hohes Maß lokaler Selbstregierung kann auch ein gutes Gegenmittel gegen Anschlussgelüste, Grenzveränderungen u. dgl. sein, die erfahrungsgemäß leicht zu Konflikt und Krieg führen können. (a. a. O., S. 240)

Die Entscheidung für eine Integration zwischen verschiedenen Sprachgruppen, nicht nur in Südtirol und Europa, sondern weltweit, und die Akzeptanz einer multikulturellen und interkulturellen Gesellschaft, hängt nicht in erster Linie von größeren oder geringeren kulturellen Unterschieden zwischen den Ethnien ab - sie sind im mitteleuropäischen Raum zumindest auf der Ebene grundlegender Wertestrukturen und Haltungen gering –, sondern

vielmehr von der grundsätzlichen Entscheidung und Bereitschaft, vor allem der dominanten Sprachgruppen, Machtpositionen und Interessenssphären zu teilen.

Ausgeprägte ethnische Positionen, die per definitionem herkunftsorientiert sind, lassen eine derartige zukunftsgerichtete Entscheidung kaum zu. Demokratische Selbstbestimmung hingegen hat nach Habermas 1996 den «...inkluisiven Sinn einer alle Bürger gleichmäßig einbeziehenden Selbstgesetzgebung. Inklusion heißt, dass sich eine solche politische Ordnung offen hält für die Gleichstellung der Diskriminierten und die *Einbeziehung* der Marginalisierten, ohne diese in die Uniformität einer gleichgearteten Volksgemeinschaft einzuschließen» (Ebd., S. 166).

Auf Mehrheits-/Minderheitssituationen von Sprachgruppen übertragen, bedeutet dies, dass nur ein gemeinsames gesellschaftliches Konzept, das über Herstellung von Konsens die nicht dominanten Sprachgruppen miteinbezieht, (staats)-bürgerliche Gleichberechtigung sicherstellen, Assimilation – als erzwungener oder mehr oder weniger freiwilliger Einschluss – vermeiden und kulturelle und sprachliche Unterschiede im Selbstverständnis der Sprachgruppen erhalten kann. Es geht um die Erhaltung von Differenz in der Gleichheit, das heißt auf der Ebene einer abstrakten – aber von allen Sprachgruppen geteilten – gesellschaftlichen Integration.

Auf dem Wege zum Nationalstaat: Ethnos, Demos, Staat und Zivilgesellschaft

Das Wort Nation ist etymologisch vom lateinischen *natio* (das Geborenwerden, das Geschlecht, der Stamm) hergeleitet. Diese Bedeutung steckt noch in der ursprünglichen Verwendung des Begriffes Nation für soziale Gruppen, die sich als Abstammungsgemeinschaften imaginieren (*Andersons Imagined Communities*) und ihre Herkunft von mythischen Ureltern herleiten. Habermas (1996) präzisiert: «Nationen sind zunächst Abstammungsgemeinschaften, die geographisch durch Siedlung und Nachbarschaft, kulturell durch gemeinsame Sprache, Sitte und Überlieferung, aber noch nicht politisch, im Rahmen einer staatlichen Organisationsform integriert sind. (...)» (Ebd., S. 133).

Diese Abstammungsgemeinschaften werden in den Sozialwissenschaften als Ethnien bezeichnet. Darunter versteht man eine Großgruppe, die Gemeinschaftsgefühl und Solidarität entwickelt hat. Eine konstruktivistische Theorie von „Ethnos“ findet sich beim britischen Anthropologen und Soziologen Anthony D. Smith (1992). Er spricht von folgenden Merkmalen einer Ethnie:

1. A collective proper name
2. A myth of common ancestry
3. Shared historical memories
4. One or more differentiating elements of common culture
5. An association with a specific 'Homeland'
6. A sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population. (a. a. O., S. 21)

Der Nationenbau des 19. Jahrhunderts oder der einsetzende Vergesellschaftungsprozess (vgl. dazu Tönnies (1887/2005) und Weber (1922/2002) fußte jedenfalls auf einer ethnischen Basis. Altermatt (1996) präzisiert das so: «Der Nationalstaat gründet auf einer ethnischen Gruppe oder Nationalität, der es gelungen ist, in der internationalen Gemeinschaft die völkerrechtliche Anerkennung als territorial begrenzter und souveräner Nationalstaat zu erlangen» (a. a. O., S. 51).

Die Entstehung von Nationen ist jedoch auch auf einen wirtschaftlichen Grund zurückzuführen. Die Ausweitung der Marktwirtschaft am Ende des Mittelalters führte dazu, dass vor allem Kaufleute die fehlende Integration der Gesellschaft zu spüren bekamen, wenn sie an jedem Stadttor Zölle und Wegemaut bezahlen mussten. Der Beginn der kapitalistischen Warenwirtschaft ist der Beginn des bürgerlichen Interesses an der Schaffung größerer und einheitlicherer Verwaltungsgebiete zur Ausdehnung und Beschleunigung des Waren-, Personen- und Nachrichtenverkehrs. Die gesamte Bevölkerung wurde aus den ständischen Sozialverbänden der frühen Neuzeit herausgerissen und zugleich geographisch mobilisiert und vereinzelt. Dies förderte das Bedürfnis nach Integration. Die Nation war zwar ein abstrakteres Integrationskonzept als die Feudal- und die Standesgesellschaft, aber sie bot Solidarität. Vor allem aber muss festgehalten werden, dass der Nationenbau eine Strategie gesellschaftlicher Modernisierung beim Übergang von der Agrar- zur Industriegesellschaft war. Er besteht in der mehr oder weniger gewaltsamen bzw. freiwilligen Vereinheitlichung verschiedener Ethnien zu einem gemeinsamen Staatsvolk mit einer als gemeinsam erklärten Sprache und Kultur. Dies hat allerdings als Nebenprodukt die Abwehr des Fremden, die Abwertung anderer Nationen und die Ausgrenzung ethnischer und religiöser Minderheiten zur Folge.

Wenden wir uns nun dem Begriff *Demos* (Volk) zu, als grundlegendes Konzept moderner und postmoderner demokratischer Gesellschaften mit einer republikanischen Staatsform oder einer monarchischen mit weitgehendster Herrschaft des Volkes. *Demos* repräsentiert im Vergleich zu *Ethnos* die andere, die politische Bedeutungsdimension von Volk. Volk im Sinne von *Demos* ist die Bezeichnung für die Gesamtheit aller Staatsbürger/innen, die über sich selbst herrschen. Die modernen Nationalstaaten haben diesen *Demos*-Begriff von Volk ihren Verfassungen zugrunde gelegt und dieses Volk als

Demos, nicht als Ethnos, zum Träger des politischen Willens erklärt. In dieser demotischen Bedeutung ist Volk nicht Stammesgemeinschaft, sondern Staatsvolk.

Gefährlich wird es jedoch dort, wo Demos und Ethnos gleichgesetzt werden. Dies führt zu Zwangsassimilierung und Unterdrückung, wenn nicht gar zu Vertreibung und Völkermord, wie die allerjüngste Geschichte aus vielen Teilen der Welt lehrt. «Wenn die politische Staatsbürgerschaft an ethnische, kulturelle oder religiöse Voraussetzungen gebunden ist, werden einzelne Teile der Gesamtbevölkerung unweigerlich diskriminiert» (Altermatt, 1996, S. 232).

Dies wirft grundsätzlich das Problem der Qualität des Zusammenlebens von Mehrheit und Minderheit auf, das von klaren Dominanzordnungen gekennzeichnet ist: Asymmetrie der sozialen und politischen Beziehungen, Umkehrung der Machtverhältnisse, Ideologisierung der kulturellen Unterschiede, Assimilationstendenzen, Reduktion von Rationalität und Entstehung einer Alltagsreligion. Und dies ist kein kultureller Konflikt, sondern Kultur wird als Deckbezeichnung für Machtverhältnisse benutzt.

Der populistischen Alltagsreligion gegenüber steht aber in demokratischen Gesellschaften die Zivilgesellschaft. Die Zivilgesellschaft ist keine Alternative zum Staat, sie versucht aber, außerparlamentarisch das Macht- und Gewaltmonopol von Regierungen zu kontrollieren.

Merkel und Lauth (1992) definieren Zivilgesellschaft so:

Die Zivilgesellschaft befindet sich in einer vorstaatlichen oder nicht-staatlichen Handlungssphäre und besteht aus einer Vielzahl pluraler [...], auf freiwilliger Basis gegründeter Organisationen und Assoziationen [...], die ihre spezifischen materiellen und normativen Interessen artikulieren und autonom organisieren. Sie ist im Zwischenbereich von Privatsphäre und Staat angesiedelt. Ihre Zielsetzungen betreffen immer auch die *res publica*. Akteure der Zivilgesellschaft sind damit in die Politik involviert, ohne jedoch nach staatlichen Ämtern zu streben. [Die Zivilgesellschaft] ist kein homogener ‚Akteur‘. Vielmehr ist sie insofern heterogen strukturiert, als sie ein pluralistisches Sammelbecken höchst unterschiedlicher Akteure darstellt, die allerdings einen bestimmten normativen Minimalkonsens teilen. Dieser beruht im Kern auf der Anerkennung des Anderen (Toleranz) und auf dem Prinzip der Fairness. [...] Der zivile Konsens bildet gemeinsam mit der Ausrichtung auf öffentliche Angelegenheiten und der Orientierung am kommunikativen Handeln das (genuin zivilgesellschaftliche) Ferment, das sich auf individueller Ebene in der Ausbildung eines Bürgersinns wiederfindet. (a. a. O., S. 22-23)

Zivilgesellschaft ist ein Raum «in-between» (vgl. Bhaba, 1994), ein Raum öffentlicher Diskussion, des Konfliktes und der Verständigung, ausgeprägter Vielfalt und Dynamik, getragen von Individuen mit einer autonomen

sozialen und personalen Identität, die sich in vielfältigen Gruppen zusammengeschlossen haben.

Zivilgesellschaft ist die Rückübersetzung des Hegelschen Begriffes der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft (vgl. Hegel, 1821/1970), die im Zwischenbereich von Privatsphäre, Markt und Staat liegt. Auch Antonio Gramsci beruft sich mit seinem Konzept der *società civile* auf die „bürgerliche Gesellschaft“ von Hegel. Bürgerliche Gesellschaft wiederum ist eine neuzeitliche Lehnübersetzung des lateinischen Begriffes *societas civilis* bzw. des altgriechischen *koinonia politiké*. Daher kann die Begriffsgeschichte der Zivilgesellschaft bis in die Polis der griechischen Antike zurückverfolgt werden (vgl. Brunner/Kosselleck (1957)). Eine Zivilgesellschaft ist charakterisiert durch gesellschaftliches Engagement, wie z. B. die Ausübung des Wahlrechts/der Wahlpflicht, der Einsatz für soziale Gerechtigkeit, für Frieden, für Nachhaltigkeit, aber auch für gesellschaftliche Selbstorganisation, die in der Corona- Epidemie auch zu Konflikten mit der Staatsgewalt geführt hat.

Eine Erziehung für die Zukunft: Eine neue andere Polis der Völker

Wie Edgar Morin, französischer Philosoph und Soziologe, in seinem Buch *Die sieben Fundamente des Wissens für eine Erziehung der Zukunft* (2015) betont, geht es nun vor allem darum, das Verständnis zwischen den Menschen zu lehren und zu praktizieren, als Bedingung und Garantie für die intellektuelle und moralische Solidarität der Menschheit. Morin weist auch darauf hin, dass die planetarische Identität und das Ziel einer weltweiten Solidarität aus Lehrplänen und Erziehungspraktiken völlig ausgeblendet sind. Dabei wäre die Erziehung zur Schaffung einer terrestrischen Bürger/innenschaft von außerordentlicher Bedeutung.

Ich zitiere zwei Stellen:

Das menschliche Wesen ist zugleich physisch, biologisch, psychisch, kulturell, sozial und historisch. Diese komplexe Einheit der menschlichen Natur wird im Unterricht quer durch die Disziplinen vollkommen zertrümmert und es ist unmöglich geworden zu lernen, was Menschsein bedeutet. Man muss diese Einheit wieder herstellen, so dass jeder, wo immer er sei, seine individuelle komplexe Identität und zugleich seine gemeinsame Identität mit allen anderen menschlichen Wesen erkennt und sich ihrer bewusst wird. (a. a. O., S. 17)

Das gegenseitige Verständnis zwischen den Menschen, sowohl nahestehenden als auch fremden, ist lebenswichtig, damit die menschlichen Beziehungen aus ihrem barbarischen Zustand der Verständnislosigkeit heraustreten. (a. a. O., S. 20)

Dieser Gedanke der planetarischen Identität wird auch von Werner Wintersteiner (2021) aufgegriffen, der das größte Hindernis in der heutigen imperialen Lebensweise ausmacht, die die Fortsetzung des Kolonialismus bedeutet, Mensch und Natur ausbeutet und weltweite Armut schafft. Bei dieser planetaren Denkweise geht es, so Wintersteiner «...um ein neues Paradigma für eine menschengerechte Wirtschaft ebenso wie für eine partizipatorische Politik; mit Respekt vor der Natur (...) ebenso wie mit der Orientierung auf das Gemeinwohl, mit einem Bildungsparadigma, das kritische Reflexivität, Zuneigung und Solidarität zwischen Völkern fördert» (a. a. O., S. 155). Wir müssen, um mit Bloom (2020) zu sprechen, «den Krieg gegen die Zukunft» (a. a. O., S. 34) beenden.

Diese Gedanken, die einer laizistischen Weltanschauung entspringen, decken sich auch mit den Überzeugungen von Hans Küng (1928-2021), ehemaliger Professor für Ökumenische Theologie in Tübingen, der schon 2001 im Rahmen der Osnabrücker Friedensgespräche zum Thema: Weltreligionen – Weltfrieden – Weltethos folgende Prinzipien einer Allgemeinen Erklärung der Menschenpflichten formulierte:

- die Verpflichtung auf eine Kultur der Gewaltlosigkeit und der Ehrfurcht vor allem Leben;
- die Verpflichtung auf eine Kultur der Solidarität und eine gerechte Wirtschaftsordnung;
- die Verpflichtung auf eine Kultur der Toleranz und ein Leben in Wahrhaftigkeit;
- die Verpflichtung auf eine Kultur der Gleichberechtigung und der Partnerschaft von Mann und Frau. (a. a. O., S. 24)

Diese Gedanken sind, aus meiner Sicht, die vorrangigen Ziele für eine Erziehung für die Zukunft. Und dies erfordert ein radikales Umdenken im Verständnis, in der Konzeption und in der Gestaltung von *Lernen* und Lernprozessen, die an Nachhaltigkeit, an der Entfaltung und Festigung eines demokratischen und interkulturellen Bewusstseins von lokalen und planetaren Bürgerinnen und Bürgern orientiert sind. Lernen ist nach Meyer-Drawe (2012) eine ständige Auseinandersetzung mit Widerfahrnissen, die nicht als Hindernisse, sondern als Ermöglicungen verstanden werden. «Lernen meint unter diesem Aspekt kein Kontinuum und keine Anhäufung. Es ist eine Gratwanderung zwischen Konvention und Aufbruch.» (a. a. O., S. 214)

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Pedagogy of Sensitivity. Problems and potentials for overcoming dichotomous perceptions

Hans Karl Peterlini

Abstract Dominant educational discourses emphasise the centrality of the individual, who constitutes him/herself as an autonomous subject by mastering the world. Bodily and sensitively oriented approaches, which take account of the entanglement between subject and world, have been lost in the current functionalisation of education. To what extent can pedagogy retake the principle of connectedness and make it productive for dealing with dichotomous tendencies? The article explores problems and potentials for a pedagogy of sensitivity in a global dimension. It proposes the polis as a lifeworld beyond divisive orders, which undermines the concept of national citizenship in favour of local and global belonging.¹

The imposition of the autonomous learning subject

In the primarily Eurocentric educational discourses, the learning subject is predominantly defined as an autonomous and rationally acting person. The German educational reformer Wilhelm von Humboldt is a crucial witness to this. The *Humboldtian Model of Education*, developed in the early 19th century, has significantly influenced education science in Europe and beyond. Humboldt (2017, p. 7) established self-activity as a principle of *Bildung*, which means lifelong and life-wide learning that affects and develops the whole personality. Education in this tradition means a process «in which subjects appropriate their world, and in this appropriation, both constitute themselves as individuals and reproduce the world» (Tenorth, 1988, pp. 243-244). Learning and education merge in the concept of *Bildung* and stand for individual emancipation and self-development rather than the adoption of a

¹ This article condenses several years of research into personal and social learning also in a global perspective. In this sense, the article draws on other works, published or in the process of publication, and places them in a new context for the question of the polis: Peterlini, 2019, 2023 b/c/d, 2024a/b.

desired behaviour through a disciplining and socialising upbringing (*Erziehung*) or the acquisition of skills through training – as Lenzen and Luhmann (1997, p. 7) put it in the formula, «*Erziehung* is an imposition, *Bildung* an offer».

The *concept of education* by Dieter Lenzen may serve as an example. Lenzen defines education along five dimensions as «individual inventory», «individual capacity», «individual process», and finally as «individual self-transgression and higher formation of the species» (Lenzen, 1997, pp. 949-957). Even though «species» refers to a social and intergenerational aspect in the broadest sense, its further development also represents an achievement to be made by the subject as individual self-transgression. In the fifth dimension, education is addressed as the «activity of educating institutions or persons, »which also influences individual educational processes. In this case, too, we are dealing with the concept of humans as *homo faber* – individually equipped, individually organised, individually learning, and, in the individual's performance, empowered to further the development of humanity, always active, shaping and subjugating the world. Such an understanding of education coincides with the criticism of postcolonial academic Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti (cf. Andreotti, 2006; Andreotti & Stein, 2022). She describes *Education for Mastery* as a concept to dominate knowledge, the others and the world.

The empowering claim of education, which is «based on internal rules of the individual» and «carried out by the individual as a subject of action» (Lenzen, 1997, p. 954), has an inherent ambivalence. The fact that the individual is granted full autonomy over his or her possibilities for learning and development also means, by implication, that the individual is saddled with all responsibility for failure. The counterparts to the talk of the autonomous super figure of learning are those less pleasing and partly discriminatory buzzwords such as *distant from education*, *educational loser*, *educational poverty*, *educational failure*, and *educational deficit*. The concept of the self-learning subject exaggerates success and punishes failure. The idea of educational success centred on the individual amounts to corroding the gift of the relationship to others, nature, and the world.

***Empfänglichkeit* as anti-thesis to self-activity: the lost Humboldtian principle**

The individualisation of education ignores the accompanying functionalisation, which, as a legacy of the Renaissance and once again of the Enlightenment (cf. Ribolits, 2009), continues to the present and anticipates today's neoliberal tendencies. With Ribolits, we could say that the myths of

individualisation are the trick to make the autonomous subject believe that it is the architect of its happiness, while in reality, it is tugging on the strings of social pressure to perform, the need to adapt political and economic requirements, and contributes significantly to its plight. To use Hegel's parable of master and servant: The master who asserts himself over the servant and establishes himself as the subject of an education for mastery fails to realise that he has become dependent on the servant's subjugation (Hegel, 1976, pp. 111 ff.). Depending on the philosophical interpretation, master and servant stand for the autonomous and the externally determined self. No matter how autonomous the subject imagines itself to be, no matter how victorious the master appears to be, it nevertheless remains subject to foreign domination.

What could this parable tell us? The liberation of the subject does not lie in the myth of its autonomy, nor in the denial of its dependence, but in the perception of the ambivalent entanglement in autonomy *and* dependence that precisely constitutes us. For Humboldt, too, the principle of self-activity is interrelated with a second important principle of life and education, namely *Empfänglichkeit* (Humboldt, 2017, p. 7) in the meaning of «receptivity» or «sensitivity». Although he takes sides in favour of education as self-realisation, Humboldt resolutely opposes a solipsistic conception of the human being, who would be split off from the world as everything that is «non-human» (ibid, pp. 5-6), who would be autonomous to this world. Instead, he spins an idea that strikes him as «extravagant» (*überspannt*), namely the «linking of our ego with the world» (ibid, p. 7). If this was already a problematic discourse in Humboldt's time, under the conditions of the purposefulness of education (cf. Ribolits, 2009), self-activity increasingly came to the fore even in the «classical concept of education» (Meyer-Drawe, 2018, p. 38). The principle of receptivity to the world disappeared from the dominant educational discourses. Accidentally, the associated loss of reference to the world matches the concept of *competence*, which partly reduces education to ability and performance. At the same time, pathic or passive moments of experience are misjudged.

With his «extravagant thought». Humboldt attacks that division, which, for Giorgio Agamben (2004), is the matrix of all other discriminatory divisions - namely, between humans on the one side and animals and nature on the other. For Agamben, the distinction between a purely creaturely life (*zoe*) and the social life of humans (*bios*), which goes back to Aristotle, represents the template of all other dichotomies. Not only does it define the sharp separation of the social and intelligent human from the irrational animal kingdom and nature, but it reproduces itself within the category of humans created in this way as a distinction between humans with more and humans with fewer rights. Just as the animal is first excluded from the totality of living beings, new subgroups

such as enslaved people, foreigners and current refugees are excluded from the humanity thus created, who can then be treated like animals (ibid, p. 37). Colonialism – understood as the education of savages – is ultimately a programme of this «machine», as Agamben calls the powerful dynamic of division. In parallel, the education of the savage child and the colonisation of its instinctuality emerged through the disciplining of Enlightenment pedagogy (cf. Richter, 1987, p. 151).

The consequences of divisive thinking, such as the idea of an autonomous human being separated from the rest of the world, are far-reaching. They have made it possible and continue to do so to first define groups of people as completely different and then to persecute them or remain indifferent to their suffering. Dichotomous divisions also make it possible to industrially exploit animals and nature to a degree that threatens humanity precisely because the human-nature-animal connection has been lost.

How undermine dichotomies in thinking and acting? The phenomenological approach

The construction of dichotomies is, as the Greek root «δίχα/dícha» and «τέμνειν/témnein» for «to cut in two» implies, a razor-sharp mental operation that can make what is split off in each case so alien that any connection is denied and thus also any empathy, any empathy and co-responsibility is omitted.

What does this mean for pedagogical thinking and action? We face the challenge of making comprehensible again the connections that entangle us with others, the world, nature and animals. One possible pedagogical approach is the experience-based perspective, which understands learning not predominantly as the acquisition of knowledge alone, but either - according to John Dewey (2009, pp. 240-261) - is stimulated by experience or is understood as experience at all (Meyer-Drawe, 2003). Experiences can thwart our routines and habits, thus bringing about «learning as relearning» (Meyer-Drawe, 1986) as a transformative process. In their work with indigenous groups, Andreotti and Stein (2022) have developed a similar experience- and process-oriented concept of an Education for Depth as a counter-model to Education for Mastery.

The body-phenomenological perspective attempts to undermine the dichotomously constructed dilemma between autonomy and dependence. As a concretisation of human existence, the body is the medium for «having a world at all» (Merleau-Ponty, 1966, p. 176). The concept of body unites what is commonly thought of as separate mental and physical activities and ways

of being. The *lived body* goes beyond the physical and encompasses all that «constitutes life in the world at all» for human beings in their existence, with hopes, expectations, and denials of self and others (Waldenfels, 2000, p. 16). It reaches, as it were, to the stars, as Merleau-Ponty (1968, p. 57, footnote 10) takes up a quotation from Henri Bergson (1932, p. 277).

Such a view of the dissolution of boundaries between the world and the human being inevitably shakes up the construct of autonomy vs. dependence. A double negation, a *neither nor* offer a way out. According to this, people learn autonomously and externally determined by responding as concrete people in concrete life situations to those situations, conditionalities, potentials and barriers in which they are entangled (cf. Peterlini, 2016, p. 41). According to Waldenfels, education is a response process that cannot be carried out unilaterally by the individual but which, at the same time, opens up possibilities and potentials precisely because people respond to given situations and external demands (cf. Waldenfels, 2008, p. 94).

The concept of the body is not a theoretical quibble. It unfolds its effectiveness precisely at the pedagogical possibilities of perception and action. When people learn or educate *neither only* autonomously *nor only* under the control of others, but when the educational and learning process takes place in exchange with the respective circumstances, it can no longer be a question of the degree of education and self-development as an autonomous achievement. The view opens for the *how* of processes of self-constitution under different individual and social conditions and circumstances. Instead of measurement and evaluation of education as an output, calibrated in whatever way and by whatever means, the question of how concrete people in concrete situations respond to concrete external demands becomes more critical and thus shapes the scope that can open up in the responsive interaction between external requests and individual responses.

The polis as topic of concrete experience and confrontation with the real

What does this mean for a pedagogy of sensitivity? How can the forgotten principle of *Empfänglichkeit* be reclaimed and made fruitful for education? Sensitivity requires an openness to being touched by the world. This is where the experience approach of phenomenology meets Humboldt's principle and, at the same time, presents us with a dilemma. Experiences of being touched by the world, the pathic and non-active moment of learning, and the *kairos* of an *aha effect* cannot be prescribed; indeed, we cannot even decide to have experiences like we can not decide to marvel or blush. Similarly, it is

impossible to determine what is learned from experiences when we have or are having them. People can experience their Muslim neighbours as pleasant people but still hold on to their ideas that Muslims threaten the Occident and that only these neighbours are an exception (cf. Peterlini, 2017).

Ultimately, learning requires seeking out what Waldenfels (2004, p. 9) calls the *breaking points of experience* to find answers for oneself and one's behaviour in the world from there, to change one's response to the world. This is a complex process and certainly not one that can be ordered and controlled pedagogically. The exchange requires a continuous comparison of perceptions with oneself, with one's life and living world. In the sense of global citizenship, being a citizen of this earth is not a question of being an elitist globetrotter (Peterlini, 2023a, p. 184). To feel the world, we must start where we are: How do we live? What makes us good? What makes us sick, individually and socially? What consequences does our lifestyle have for us and others? Only from here, from concrete experience and direct confrontation, is the step into the global possible.

May the polis be such a topic for experience learning? The pioneer of a «homeland earth» in the sense of global citizenship, Edgar Morin, assumes a twofold dimension of human existence as a natural and cultural being (Morin & Kern, 1993, p. 62). By evolving out of being embedded in nature and mainly instinctually driven, humans develop «hubris»: «Violence, in animals limited to defence and the capture of food, is unleashed in humans beyond what is necessary» (Morin, 1974, p. 131). If humanity is to preserve itself, it must continue in the «continuation of becoming human» (Morin & Kern, 1993, p. 117), in the sense of a *civilisation of civilisation*, as Morin's call for a civilisation policy is often described (cf. Ley, 2005, p. 7). This is only possible through an increase in solidarity since otherwise the complexity of society due to inequalities, discrimination, different interests, and migration cannot be endured and promotes anti-minority tendencies, in the deceptive hope of reducing complexity by fighting it on the respective others. For convivial living together, according to Morin, with reference to Ivan Illich, it is essential to «restore solidarities, make cities human again, revitalise rural regions» (ibid, p. 68); likewise, a civilisation policy would have to «reverse the hegemony of the quantitative in favour of the qualitative and give priority to the quality of life» (ibid). With this, the polis – in the meaning of concrete lifeworld – becomes a model beyond divisive orders; it undermines the concept of national citizenship bound to rights of birth and origin in favour of local and global citizenship since it develops itself in practices of living together and, already on the level of the nation-state, transcends it to a «planetary height» (ibid).

According to Habermas, the lifeworld is the dimension of human existence that enables consciousness through problematisation and mobilises communicative action precisely through existential challenges (cf. Habermas 1984, p. 46, 1987, pp. 325-400). This capacity is contrasted by the dimension of systems, for instance, the system of politics or the economy (Habermas, 1987, p. 165). At this level, a different communicative principle applies, namely strategic communication along the respective steering media – power in the political system and the profit in the economic system. The problem lies in the dynamic that the systems colonise the lifeworld. The lifeworld potential for negotiating interests and finding convivial solutions is counteracted on a symbolic level by the dichotomous, strategic questions of power or powerlessness, winning or losing, taking advantage or being taken advantage of. The positive experiences with the neighbour are then clouded by the fact that they have a different religion or are of a different origin or social belonging. Because the neighbours are subject to a different symbolic order, the positive experiences with them are overlaid, and one's own experiences are discarded in favour of thinking in the categories of the system level.

The Habermas model itself could now be understood as dichotomous. On the one hand, a living environment in which constructive communication processes are possible; on the other, a destructive order of systems. A mediating instance could be civil society, which counteracts the one-sided colonisation of the lifeworld by the systems and, in turn, influences the systems from the lifeworld, thereby transforming them (cf. Høibraaten, 2001, p. 160). The one-sided colonisation from top to bottom then gives way to an interaction between the experiences in the lifeworld and a transformation, albeit often sluggish and prone to relapse, at the system level. Looking back at past progress in civilisation, we easily may find developments in which civil society action from below demands changes at the system level (for example, in legislation), but at the same time, such changes also lead to new awareness-raising in civil society. It is not a one-sided process but a mutual exchange.

What does this mean for the question of learning discussed here? Learning also occurs in interactions between I and We and the world; it is not an isolated achievement but happens in an exchange that is as conflictual as it can be solidaristic. It cannot be controlled, but it can be influenced; individuals are not masters of education, but they are also not powerless when they join forces, negotiate their interests, create society together, trade, and exchange services - all characteristics of the polis. The polis of education is not limited to the city. Understood as a lifeworld, the polis is everywhere where people relate to each other and the world, urban and rural, local and global.

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Critique of *bewilderment*.

For an *ecological* moral education

Ines Giunta

Abstract To overcome the crisis of this historical time, which is a crisis of democracy and humanity, we need to make the courageous choice to promote the final transition to an ethos capable of reestablishing the bonds within the individual-society-species-Earth ring and promote a critical citizenship that consigns the *polis* to its original meaning as space of dialogue.

Critica dello *smarrimento*.

Per un'educazione morale *ecologica*

Introduzione

La *crisi* che stiamo vivendo è, essenzialmente, una crisi della *partecipazione* attiva e consapevole, che trova verosimilmente la sua origine nella difficoltà di percepirci all'interno di una visione ecologica profonda, solo in ragione della quale diventerebbe possibile invertire la rotta e costruire un nuovo modo di essere e stare insieme come *comunità*, fondato, questa volta, non più sulla consapevolezza di un *pericolo comune*, ma su quella (ancora fugace ed epifenomenica) della *comune responsabilità* che grava su tutti gli esseri umani in quanto esseri razionali.

Coerentemente con queste premesse, ci si chiede in che modo sia possibile favorire questa partecipazione nella forma di una rigenerata, rianimata, rivitalizzata attitudine ecologica sociale e umana, cioè di una cittadinanza critica che consegni la *polis* al suo significato originario di spazio del dialogo e che veda raggiunto il suo scopo nell'adozione di *comportamenti responsabili*. Questi ultimi si configurano senza dubbio come esito di un'*esperienza razionale*, basata su specifiche conoscenze e abilità in grado di rischiarare l'orizzonte del possibile e (al contempo) del desiderabile per il bene comune. Ma sono anche, e forse soprattutto, la risultanza di un'*esperienza morale*, che riguarda, cioè, il nostro rapporto con gli altri (umani, animali, ambiente) e con

noi stessi rispetto a norme e valori (Baldacci, 2020) come quelli *ecologici* nei quali, con tutta evidenza, non riusciamo a riconoscerci.

Si tratta, è bene sottolinearlo, di due ambiti fortemente problematici e sui quali occorre investire ancora molto in termini di ricerca: il cambiamento di registro che la gravità delle emergenze che stiamo vivendo richiederebbe non è, infatti, ancora avvenuto, nonostante siano già tanti gli studiosi che hanno offerto traiettorie sostenibili e praticabili. Questo sembra suggerire che non sia corretto porre su uno stesso piano queste esperienze e che vi sia l'urgenza di entrare nel vivo della *struttura della problematica morale* (Baldacci, 2020), analizzando prima i termini che la compongono da una prospettiva ecologica ed entrando nel vivo, quindi, del compito dell'educazione per la formazione di un'*etica ecologica*, da una parte, e di una *moralità critica e consapevole*, dall'altra.

Anatomia di una crisi

In qualunque momento della storia lo si osservi, il comportamento di una società è sempre innervato da un sapere di *senso comune* esito di una *sintesi culturale* che trova il suo fondamento in un *èthos* concreto rappresentato «[...] dalle norme, dai valori e dalle prassi di riferimento per la vita sociale» in quel determinato momento, condivisi e accettati da tutti (Baldacci, 2020, p. 26). In questo tempo storico, in particolare, l'*èthos* vigente risente fortemente dell'influenza che la globalizzazione esercita sulla vita privata e sullo spazio pubblico imponendo modelli e finalità *market oriented* che un rodato sistema di replicazione e sofisticate tecniche di persuasione hanno provveduto a normalizzare nel tempo e che, tuttavia, ora mostrano le prime crepe sotto il peso delle tante ingiustizie sociali e degli innumerevoli danni ambientali di cui si sono resi responsabili. Si apre così, la strada a nuovi interrogativi morali che hanno generato una *crisi culturale* di una tale vastità da metterne in dubbio i presupposti.

Si tratta, innanzitutto, di una crisi *delle e nelle* relazioni che spezza i legami fondamentali attraverso cui l'inconscio collettivo ha modellato le forme archetipiche fondamentali dell'*esserci* (Heidegger, 2019), ossia di quel particolare modo di *essere-nel-mondo* che lo dota di senso, che rende chiaro, cioè, come non si possa *essere* se non in virtù di quella co-implicazione che, sia pure in termini non heideggeriani, possiamo chiamare *relazione* (Castelluzzo, 2016). Facendo riferimento a Levinas (Levinas & Petrosino, 1983), Biesta (2010) spiega come questa relazione non sia interpretabile né come un particolare rapporto di conoscenza e nemmeno come frutto di un atto intenzionale dell'io: la relazione con l'Altro non è una responsabilità che possiamo

scegliere di prendere su di noi poiché ciò sarebbe possibile solo se fossimo un Io o una coscienza prima di essere “inscritti” in questa relazione. La relazione ha, dunque, una natura eminentemente *etica*. Caduti nella trappola che Mancini (2002) definisce efficacemente *impercezione*, ossia quell’ignoranza percettiva «[...] che trasforma in semplicemente inesistente ciò che non viene riconosciuto» (p. 19), divenuta efficace dispositivo del sistema, ne abbiamo sorprendentemente e anche direi banalmente rimosso l’importanza, di fatto alienandoci a noi stessi. Per questo la crisi *delle e nelle* relazioni è una crisi *fondamentale*. Una *crisi totale*.

A forza di frammentare abbiamo, in particolare, reso invisibile la relazione di co-generazione che intercorre tra *individuo-società-specie*, in ordine alla quale «[...] ogni sviluppo del genere umano significa sviluppo congiunto delle autonomie individuali, delle partecipazioni comunitarie e del sentimento di appartenenza alla specie umana» (Morin, 2001, pp. 111-112), relazione che Morin pone a fondamento di quella che definisce efficacemente come un’*antropoetica*, nella piena consapevolezza di come questa comporti «[...] un’aspirazione e una volontà, ma anche una scommessa nell’incerto» (Morin, 2001, p. 113). Nel chiarire la particolare natura della relazione che intercorre in maniera specifica tra *individuo* e *società*, Morin spiega come questa si esplichi in una forma di aiuto e di regolazione reciproche, a fondamento delle quali pone l’istituto della *democrazia*, che basa il suo funzionamento proprio sull’equilibratura tra l’esercizio delle libertà individuali e la responsabilità nei confronti degli altri membri della collettività. Se vista da questa prospettiva, la democrazia si configura, dunque, come qualcosa in più rispetto a un regime politico: «[...] è la rigenerazione continua di un anello complesso e retroattivo: i cittadini producono la democrazia che produce i cittadini» (Morin, 2001, p. 113). O dovrebbe esserlo: Labate (2019) individua, infatti, proprio nella difficoltà di saper leggere la natura propria del funzionamento di questo anello il nucleo aporetico di fronte al quale viene a trovarsi il pensiero nella sua ricerca di una comprensione profonda della crisi in atto che sembra avere a che fare proprio con la rottura del rapporto fiduciario che dovrebbe esserci tra governanti e governati nella forma di una reciproca e brutale ostilità. È in questa crisi di legittimità che si manifesta ciò che il Filosofo descrive come il *doppio odio* che prende di mira la democrazia parlamentare: da un lato, il disprezzo delle élites nei confronti delle sue norme, delle sue precauzioni e delle sue lentezze, ossia paradossalmente proprio di quegli elementi che assicurano che la sovranità sia legittima, e, in risposta a questo, l’odio populista che la considera un sistema incapace di funzionare e responsabile della perpetuazione delle disuguaglianze di classe.

Nel quadro di quello che Labate (2019) definisce efficacemente come un *ignoto democratico* si aprono due scenari distopici parimente inquietanti:

quello in cui la democrazia potrebbe assumere la forma di un sistema completamente oligarchico, così mitigando gli effetti dell'incostante volontà popolare, e quello in cui potrebbe prevalere una democrazia diretta, così abbracciando in maniera totale e totalizzante l'ideale tecnologico della Rete.

Identifichiamo chiaramente per questa via un primo *bisogno formativo*: la formazione di comportamenti responsabili che possano essere considerati autenticamente *virtuosi* nel quadro di un *èthos* veramente condiviso.

Al potenziamento in senso democratico della relazione *individuo* e *società* Morin fa seguire, poi, quello in senso neo-umanistico della relazione di reciprocità che esiste tra *individuo* e *specie*, evidenziando come, per quanto oggetto di continui tentativi di occultamento nella forma di inutili astrazioni o pericolosi riduzionismi alla sola istanza biologico-riproduttrice, la percezione dell'esistenza di questa relazione sia sopravvissuta grazie al sentire delle religioni e delle etiche universalistiche, che ne hanno consentito il fiorire in *Umanità*, «[...] ossia in coscienza comune e in solidarietà planetaria del genere umano» (Morin, 2001, p. 120). Resta ancora, tuttavia, il compito più arduo, quello a cui siamo chiamati come esseri umani in questo tempo storico: sottrarla al pericolo, estremo e urgente insieme, della sua autodistruzione portandola a compimento attraverso il rifiuto di ogni residua forma di prevaricazione, di sfruttamento o di barbarie, così da inaugurare finalmente la stagione tanto attesa dell'utopia buona, ossia, con le parole di Morin (2001), "salvare l'Umanità realizzandola".

Ma questa Umanità ha bisogno anche di riconoscersi nell'appartenenza alla Terra, che lega gli esseri umani gli uni agli altri non solo per il fatto di esserne la *matrice*, ma anche perché il pericolo che la affligge e che ne minaccia le sorti li accomuna in una medesima *comunità di destino* (Morin & Kern, 1994; Morin, 2002). Matura, così, una nuova consapevolezza che apre a una ri-significazione dell'Umanità dalla inedita potenza rigeneratrice che ne fa una nozione etica, in quanto «[...] è ciò che deve essere realizzato da tutti e in tutti e in ciascuno (Morin, 2011, pp. 120-121).

È alla luce di queste tendenze che è possibile identificare un secondo *bisogno formativo*: l'adozione di comportamenti responsabili orientati al raggiungimento di quelle virtù intrinse di una moralità intesa in senso universale che rende "l'uomo pienamente umano" (Baldacci, 2020, p. 31).

Un'etica ecologica

Nel quadro di queste considerazioni appare finalmente chiaro come in questo tempo storico la *sintesi culturale* sia stata osteggiata e messa in crisi da *controcorrenti* (Morin, 2001) nate come forma di resistenza allo svuotamento di senso, alla cultura dell'odio, all'invasione del quantitativo, allo strapotere del denaro, alla preminenza della logica utilitaristica, alla crescita del degrado umano e morale di un'epoca monopolizzata dalle *post-verità*, che si caratterizza non solo per il fatto di produrre menzogne, ma soprattutto per il fatto di promuoverle come se fossero vere: «[...] la popolarizzazione del principio capitale del postmoderno (ossia la versione più radicale dell'ermeneutica), quello appunto secondo cui “non ci sono fatti, solo interpretazioni”» (Ferraris, 2017). Bisogna, dunque «[...] rimettere al centro delle nostre pratiche la coltivazione di quella virtù politica che consiste nell'essere in rapporto con la verità. Si tratta di dissequestrare la verità dall'interesse del più forte» (Labate, 2019, p. 46). E la verità più profonda del nostro essere e stare al mondo è proprio in quel legame *individuo-società-specie* che spinge nella direzione di una maggiore richiesta tanto di *democratizzazione* quanto di *umanizzazione*. Capra (2017) inquadra questa neo-nata sensibilità all'interno di una più generale *consapevolezza ecologica profonda* (Naess, 1973), che si caratterizza non solo per il fatto di riconoscere la fondamentale interdipendenza di tutti i fenomeni, ma anche perché rinnova l'anello *individuo-società-specie* richiamando l'attenzione sul quarto elemento di cui si diceva, l'appartenenza alla Terra. Preferendo il termine *ecosofia* a quello di *ecologia profonda* o, ancora, a quello di *paradigma di etica ambientale*, Naess (1973) la definisce come «[...] una filosofia dell'armonia o dell'equilibrio ecologico» (p. 99).

Ci troviamo con tutta evidenza, dunque, in un tempo storico di chiara rottura paradigmatica in cui vigono due *sistemi di credenze*, che Baldacci (2015; 2020) definisce stati mentali rilevanti, consolidati e impliciti, assimilati durante i processi di socializzazione e di inculturazione: citando Gramsci (Quaderno 3, XX 1930), «La crisi consiste appunto nel fatto che il vecchio muore e il nuovo non può rinascere: in questo interregno si verificano i fenomeni morbosi più svariati» (par. 34, citato in Labate, 2019, p. 84). Ecco, questo interregno oggi è il luogo della *crisi totale* che è essenzialmente una crisi di *democrazia* e di *umanità*.

Da una parte, un *ethos* di matrice neoliberista che alimenta il ricorso a forme di governance *a-democratiche* tralasciano i *valori democratici* espressi dalla «[...] cura per lo sviluppo umano, l'uguaglianza, la solidarietà, l'inclusività, il dialogo, l'atteggiamento sperimentale, l'autonomia» (Baldacci, 2020, p. 85) a favore di una logica del *sempre di più* improntata all'accumulazione, all'espansione e alla implementazione continui ottenuti attraverso «[...] la

stabilizzazione della mortificazione che consiste nel tenere le persone in vita alle condizioni minime» (Mancini, 2015, p. 35).

Dall'altra, un *èthos* ancora allo stato embrionale animato da quelle *contro-correnti* che lavorano a una presa di coscienza collettiva sulla necessità di una ri-significazione della comunità basata su nuove premesse. Un *èthos* che non solo riconosce come fondamentali i *valori democratici*, ma che li iscrive all'interno di un *paradigma ecologico* che ne amplia la portata in direzione di una *inclusività totale*, ossia di una visione che riconosca il valore intrinseco di tutte le forme di vita sulla Terra, in ragione della quale diventi finalmente possibile pensare gli esseri viventi come membri di medesime *comunità ecologiche* legate l'una all'altra in una rete di rapporti di interdipendenza. È solo quando questa percezione ecologica profonda sarà diventata parte della nostra consapevolezza di ogni giorno che emergerà un sistema etico radicalmente nuovo.

Non stupisce il fatto che una società complessa come la nostra possa essere caratterizzata dal *pluralismo etico* (Baldacci, 2020, p. 57). Tuttavia, se, come avevamo indicato, si riconosce possibile restituire senso e profondità all'*anello individuo-società-specie-Terra* solo nella misura in cui si identifichi nella *democrazia* un modo convincente di vivere insieme e di sentire la vita sociale (Dewey, 2000, cit. in Baldacci, 2020), allora non possiamo non tenere in considerazione il fatto che una comunità si qualifichi come democratica proprio in forza della condivisione chiara di un *èthos*.

Il precipitato educativo di una tale consapevolezza è che per superare la crisi occorra compiere la scelta coraggiosa e di certo non banale di promuovere la definitiva *transizione* a un *èthos* in grado di *ristabilire i legami* all'interno dell'*anello individuo-società-specie-Terra*.

Per una pedagogia ecologica e democratica

È in ragione di queste considerazioni che entra definitivamente in crisi la tenuta dell'idea che il nostro rapporto con il mondo e con noi stessi possa essere ridotto a un'*esperienza razionale*, che abbia a che fare, cioè, con la funzione dell'educazione che Biesta (2010) chiama *qualificazione*, orientata «[...] all'acquisizione di conoscenze, abilità e disposizioni che ci qualificano per fare qualcosa» (p. 355). Il conflitto tra il vecchio e il nuovo *èthos* lascia chiaramente intendere la necessità di pensare al «[...] nostro rapporto col mondo (con gli altri esseri umani, con gli animali, con l'ambiente) rispetto a norme e valori; ossia, sotto il profilo di nozioni come bene e male, giusto e ingiusto» (Baldacci, 2020, p. 15), ossia nei termini di un'*esperienza morale*, che attiene, cioè, ai modi in cui l'educazione contribuisce alla *soggettivazione*,

funzione che Biesta (2010) interpreta in maniera antitetica rispetto a quella di *socializzazione*, riguardando quest'ultima l'inserimento di "nuovi arrivati" negli ordini esistenti, mentre la prima i modi di essere indipendenti da essi. A tale riguardo, Baldacci specifica che ci sono due livelli del *pensiero morale* (Baldacci, 2020).

Il primo è quello *intuitivo-emotivo* che vige nei periodi di sintesi culturale, comporta, pertanto, l'adesione intuitiva all'*èthos* vigente è connesso ad un *apprendimento* e, in particolare, alla formazione di *abiti di azione, disposizioni durevoli* di tipo astratto convenzionalmente indicate con il termine *carattere* maturate durante i processi di inculturazione-socializzazione che predispongono ad *agire* in un certo modo in presenza di determinati contesti. Il secondo livello interviene quando, dalla prospettiva del singolo, i costumi di una comunità si dimostrano inadeguati a guidare l'azione, si considerano superati o, peggio, li si percepisce come in contrasto con un nuovo sentire: nel vuoto dello spazio tra ciò che l'*èthos* ancora imperante sembra suggerire come bene e il dubbio che non sia così, spiega Baldacci (2020), si spezza il meccanismo dell'automatismo nella scelta del comportamento da adottare e si rende, pertanto, necessario riconsiderare i giudizi intuitivi alla luce di un *ragionamento morale* che dia luogo a un *giudizio morale* o che lo giustifichi (Baldacci, 2020). Anche questa disposizione a ragionare è, secondo lo Studioso, un *abito*, ma questa volta si tratta di un *abito appercettivo*, che corrisponde a una tendenza a *vedere* e a *sentire* le cose in una certa maniera ed è perciò legato a disposizioni emozionali, convenzionalmente denominate *mentalità*. Baldacci spiega come il *ragionamento morale* si formi mediante la progressiva interiorizzazione delle forme di interazione sociale che avvengono attraverso il *dialogo* con altri più competenti (docenti, adulti di riferimento) e la *discussione* tra pari, durante le quali si impara a dare ragione dei giudizi morali e a confrontarli tra loro. E come, al contrario, quando *dialogo* e *discussione* vengono negati o banalizzati e ogni tentativo di ragionamento morale inibito, si verifici quella forma di ripiegamento «[...] nello spazio interiore, nell'invisibilità del pensare e del sentire» (Arendt, 2006, p. 61) che la Arendt (2006) chiama "emigrazione interiore", una «[...] fuga dal mondo nel nascondiglio della propria interiorità, dalla vita pubblica nell'anonimato» (Arendt, 2006, p. 67). La sistematica mortificazione della *virtù dell'essere in rapporto con la verità*, afferma Labate (2019), rovina così, nel disimpegno, nell'attitudine a *occuparsi di altro*, nella rinuncia definitiva allo spazio pubblico, quello del *logos politikos*. Una tentazione alla quale, tuttavia, non possiamo continuare a dare seguito, continua il Filosofo: siamo, infatti, costretti a ridiscendere nella *caverna* perché la caverna è la *polis* e non si può pensare di uscirne semplicemente perché non esiste un altro modo di stare al mondo che non sia organizzato politicamente: «Dentro questo spazio dobbiamo riorganizzare

collettivamente le nostre virtù e il nostro modo di accordarci su ciò che è vero per la maggior parte delle persone. La politica è questa situazione di immanenza in cui il rapporto con la verità è deciso dal giudizio dei molti e non la conoscenza elitaria dei pochi» (Labate, 2019, pp. 44-45).

Per contrastare la tendenza distruttiva di questi “tempi bui” (Arendt, 2006), occorre, quindi, cominciare da dove tutto sembra essere finito: predisporre *contesti* opportunamente progettati e animati all’interno dei quali coltivare quelle *capacità interne* (di tipo cognitivo, emotivo e affettivo) che secondo la Nussbaum (2012), afferma ancora Baldacci, consentono una *cittadinanza attiva e critica*: una *capacitazione discorsiva* che «[...] vista nell’orizzonte del *superamento della subalternità culturale e mentale*» (p. 117) origini il compimento dell’umano in ordine alle qualità che gli sono più proprie e che diventi *capacitazione democratica*. Come spiega la Arendt (2006), già i Greci sostenevano che solo un costante scambio di parole sotto la forma del *dialogo* poteva unire i cittadini in una *polis*. Non basta, dunque, abitare il mondo e farvi risuonare la propria voce per farlo diventare umano, occorre farne *oggetto di discorso*: «Noi umanizziamo ciò che avviene nel mondo e in noi stessi solo parlandone e, in questo parlare impariamo a diventare umani» (Arendt, 2006, p. 72). Il *discorso*, dunque, come dispositivo di interrogazione sul presente (Arendt, 1951) nello sforzo infinito di essere contemporanei comprendendone il senso.

L’incessante narrazione che ne deriva è, per la Arendt (2006) preciso appannaggio del poeta e dello storico. Un compito, aggiungiamo noi, che riconosciamo anche alla *pedagogia*, nella misura in cui, esercitando il dovere della *vigilanza* (Morin & Zagrebelsky, 2012) essa si assume la responsabilità di realizzare quello spazio della *connessione sentimentale* gramsciana che è connessione integrale, «[...] una capacità di relazione in grado di ascoltare, comprendere, spiegare, persuadere, infine guidare e orientare» (Labate, 2019, p. 89) nella forma di un rinnovato modo di pensare e agire la *polis*.

Conclusioni

Viviamo all’interno di una *crisi* che assume la forma, di certo inquietante, della *negazione* di due aspetti fondamentali del nostro essere e stare al mondo: *come siamo* e il *modo in cui stiamo*. Ma se, invece che intendere la negazione in maniera aristotelica come il giudizio che connette il soggetto e il predicato in un rapporto di esclusione così da rifiutare l’*essere* o il *modo* di essere di una cosa, la intendessimo hegelianamente come il momento essenziale del divenire dialettico e, quindi, come fondamentale per passare a una determinatezza

di grado superiore, allora potremmo vedere nella crisi in atto un fattore di cambiamento nel modo di intendere *umanità* e *democrazia*.

Del resto, Ceruti e Bocchi (2004) spiegano come *homo sapiens* non sia nato umano, ma abbia imparato a esserlo lungo il corso di un divenire millenario, in cui nuove forme di umanità si sono susseguite non senza difficoltà, e avanzano l'ipotesi che proprio in quest'ultima crisi e nelle maturate consapevolezza si possa rinvenire «[...] il sottocrinale di una nuova tappa dell'ominazione» (Ceruti & Bocchi, 2004, p. 107), quella, appunto, in cui l'*umanità smarrita* rigenera se stessa a partire dalla riappropriazione della *democrazia smarrita* (Labate, 2019). Ma la cura dell'umanità per se stessa e per la democrazia passa attraverso l'esercizio della produzione di discorsi di verità capaci di creare consensi sulla base di una nuova e più profonda consapevolezza ecologica. L'*antinomia* tra eticità e moralità si ricompone, dunque, nel quadro di un'*etica ecologica* che è intrinsecamente democratica. Ricomporre le relazioni tra persone e tra governanti e governati è, dunque, la sfida per una *pedagogia* che, a partire dalla specificità e dall'urgenza del compito, non può che qualificarsi come democratica ed ecologica.

Nell'equilibrio dinamico che deriva dall'aver finalmente imparato «[...] ad essere qui (*dasein*), sul pianeta [...] cioè abituarci a vivere, a condividere, a comunicare, a restare in comunione» (Morin & Kern, 1994, pp. 189-190), la definizione più propria di *bellezza*.

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Pedagogy

The symbiotic autonomy of polis. Leading schools to be critical infrastructures

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Abstract This paper argues that today's increasing uncertainty and crises require a rethinking of school leadership and schools as critical infrastructures that can sustain society's resilience. The paper argues that the autonomy of the fifth-century Athenian polis, which was based on a symbiotic imaginary component between the city and its citizens, offers valuable insights in this direction, as it represents an extended form of autonomy as a collective imaginary project.

Introduction

We live in uncertain and fast-moving times (Stevenson, 2020), in which not only the future is beyond human prediction and control (Dishon & Gilead, 2021), but also our frameworks of sense-making are moving, blurring, shifting, highly contested, and contestable (Ling, 2017). Along with the above uncertainties, the pandemic of Covid-19 revealed the limitations of educational systems as it has demonstrated that most school systems have been caught flatfooted (McLeod & Dulsky, 2021). It also revealed the uneven pressure on individual schools and school leaders to manage a health and learning crisis beyond their level of action and control (World Bank, 2022), underscored the changing nature of school leaders' work under the uneven pressures of uncertainty and crisis (Hauseman *et al.*, 2020; Pollock, 2020) and emphasised that the personal costs to school leaders were significant and hurt their well-being and mental health (DeMatthews *et al.*, 2021; Harris and Jones, 2022).

The unprecedented scale of the above situation brought to the fore two interrelated limitations. Firstly, in an uncertain environment, schools may again need to operate as first-responders in crises that exceed their levels of control. Secondly, schools need a new type of leadership to assume this role and preparation is required. In fact, the scholarship on educational leadership so far, by being based on the assumption that leadership occurs in an organised system

(Blomme, 2012) and in a recognisable world (Jennings & Dooley, 2007), has mainly focused on micro-level parameters such as school performance, school improvement, and student learning outcomes (Ståhlkrantz & Rapp, 2022; Kemethofer *et al.*, 2022), leaving aside school's operational capacity to respond in times of crisis.

This article uses the conceptual framework of the polis of fifth-century Athens to fill this gap, arguing that school leadership should prepare schools to function as critical infrastructures. The section *The symbiotic autonomy of polis* provides a brief description of the main features of the Athenian polis and focuses on its historically new feature of autonomy. The section *School autonomy is not novel, but an expansion is needed* discusses earlier forms of autonomy in education and the final section concludes with the new forms of autonomy that schools must adopt as critical infrastructures.

The symbiotic autonomy of polis

My approach on polis is based on a dual pillar: on the characteristics of polis itself and on its historically novel contributions as depicted by Castoriadis.

First, the polis of fifth-century Athens did not describe «just a walled city but rather a political community of men ready to defend their society» (Hansen, 2006, p. 98). Polis was the city-state in Ancient Greece, referring above all to the unbounded bond of «an institutionalised political community» (Hansen, 2006, p. 56), taking place in the physical territory of a city, which was «inextricably linked to its hinterland» (Hansen, 2006, pp. 101-105). «The polis, properly speaking, [was] not the city-state in its physical location; it [was] the organisation of people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space [lied] between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they [happened] to be» (Arendt, 1958, p.198).

The above positioning sets four characteristics of polis depicted in Aristotle's *Politics*. In fact, as Aristotle put it, a citizen is not only one that lives in the city in the territorial sense, who honours the constitution, the laws of *the polis*, but mostly the person that actively participates in the administration of justice and the holding of public office (*Politics*, Γ 1.1274 b 32-1279 b 10). In fact, Castoriadis (1991, p. 109) commenting on the words of Thukydides that «the polis is the men» reminded that «in antiquity, what is suspended over everything else is that the *polis* is us» (1997, p. 95). Moreover, the symbiotic relationship between the citizens and the city is also resumed in Aristotle's statement that if the spirit of citizens' participation in the affairs of the polis is the same after they had come together as it was before they left their separate

spheres, this community would not be a *polis* (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1280b). Furthermore, polis as symbol of the public and political sphere takes precedence over the private sphere because: a) *polis* has priority over the family, and the individual like the whole has priority over the parts [*πρότερον δὲ τῆ φύσει πόλις ἢ οἰκία καὶ ἕκαστος ἡμῶν ἐστίν. Τὸ γὰρ ὅλον πρότερον ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τοῦ μέρους*], (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a20-24). Finally, the aim of the polis is not only to assure the living (*ζῆν*) but also the living well (*οὐσα δὲ τοῦ εὖ ζῆν*) (*Politics*, 1252b30-34), with living (*ζῆν*) and living well (*εὖ ζῆν*) being intrinsically linked together in the scope of the polis.

Secondly, the historically novel contribution of the polis, as presented by Castoriadis (1983; 1987), consists in the element of autonomy that results from the sovereignty of the *dēmos* (the community of citizens). The sovereignty of *dēmos*, which was a hallmark of polis, brought to the fore a fundamental qualitative step as it put forward the notion of autonomy for the first time in history. The element of autonomy resides in the fact that *dēmos* is sovereign as it was *autonomos*, *autodikos*, *autoteles*, meaning self-legislating, self-judging, and self-governing respectively (Castoriadis, 1983). Castoriadis (1987) underlined that the Greek polis of the fifth century was the only society that not only affirmed the political equality (equal sharing of activity and power) of all free men, but also instituted political power directly into the hands of its citizens, with *demos* describing the «collective strength and ability to act with that realm, and indeed to reconstitute the public realm through action» (Ober, 2008, p. 7). In fact, the Greek word for democracy, referring to the combination of the words *dēmos*+*kratos*, was not referring to the rule of majority as today, but to the collective power of people to make decisions on the affairs of the polis, with democracy being «the regime in which the *dēmos* gain a collective capacity to effect change in the public realm» (Ober, 2008, p. 7).

The precursor of the autonomy of the polis is based on its imaginary substratum which guarantees both the instituted and the instituting function of society (Castoriadis, 1987). The instituted function is encapsulated in the notion of *social imaginary significations*, that neither correspond nor are exhausted by references to “rational” or “real” elements, but appear as structuring links between «the representations, the affects and the intentions dominant in a society» (Castoriadis, 1987, p. 231) holding society together. On the other hand, the instituting function is encapsulated in the notion of *radical imagination*. For Castoriadis, imagination becomes *radical* because a) it can create *ex nihilo* something new that has never existed before, b) becomes the means of interrogation, c) discloses possible alternatives (Castoriadis, 1987, p. 221) and is in its essence rebellious against determinacy (Castoriadis, 1997, p. 214). In other words, under its instituting function and the radical imagination, a given society had the ability to put «into question [its] actual institution»

(Castoriadis, 1991, p. 125), and to create unprecedented ways of being and doing that cannot be traced back and be explained through pre-established criteria, rules and meanings.

School autonomy is not novel, but an expansion is needed

The importance of autonomy of individual schools is not new. Autonomy in education has been approached in the last two decades mainly under the policies of decentralisation, focuses primarily on administrative and managerial aspects such as the devolution of decision-making to bodies at lower levels (Daun, 2004), mostly at the level of fiscal decentralisation (Busemeyer, 2007), and has been associated with the improvement of school quality and school performance (Maslowski *et al.*, 2007; Gropello & Marshall, 2011).

The above approaches of decentralisation do not address, however, the new challenges that emerge of schools being the first responders in an uncertain crisis environment. In fact, the condition of uncertainty described above, meaning the condition in which there is a difference between the information available and the information needed (Galbraith, 1973) to determine an appropriate response to that situation (Bennett and Lemoine, 2014), finds the above approach of autonomy rather limiting, and creates new challenges related to resilience at both the organisational and societal levels.

In fact, scholars argue that the uncertainties and frequent crises of the current context put forward the need for organisations that can manage risk effectively, that can be resilient not in the sense of resisting, but rather in how to adapt, respond and take advantage as unforeseen changes happen (Cheese, 2016). D'Auria and De Smet (2020) also highlight the above need, underlining that «during a crisis, leaders must relinquish the belief that a top-down response will engender stability. [...] Leaders can better mobilise their organisations by setting clear priorities for the response and empowering others to discover and implement solutions that serve those priorities» (pp.19-20). Following the same line of thinking, Borrell (2020a, b) referring to the EU level, introduced the concept of 'strategic autonomy', intended to ensure that we can take charge of ourselves, we are able to defend our interests and values in an increasingly harsh world, a world that obliges us to rely on ourselves to guarantee our future.

Schools as polis: a new approach of autonomy

Understanding schools as polis implies a different kind of autonomy, in which they are seen as dynamic, complex systems that constantly reconfigure themselves to meet new macro-realities at their micro-level. Schools as polis rely on the relationship between their *locus* and their *citizenry*, building on their collective memories and social imaginary significations to create a sense of identity and belonging. In this perspective, the autonomy of the school is not the result of an administrative procedure consisting in the assignment of managerial tasks, but the result of an identity process that develops over time.

If we look at recent research linking autonomy to resilience in different sectors (Bahadur & Doczi, 2016; Borrell 2020a, b; Mannion *et al.*, 2023), we recognise that schools as polis are enabled to act as critical infrastructures that ensure societal resilience. This new role is consistent with scholarship that emphasises the need to establish emergent and relational types of infrastructures. Analytically, Star and Ruhleder (1996) were the first to postulate that infrastructure appears only as a context-specific relational property that emerges from people in practice. Hopkins and Woulfen (2015) also emphasised the relational nature of infrastructure by stating that infrastructures are not fixed scaffolds or supports that fade into the background, but only emerge when they are constructed, worked on and used in teaching and leadership practice (pp. 375-376). Almklov *et al.* (2018) have emphasised this relational dimension of infrastructure and distinguished between planned and emergent infrastructure. According to the authors: «studying infrastructures, including their emergent properties, implies a relational perspective geared to revealing how people, organizations and associated technical systems come to relate to each other through the processes of infra structuring» (p. 2). More recently, Greenberg *et al.* (2020) also emphasise the relational dimension in the concept of ‘community infrastructuring’, which opens new possibilities for acknowledging the resource richness of communities and considering permeability, movement and transformation in a way that enables democratic action.

Empowering schools with the polis’ conception of autonomy gives them the properties of autonomy that cities have been given in architecture and urbanisation studies as opposed to towns. Starting from the fact that the Egyptian hieroglyph for city also means «mother» (Anderson, 2015, p. 181), in the sense that they take care of their citizens to assure the living-well, scholars have underlined their imaginary and symbiotic component. Calvino (1978, p. 38) underlined that cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, they are neither the work of the mind nor of chance, as neither the one nor the other suffices to hold up their walls. Their social imaginary is about «the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how

things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations» (Taylor, 2004, p. 23). This imaginary component emphasises the fact that the city is a collective narrative, the co-construction of a collective project (de Biase, 2014, p. 177) that inspires not only ideas, but also stories and feelings, which in turn inspire ideas (Bell and De-Shalit, 2011, p. 9), with the inhabitants of cities changing as inevitably as the cities themselves (Anderson, 2015, p. 416) and cities reflecting and shaping the values and views of their inhabitants in different ways (Bell and De-Shalit, 2011, p. 2).

Conclusion

If we consider schools as critical infrastructures for societal resilience, we recognise that schools function within a context-specific space-time framework and context-specific social imaginary significations that require space for the emergence of symbiotic autonomy. Ancient Greece was indeed organised in polis, but each polis was different from the others. Each polis functioned in a different place, with different citizens, different social-historical and different social-imaginary significations, and therefore, created different ways of managing its own entropy in order to survive and thrive, which in sum led to a different operational code for each polis.

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A school for participation and the common good. Milani and Langer to inspire committed teachers

Sabina Langer

Abstract The republication of the German translation of the *Letter to a Teacher* by the School of Barbiana (2023) can be an important stimulus to reflect on Lorenzo Milani and Alexander Langer. These two significant Italian figures of the last century – their thoughts, work and commitment – can be inspiring for rethinking the (political) role of schools and particularly teachers in fostering active youth citizenship, democratic participation, and care for the common good.

Introduction

The South Tyrolean intellectual and politician Alexander Langer (1946-1995) translated into German the *Letter to a Teacher* (*Lettera a una Professoressa, Brief an eine Lehrerin*; henceforth *Lettera*), the manifesto for a more democratic school, written by the pupils of the Barbiana school directed by the priest and educator Lorenzo Milani (1923-1967). Aware of their privilege in a profoundly unequal society – middle-class men who had the opportunity to study – they both decided to side with the oppressed and become promoters of change, peace and democracy.

The young Langer was studying at the University of Florence and was in the age of compulsory military conscription when he visited Milani, who was a staunch supporter of conscientious objection (Levi, 2007). In Barbiana, Langer also discovered the school described in the *Lettera*, a revolutionary educational project in line with the critical pedagogical tradition (which, however, Milani did not know; Mayo, 2007). The historical context of that extraordinary school was peculiar (Crescenza, 2020): thanks to the economic boom, living conditions seemed to be constantly improving; furthermore, the middle school reform (1962) allowed – at least on paper – everyone to study up to the eighth grade, supporting the equality enshrined in the new

democratic Constitution. However, socio-economic contradictions were more and more evident and led to the protests of 1968.

Like many others, Langer sat in Barbiana's one and only classroom, listening to the pupils and answering their questions. He fell so much in love with this idea of school that he translated the *Lettera* to make it accessible to the German-speaking public – thus becoming a bridge between peoples and cultures, as he often did in his life. Through Langer's notes accompanying the *Lettera*, today's readers receive an excellent overview of the Italian school of the time and of Milani's work and thought. Even though Langer did not follow the prior's exhortation to quit the university to walk side by side with the poorest (Langer, 1987), he still found his way to commit himself daily to the common good.

This paper takes its cue from that encounter between Milani and Langer to highlight some significant traits of their thoughts and commitment, and to reflect on the role – still often disregarded – of schools and teachers in fostering youth participation.

Lorenzo Milani and the democratic school of Barbiana

At a time when the school was selective, geared toward urban and bourgeois children and could be compared to «a hospital that tends to the healthy and rejects the sick» (Scuola di Barbiana, 1996, p. 20¹), Lorenzo Milani promoted a democratic schooling. To him, the children of farmers and workers were not inferior or more ignorant than those of doctors and engineers. Their culture was simply different and had to be valued so that they could be proud and use it alongside knowledge learned in school. Convinced that the language makes one free and equal, Milani conducted many literacy projects (Milani, 2019) until he ended up in Barbiana, a small and isolated mountain parish – not far from Florence – where he had been banned for disobeying his superiors.

For Milani, education was not neutral and implied necessarily taking a stance, as declaring oneself neutral meant to side with the dominant power (Batini, Mayo & Surian, 2014). He thus pursued a committed education (Martinelli, 2007), convinced that schools should provide the tools to fight social injustice. He believed that the most appropriate point of view to understand and innovate schooling was that of the marginalised (Tacconi, 2017). His school was about changing the world; pupils learned participation.

¹ Quotations refer to the Italian edition, but I used the English translation in the version: <https://archive.org/details/LetterToATeacher-English-SchoolOfBarbiana>.

Between 1955 and 1967, 45 pupils studied in Barbiana, 9 of whom were girls, an amazing fact for the time and context (Passerotti, 2019). Milani gave lessons mainly to the older ones, who then taught the younger ones (today we would speak of *tutoring* or *peer education*) for 365 days a year, 10-12 hours a day, with no breaks except to eat and swim in the summer or ski in the winter: every moment was an educational moment to experience the joy of learning and success. Learning started from the real and concrete (newspapers, workshops, guests hired as teachers). Through vocabulary enrichment, constant questioning, listening to the answers, and practising collective writing, the didactics were aimed at leaving no one behind. Stimulated by those who struggled the most, a generative process of reciprocal learning was triggered and resulted also in developing awareness of oneself and of what one was doing.

These mentioned above are elements of a pedagogy Milani did not learn from books but rather built from the bottom up, grounded in experience (Taconi, 2017) in order to care for everyone differently. *I care* was the school's motto: together with their teacher, pupils learned to care for the others and the world, to be active citizens («[I learnt] that others' problems are like mine. To come out of them together is good politics. To come out alone is stinginess» Scuola di Barbiana, 1996, p. 14). To support political and social commitment, Milani was convinced that children should learn and express themselves effectively in all fields and in as many languages as possible, because «it is the language alone that makes equal. Equal is who can express himself and can understand the words of others» (*ibidem*, p. 96).

These traits point to a committed teacher and to a school where one is trained to understand the world and be an aware and active part of it.

Alexander Langer, living together between people and with nature

Alexander Langer was a teacher, journalist, activist and founder of the Green political movement – who was elected to the European Parliament in 1989. He worked for inter-ethnic living together, ecological conversion, fairer relations between North and South, East and West, and promoted peace in foreign policy (especially in the territories of the former Yugoslavia). It is possible to trace a transformative (and thus educational) approach in his constant attempt to translate his ideas into action – an «implicit pedagogy» (Bianchi, 2023).

Apart from the fact that Langer translated the *Lettera* and was always on the side of the weakest, some other aspects of his thought may be useful for our current aim – that is, to think of teachers as promoters of citizenship. As

the *inter-azioni.eu* project (www.inter-azioni.eu) shows, his constant commitment inside and outside the political arena can serve to rethink civic and political engagement with the new generations and increase their awareness and ability to position themselves, to question topical issues, multiplying points of view in order to develop desirable alternatives (Langer & Zambaldi, 2022a). In an increasingly neo-liberal world, ruled by prevaricating and competitive dynamics, Langer was already stating thirty years ago the impossibility of a peaceful coexistence between people if disconnected from the care for nature – thus subscribing to an ecological thinking and systemic perspective (Langer & Zambaldi, 2022b). He suggested to reverse the Olympic motto *citius, fortius, altius* (faster, stronger, higher) into *lentius, profundius, suavius* (slower, deeper, gentler) to implement an individual and social *ecological conversion* and to build a real well-being based on quality instead of quantity (cf. Langer, 1994a).

Langer suggested the need for more human progress and growth, a shared awareness through desirable methods: He affirmed an ethos of self-limitation, simplicity and livability, rather than a consensus based on fear of apocalyptic catastrophe, climate change or pandemic (Langer & Zambaldi, 2022a). From a very young age and throughout his life, Langer was actively involved in experimenting with forms of coexistence between the different language groups in his homeland (South Tyrol), promoting intercultural dialogue based on affirmation and understanding of differences, exploration of common solutions, cooperation between institutions and civil society, and mixed groups as «pioneers of a culture of coexistence» (Langer, 1994b). In an era that was already afflicted by conflicts and wars due to ethnic differences, repression of minorities and nationalist tendencies, he proposed the creation of a Civil Peace Corps (Langer & Glücher, 1995) based on dialogue and the valorisation of positive experiences, to show that an alternative was not only desirable but also possible.

Struggling for active citizenship

Decades have passed since the experience recounted in the *Lettera* and the world Langer knew. The changes are radical, complexity and challenges have increased. Contradictions and gaps remain and grow within global interconnections, an intersectionality of oppressions (hooks, 1984).

Among many current power dynamics, this paper intends to focus on the one determined by the age difference (adult-child) that continues to confine the youth to a marginal role in society, but also in school, preventing their real participation.

Ever since the UN enshrined the right of children to express their opinion (UN, 1989, Art. 12), there has been a lively debate on their active engagement in matters that affect them. Many scholars have worked on models of participation (starting from Hart, 1992) or on how to increase their involvement in school (e.g., the *Student Voice* movement). In the last decades, national, European, and international documents have been published presenting skills and competences that children are expected to develop (with the help of formal and informal education) in order to become active citizens. We can identify two approaches (Pinto Minerva, 2017): (1) relying on fear to activate caring actions and attitudes; making children concerned and aware of an emergency situation, informing them about critical issues and possible solutions; (2) starting from action, favouring joy and love, awakening critical thinking and the ability to act with awareness; children have the opportunity to experience, grow and learn by doing. A bit like Milani and Langer seem to suggest.

Regardless of the chosen educational approach, young people – in Italy, but not only here – are still voiceless. We could thus follow Keenan’s suggestion (2017): «rights, especially what we call human rights [or the rights of the child], are better treated as *things we claim* rather than *things we have*».

Claiming one’s rights is the basis of the *FridaysForFuture* movement (FFF) led by Greta Thunberg, who in 2018 launched a school strike to demand urgent action on the climate crisis. Many peers joined her, marching for their rights to life, to a future, to have a voice. It is a global, peaceful movement led and organised by young people, with a relevant informal and extracurricular educational function in fostering participation, education to sustainability, active citizenship and civic engagement (Francesconi, 2021).

FFF points to adults as the cause of the climate crisis by blaming the failures of governments; it seems to adhere more to the first approach of citizenship education mentioned above, the one based on terror, on informing in order to be aware of the catastrophe we are facing.

You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I’m one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you! (Thunberg, 2019)

Suggestions for a committed school

We know, however, that dreams are essential for growing and transforming the world. As Appadurai (2004) states, culture should not only be understood as origin, past, identity, but also be opened up to the terrain of collective elaboration in which to express possible futures, desires, and reasons for aspiring and sharing such aspirations. Dreams, desires are central to active thinking (a thought in action) aimed at the common good, at the good of the *polis*. That Greta and young people feel deprived of dreams should ring more than an alarm bell. It should force us to shift paradigm. Let us therefore once more look back to Milani and Langer, promoters of desires and desirability, of revolutionary utopias.

Revolutionary utopia tends to be dynamic rather than static; tends to life rather than death; to the future as a challenge to man's creativity rather than as a repetition of the present; (...) to men who organize themselves reflectively for action rather than men who are organized for passivity; to creative and communicative language rather than prescriptive signals; to reflective challenges rather than domesticating slogans; and to values that are lived rather than myths that are imposed. (Freire, 1985, p. 82)

In 1960s Italian schools, (and, to some extent, in today's) individualism, achievement and selection are symptomatic of a system that reproduces dominant cultures and asymmetrical power relations (based e.g. on class, gender, language). In Barbiana, where the pupils cared (*I care*) about the others and their surroundings, their care was a pedagogical experience in which they were both teachers and learners (Mayo, 2007) because «knowledge is only meant to be passed on» (Scuola di Barbiana, 1996, p. 110). Knowledge, rooted in experiences, is the starting point for transforming the world.

As FFF shows, young people still want to take care of the common good on which survival (life!) depends. However, even the most recent writings on citizenship skills seem to consider children and young people only as *future citizens*. So the implicit (and habitual) belief persists that young people are not really an active and vital part of our democracies yet. Furthermore, these documents miss the fundamental role of teachers in the process of youth empowerment. Teachers remain in the background as a neutral presence. But... education is never neutral! There is a clear difference between a «banking concept» (Freire, 2000) of civic education (as the transmission of notions about institutions, laws, problems, correct attitudes to maintain the *status quo*) or a «problem-posing», democratic and political education (meant to transform the world). In the first case – as in the first approach spotted above, teachers can apparently continue to do as they have always done, “simply” transferring

knowledge. But, for a problem-posing, action-oriented and loving approach, the active role of the teacher as a facilitator of participation is central. Teachers should therefore be supported in this expected paradigm shift in order to open an intergenerational dialogue (Langer, 2024). Like Milani did, teachers could (or should) take responsibility for helping pupils exercise their right to active citizenship; it is indeed crucial that adults intentionally collaborate, because it is not enough for young people to (know how to) express their opinion, they also need someone to take them seriously (Lundy, 2007). Intergenerational dialogue is a prerequisite to create the space for action and decision-making in which young people can become active citizens and agents of change. One of the many possibilities for schools to actively stand on the side of democracy and student participation is for teachers and pupils to discuss real and wide-ranging topics together – e.g. starting from texts such as Langer’s. Another could be to codesign and implement caring actions for the polis, developing in this way a «radical collegiality» (Fielding, 1999) aimed at the common good (Langer, 2022). One would learn from the other, in a generative interaction, exchanging points of view to pursue together those *revolutionary utopias* that keep alive the capacity to aspire. The school would be generative again and would become a *political* place.

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Polis crisis, ecosystemic resilience, and schools. What strategies to support Italian teachers?

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Abstract The contribution intends to propose a pedagogical and ecosystemic reading of the crises affecting the polis today. In particular, the repercussions they have on the epistemologies, i.e. the way of understanding reality, of high school teachers will be problematised. Pedagogical supervision is identified as a possible coping strategy for the difficulties experienced in school contexts. Such difficulties, which are eminently relational, call teachers to adopt genuinely transformative epistemological postures that return them to the role of resilient mentors in their students' lives.

The crises of the polis in the age of change

The polis is a complex living ecosystem, consisting of the relationships between the people who live in it and the subsystems through which they organise themselves.

The principles of justice, solidarity, fraternity and conviviality constitute the specific characteristics of the relationships in it (Ceruti & Bellusci, 2021). However, in the age of perpetual change and systemic and multidimensional crises, these principles (previously conceived as fundamental prerequisites of the formation of active and responsible citizens) are no longer perceived as applicable. The collaborative, conscious and responsible construction of one's own well-being *through* the construction of the well-being of the other (which once constituted the basic value premise of the authentically democratic state) is today outdated and impracticable. The polis seems to have lost its political-formative vocation, anciently aimed at educating young generations in active and responsible citizenship. Thus, urban space and its multiple environments turn out today to be a privileged theatre for the multifaceted manifestations of the crisis. This affects all social actors and mostly takes on existential characters, spilling over into relationships.

The waning of the *sense of community*, typically associated with the idea of democratic polis proper to the culture of ancient Greece, has left the emergence of experiences of widespread uncertainty and intense insecurity (Bauman, 2007; Recalcati, 2023). These experiences, inevitably, lead each subject, regardless of age, to live his or her life attempting to make up for the shortcomings caused by the loss of the social value and institutional reference points that have always guided human understanding and action in the world (Cambi, Certini & Nesti, 2017).

The axiological crisis and the relational crises that result from it pave the way for the formation of epistemologies of reality that recognize (not incorrectly) the paradigm of crisis as the only useful framework for weaving the narrative plots of contemporary events (Fabbri, 2019). Indeed, one frequently hears about crises negatively, at each level of human life. Whether it is at the systemic level (economy, work, politics, institutions, society, environment, culture, education) or at the level of the ages of life (childhood, adolescence, youth, adulthood, third age) or at the level of the social roles played in the different spheres of life (professional, educational, etc.), the criticalities experienced turn out to be more and more numerous and increasingly difficult to manage.

Given the systemic and complex nature of contemporary reality (Bocchi & Ceruti, 1998), each of the *levels of criticality* mentioned above intersects with the others, causing considerable difficulties in understanding them. These difficulties of understanding, inevitably, have repercussions on the actions carried out (and deemed feasible) to deal with the criticalities themselves. It happens that, faced with the impossibility of signifying sudden changes and the critical events they bring with them, coping strategies are activated that take the form of attitudes of closure, isolation, distancing, and distrust of others. Consequently, as Franco Cambi (2022) states, «Contemporary societies present very disturbing signs of non-cohesion, weakening of civic consciousness, nationalistic or even egocentric closures in citizens themselves» (p. 15, translated by the author).

Although such strategies are considered the only viable ones for coping with the experienced criticalities, they prevent the activation of resilience processes, which enable communities to reactivate and renew themselves for the re-construction of common and commonly shared well-being, first and foremost, through relationships.

This is particularly problematic from an educational point of view, as it affects the possibility of educating the younger generations to actively act in reality and creatively transform its criticalities.

There arises, therefore, the need to reflect on the epistemologies adopted in the processes of signifying reality and its criticalities. These determine the possibility of understanding it and, consequently, of acting within it.

Possible strategies for understanding

Acting responsibly and actively in the world (Freire, 2011; 2021) might prove possible by activating ecosystem resilience processes (Kumpfer, 2002; Richardson, 2002). As ecosystem theories argue, living systems (whether people or the systems in which they live) activate coping processes that take the form of adaptive attempts to preserve their functioning. These are necessary to cope with changes and the difficulties caused by them. In the presence of criticality, the living system activates adaptive processes such that the changes it faces can be transformed into *energies* to be integrated into a new state of systemic homeostasis. Thus, each living system, given its autopoietic nature (Maturana & Varela, 2021), can modify and transform itself according to the changes that take place in the environment in which it lives, to meet its survival needs.

In pedagogical terms, ecosystem resilience could be defined as the ability, peculiar to human living systems, to actively adapt to perturbations from outside, transforming experienced criticality into an opportunity for learning and growth (Malaguti, 2005; Scardicchio, 2020; Vaccarelli, 2016). This process, which is far from simple, requires, on the one hand, the ability to rethink (first and foremost about oneself and one's way of understanding reality) and, on the other hand, the willingness to give up one's habits of thinking.

However, in the absence of flexible metacognitive tools useful for understanding critical issues and signifying them as opportunities for rethinking, the adaptation strategies implemented may be limited to forms of sterile resistance to disruptions, not providing for any substantial change. This results in the reiteration of epistemological postures and operational practices that continue to prevent the activation of genuinely resilient processes.

Transformative resilience (as opposed to reiterative resistance) implies the abandonment of previously used paradigms. Indeed, resilient change can only take place if processes of signification of causes and consequences (Mezirow, 2016) of change accept the transformation of meaning structures as a necessary strategy of active adaptation. Indeed, on these depend the strategies implemented to deal with the difficulties arising from them. Adaptation processes, although indispensable, are not always the result of critical and conscious reflection on change and the direction one wishes it to take. As Freire (2021) stated,

If change is an integral part of cultural experience, which in turn is fundamental to our existence, then we have a duty to try to understand the reasons for being. To accept or deny change we must understand it, knowing that while we are not a mere object on which it operates, it is not the result of the will of particular individuals or groups. Undoubtedly, this means that to changes that alter conceptions, behaviours and righteousnesses, or that force us to reject certain values we previously shared, we cannot simply adapt, nor can we merely rebel following an impulse. From this perspective, radical critical education can never be separated from a lucid perception of change, which moreover reveals the active presence of the human being in the world. (p. 31, translated by the author)

This awareness must occur, first and foremost, in teachers.

As significant adults professionally engaged in the education of young people, teachers within school environments are often faced with situations in which their strategies of signification do not allow them to understand the constitutive complexity of the difficulties they experience. In this way, they are unable to act in an active and transformative manner to overcome them.

Such difficulties (starting with those of a relational nature, that concern individual students, relations between students, relations between students and teachers and relations between the latter and their families) involve, therefore, all the actors operating in the school system, and students and teachers first and foremost. This turns out to be an authentic educational emergency, from which specific educational needs emerge.

In fact, with explicit reference to Italian upper secondary schools, on the one hand, adolescent students are increasingly explicitly asking to acquire metacompetencies useful for learning *how to live* (Morin, 2015) (starting with the epistemological and metacognitive tools needed to understand both the complexity of the world around them and the instability and transformativity typical of their age). On the other hand, teachers, who are also immersed in the many crises that involve them as adults as well as professionals, often find themselves lacking the metacognitive tools useful for:

- Understand critical issues in reality;
- Devise strategies for coping with them;
- Meet one's needs for recognition, both personal and professional;
- Effectively fulfil their role as educational leaders (Dato, 2017) in the lives of students and their families.

Teachers themselves today experience a multidimensional crisis that affects every area of their identity. Both on a personal level (Cornacchia & Tramma, 2019) and on a professional level (Margottini, 2022), in today's society, the teacher is socially misrecognized and his or her store of knowledge and skills, often transmissive, specialized and parcelled in nature, seems insufficient to adequately respond to the educational and training needs of

students and to transformatively address the critical issues emerging in classrooms (Freire, 2021).

What does the school do?

In such a scenario, the school often does not offer its own operational *arms* (teachers) useful space and time to develop and practice strategies for understanding and coping with the crises that they experience both personally and professionally.

On closer inspection, the actual process of teacher education and recruitment does not facilitate the development of such complex metacompetencies, which are necessary to actively and consciously create, within classrooms, a connective relational fabric useful for making the school system a relationally positive environment, and an authentic democratic gymnasium preparatory to community life.

If analysed in complex terms, the issue can be attributable to, among other factors, the way teaching staff are recruited and trained in Italy. In upper secondary schools, the requirements necessary to enter the teaching profession are acquired only at the end of prior university education, overlapping with epistemological paradigms already acquired and often rigidly structured during the years of study of specific disciplines. Thus, the teacher arrives in the classroom without useful tools to manage the challenges of complexity (Ceruti & Bocchi, 1988), which, in school settings, manifest themselves in the most diverse forms of youth discomfort, including anti-social behaviours (CNG, 2022). However, to be effectively faced, such challenges need to be understood and linked to how they are interpreted and managed during teaching practices, through the exercise of reflective (Fabbri, Striano & Melacarne, 2014; Mortari, 2009) and complex (Morin, 2000; 2015) thinking. By not adopting these thinking styles, the risk is the perpetuation of strategies of understanding and acting that are maladaptive to the processes and modifications, affecting the ecosystem of life, both of teachers and students. Indeed, through their teaching styles and methodologies, teachers transmit their ways of conceiving, understanding and acting in reality to students who, in turn, adopt them as their own (Dweck, 2013).

What could the school do?

To support teachers in the process of devising coping strategies that consider its many complexities, it might be useful to activate processes of pedagogical supervision within educational institutions.

Supervision «is a complex consultative practice that prepares a participatory theoretical-experiential space within which it is possible to converge, interconnect and enhance professional skills (individual and collective) of observation, analysis and evaluation of established work practices» (Oggiogni, 2013, p. 15).

In a school environment, the supervision would thus provide a valuable opportunity to regenerate teachers' imaginaries both around their professional identity and as adults who, dropped into their specific context of working life, experience difficulties in the exercise of their delicate educational and training role. As a community of practice within which the group of teachers dialogically discusses about epistemological, relational or methodological issues, it allows for peer sharing of experiential experiences in a welcoming and non-judgmental relational climate. Ensuring this positive relational climate is the duty of an experienced pedagogue, adequately trained in the practices of pedagogical supervision and possessing knowledge and skills useful for understanding the complexity of the processes characteristic of school environments and the possible difficulties arising from them. Beginning with the identification, by mutual agreement with the group of professionals involved, of the objectives of the supervision process to be activated, the supervisor has the task:

- to create a dialogic and nonjudgmental setting within which it is possible to activate reflective processes and exercise critical thinking around professional practices;
- to solicit constant monitoring of progress towards the achievement of the set goals;
- to moderate the discussion around the topic and solicit the active participation of all participants;
- to enhance the professional skills emerging from the reflections reported by professionals;
- to ask questions that can stimulate the reflexivity of the professionals involved about the practices acted upon, making use of different narrative tools (especially writing);
- to positively value the different viewpoints emerging as potential solution strategies for the problem under discussion;
- to guide in the development of novel solution strategies;
- to foster the formation of a shared professional culture.

In this way, the process of pedagogical supervision turns out to be an authentic process of community building, an exercise of dialogical confrontation among professionals, an opportunity for decentralization and active and conscious rethinking of one's epistemological postures and professional practices.

As an authentic transformative practice, it is useful in soliciting learning from experience and the transformation of emerging difficulties into opportunities for unprecedented rethinking, both personal and in the intervention environment. The practice of supervision would thus enable teachers, if embedded organically within school contexts as a tool to support teaching practices, to reclaim their role as mentors of resilience in the lives of their students. As a result, it could foster the activation of ecosystemic resilience processes that, from the school, propagate throughout the times and places of life experienced by the individuals who animate it.

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Korczak's pedagogy and its contribution to the promotion of active citizenship at school

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Abstract In this paper, we will attempt to outline the role of Korczak's pedagogy in the democratizing development of young people and examine whether such a pedagogy can contribute to the promotion of active citizenship in contemporary education. On the other hand, the promotion of active citizenship through education is crucial. Hence, Korczak's pedagogical work is important because he sees the school as a democratic community in the sense of a *polis* in which children can live the democratic way of life.

Introduction

Janusz Korczak was born in Warsaw in 1878 or 1879. As a doctor, journalist, activist and writer, but above all as a pedagogue and champion of children's rights, he influenced trends in pedagogical theory and practise. He worked for many years as the director of an orphanage in Warsaw. He was repeatedly refused asylum during the Great Warsaw Action of 1942 and remained with his orphans until their death in the Treblinka extermination camp.

Korczak's pedagogical practise and his writings bear witness to his firm conviction that true education worthy of the name is moral education. Like other school reformers, e.g. Johann Pestalozzi, Maria Montessori and John Dewey, Korczak advocated experiences based on the child's natural order of development (Silverman 2017a; Lifton, 1997). He turned to the children themselves as the linchpin of school reform. Korczak introduced new psycho-logical insights that were ignored in traditional schools. He was also inspired by a social vision that saw schools as a breeding ground for a new democratic social order (Engel, 2004).

Accordingly, in his eyes, the essential aim of education is to mould children's character in the fullness of their personality in the present, while encouraging and strengthening their will to do good. Korczak did not concentrate on formulating a formal educational philosophy. Instead, he introduced

innovative organisational structures in his experiential schools, the orphanages, to promote a new social vision (Engel, 2004, p. 171). Through effective action, children's will to do good is strengthened and encouraged and their will to do evil is diminished and channelled in more constructive directions that strengthen the democratic way of life (Dewey, 1916). Recognising the great difficulties in bridging the very problematic gap between the life-enhancing potential of constructive work on the human will and the severe limitations imposed by negative genetic and social forces, Korczak developed a pedagogical approach that can be described as «ameliorative compassion» (Silbermann, 2017b). In the two orphanages he ran, Korczak developed and implemented a set of pedagogical practises, methods and frameworks known as the Korczakian system. This system enabled emotionally disadvantaged and abused children from broken homes with significant social and interpersonal problems to undergo significant processes of self-reformation during their stay in the orphanages (Silverman, 2017a).

On the other hand, education today must insist on developing students' skills and abilities to deal with environmental, social, cultural, and humanitarian issues as democratic citizens of tomorrow, on which the future of democracy itself depends. The link between education and the application of pedagogical methods that enable a democratic political community to develop and realise its democratic goals is seen as essential. By promoting active citizenship through education, democratic life flourishes in the school and students have a sense of justice, develop morality, are able to protect their rights and promote democratic values, which are also the fundamental aims of Korczak's pedagogy.

The Nature of Janusz Korczak's Pedagogy

Korczak was primarily in favour of educational experiences that were oriented towards the natural developmental order of the child (Lifton, 1997). Above all, he turned to the children themselves as the linchpin of school reform. Korczak introduced new psychological insights that were not taken into account in traditional schools. He was also inspired by a social vision that saw the school as a breeding ground for a new democratic social order. Consequently, Korczak sought to replace the traditional school structures with new forms of organisation that would reflect the democracy he aspired to. In this sense, Korczak's pedagogy contains value elements that emphasise the responsibility and participation of the student in educational practise with a dynamism that matches or even surpasses the educational goals of today's education systems (Engel, 1999).

Korczak encouraged children to actively participate in their own schooling. In such an educational environment, the child would be socialised into a democratic way of life. Access to his social ideals was not to be achieved through direct instruction, such as civics courses, but through the creation of a living democracy in a school environment (Silverman, 2017b). Specifically, Korczak created a living democracy in a school setting by balancing the rights of the individual and the community. Whilst he wanted the children in the orphanages to acquire skills and knowledge, he also wanted them to learn to think independently. Of course, this could also have negative effects, with the children neglecting or abusing the tasks they were given (Engel, 1999).

For these reasons, Korczak created alternative authority structures that were more democratic than the traditional authority structures. Moreover, these alternative authority structures were intended to reflect desirable democratic practises. Teachers and other school staff participated in these control mechanisms, but much of the authority was transferred to the children themselves. In the orphanages, active participation in the political and legal structure was crucial to the children's social development and served to introduce them to the democratic process. The children were involved in activities where they could learn the basics of the democratic process through direct participation through self-governance and peer arbitration in this Korczak system (Korczak, 2003).

The main methods of Korczak's system are: the children's parliament and court, the constitution of this court, the apprentice system, graduated citizen status, ethical improvement bets and growth charts, work assignments, units and points. Each of these elements, independently and through the interrelationship between them, promoted educational processes that sought a democratic way of life, through respect, justice, care, and active participation. Through this system, Korczak illustrated his insistence that education must take place with the children, in a genuine dialogue with them, and embodied a clear translation of this principle into 'hard' self-governing institutions (Silverman, 2017a).

Firstly, the children's parliament was at the centre of the governance structure. It dealt with many of the educational and ethical issues that were important to the running of the orphanages. The court, another important structure, also met once a week to give the children the opportunity to discuss the consequences of antisocial behaviour. In this way, the children became part of the authority structure in an equitable social environment based on participatory democracy. Finally, the orphanage newspaper was an instrument that was crucial for the functioning of "children's democracy". The weekly newspaper served to keep the school community together. According to Korczak, the newspaper helped the children learn that it takes a lot of courage to speak

one's mind. It is worth noting that children's participation in activities such as the parliament, the court, writing the newspaper, etc. is an educational process that encourages self-development through taking responsibility. In addition, participation offers children the opportunity to develop decision-making skills and realise their democratic impulses (Engel, 2004).

According to Silverman (2017a), the fundamental pedagogical principles that we can identify in Korczak's approach are (a) the *child is already a human being*. With this sentence, Korczak argues that since all human beings are characterised by a human dignity that must never, nowhere and by no one be violated, the child must enjoy the full respect of all in all areas. He believed that children, like adults, are different and have both good and bad sides to their daily lives and relationships. For Korczak, the uncompromising enforcement of children's rights is essential in a truly just society. This is still not the case in our society today, as many restrictions and even punishments are natural for the child and socially and institutionally acceptable. (b) The concept of *ameliorative compassion*. This term symbolises an educational ethos based on two simultaneous, interrelated educational processes: the formation of friendship, which shows genuine respect for the child, i.e. the child must be accepted as he or she is as a growing and developing human being; and the expression of criticism, whereby the problematic points in the child's behaviour are identified and, having identified these, the child is encouraged to take on tasks of self-improvement in intellectual, ethical and behavioural terms, and is finally given the means to achieve this. Ameliorative compassion creates a foundation of mutual trust upon which a positive educational influence can be built. People's ability to trust themselves and the world depends on their experience of the educator's presence. In other words, an ethic that strives for justice and an ethic that strives for care are combined.

The pedagogy based on ameliorative compassion involves: (i) viewing a student's difficult actions as an expression of the experience of their present self, (ii) respecting and accepting the student as they are and building a relationship of trust between student and educator, which is a necessary prerequisite for any pedagogical influence on a student, (iii) providing the student with opportunities for action that challenge them to improve themselves and the society in which they live, (iv) challenging the student to acquire the tools and skills necessary for self-improvement and social improvement, to practise them and to apply them in life, and (c) the concept of *pedagogical forgiveness*. Educational forgiveness, expressed in ameliorative compassion, removes obstacles and opens the doors to self-improvement. Educational forgiveness, however, is not intended to free children from responsibility for their actions, but to express the hope and the aspiration that they will correct their behaviour. Educational forgiveness does not only depend on the children's efforts. There

are also boundaries that they must not cross: It cannot tolerate an unjust social climate in which aggressive and irresponsible children become stronger while cooperative and responsible children become weaker. According to Korczak, ameliorative compassion and the pedagogical forgiveness that goes with it must characterise the attitude of the worthy educator towards the children and their way of cooperating with the educator (Flanagan, 2008).

Through his pedagogy, Korczak advocated the emancipation of children, their self-determination and respect for their rights (Korczak, 2017). Korczak sought to replace traditional school structures with new forms of organisation in which the democratic way of life is part of the activities in the orphanages and functions as a participatory democracy modelled on the polis of ancient Athens, whose main feature is the idea of active citizenship.

Active Citizenship and Education

Active citizenship is a delicate concept in terms of its conceptual content, complex and difficult to define. It is linked to the emergence of two traditions: the political-democratic, whose axis is the polis and democracy, and the liberal-cosmopolitan, whose axis is the world, liberalism, and cosmopolitanism.

It was in the polis of ancient Athens that the idea of political life and the concept of man as a being destined by nature to lead a political life emerged for the first time in human history (Aristotle). The polis, with its public space, was conceived as a context of emancipation from forms of slavery, such as private life and the world of material things, and the transition to the world of action. For this reason, active participation in political life represents the highest form of life for Aristotle and is linked to the central thesis: the idea of the free citizen whose main concern is to defend the interests of the polis, i.e. the common good. Furthermore, this idea was also linked to another, equally important idea, namely that of education. According to Aristotle, education was conceived as the moral formation of the citizen in order to enable him to participate in political life through the acquisition of appropriate “morals”, i.e. political virtues such as justice and respect for the law as a framework of freedom. The aim of education is therefore the acquisition of political virtues and public morality through active citizenship. It is linked to active participation in the life of the political community. In the Ruthenian tradition, it is even a prerequisite for the ethical development of the individual (Balias, 2008).

At the other end of the ancient Greek tradition is the liberal political tradition, which focuses on the individual, his or her freedoms and rights. It is primarily this tradition that differs on the issue of freedom. While the ancient Greek concept sees the interest of the polis of ancient Athens as the highest

moral principle, modernity elevates the freedom of the individual to the highest moral principle and at the same time makes it the fundamental moral goal of the political community. Education itself is linked to the individual (private) and political (public) freedoms of the citizen. In other words, education had to serve the ideals of freedom and human rights. Today, however, under the influence of the neoliberal doctrine of individual freedom, this emphasis on individual freedoms and rights has led to an excess in the sense of ancient Greek hubris, i.e. to a distortion of the concept of freedom and to the expansion of the egoistic individual (Balias, 2008, p. 14). Such an individual defends his own interests at the expense of the interests of others, but also at the expense of the interests of the community and the common good. Therefore, education is not only a means of acquiring political virtues for the proper functioning of democratic institutions, but also an important prerequisite for the realisation of the citizen's individual goals and human rights such as health, security and personal success in general (Rawls, 1993), without the satisfaction of which the citizen will not have a strong motivation to actively participate in the political life of a democratic society (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992).

Active Citizenship and Korczak's Approach

Through this educational system (Korczakian system), Korczak enabled the children of the orphanages to develop morally and prepared them as future democratic citizens in a safe and just society. We observe here the potential of Korczak's pedagogy to create a community in which there is a willingness to cooperate, a willingness to participate, the development of trust between students and between children and teachers, and a sense of justice, reminiscent of Pericles' description of Athenian democracy (Sakellariou, 2000). In essence, Korczak was able to instil these moral and democratic principles in the students through the way they lived. That is, the democratic institutions - children's council, court, plebiscites - led to the creation of a polis modelled on the ancient Athenian polis, in which democratic culture and thus the democratic way of life could flourish through educational practise.

The way in which the educational function of the orphanages led to the cultivation of political virtues enabled the children to actively participate. Korczak succeeded in fostering these virtues primarily through the democratic functioning of the children's council and the court, teaching the children themselves a democratic way of life. These virtues include critical thinking and the ability to question political authority, the willingness to engage in meaningful dialogue, the ability to respect the rights of others, moderation in demands, the ability to compromise, honesty and self-control. Through his pedagogical

practise, Korczak succeeded in protecting children from the arbitrariness of adults (teachers) while at the same time giving them the freedom to decide for themselves how they wanted to organise their lives (Flanagan, 2008, p. 52).

Conclusions and discussion

Active citizenship today is linked to both the rights and the duties of citizens towards the community to which they belong. On this basis, education today should focus more on the cultivation of democratic values and these “small virtues”, as well as on respect for the human rights and freedoms of all citizens. Korczak succeeded in developing those skills and virtues that would promote a democratic way of life in Dewey’s sense and ultimately lead to the democratisation of orphanages and their transformation into a democratic, advice-seeking community, both among the children and the teachers themselves.

Korczak’s pedagogical approach reveals his conception of active citizenship, according to which he considers the presence of the student and their intervention in pedagogical practise and in the actual educational process through his direct participation to be necessary. Something similar can be observed in Athenian democracy, where citizens had the opportunity to participate in the organisation and maintenance of social life, or as Pericles said about the citizen’s attitude towards the polis: «The citizen who does not participate in these, i.e., the common activities, let us find peace and everything would be meaningless» (Sakellariou, 2000). We understand, then, that Korczak placed great emphasis on the distinction between the student who is committed to the common good and the one who is preoccupied with his personal goals and indifferent to the common good (referendum). It seems that at the heart of his pedagogical work was his tireless endeavour to create a holistic pedagogical environment that combined ethical interpersonal relationships and relationships based on an ethic of justice, and in this he largely succeeded.

In the context of today’s multicultural societies, Korczak’s ethos and practise can contribute significantly to the promotion of humanity in civic education. Korczak advocated the uncompromising enforcement of children’s rights as the highest imperative of a truly decent society, and this was his most far-reaching contribution to the formation of world culture. More broadly, Korczak’s life and work should be taught as a model of the best possible humanity, a demonstration of the principle that our humanity is constituted by what we give to others, not by what we get from them. Finally, his approach offers guidelines for a dialogue-based, non-coercive democratic moral education that does not fall into exhortative, often coercive, and indoctrinating practises.

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School for a solidary society. Philosophy for children as an access to critical and empathic thinking within *polis*

Anja Thielmann

Abstract The preamble to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - SDGs (United Nations, 2015) identifies the core issues that ensure the strengthening of coexistence in peace and dignity and the promotion of just and inclusive societies that respect human rights. This article is intended to provide an insight into the methodological approach of the Philosophy for Children educational program and illustrate it using the example of active citizenship in relation to the conference title *polis*.

Initial considerations

A sub-goal 4.7 of the UN Agenda 2030 is Global Citizenship Education. This is one of the central disciplines that should enable citizens to help shape sustainable development in the world (see United Nations 2016). The aim is to use education to address social challenges whose causes and effects are intertwined across national borders. Against this backdrop, the role of citizenship needs to be reflected upon and developed (Maurič & Thielmann, 2022, p. 128). The acquisition of key qualifications (soft or 21st century skills) or cross-curricular competences, which have been at the top of the list of educational goals alongside the SDGs for some time now, appears to be essential in this context. According to the national education report, cross-curricular competences can not standardized be defined (Herzog-Punzenberger, 2012, p. 71). But to reach these goals the expectations of schools are primarily focused on social, intercultural skills and civic-democratic skills - the latter due to alarming developments such as low political participation. Referring to the Austrian school system as an example and emphasize that “although their acquisition (by pupils) is an explicit goal of Austrian schools, their teaching is not assigned to an individual school subject, but is expected of schools and teaching as a whole” (Dämon *et al.*, 2012, p. 13).

In order to meet this requirement, Austrian schools must and are increasingly creating courses that go beyond the existing curriculum (the so-called subject canon). However, as with any subject that is to be newly implemented, the question arises as to how this could be methodically implemented. Especially when it comes to acquiring soft skills or cross-curricular competences. One of these possibilities for acquiring key qualifications is the internationally established educational program of the educational movement Philosophy for Children, which was described in the UNESCO study “Philosophy - A School of Freedom” published in 2007 and will be examined in more detail in this article.

Philosophy for Children (p4c)

In the introduction to the UNESCO study -published in 2007 entitled: *Philosophy, a School of Freedom Teaching Philosophy and Learning to philosophize. Status and prospects of 2007-* the interest in p4c is justified by the state-recognized rights of children, «in particular the right of every child to develop his or her own worldview»¹ (Dt. UNESCO Kommission, 2007, p. 11).

The school has the task of supporting this development process when it comes to implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989, «which, in addition to concrete legal entitlements of the child, includes ‘the right to freedom of expression’, the right ‘to obtain information and ideas of all kinds’ [...]» (Articles 12 and 13, Dt. UNESCO Kommission 2007, p. 11). Although p4c has been the subject of much controversy over the last 40 years, Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp’s approach of *transforming the classroom into a community of inquiry* can be considered the most influential in the development of the global p4c movement. In the UNESCO study also claims the importance of the fact that the majority of p4c projects are based on Lipman and Sharp’s approach was also emphasized and highlighted at an international level. In the following, the basic concepts of the p4c approach, from learning to think to the connection between language and thinking to philosophizing in the community of inquiry, are presented. At the end of the article, a reference is made to the remarks of Barbara Weber, who dealt with the topic of human rights in a p4c education project.

¹ Translations from German are by the author.

Learning to think

Lipman (1922-2010), American philosopher and didactician of philosophy, is considered the founder of the concept of *Philosophy for Children* (p4c). Lipman is of the opinion that there is a special, unique connection between philosophy and childhood. He refers here to John Dewey (1859-1952), who saw childhood as the best time to think about the larger contexts of concrete life. In addition to the philosophical exploration of questions and topics, the focus in the early years of the p4c movement was on improving pupils' ability to think by developing their thinking skills. Pupils should acquire the following skills:

- learn to argue coherently and form valid conclusions.
- develop creativity in their thinking, formulate hypotheses and develop concepts.
- are encouraged in their personal and interpersonal growth.
- develop a basic ethical understanding.
- recognize alternatives and possibilities, develop objectivity and freedom from prejudice in their thinking.
- learn to think logically and logically.
- develop persuasiveness through argumentation.
- develop the ability to grasp the overall scope of a problem.
- learn the ability to make judgments while considering alternatives.
- recognize the relevance of partial aspects in relation to a larger whole (Lipman, Sharp, & Oscanyan, 1980, p. 62f.).

The dominance of the focus on *improving thinking* is based on the question posed by some educators in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which went something like this: If education is only about instructing students to think/deepen their knowledge of a discipline, why don't we just teach thinking? Even then, countless studies were written on the subject and brain research in particular has taken a liking to this topic in recent years. But a clear picture of how teachers should teach in order to have *better* thinking pupils has not been presented. Looking at Dewey's remarks in his work *How We Think*, in his opinion it is pointless «to ask a child or an adult in general to think without first experiencing in some way a sense of difficulty that shakes his equilibrium» (Dewey, 1951, p. 12). This means that a prompt to think is impossible per se, but that a specific occasion must be present, such as doubt or astonishment.

Dewey attributes the greatest importance to intellectual curiosity and considers it to be the driving force or the most important factor. Dewey's assumption is taken up by the British philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1900 - 1976), who also held the view that thinking cannot be taught on its own, but must always be integrated into a discipline and believes that it is almost incomprehensible

that philosophy, as the discipline that deals, among other things, with the cultivation of rationality through improved argumentation and conceptualization of language, was not taken into account. Lipman is convinced that *better* thinking in the school or classroom means *better* thinking in language or expression, which in turn implements the need to teach logical thinking, a traditional sub-discipline of philosophy. Lipman emphasizes those aspects of logical thinking that can be taught discursively formulated and subjected to evaluative criteria, such as drawing inferences, offering convincing arguments, uncovering underlying assumptions, establishing defensible classifications and definitions, and organizing coherent explanations, descriptions and arguments.

Lipman's reference to Vygotsky and his work *Thinking and Speaking*, where he writes that «*to discover language, one must think*» (Vygotski, 1983, p. 90), shows that the improvement of thinking ability and the development of thinking skills correlates with language acquisition and the improvement of children's linguistic abilities.

Thinking – speaking – philosophizing

The overall conception of Vygotsky's work can be summarized in one sentence as follows: «Certainly language is not everything, but without language we are nothing. That we can talk to each other is what makes us human» (Moeller, 1990 cited in Münnix & Münnix, 1998, p. 169). In addition to Vygotsky, other philosophers also deal with the connection between thought and language. For example, the American philosopher and logician Charles Sanders Peirce writes: «The warp and weft of all thought and all research are symbols; [...] so that it is false to say that good language is merely 'important' to good thought; for it is its essence» (Peirce, p. 166 cited in Dewey, 2004, p. 86).

Language, albeit in many different forms and ways, such as verbal and non-verbal, is something that all people have in common. Children should learn language, but the word *learn* only inaccurately refers to the fact that they also have the corresponding right to use language that is familiar to the rest of humanity and in which children share with adults and adults share with children. Language is a common human possession and a fundamental shared value. Once children have gained access to common language, they have the essentials to think, but this does not mean that they cannot think without language (cf. Lipman, 1991, p. xxii). In a nutshell, one could say that «action, knowledge and experience need language in order to become common: One learns with language to understand the world as a world and to move in it»

(Bock, 1998 cited in Münnix & Münnix, 1998, p. 170). If language is explicitly understood as thinking and thinking in such a way that it implies language, then a conversation in the classroom is promising, as it can be assumed that it will be conducted with the support of individual thinking (cf. Cam, 1996, p. 15f.). Following on from these considerations, Lipman's main interest can be seen as the promotion of thinking, which is not only a critical, creative and complex approach to a topic, but also the ability to develop self-reflection. Furthermore, learning from each other (peer-learning) is seen as playing an important role. In concrete terms, this means that when a pupil explains a concept or questions an underlying assumption, other children should feel empowered and encouraged to do the same whenever a suitable opportunity arises. In order to develop this ability, the philosophical discussion should enable pupils to think together in order to be made aware of the associated processes of their own thinking (cf. Cam, 1996, p. 11).

Philosophizing within the community of inquiry

The term *community of inquiry* is used by both Peirce and Dewey. Peirce only uses the term "community of scientific inquiry" in relation to scientific research. In doing so, he relies on the ultimate characteristic of being human: reason. Since it is dependent on language, it only arises within a community. Based on this social foundation of reason and the essential reasonableness of human beings, the human self, which is characterized by a continuous process of growth, only makes sense in relation to others. For this reason, thinking is never an internal process; even when the self thinks for itself, there is a critical-reasonable and an innovative element. Another aspect of community and learning is expressed by the philosopher and social psychologist George Herbert Mead as follows: «So far as education is concerned, the child does not become social by learning. He must be social in order to learn» (Mead, 1993, S. 323).

Dewey also uses the term community of inquiry in relation to research, but more when it comes to learning itself. In Dewey's opinion, *education* fails because it only refers to the stubborn learning of facts instead of letting students approach problem solving like scientists. This problem solving is supposed to make them think for themselves instead of memorizing. Dewey left no doubt that what needed to happen in the classroom was *thinking* (independent, imaginative, resourceful). In his opinion, the educational process in the classroom should be modeled on the scientific research process. Both Peirce and Dewey see an interplay between thinking and learning in the community, which can be understood as *thinking together* in the sense of *distributive*

thinking. In this process, different thinking operations are applied to a common problem in which the participants express different views, bring in other aspects, correct themselves and thus move forward. For Peirce, thinking takes place in this dialectical weighing up of different perspectives and believes that a *reasonable* result can only emerge from this. Peirce's assumption that such thinking processes can be internalized and applied outside the community of inquiry is underpinned by research such as that described by Vygotsky. This concept of *thinking together* is taken up by Lipman and he relates this to the basic idea of education for democracy, in which all perspectives are uncovered, but unacceptable ways of thinking are detected and refuted by the community of inquiry itself. Education for democracy and reflection on common values becomes the social task of philosophy. This form of philosophy is thus located as a special *unscientific* form of cognition that is concerned with judgment as a value as well as a unique form of community - those who judge judgment and critique critique (Lipman, 2003, p. 38).

This means that it is not about absolute knowledge content, but about the construction of a pragmatic and social reality. Weber believes that such a pragmatic understanding of philosophy justifies the development of a strongly participatory approach to philosophizing with children (Weber, 2013, p. 184).

Thinking together and collaborative learning in a community of inquiry is based on shared, valuable experiences and, in addition, the community of inquiry strengthens itself by recognizing that difficult problems can be solved together or that conflicts and disputes can be overcome cooperatively. For this reason, Lipman sees the need for children to develop and recognize different thinking strategies. However, this should always take place through discussion, through philosophizing. Consequently, as indicated at the beginning of the article, the class must be transformed into a community of inquiry.

Example of human rights - connection of GCE and p4c

Human rights education is multi-layered - learning in human rights education therefore means not only acquiring knowledge about human rights and the mechanisms for their protection, but also strengthening the skills that are important for their implementation - such as conflict competence, the ability to cooperate and criticize. (Ludwig Boltzmann Institut, 2019)

Barbara Weber (2013) describes very impressively in her work *Philosophieren mit Kindern zum Thema Menschenrechte. Vernunft und Mitgefühl einer demokratischen Dialogkultur*, that cross-curricular competences are also learned through learning from each other and takes up two core concepts, communicative reason on the one hand and compassion on the other, and thus provides starting points in human rights education. The aim of her

explanations is to show that the *ideal* discourse based on communicative reason (Jürgen Habermas) and the *culture of human rights* based on compassion (Richard Rorty) are not mutually exclusive, but rather interdependent. Furthermore, according to Weber, both aspects are linked to the corporeality of the human being, since on the one hand compassion is a prerequisite for ethical conflicts to be perceived and resolved in the first place and on the other hand communicative reason is dependent on a change of perspective within a bodily constructed intersubjective space. In the following, these two views are didactically transferred into an educational project *Philosophizing with Children: the Cultivation of Reason and Compassion with regard to contemporary human rights education*. Weber thus shows that «*the recognition of the personhood of others and the compassionate understanding of their being-in-the-world are prerequisites for engaging in rational discourse*» (Weber, 2013, p. 11). This brief excerpt from Weber is intended to show the connection to the interplay between Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and Philosophy for Children (p4c) mentioned at the beginning, as well as to the understanding of *polis*.

Summary

Referring to Lipman and his model of «Higher Thinking in Education» (Lipman, 1991, p. 22) it can be said that when it comes to encouraging pupils in their thinking, such encouragement must go in a direction in which they are given the opportunity to argue their opinions and points of view through reasoning and to articulate their emotions. This also requires semantic and syntactic tools, such as knowledge of the meaning of abstract concepts, their ambiguity as well as their relationship to each other. In my opinion these are necessary future skills in relation to *polis* which was for the *pea*-conference understood in a very broad way as «living together in a complex world and society where all differences can find a way to coexist, conviviality, politics and active citizenship, as well as personal and shared responsibility arising from the common good» (*pea*-conference 2023) or as Dewey (1964, p.120-121) puts it «Democracy is more than a form of government; it is first and foremost a form of living together, of shared experience». Based on Dewey's understanding of Democracy, the p4c-programme offers a didactical-methodological setting where teacher and pupils (students) on one hand have the opportunity to learn and apply philosophical skills in dialogical exchange and to acquire social and personal skills, as Weber (2013, p. 160) emphasizes in the key competence of compassion and communicative good sense, among others. They are given the opportunity to share common experiences in their

community of inquiry! On the other hand if the p4c-programme is thought in connection with current streams like Global Citizenship Education, Democratic Thinking and Learning or Education for Freedom the philosophical attitude of the students and the acquisition of key qualifications – such as communication and social skills, in fact as a school of learning to think – can furthermore be beneficial for ecological and creative thinking in general.

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Without creativity and dialogue there is no pedagogy! Perceptual vignettes as phenomenological-creative and reflexive-collegial method

Ulrike Barth & Angelika Wiehl

Abstract Creativity and collaboration constitute two key elements of a pedagogy that is oriented towards the children and young people. The article exemplifies the creative writing and reflection method with perceptual vignettes. They should be designed equally with individual and collegial knowledge and open our eyes to the present and the surprising, from which we can gain future impulses for a collegially responsible pedagogy.

Ohne Kreativität und Dialog keine Pädagogik! Wahrnehmungsvignetten als phänomenologisch-creative und reflexiv-kollegiale Methode

Einleitung

Die «Polis» bildete den begrifflichen Bezugsrahmen der PEA-Konferenz («Pedagogy, Ecology and the Arts») für die Erforschung der Pädagogik hinsichtlich gemeinschaftsbildender und auf die Zukunft hin orientierter Dimensionen. Dafür gilt es, Polis in der Bedeutung für eine noch im Entstehen befindliche Gemeinschaft zu denken, wie es Edouard Glissant (2013) formuliert: «Daß unter großen Mühen eine gemeinschaftliche Teilhabe an einer unmöglichen Polis im Entstehen ist, davon haben wir heute ein Bewusstsein.» (S. 27) Diese »unmögliche Polis«leuchtet bei Philosophinnen und Philosophen als Zukunftsidee für eine »große Transformation« auf (Kurt, 2017; Wintersteiner, 2021), die durch ein neues, Risiken einschließendes «planetares Denken» (Kramer & Wintersteiner, 2021, S. 207) eingeleitet werden kann. Nach Morin (2012, S. 15) besteht gerade die Unsicherheit darin, dass Polis als etwas Unwahrscheinliches doch möglich sein wird.

Wenn wir diesen Weg des «planetaren Denkens» in der Gemeinschaft wirklich gehen wollen, erreichen wir Veränderungen. Inklusion im weiten Sinne, losgelöst von einordnenden und urteilenden Kategorien, benötigt

Transformationen im Gemeinwesen, im Dialog und in Beziehungen. Um für entstehende Inklusion eine transformierende Handhabe zu finden, stellen wir die Reflexion von Wahrnehmungsvignetten (WV) zur Diskussion; sie veranlassen die Lösung von tradierten Vorstellungen, um sich für Unvorhergesehenes zu öffnen und Kreativität im gemeinschaftlichen Dasein zulassen zu können.

Unerwartete und ungewöhnliche Ereignisse lösen Staunen, Bewundern oder Irritationen aus. Diese Empfindungen bezeichnen unterschiedliche Welt- und Menschenbegegnungen. Insbesondere «gewährleistet die Fähigkeit des Staunens, sich für etwas Großes und Größeres, als der Mensch selbst ist, zu öffnen oder auf etwas Verstörendes oder Irritierendes zu treffen. In diesem Spannungsfeld von Irritation bis Bewunderung erschließt sich dem staunenden Menschen Selbst-, Mit- und Weltsein» (Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, S. 86). Er spürt Momente auf, die scheinbar aus Raum und Zeit fallen, weil sie nicht verstanden werden, aber dennoch Aufmerksamkeit und Bewusstsein auf sich ziehen. Auf solche Vorgänge lenken Wahrnehmungsvignetten (Barth & Wiehl, 2023a, 2023b) das forschende Interesse. Einmalige und besondere Ereignisse werden möglichst ohne deutende Urteile in kurzen Texten beschrieben.

Die Wahrnehmungsvignetten bieten sich als eine phänomenologisch-kreative und reflexive Methode an, um Praxiserfahrungen mit theoretischem Wissen und im kollegialen Dialog zu verbinden. Sie haben nicht den Anspruch eines perfekten Textes, vielmehr sind sie Ausdruck der Forderung Husserls, «auf die Sachen selbst zurückzugehen» und diese «in ihrer Selbstgegebenheit [zu] befragen» (zitiert nach Vetter, 2020, S. 468). Wir erweitern diese Zugangsform durch den Blick auf das Atmosphärische nach Böhme, der für die Begründung einer «neuen Ästhetik» die Atmosphäre als «Beziehung von Umgebungsqualität und menschlichem Befinden» (Böhme, 2017, S. 22) konstatiert. Wahrnehmungsvignetten verstehen wir als ein Medium, affizierende (heil-)pädagogische Momente mit Kindern, Jugendlichen und Erwachsenen schriftlich festzuhalten, um sie in der Gruppe zum Erklingen zu bringen, ihre Aussagen zu befragen und die eigene Haltung zu reflektieren.

Ausgehend von einem Problemaufriss phänomenologischer Wahrnehmung und Beschreibung entwickeln wir drei Reflexionsphasen, die individuell und im kollegialen Dialog durchgeführt, für die pädagogische Ausbildung und Forschung geeignet sind. Angeregt durch die PEA-Konferenz erweitern wir unseren forschenden Blick auf die Polis-Idee, die wir – wie im zeitgenössischen Diskurs (Nida-Rümelin, 2023, S. 52) – als eine Weiterentwicklung der von Platon für die Gemeinschaftsbildung initiierten Erkenntnisarbeit durch «Presencing» (Scharmer, 2022, S. 113ff.) skizzieren.

Phänomenologisch-kreative Arbeit mit Wahrnehmungsvignetten

Phänomenologisch-kreatives Schreiben

Das phänomenologisch-kreative Schreiben bringt zuvor wahrgenommene Phänomene erneut zur Erscheinung. Diese Re-Kreationen vollziehen sich – wie Kreativitätsprozesse überhaupt (Stoltz & Wiehl, 2021) – in vier Phasen (Wallas, 1926/2014). Am Anfang steht die «Vorbereitung», das hinwendende Beobachten zur «Sache selbst» (Husserl, 2016, S. 6); es folgt die »Inkubation« als Phase des Loslassens, Vergessens und unbewussten Verarbeitens (Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, S. 128); sie bereitet die «Einsicht» vor, durch die das ursprüngliche Ereignis als sinnhafte Essenz wiedererscheint, das in der Phase der «Verarbeitung» in einer Wahrnehmungsvignette verdichtet wird (ebd., S. 130ff.). Das durch «Einsicht» wiedergewonnene Phänomen wird re-kreiert; weil nicht in Situ mitprotokolliert wird, findet der Schreibakt nachträglich statt. Eine Wahrnehmungsvignette – so unsere Definition – entspringt «einer phänomenologischen Methode, die Praxisbeobachtungen, Beschreibungen, Reflexionsschritte und professionell-pädagogische Anwendungen einschließt» (ebd., S. 119). Das re-kreierte Phänomen kann mittels Wahrnehmungsvignette genauso vergegenwärtigt werden wie im Moment des ursprünglichen Ereignisses. Schriftlich erfasst birgt es etwas Geheimnisvolles, das «seinem Wesen nach nicht fassbar ist [...], weil es der von der Entwicklung eines Menschen unabtrennbare Kern ist» (Dufourmantelle, 2021, S. 27). Dieses Unfassbare wird in weiteren Arbeitsschritten reflektiert und gedeutet (Kap. 3).

Wahrnehmungsvignetten als verdichtete Momente

Wahrnehmungsvignetten beruhen auf Wahrnehmen und Beobachten der «Sache selbst» (Husserl, 2016) bzw. der «Selbstgegebenheit» (Marion, 2015) und werden aus der Ersten-Person-Perspektive einer am pädagogischen Geschehen beteiligten oder einer beobachtenden Person (WV 2) geschrieben. Entscheidend ist, dass sie die erlebten Momente in einer, das Affizierende und das Besondere konzentrierten Beschreibung zeigen, die (möglichst) keine Annahmen, Erklärungen oder Beurteilungen enthält. Gerade Störungen oder »herausforderndes Verhalten« in pädagogischen Kontexten (Fröhlich-Gildhoff *et al.*, 2020) veranlassen beteiligte Pädagoginnen und Pädagogen zu Reaktionen und Urteilen. Stattdessen lösungsorientiert auf das Herausfordernde eingehen zu können, verlangt die Ausbildung einer Haltung, z. B. durch Achtsamkeitsübungen. In der phänomenologischen Arbeit geht es daher um die

Sensibilisierung und das Interesse an individuellen Potenzialen und Bildungsbedürfnissen.

Die folgende Wahrnehmungsvignette beschreibt eine Szene nicht erwarteter Konformität mit unterrichtlichen Abläufen; sie enthält affizierende oder beunruhigende Anzeichen, die den Blick einer Person in «beobachtender Teilhabe» auf sich lenken.

Rhythmus

Chris, der Erzieher steht vorne, er gibt einen Rhythmus vor, die Kinder sollen mitmachen. Chris klatscht rhythmisch, dann fügt er Stampfer mit den Füßen in die entstehende Pause zwischen den Klatschern und dann folgt ein Reiben der Hände. Karl steht nah bei Chris und verzieht schmerzhaft das Gesicht, als Chris die reibenden Hände rhythmisch hinzufügt. Der Rhythmus geht weiter. Beim nächsten Händereiben dreht sich Karl weg vom Geschehen, er versucht in den Rhythmus zu finden, klatscht, stampft, ein wenig verzögert, dreht sich weg und verzieht das Gesicht. Bei der nächsten Runde führt er die Hände nach dem Stampfen an die Ohren, hält sie sich zu, während die anderen die Hände reiben. Er findet in den Rhythmus: klatschen, stampfen, Hände über die Ohren, klatschen, stampfen, sein Gesicht entspannt sich, er lächelt und wippt leicht mit dem ganzen Körper. (WV 2; Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, S. 221)

In dieser Unterrichtssituation sollen die anwesenden Kinder rhythmisch stampfen und klatschen. Ein Kind, das den Vorgaben nicht folgen kann, zieht die Aufmerksamkeit auf sich. Die beobachtende Person beschreibt weder die Bedingungen des pädagogischen Handelns noch jene der Abweichungen des Kindes; sie verweilt nicht beim Allgemeinen, sondern fokussiert Konkretes und Besonderes. Sie verdichtet leibhaftig erfahrene Momente, die sie «in ein bildliches Vor- und Nachspiel» verwickeln (Waldenfels, 2019, S. 213)

Reflexion pädagogischer Phänomene

Der dreiphasige Reflexionsprozess mit Wahrnehmungsvignetten wurde mit Studierenden der Waldorfpädagogik erarbeitet, um Bezüge zwischen der pädagogischen Praxis und entwicklungspsychologischem Wissen herzustellen, die Sicht auf Kinder (und Menschen im ganz allgemeinen Sinne) zu reflektieren sowie den Umgang mit pädagogischen Herausforderungen zu überdenken. Durch die dreiphasige Reflexion beispielhafter Wahrnehmungsvignetten erwerben sie die Basis einer verstehenden Diagnostik und einer professionellen pädagogischen Haltung. Diese Reflexionsarbeit wird am Beispiel der Wahrnehmungsvignette «Rhythmus» erörtert.

Journaling als Wegmarkenanzeiger persönlicher Entwicklung

Reflexionen durchziehen das Alltagsbewusstsein und führen am ehesten bei Krisen oder Misserfolgen zu Veränderungen. Für unsere Methodologie eignet sich das Journaling (Schneider, 2017), eine Methode geführten Schreibens aus der Theorie U (Scharmer, 2022), zur Aktivierung der Übungs- und Reflexionsprozesse. Durch Aufgaben für die drei Phasen der Reflexion und den Austausch im Team gewinnen die Beteiligten erkenntnis- und handlungsleitende Gesichtspunkte (Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, S. 176ff.). Dabei geht es um

- Erschließen oder Bewusstmachen des Wahrnehmungsvignetteninhalts bzw. der Aussage
- Herstellen von Zusammenhängen und Bezügen zur Anthropologie und Entwicklungspsychologie
- Begriffsbildung für eine pädagogische Professionalität
- Erkennen der Angemessenheit räumlicher Strukturen und didaktischen Handelns
- ggf. Abgleichen mit dem Index für Inklusion und pädagogischen Fachkenntnissen (Barth & Wiehl, 2021; 2023b, S. 188)

Übungen und Erfahrungen werden im Journaling notiert und für die weitere pädagogische Arbeit zu Rate gezogen. Beispielsweise umfasst es Aufgaben zur ersten Reflexion der Wahrnehmungsvignette «Rhythmus»:

- Schreiben Sie auf, was sich Ihnen in der Wahrnehmungsvignette zeigt.
- Wie geht es Karl? Wie verhält er sich und warum?
- Ist sich Chris seiner pädagogischen Möglichkeiten und Grenzen bewusst?
- Wie wirken die Vorgänge auf Sie?

Reflexion als «eine Kernkompetenz des Professionalisierungsprozesses [...], die es im Rahmen der Lehrer*innenbildung zu fördern gilt» (Wyss & Mahler, 2021, S. 23), bedarf der Kriterien und der Übung. Denn eine Bedingung für die professionelle Weiterentwicklung ist die Lösung von Denkgewohnheiten und Handlungsmustern, um gemäß der Theorie U (Scharmer, 2022, S. 38) in eine Sphäre zukünftiger Ideen einzutreten und die eigene Haltung und Pädagogik neu zu verorten (Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, S. 234; Kap. 4). Das Journaling zeigt Wegmarken der persönlichen Entwicklung.

Drei Reflexionsphasen mit einer Wahrnehmungsvignette

Durch die drei Reflexionsphasen entstehen Prozesse der persönlichen Bezugnahme zu einem Geschehen und mehrperspektivische Blickrichtungen und Deutungsmöglichkeiten. Zuerst geht es darum, die Wahrnehmungsvignette zu

lesen und sich zu fragen, was sie zeigt, welche Stimmungen, Äußerungen, Verhaltensweisen, Umstände usw. auffallen.

Die Reflexionsphasen als strukturiertes Vorgehen der pädagogischen Ausbildung und Praxis weisen einen Weg auf, um haltungsorientierende und handlungsleitende Erkenntnisse zu erlangen. Der kollegiale Austausch darüber führt zu anderen, erweiterten Sichtweisen: «Was ein Mensch sieht, hängt sowohl davon ab, worauf er blickt, wie davon, worauf zu sehen ihn seine visuell-begriffliche Erfahrung gelehrt hat.» (Kuhn, 1967/2020, S. 125) Selbst erarbeitete und in Gemeinschaft geteilte Erkenntnisse weiten den Horizont und verändern die Haltung anderen Menschen gegenüber.

Presencing als Grundlage kollegialer Zusammenarbeit

Zentrale Aufgaben pädagogischer Institutionen liegen in Gestaltung und Förderung von Gemeinschaft und geteilter Verantwortung durch kooperative Formen – in gewisser Weise der Kerngedanke der Polis. In aktuellen Diskursen wird auf ihren Ursprung in Platons sokratischer Methode verwiesen, die Menschen zum Erlangen gesicherten Wissens für das gemeinschaftliche Wirken führt (Nida-Rümelin, 2023, S. 52). Nicht das Vorbild der griechischen Polis, sondern ihr Kerngedanke ist leitend, wenn es um Erkenntnisse für die Gestaltung zukünftigen (Zusammen-)Lebens geht.

Jede Schule schafft dafür Gremien, die in staatlichen Schulen anders organisiert sind als in Schulen in freier Trägerschaft wie den selbstverwalteten Waldorfschulen. Eines der tragenden Elemente von Waldorfschulen sollen «Lehrerversammlungen» (Steiner, 1919/1991, S. 103f.) sein, um durch «kulturpolitische Betrachtung» die «Denkgewohnheiten» in Zukunftsimpulse für die Pädagogik zu verwandeln (ebd., S. 105). Dieses kollegiale Format kann die Arbeit mit Wahrnehmungsvignetten ergänzen. Weil die angestrebte Haltungsentwicklung nicht nur durch Reflexionen zu erreichen ist, bedarf es der Übungen, um Erkenntnisse mit der Selbstentwicklung zu verbinden. Die entstehende Fähigkeit, sich geistesgegenwärtig auf ein Ereignis und eine neue Erkenntnis so einzulassen, dass ihr Zukunftspotenzial wirksam wird, fasst C. Otto Scharmer (2022) mit dem Begriff «Presencing» zusammen. Die Idee der Polis und das Presencing verbindet ein Weg dynamischer Gemeinschaftsbildung durch neu zu gewinnende Erkenntnisse – z. B. aus den Reflexionsphasen mit Wahrnehmungsvignetten.

Übungen zur Aufmerksamkeit- und Achtsamkeitsschulung

Die ethische Ausrichtung der Pädagogik ist eine Grundforderung; ihre Umsetzung bedarf außer Leitlinien wie den «Reckahner Reflexionen» (Prengel, 2019) der Übungen zur Selbst- und Haltungsentwicklung. Jede Professionalisierung erfordert, dass Situationen angemessen eingeschätzt und Denken, Fühlen und Wollen statt an Befindlichkeiten bedarfsgemäß ausgerichtet werden (Scharmer, 2022, S. 100ff.). Für die Ausbildung einer ethischen Haltung haben wir Übungen Rudolf Steiners adaptiert, die eine «Weiterentwicklung der Seelenkräfte Denken, Fühlen und Wollen» durch «Gedankenkontrolle, Willensinitiative, Gleichmut, Positivität, Unbefangenheit und seelisches Gleichgewicht» (Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, S. 163ff.) fördern, und um die Rück- und Vorschau-Übung ergänzt (ebd.).

Bei der ersten Übung der »Gedankenkontrolle« wird ein Begriff oder ein Gegenstand etwa fünf Minuten konzentriert beobachtet; dies bewirkt, sich bewusst auf etwas einlassen zu können. Bei der zweiten Übung der «Willensaktivität» wird täglich eine unbedeutende Tat immer zur gleichen Zeit verrichtet, damit im konkreten Fall geistesgegenwärtiges Handeln möglich ist. An dritter Stelle steht das für die Haltungsentwicklung unabdingbare Üben der «Gelassenheit», damit keine reaktiven, sondern überlegte Handlungen erfolgen. Die vierte Übung schult »Unbefangenheit und Positivität«, um in schwierigen Situationen eine empathische Offenheit für Lösungen zu bewahren. Die fünfte Übung gilt der «Unvorgenommenheit», um bei seltsam erscheinenden Vorkommnissen Gelingensmöglichkeiten denken zu können. Die sechste Übung, der Zusammenklang der vorangehenden Übungen, soll zu «Ausgeglichenheit und Selbstregulation» führen. Für die persönliche Nachsorge fügen wir die «Rückschau» am Abend und zur Gewinnung für Lösungsideen die «Vorschau» am Morgen hinzu (ebd.). Abends werden die Tagesereignisse rückwärts ins Bewusstsein gerufen, um etwas Gelungenes oder Krisenhaftes zu bemerken und in eine Frage für den nächsten Morgen zu kleiden. Bei regelmäßigem Üben leuchtet sie nach dem Aufwachen verbunden mit neuen Impulsen auf. Die Übungen ergänzen die Reflexionsarbeit durch Aktivierung des individuellen Fähigkeitspotenzials.

Haltungsentwicklung als individueller und kollegialer Auftrag. Ausblick

Eine professionelle Haltung auszubilden, ist ein individueller und ein kollegialer Auftrag. Die phänomenologische Arbeitsweise «kann (und soll) zur erhöhten Achtsamkeit auf sich und die Adressaten pädagogischen Handelns

führen» (Brinkmann, 2017, S. 9). Dabei lehrt uns die «Theorie professionellen Handelns [...], dass wir mehrere Perspektiven abwechselnd einnehmen sollten, wenn wir Kinder verstehen wollen» (Prenzel, 2003, S. 36). Aber nicht nur Mehrperspektivität und Anerkennung heterogener und individueller Lern- und Entwicklungsbedürfnisse, sondern auch kollegialer Austausch darüber führt zu einer «Pädagogikethik» (Prenzel, 2019, S. 29) als gemeinsames Anliegen.

Um die Idee der Polis für die Haltungsentwicklung fruchtbar zu machen, muss die individuelle pädagogische Professionalisierung der Gemeinschaft zu Gute kommen. Haltung ist im beruflichen Zusammenhang nicht nur Privatsache, sondern kann durch kriteriengeleitete Reflexionen kollegial erarbeitet werden.

Die «große Transformation» geht nach Hildegard Kurt (2017) und Werner Wintersteiner (2021) von einem sozialen und ökologisch gerechten Miteinander auf der Erde aus (Kurt, 2017, S. 15). Das erfordert ein «planetare[s] Denken, das alles lokalpatriotische, nationalistische, rassistische, sexistische Denken überwindet» (dies., 2021, S. 207). Durch die «Bereitschaft, dialogisch und kritisch zugleich sich mit anderen auseinanderzusetzen» (ebd., S. 206), besteht eine Chance für die Transformation. Inklusion als Gestaltungsidee einer zukünftigen planetaren und inklusiv gedachten Polis findet ihren Anfang letztlich im multiperspektivischen Dialog und in gemeinschaftsorientierender professioneller Haltung.

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School as a bridge between the ‘small’ and the ‘big’ world. School as a polis?

Tamara Peer & Sandra Matschnigg-Peer

Abstract Phenomenological vignette research is a methodological approach that aims to illuminate experiences. This article presents a vignette that sheds light on the experiences of pupils when primary school becomes a polis: when the social promises and difficulties of the ‘big’ world are thematised in the ‘small’ world of the primary school classroom and when the classroom becomes a place of discursive debate.

Schule als Brücke zwischen der ‚kleinen‘ und ‚großen‘ Welt – Schule als Polis?

Problemaufriss

Soll Schule als Polis verstanden werden – als demokratische «Gesellschaft im Kleinen» (Böhm und Seichter, 2022, S. 297; Reinhold, Pollak und Heim, 1999, S. 320), die Normen, Werte und Gesetze der Res Publica – der ‚großen‘ Welt – in einem überschaubaren Gemeinwesen erleben, erproben und verstehen lässt (von Hentig, 2003, S. 191)?

Diese Frage ist es, die den Rahmen des vorliegenden Beitrags bildet und zunächst mit einem Hinweis auf Hartmut von Hentig einhergehen soll. Die Forderung, Schule als Polis zu gestalten, sie zu einem Lebens- und Erfahrungsraum werden zu lassen, um (politische) Bildung zu ermöglichen, wurde maßgeblich von dem Pädagogen von Hentig geprägt (von Hentig, 1996; 2003). Versammlungen, demokratische Entscheidungsfindung und damit einhergehende diskursive Auseinandersetzungen stellen exemplarische Merkmale dar, die eine (Schul-)polis kennzeichnen lassen (von Hentig, 1996, S. 205):

Die Schule soll ein Lebens- und Erfahrungsraum sein, eine Gesellschaft im Kleinen, eine Polis, wo die Verhaltensweisen, die wir von mündigen Bürgerinnen und Bürgern erwarten, täglich gelebt und gelernt werden (Laborschule Bielefeld, 2023)¹.

Ins Zentrum öffentlichen Interesses geriet von Hentig jedoch nicht nur aufgrund seiner wissenschaftlichen Tätigkeit, seiner reformpädagogischen Ideen und seinem Versuch, eine Schulpolis zu verwirklichen. Es war seine Beziehung zu Gerold Becker, dezidiert von Hentigs fehlende Bewertung, sein Leugnen und Bagatellisieren der Verbrechen, die Becker in seiner Rolle als Schulleiter der Odenwaldschule verübte, von Hentigs mögliche «Mitwisserschaft des hundertfachen Missbrauchs» (Füller, 2018), die ihn in Kritik geraten ließen (Verbeet, 2010; von Bebenburg, 2021).

Verweise auf von Hentig gehen mit moralischen Bedenken einher – ihnen sollte durch Offenlegung, ihnen soll durch eine kritische Haltung begegnet werden. *Soll Schule als Polis verstanden werden?* stellt daher nicht nur jene Frage dar, die den Rahmen des vorliegenden Beitrags bildet – sie ist es auch, die es notwendig machte und machen wird, sich moralisch-ethischen Fragen zu stellen.

Nach diesen einleitenden Worten ermöglicht es die Vorstellung des theoretischen Rahmens, von Hentigs pädagogischem Ideal einer Schulpolis mit Verweisen auf Hannah Arendt eine kontroverse Position voran- und damit gegenüberzustellen und die mögliche Relevanz beider Positionen für die Institution Schule zu beleuchten.

Theoretischer Rahmen

Hannah Arendt (1954) fordert im Beitrag *Die Krise der Erziehung* politisch öffentliche Lebensgebiete von Erziehung entschieden zu scheiden (Arendt, 1994, S. 275): «We must decisively divorce the realm of education from the others, most of all from the realm of public, political life [...]» (Arendt, 1954, S. 13).

Es gelte, das Kind vor der Öffentlichkeit, vor dem Politischen zu schützen: Denn ein Kind, das «der Welt ohne den Schutz des Privaten und Geborgenen ständig ausgesetzt» (Arendt, 1994, S. 267) sei, gehe «in seiner Lebendigkeit zugrunde» (Arendt, 1994, S. 267). Dort, wo versucht werde, «aus den Kindern selbst eine Art Welt zu errichten» (Arendt, 1994, S. 267), bilde sich ein Raum, in dem «Menschen, die im Werden sind und noch nicht sind, gezwungen

¹ Die Laborschule Bielefeld wurde 1974 von von Hentig gegründet und als Einrichtung der Universität Bielefeld, an der von Hentig eine Professur für Pädagogik innehatte, fortan wissenschaftlich begleitet (Böhm & Seichter, 2022, S. 297; Reinhold, Pollak & Heim, 1999, S. 320).

werden, sich dem Licht einer Öffentlichkeit überhaupt zu exponieren» (Arendt, 1994, S. 267f.). Der*die Einzelne werde einer «wirklich tyrannischen Autorität unterstellt, der Tyrannei durch die Majorität» (Arendt, 1994, S. 263).

Jenseits dieser Darstellung fordert Hartmut von Hentig über vierzig Jahre später, «junge Menschen auf das Leben in der *polis* vorzubereiten» (von Hentig, 1996, S. 124). Er eröffnet die Möglichkeit, Schule als *Polis* zu denken, Schüler*innen sollen «Politik verstehen und sich ein Urteil über die Prinzipien, Probleme, Prozeduren [...]» (von Hentig, 1996, S. 124) bilden. Schule als *Polis* bearbeite nach von Hentig gesellschaftliche Herausforderungen und kann Schüler*innen bereits in der ‚kleinen‘ *Welt Schule* mit ‚großen‘ Problemen konfrontieren:

Man muß die Schule [...] zur *polis* machen, in der man im Kleinen die Versprechungen und Schwierigkeiten der *res publica* erfährt, sich und seine Ideen erprobt und die wichtigsten Tätigkeiten übt. (von Hentig, 1996, S. 128)

Von Hentigs Forderung, dass Schule zur *Polis* gemacht werden müsse, zu einem Lebens- und Erfahrungsraum, scheint sich in bildungspolitischen Diskursen² widerzuspiegeln (von Hentig, 1996; 2003):

So sollen Schule und Unterricht laut österreichischem Lehrplan dazu beitragen, «dass junge Menschen befähigt werden, bei der Bewältigung von gesellschaftlichen, sozialen, ökonomischen und ökologischen Herausforderungen eine aktive Rolle» (Lehrplan der Volksschule, 2023, S. 2) einzunehmen.

Schule sei «ein sozialer Raum, welcher es ermöglicht, sich zu erproben, die Wirkungen des eigenen Handelns zu erleben und diese kritisch zu reflektieren» (Lehrplan der Volksschule, 2023, S. 2).

Forschungsfrage

Während sich die Forderung, Schule als *Polis* zu gestalten, implizit im Lehrplan der Volksschule, aber auch im internationalen Diskurs rund um Schule widerspiegelt, finden kritische Bezüge, Einwände oder konkrete Handlungsanweisungen, die sich aus den Gedanken Hannah Arendts ableiten lassen, kaum Erwähnung (Arendt, 1994; Council of Europe, 2018; Lehrplan der Volksschule, 2023, von Hentig, 1996; 2003).

² Nicht nur im Lehrplan der Volksschule, sondern auch im *Referenzrahmen des Europarats für Demokratiekompetenzen* scheinen Forderungen sowie Prämissen von Hentigs implizit aufgegriffen zu sein (Council of Europe, 2018; Lehrplan der Volksschule, 2023, S. 2; 9-19; von Hentig, 1996, S. 215-234).

Diese Ausgangslage ist es, die die zentrale Forschungsfrage begründen und gleichermaßen kontextualisieren lässt: *Welche Erfahrungen können gemacht werden, wenn Schule zur Polis wird, wenn gesellschaftliche Versprechungen und Schwierigkeiten der ‚großen‘ Welt in der ‚kleinen‘ Welt der Volksschulklasse thematisiert werden und der Klassenraum zum Ort diskursiver Auseinandersetzung wird?*

Methodischer Zugang: Vignettenforschung

Die phänomenologische Vignettenforschung wird als methodischer Zugang verstanden, der es ermöglichen kann, sich Erfahrungen anzunähern:

Vignetten werden dabei als *gehaltvolle Beschreibungen schulischer Erfahrungssituationen* verfasst, die aus *teilnehmender bzw. «mit-erfahrender Erfahrung»* gewonnen werden (Agostini, 2016, S. 48-55). Als *prägnante Verdichtungen* ermöglichen sie einen *Nachvollzug* des Beispielhaften (Anderegg, Beuschlein, Papadopoulou und Strauss, 2023, S. 15; Brinkmann, 2012, S. 44; Schwarz, Schratz und Westfall-Greiter, 2013, S. 13-15), zeigen Facetten schulischer Erfahrungssituationen auf und eröffnen eine erweiterte Perspektive auf Schule und Unterricht (Rathgeb et al., 2023, S. 173). Ein Lesen der entstandenen Vignetten und ein daraus resultierendes (An-)Deuten erfolgt durch die Vignettenlektüre. Dabei werden die *miterfahrenen schulischen Erfahrungssituationen* selbst in den Blick genommen:

Unsere Lektüren der Vignetten sind ein Fragen und Weiterfragen und gleichen eher Suchbewegungen als Festschreibungen (Schratz, Schwarz & Westfall-Greiter, 2012, S. 39).

Durch die Lektüre sollen jene Erfahrungsmomente, die in den Vignetten sicht-, hör-, (mit)fühlbar gemacht werden, nachvollzogen werden können:

Vignettes are not analysed or interpreted in a conventional way. Rather, the aim is to value the fullness and richness of experience articulated in a vignette and to show this abundance in as many facets as possible and in different readings. Depending on the reading and the reader, other things come to light and into view (Agostini, Schratz & Eloff, 2024, S. 113).

Wenn Schule zur Polis wird

Es galt, Schule – ferner die Gemeinschaft einer dritten Volksschulklasse in Wien – als Polis zu beleuchten, Schüler*innen mit gesellschaftlichen Versprechungen und Schwierigkeiten der ‚großen‘ Welt zu konfrontieren, um nicht nur eine mögliche Verhältnissetzung der*des Einzelnen, sondern auch diskursive Auseinandersetzungen in der Gemeinschaft anzuregen (von Hentig, 1996, S. 128).

Als Thema, welches es ermöglichen sollte, gesellschaftliche Versprechungen und Schwierigkeiten der ‚großen‘ Welt zu repräsentieren, wurden Schönheitsideale gewählt. Sowohl das wechselseitige Verhältnis zwischen Gesellschaft und Körper, aber auch der komplexe Zusammenhang zwischen Schönheitsidealen und staatlicher Politik können als Argumente genannt werden, die diese Entscheidung – neben einer Abstimmung mit der Klassenlehrperson – begründen lassen (Gugutzer, 2022; Liebelt, 2023).

Durch einen gesetzten Impuls, dem Vorlesen einer Rahmengeschichte, wurde eine künstlerische Auseinandersetzung der Kinder mit der Thematik initiiert. Die daraus resultierenden Zeichnungen ließen nicht nur sichtbar machen, welche Schönheitsideale in der ‚kleinen‘ Welt implizit wirken, sondern wurden gleichermaßen als Grundlage genutzt, um eine Diskussion und Reflexion im Plenum anzuregen. Die Umsetzung dieser Unterrichtssequenz erfolgte durch die Lehrpersonen der Klasse.

Durch Teilnahme – durch teilnehmende Erfahrung – war es uns möglich, die Intervention und das darauffolgende Gespräch in der Klasse mitzuerfahren und nach dem Rückzug aus dem Feld Vignetten zu verfassen (Agostini, 2016, S. 48-55; Schwarz et al., 2013).

Vignette Nurhi

Nurhi blickt starr auf ihr Blatt Papier. Dieses hält sie mit beiden Händen fest und presst ihre Ober- und Unterlippe so fest aneinander, dass ihr Mund kaum mehr zu sehen ist. Ständig wechselt sie im Sitzkreis ihre Sitzposition und stößt dabei wieder und wieder ihre Nachbarinnen an. Die Lehrperson lässt ihren Blick schweifen und richtet folgende Fragen an das Plenum: «Wie hast du dich gezeichnet? Was bedeutet es für dich, schön zu sein?» Ohne aufgerufen zu werden, durchbricht Nurhi die kurz anhaltende Stille. Fast hektisch erörtert sie: «Wirklich schöne Kinder schauen anders aus als ich. Die haben schöne Augen und lange Haare. Sie tragen keine Brille.» Die Lehrperson runzelt die Stirn, schiebt ihre Brille auf die Nase, blickt zu Nurhi und fragt ruhig: «Möchtest du uns mehr verraten?» Die Schülerin erhebt sich aus der sitzenden Position, präsentiert ihr Bild und führt bestimmt fort:

«Ich glaube, dass ich für mich nicht so schön bin. Man muss für sich selbst schön sein. Die Brille ist für mich nicht schön. Ohne Brille wäre es besser.» Sie richtet ihren Blick zuvor auf ihre Mitschüler*innen und dann auf die Lehrpersonen. Niemand reagiert, niemand sagt etwas. Nurhi lässt sich fallen, setzt sich mit einem lauten Seufzen auf ihren Platz im Sitzkreis. Das Blatt saust zu Boden.

Vignettenlektüre Nurhi – Bürgerin einer (Schul-)Polis sein?

Nurhi nimmt ihren Platz im Plenum ein. Entsprechend der Aufforderung der Lehrperson hat sie die Zeichnung mitgebracht, diese hält sie fest in ihren Händen. Die Schülerin richtet den Blick auf das Blatt Papier, setzt sich mit ihrer Darstellung, wie sie aussehen würde, wenn sie ihr Aussehen verändern könnte, auseinander. Dass sich Nurhi eine *Meinung gebildet hat*, und dass sie bereit zu sein erscheint, ihre *Gedanken zu artikulieren, sich zu positionieren, sich einzubringen, aktiv zu werden* (Lehrplan der Volksschule, 2023, S. 14f.), sich als *Bürgerin in der polis zu betätigen* (von Hentig, 2003, S. 224), bringt sie nonverbal zum Ausdruck: Das Aufeinanderpressen der Lippen, ihre Unruhe, ihre mögliche Anspannung, der sie durch körperliche Aktivität begegnet, lassen deuten, dass die Schülerin jedenfalls mit dem Gedanken spielt, sich zu dem *kontroversen Thema* (Lehrplan der Volksschule, 2023, S. 14) im Plenum zu äußern. Nachdem sich die Lehrperson an die Kinder wendet und sich informiert, was es für den*die Einzelne bedeute, schön zu sein, hält sich Nurhi nicht mehr zurück. Sie antwortet, ohne aufgezeigt zu haben und aufgerufen worden zu sein, setzt sich mit der *gesellschaftlichen Fragestellung* in ein Verhältnis und beschreibt *deren Relevanz für das eigene Leben* (Lehrplan der Volksschule, 2023, S. 15).

Die Schülerin stellt sich dem *Bürger*innensein in der polis* (von Hentig, 1996, S. 98), stellt sich der *Scheinöffentlichkeit* (Arendt, 1994, S. 267) im Plenum und stellt dabei ihre Demokratiekompetenzen unter Beweis: Sie zeigt, *(nach-)gedacht zu haben und sich positionieren zu können*, nimmt am Gespräch teil, und demonstriert, dass sie es *gestalten kann und will* (Lehrplan der Volksschule, 2023, S. 14). Nurhi handelt, positioniert sich und *exponiert sich* (Arendt, 1994, S. 268): Sie stellt fest, sich selbst nicht schön zu finden, da sie weder lange Haare noch schöne Augen habe und zudem eine Brille trage.

Die Lehrperson fragt die Schülerin daraufhin, ob sie mehr verraten möchte und scheint sicherstellen zu wollen, dass der Diskursraum als ein sicherer Ort wahrgenommen werden kann, «a safe space where students feel able to discuss their views openly, even when their views may be controversial, by creating an open, participative and respectful classroom environment that allows all class members to share their experiences, to express their own opinions

and emotions, and where the students participate in the setting and respecting of ground rules, such as listening to and respecting others» (Council of Europe, 2018, S. 92).

Nurhi antwortet. Erneut nutzt sie das Plenum, öffnet sich der Gemeinschaft, bezieht Stellung, stellt sich der Öffentlichkeit: Sie zeigt den Mitschüler*innen ihre Zeichnung, weist darauf hin, dass sie es als maßgeblich erachte, dem eigenen Schönheitsideal zu entsprechen. Dies tue sie jedoch nicht. Nurhi positioniert sich als Schülerin, die glaubt, sich selbst als nicht schön wahrzunehmen, begründet ihre Meinung, lässt den Klassenraum zur Polis werden, zu einem Diskursraum, der demokratische Werte erfahren und Kompetenzen erwerben lassen könnte:

Through democratic teaching and learning practices clusters of competences might come into play. For instance, a conversation on a sensitive or controversial issue, held in a safe atmosphere, and by giving voice to all arguments and perspectives, while encouraging perspective-taking, might: – support the development of self-efficacy and empathy; – foster analytical and critical thinking skills; – develop tolerance of ambiguity; – contribute to valuing democracy and fairness; – strengthen knowledge and critical understanding of the topic discussed. (Council of Europe, 2018, S. 93)

Der Schülerin scheint es allerdings nicht möglich zu sein, demokratische Werte zu erfahren und entsprechende Kompetenzen zu erwerben. Sie steht einer Gemeinschaft gegenüber, die vorerst nicht auf ihre Äußerungen eingeht bzw. selbst Stellung bezieht.

An die Demokratie kann nur glauben, wer erlebt hat, daß sie hält, was sie verspricht, daß sie möglich ist. Sie verspricht, daß meine Stimme in den gemeinsamen Angelegenheiten gehört wird – wirklich gehört wird. (von Hentig, 2003, S. 224f.)

Nurhi macht die Erfahrung, nicht wirklich gehört zu werden. Sie steht einer schweigenden Majorität gegenüber, die ihrer Einschätzung, nicht schön zu sein, nichts entgegenhält, die ihr nicht antwortet, der sie nichts entgegen, gegen die sie sich nicht zur Wehr setzen kann, die sie nicht erreichen kann.

Die Schülerin scheint ausgeliefert zu sein, sie kann nicht fliehen, sie kann sich lediglich der Situation entziehen (Arendt, 1994, S. 262f.): Seufzend lässt sie sich fallen, als Kind, das weder dem eigenen noch dem Schönheitsideal der Gemeinschaft zu entsprechen erscheint, als Bürgerin einer Polis, deren Worte in dem Schweigen der Majorität verklingen.

Diskussion

Soll Schule als Polis verstanden werden? Blicke auf den *Lehrplan der Volksschule* oder auf den *Referenzrahmen des Europarats für Demokratiekompetenzen* lassen erkennen, dass *Schule als Brücke zwischen der ‚großen‘ und ‚kleinen‘ Welt* fungieren soll, dass sie, entsprechend der Forderung von Hentigs (1996; 2003) als *Lebens- und Erfahrungsraum* zu gestalten sei, als *sozialer Raum, der (politische) Bildung* ermöglichen lässt. Das Aufgreifen von *gesellschaftlichen Versprechungen und Schwierigkeiten der ‚großen‘ Welt in der ‚kleinen‘ Welt Grundschulklasse* wird als Möglichkeit vorgestellt, die es den Schüler*innen ermöglicht, *demokratische Werte* erfahren und *Kompetenzen* in einer *Schulpolis* erlangen zu können. Der Forderung, *Schule als Polis* zu gestalten, wird affirmativ begegnet (Council of Europe, 2018; Lehrplan der Volksschule, 2023, S. 2; 9-19; von Hentig, 1996; S. 205; 2003, S. 191; 224f).

Hannah Arendts (1954; 1994) Appell, dass *Erziehung von Politik entschieden zu scheiden sei*, ihre Bedenken, dass das *Kind vor der Öffentlichkeit* – auch vor einer *Scheinöffentlichkeit* – geschützt werden müsse, ihre Hinweise auf Gefahren, die mit einer Etablierung einer *eigenständigen Welt der Kinder* einhergehen können, scheinen hingegen im aktuellen Diskurs um Schule kaum aufgegriffen oder berücksichtigt zu werden (Arendt, 1994; Council of Europe, 2018; Lehrplan der Volksschule, 2023, S. 2; 9-19).

Diese Ausgangslage war es, die der Entscheidung, sich möglichen *Erfahrungen* annähern zu wollen, die gemacht werden können, *wenn Schule zur Polis wird, wenn gesellschaftliche Versprechungen und Schwierigkeiten der ‚großen‘ Welt in der ‚kleinen‘ Welt der Volksschulklasse thematisiert werden*, zugrunde lag und in einem Nachdenken münden muss:

Einem Nachdenken über das, was Nurhi widerfuhr, einem Nachdenken über methodisch-didaktische Aspekte – über das Setting, den Inhalt und das (fehlende) Handeln der Lehrpersonen – über moralisch-ethische Werte, einem Nachdenken über die Forderung, dass Schule als Polis verstanden werden soll.

Nurhis Bereitschaft, sich der *Scheinöffentlichkeit* zu stellen, ihr Entschluss, ihre *Gedanken zu artikulieren*, sich als *Bürgerin in der Polis zu positionieren* und ihre daraus resultierenden Erfahrungen sind es, die ethisch-moralische Bedenken bedingen, aber auch Fragen nach möglichen Wegen stellen lassen, nach möglichen Wegen, um Kinder zu schützen und sie gleichermaßen «auf ihre Aufgabe der Erneuerung einer gemeinsamen Welt vorzubereiten» (Arendt, 1994, S. 276).

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The enactive value of education. From learning brain to learning consciousness

Brigitta Pia Alioto & Giacomo Zavatta¹

Abstract Drawing on the contribution of John Dewey and embodied cognition, this article tackles the close connection between perception, action and reflection. The aim is to articulate a conception of education and the learning experience aligned with human flourishing. Sections 1 and 2 explore the centrality from a gnoseological point of view of the trinomial mind, body and environment, while section 3 focuses on the concept of reflective thinking proposing a holistic view of learning.

Il valore enattivo dell'educazione: dal *learning brain* al *learning consciousness*

Introduzione

Il presente articolo, attraverso il contributo di John Dewey e dell'*embodied cognition*, ha come scopo indagare lo stretto legame tra educazione e politica a partire dalla centralità gnoseologica del trinomio mente, corpo ed ambiente (primi due paragrafi) e dalla relazione tra apprendimento ed educazione a partire dal pensiero riflessivo (terzo paragrafo). L'indagine pedagogica qui proposta, da una parte mostra come il fine ultimo dell'educazione sia lo sviluppo dinamico ed integrale della persona umana; dall'altra, prende in considerazione il nesso tra educazione e filosofia politica riflettendo sul valore politico

¹ Il presente lavoro è frutto di una stretta collaborazione tra i due autori, che ne hanno discusso e rivisto collegialmente ogni parte. A fini concorsuali si specifica che l'introduzione e il paragrafo *Educazione e vita: la prospettiva politica della pedagogia* è attribuibile a Giacomo Zavatta; il paragrafo *Embodied cognition: mente, corpo, ambiente* è attribuibile a Brigitta Pia Alioto, la conclusione e l'abstract ad entrambi.

della scuola. Nell'articolo, infatti, si propone un'idea di istituzione scolastica che assume i connotati di una polis di carattere democratico².

Educazione e vita: la prospettiva politica della pedagogia

Centrale per Dewey è l'intreccio tra questioni politiche, psicologiche e pedagogiche. A questo proposito, commentando l'opera *Democrazia ed educazione*, Spadafora (2017) afferma: «il giovane filosofo [in questo libro] analizza la continuità corpo-mente, la centralità dell'individuo come espressione della democrazia e, soprattutto, il senso dell'adattamento contestuale dell'individuo nella sua situazione specifica rispetto all'ambiente di vita» (ivi, p. 60). L'operazione deweyana è riassumibile in due argomentazioni: in primo luogo, egli sostiene che l'educazione è una necessità biologico-spirituale per l'individuo; in secondo luogo, il filosofo americano lega il concetto di educazione a quello di democrazia, realizzando un circolo virtuoso dove l'una non può darsi pienamente senza l'altra (Baldacci, 2019).

Si analizza ora la prima tesi. Essa deve essere compresa in relazione al ruolo assunto dall'educazione nel rapporto individuo-ambiente, che Dewey interpreta a partire dal principio di "transazione". Quest'idea, secondo la lettura di Biesta (2014) e Margiotta (2015), pur venendo declinata esplicitamente nel testo *Knowing and the Known* (1949), attraversa l'intera opera del filosofo americano. Lo stesso Dewey riconosce e precisa in una nota al testo del '49 che, nell'articolo del 1896 intitolato *The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology* (Dewey, 2008b) è possibile riscontrare per la prima volta la prospettiva transazionale³. Nel testo del 1896, criticando la teoria dell'arco riflesso, viene presentata per la prima volta un'idea unitaria e teleologica dell'esperienza, dove la relazione tra individuo e ambiente si caratterizza come un continuo rapporto di trasformazione e mediazione di stimoli e dei loro significati (Granese, 1966). Secondo Dewey (Szpunar, 2010), il concetto di esperienza ha come presupposto l'unità e la continuità delle coordinazioni senso-motorie che determinano una trasformazione dell'interazione con l'ambiente. L'esperienza, dunque, si configura secondo modalità continue e cumulative in cui la risposta all'ambiente deve essere concepita come una trasformazione nello stimolo stesso. L'individuo e l'ambiente, infatti, si trovano ad interagire come se

² Pagani in un recente testo (2012) intende il concetto di polis greca come una comunità di natura politica ed educativa.

³ «"Transaction", in ordinary description, is used for the consideration as detached of a "deal" that has been "put across" by two or more actors. [...] The beginnings of this attitude may be found in his paper *The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology* (1896)» (Dewey & Bentley, 1949, p. 101).

fossero all'interno di un circuito. «What we have is a circuit, not an arc or a broken element of a circle» (Dewey, 2008b, p. 102).

In quest'ottica, il tratto di fondo che segna la transazione e la coordinazione, quali principi unificatori, è il rifiuto di ogni forma di dualismo: mente-corpo, azione-pensiero, interesse-disciplina, gioco-lavoro, metodo-contenuto, naturalismo-umanismo (Spadafora, 2017). Secondo questa concezione, il fare esperienza assume un portato conoscitivo nella relazione ricorsiva con l'ambiente di riferimento. Da una parte, infatti, l'ambiente "agisce", cioè sortisce effetti sul pensiero, dall'altra li subisce. Come sottolinea Borghi (1974), il potere insito del pensiero risiede nella capacità di offrire gli strumenti migliori per agire e di conseguenza modificare e padroneggiare i contesti. Si ricorda, a questo proposito la definizione di pensiero proposta in *Christianity and Democracy* «Get hold of the best tools of action» (Dewey, 2008a, p. 10) successivamente ripresa in *How we think* con il pensiero riflessivo (2008c). Pensare riflessivamente, dunque, rappresenta una modalità di esperienza che in qualche modo "sostiene" l'azione (Biesta, 2014), poiché coglie la relazione tra le azioni e le loro conseguenze. Il pensiero riflessivo, infatti, deve costituire uno degli scopi dell'educazione perché consente, in maniera collaterale, di sviluppare le attitudini personali necessarie per la fioritura della persona.

Concludendo, si può affermare che imparare a pensare significa, allora, contemporaneamente consentire al soggetto di indagare la problematicità delle esperienze di vita a partire dai contesti, per ricostruire la loro significatività e sviluppare al meglio la propria personalità. Per questa ragione, nel primo capitolo di *Educazione e Democrazia*, Dewey presenta l'educazione come una *necessità della vita*, facendole assumere una funzione naturale al pari del mangiare, del bere e del riprodursi (Spadafora, 2017).

Veniamo ora alla seconda tesi: il rapporto di implicazione tra democrazia ed educazione (Baldacci, 2014). L'argomentazione deweyana muove dall'idea che educazione e democrazia realizzino un circolo virtuoso dove l'una non può darsi pienamente senza l'altra. Da una parte, la democrazia viene presentata come un sentimento vitale e come una forma organizzativa che permette all'individuo di esprimere le proprie potenzialità e sviluppare appieno la propria personalità, si consideri per esempio il testo *The Ethics of Democracy*. Per questa ragione, essa necessita dell'educazione per garantire ai cittadini un processo sociale di crescita intellettuale e morale. L'educazione, infatti, assicura la massima estensione del numero di individui capaci di partecipare alla vita democratica e al contempo offre gli strumenti per rendere attuale lo sviluppo della personalità. D'altro canto, il processo educativo ha bisogno delle condizioni ottimali per realizzare i propri fini. Queste vengono offerte da un regime democratico. Come afferma Baldacci (2019, p. 103) «questa concezione politico-pedagogica» ha due nessi e conseguenze:

In primo luogo, la compenetrazione tra educazione e democrazia implica un ideale educativo democratico. [...] In secondo luogo, [...] la stessa scuola deve essere concepita come una comunità democratica, solo in quanto tale essa può veramente assicurare la crescita intellettuale e morale di tutti (ibidem).

Per intendere la scuola come una polis democratica, occorre dunque superare il principio neoliberista che fa del merito e dell'efficienza i valori guida della comunità scolastica (Baldacci 2014). Per converso, l'istituzione scuola va intesa come un'organizzazione volta a promuovere la crescita umana, la partecipazione attiva e le pari opportunità di tutti i suoi membri.

Embodied cognition: mente, corpo, ambiente

Per diverso tempo, la mente e il corpo sono stati concepiti come entità separate, implicando una serie di dicotomie che hanno influenzato le dinamiche della relazione educativa: la negazione del corpo a favore della mente, delle emozioni a favore delle funzioni superiori del cervello, delle intelligenze multiple a fronte dell'intelligenza logico-matematica (Zambianchi & Scarpa, 2020). Lungi dal voler essere un'argomentazione ancorata alle più tradizionali visioni funzionaliste e cognitiviste, il paragrafo intende utilizzare l'approccio enattivo, con particolari riferimenti a Maturana e Varela (1980), al fine di spiegare il valore dell'*embodied cognition* all'interno della relazione educativa.

Secondo la teoria sistemica, un attributo chiave del corpo vivente è la sua capacità di auto-individuazione, *self-individuating* (Di Paolo & Thompson, 2014), ossia quel processo mediante il quale il corpo si distingue dal suo ambiente e consente, a chiunque lo osservi, di discernerlo come entità precisa e autonoma (Di Paolo & Thompson, 2014). In qualità di sistema autonomo e dall'inter-retroazione con l'ambiente, esso ricerca un equilibrio omeostatico, ridefinendo sé stesso (Maturana & Varela, 1980; Margiotta, 2015). Al concetto enattivo di autonomia devono essere aggregati il concetto di adattività, ossia l'abilità di alcuni sistemi autonomi di regolare i loro processi operativamente chiusi⁴ in relazione a condizioni registrate in miglioramento o in deterioramento (Di Paolo & Thompson, 2014) e il concetto di *sense-making*.

⁴ Un sistema, per essere considerato tale, deve essere chiuso operativamente, cioè si deve produrre e sostenere sulla base delle sue operazioni elementari. La chiusura non ne implica l'indipendenza. Esso mantiene le relazioni tra i suoi elementi invariati, nonostante le perturbazioni che derivano dalle sue dinamiche interne e dalle relazioni con altri sistemi (Maturana e Varela, 1980). Le *perturbazioni* provenienti dall'esterno possono innescare grandi cambiamenti indirettamente. Per esempio, l'insegnante non determina la reazione dell'alunno. Al contrario, la specifica reazione dell'alunno all'insegnante è il risultato di processi all'interno delle sue strutture precostituite, che possono portare all'adattamento (Schwaninger e Groesser, 2012).

Quest'ultimo viene definito come la regolazione adattiva degli stati e delle interazioni di un agente riguardo alla propria vitalità. In termini intersoggettivi, il *sense-making* è definibile come un processo incarnato di regolazione attiva dell'accoppiamento tra agente e mondo (De Jaeger & Di Paolo, 2007). Un sistema è, dunque, cognitivo «when its behaviour is governed by the norm of the system's own continued existence and flourishing» (Di Paolo & Thompson, 2014, p. 73). Secondo Di Paolo e Thompson, infatti, la cognizione di base non riguarda la rappresentazione dello stato delle cose, «rather of establishing relevance through the need to maintain an identity that is constantly facing the possibility of disintegration» (2014, p.73).

Focalizzandosi sull'ambito sociale, si può considerare il corpo non solo un mezzo, ma il fine stesso dell'essere cognitivo. L'uomo, dunque, percepisce per agire e ciò che percepisce dipende da come intende agire (Glenberg *et al.*, 2013; Gomez Paloma *et al.*, 2016). L'approccio incarnato ridefinisce profondamente il ruolo che l'esperienza soggettiva gioca nella costruzione e nell'espressione della cognizione e della conoscenza (Francesconi e Tarozzi, 2012). Il corpo, ormai non più in un rapporto dicotomico con la mente, acquisisce dimensioni esperienziali, funzionali, biologiche, psicologiche e intersoggettive, divenendo, in accordo con Merleau-Ponty (2002), «both a lived experience structure and a context for cognitive mechanisms» (Francesconi & Tarozzi, 2012, p. 268).

Negli anni '80 del secolo scorso, infatti, vi fu un *turning point* delle scienze cognitive: un'espansione in verticale, ossia in direzione del cervello (con lo sviluppo delle neuroscienze e le tecniche di *neuroimaging*⁵) e un'espansione in orizzontale, ossia verso l'ambiente (Jacomuzzi, 2023). La possibilità di una conoscenza oggettiva venne sostituita con il ruolo dell'azione, delle emozioni, nonché dell'ambiente nel processo conoscitivo. La teoria ecologica di Gibson (1979) è l'esempio più chiaro rispetto al ruolo fondamentale dell'apparato sensomotorio e motorio nella cognizione - e necessaria per esplicitare al meglio l'*embodied cognition*. Egli, nel definire il concetto di *affordance*, attribuisce primaria importanza ai sistemi percettivi. Tali *suggerimenti*, che l'aspetto fisico dell'oggetto forniscono al soggetto sul suo utilizzo, dipendono dal repertorio esperienziale dello stesso (Gibson, 1979). Di conseguenza, l'individuo non percepisce una copia del mondo esterno, ma una rielaborazione del mondo esterno utile a quella che Emirbayer e Mishe (1998) definiscono la sua intenzione d'azione basata sull'esperienza di azioni già svolte. L'azione, dunque, è percezione e la

⁵ Le scienze cognitive classiche operavano un approccio astratto e anti-biologista del cervello. Conoscere la conformazione cerebrale non sembrava essere fondamentale per comprendere il funzionamento della mente. Solo quando le neuroscienze riuscirono, attraverso tecniche di visualizzazione cerebrale, a dare uno sguardo sistemico degli scambi neuronali, fu possibile intendere la mente come inserita in un corpo e in un ambiente esterno (Jacomuzzi, 2023).

percezione è azione (Zambianchi & Scarpa, 2020). Gli apparati sensomotorio e motorio non vengono più considerati come servitori delle funzioni cognitive superiori, ma essi stessi contribuiscono alla costruzione della conoscenza della realtà che il soggetto costantemente mette in atto (Francesconi & Tarozzi, 2012). A questo punto dell'argomentazione, è necessario introdurre il concetto espresso dal verbo inglese *to enact* e la dimensione ambientale, definibile altresì nell'intersoggettività dell'individuo (Margiotta, 2015). Rispetto al primo concetto, *to enact*, l'approccio enattivo intende *mettere in scena, rappresentare* il mondo, secondo la struttura percettiva/incarnata dell'individuo. Nello specifico:

La realtà non viene dedotta come un dato: dipende dal percettore, non perché il percettore la "costruisce" secondo la propria fantasia, ma perché ciò che viene considerato come mondo pertinente è inseparabile dalla struttura del percettore. [...] Fondamentalmente le strutture incorporate (senso motorie) costituiscono la sostanza dell'esperienza e le strutture esperienziali "motivano" la comprensione concettuale e il pensiero razionale (Margiotta, 2015, p. 372).

L'*intersoggettività* sposta l'attenzione dal piano prettamente individuale ai processi partecipativi, ove i mondi percettori ed esperienziali interagiscono, come sistemi autonomi, ma nell'ottica di un *sense-making* partecipativo (Gallesse, 2006; De Jaegher & Di Paolo, 2007). Si assiste, dunque, a una cognizione biograficamente intrisa, ove mente, corpo e ambiente - la cui relazionalità è il punto focale dell'argomentazione successiva - creano l'esperienza vissuta e condivisa.

L'approccio enattivo nella relazione educativa: il superamento del *learning brain* a favore del *learning consciousness*

In questo capitolo, attraverso il pensiero di Dewey ed il contributo della teoria enattiva, si è riflettuto sul trinomio percezione, azione e riflessione. La riflessione va intesa, qui, come un dispositivo che permette all'individuo di orientare la propria azione e di trasformare e modificare le premesse ed i processi mentali superando così la prospettiva del *learning brain*, ossia l'apprendimento della mente, a favore di una prospettiva più completa: il *learning consciousness* (Francesconi & Tarozzi, 2012). Su questa linea si ritiene, infatti, che le nuove scoperte delle scienze cognitive pongano al centro la realizzazione integrale della persona, sottolineando l'alternanza ciclica di azione e riflessione e l'interconnessione tra rappresentazioni mentali, neuroni specchio e manifestazioni comportamentali. Secondo le caratteristiche del modello dell'integrale antropologico (Margiotta 2015), infatti, l'educazione svolge un ruolo fondamentale

nella formazione e nella manifestazione del sé (*self-individuating*), proprio perché facilita l'alternanza ciclica di azione e riflessione. In tal senso, come sottolinea Margiotta (2015), la relazione educativa proponendosi in continuità con la logica della vita segue una trama enattiva, poiché mira alla formazione dell'*identità* delle persone. Essa, dunque, si fa formativa quando riesce a *dar forma* ai sistemi d'azione umana dell'educando immerso in una biografia incarnata (Margiotta, 2011). La riflessione diviene, dunque, il dispositivo pedagogico attraverso cui «io sono me» ...[dove]... «io» resta lo stesso malgrado le modificazioni interne del «me» (Zambianchi & Scarpa, 2020, p.139)

Le considerazioni suddette hanno un'importante valenza politica, poiché consentono di riflettere sul rapporto tra istruzione ed educazione. In un recente articolo, Prudy e colleghi (2023) hanno denunciato una deriva neoliberista, a livello europeo, riscontrabile nelle policies per la formazione degli insegnanti e nei modelli educativi: «distinctly neo-liberal infused policy concerns for standards in teacher education [...]. Thus, developments in EU teacher education policy have been characterised by performativity-focused, competency-framed standards, monitoring systems, accreditation criteria and quality assurance processes for Initial Teacher Education providers» (Purdy *et al.*, 2023, p. 757). Tale visione dell'istruzione propone un principio educativo (Baldacci, 2014) che si distanzia dalla concezione di polis democratica proposta in questo elaborato. Coerentemente con la visione neoliberista, infatti, i valori dell'equità e dell'inclusione vengono sostituiti dal principio del merito e della segregazione (Wahlström, 2022) e lo sviluppo cognitivo dell'individuo viene ridotto esclusivamente all'addestramento ed all'acquisizione di abilità e di competenze: la prospettiva della *learnification* (Biesta, 2014). Ripensare la relazione educativa a partire dalla teoria enattiva significa, per converso, proporre un modello di istruzione che guardi alla formazione integrale della persona.

In conclusione, il capitolo intende, attualizzando alla luce delle sfide contemporanee il contributo di Dewey, riscoprire il primato della relazione educativa attraverso la considerazione dell'*embodied cognition* secondo la teoria enattiva con lo scopo di invertire alcune tendenze di stampo neoliberista che appiattiscono il fenomeno della cognizione e dell'apprendimento alla mera acquisizione di competenze e abilità strumentali.

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Board games for citizenship education, insights from the experience of *YouTopia* LAB

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Abstract Citizenship education plays a crucial role in the future of democracy. This paper explores the potential of board games as effective tools in unlocking some of the Competences for Democratic Culture crucial to boost political and democratic education in schools. By facilitating the development of decision-making, negotiation and debate skills among participants, board games have a good potential in political education. Drawing from the *YouTopia*_LAB case study, this paper would suggest a possible way to integrate board games into civic education curricula.

Introduction

Norberto Bobbio stated the minimum definition of democracy as «a set of procedural rules for collective decision making in which the broadest possible participation of stakeholders is envisaged and fostered» (Bobbio, 1986, p. 9). From this angle, democracy is a form of social organisation that assigns ownership of political power to individuals identified as citizens who form a society. The concepts of democracy, such as governance and citizenship, are nested in personal values and are strictly related to attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical thinking (McIntosh *et al.*, 1993). Therefore, some skills and knowledge play a pivotal role in ensuring that all citizens can be active in the democratic decision process designing the best future they expect (Council of Europe, 2018a).

In 2018 the Council of Europe developed the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) which is a comprehensive framework for promoting democratic citizenship and active participation in diverse societies and for fostering democratic values, attitudes, and behaviours (Council of Europe, 2018a). The twenty RFCDC refer to four main categories and their descriptors: values (valuing dignity and human rights, cultural diversities, justice and fairness), attitudes (openness to cultural otherness, world views and practises, respect, civil-mindedness and responsibility), skills

(autonomous learning, analytical and critical thinking, listening and observing, flexibility, communication and social interaction), knowledge and critical understanding (of the self, of language and communication, of the world: politics, law, cultures, media, economies, environment, sustainability) (Council of Europe, 2018a, 2018b). Educators, policymakers, and civic leaders are invited to use these competencies to inform curriculum development, educational initiatives, and civic engagement programs aimed at fostering democratic values, attitudes, and behaviours among citizens of all ages (Naval *et al.*, 2002; Council of Europe, 2010).

Political education belongs to civic education and plays a crucial role in preparing students to become informed and engaged citizens in democratic societies (Tibbitts, 2015). For the future of democracy, political education and sustainability are strongly interlinked considering the ongoing and coming challenges as climate, economic and social changes. Integrating principles of system thinking and ecology education into political education can provide learners with a more comprehensive understanding of the interactions between political systems, ecological systems, and societal well-being. To provide students with an adequate background it is urgent to educate them in ecology and sustainability, give them disciplinary knowledge, fostering them in system thinking. However, traditional approaches to political and sustainability education often struggle to captivate students' interest and foster their active learning. For this reason, the Council of Europe (2010) and UNESCO agreed that it is mandatory to explore innovative approaches to strengthen the required skills and knowledge to promote civic life and active citizenship through political and sustainability education (Council of Europe, 2010; Tibbitts, 2015). One of the innovative approaches in citizenship and sustainability education can be game-based learning (GBL) offering immersive and interactive experiences to practise some of the RFCDC (Brennan, 1981). The use of board games and GBL approaches can thus encourage players to engage with complex political issues and democratic processes starting from the exercise of some of the key competencies such as negotiation, mediation, critical thinking, and ethical values (Oberle *et al.*, 2016).

This paper explores how board games can enhance political education in schools, presenting the *YouTopia*_LAB case study to illustrate their potential impact in fostering democratic values, political education, and civic skills.

The YouTopia_LAB experience; a case study

The *YouTopia_LAB* module was drawn upon a multidisciplinary theoretical framework to analyse the role of board games in skill development for citizenship. From an educational perspective, constructivism and experiential learning highlight the importance of active engagement and hands-on experiences in fostering skill development (Bateson & Martins, 2013; Vygotskij, 2015). From a psychological point of view, social cognitive theory and perspective-taking provide insights into the mechanisms through which board games promote empathy and social skills (Plass *et al.*, 2020). Game studies contribute to drawing perspectives on the unique affordances of games as interactive, participatory media forms that facilitate skill acquisition (Bergen & Fromberg, 2009; Cera, 2009; Dunkan, 2020)

During the school year 2021/22 a didactic module called *YouTopia_LAB* was implemented in two high school classes (37 students in the 14-16 age range) in Trentino (Italy), to stimulate students' skills for citizenship. A researcher conducted the activity and two teachers per class were involved as external observers. The *YouTopia_Lab* module was nested in the civic and citizenship education curriculum of both classes.

The implemented educational module lasted three hours and was structured in three phases: i) introduction ii) playing phase and iii) final debriefing (Fig. 1). The module was based on the use of *YouTopia – the ecosystem valley*, a cooperative strategic educational game in which players are called to collectively build the most sustainable city: coping with the negative effects of climate change and the ecosystems' overexploitation they must find together the best solution to improve the resilience of the built city. The game has been developed to induce students to exercise some RFCDC competencies and system thinking expressly in two specific parts of the game:

- Building era: to build, move, or change any building on the game board, each gamer must illustrate the reasons for the choice and more over the final decision must be debated, voted on, and approved by the majority.
- Climate change era: in a changing world with extreme weather events and side effects of natural resources depletion, players are called to find new strategies to change the city in a more resilient way co-creating a new governance framework with rules, restrictions, new economic and ecological perspectives.

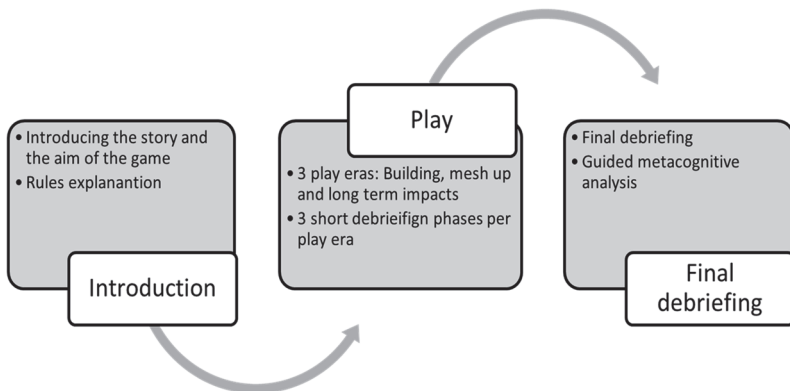


Figure 1. Illustration and structure of the three phases of the YouTopia_LAB.

Results

During the debriefing phases, qualitative data were collected and analysed with a qualitative content analysis approach to test the effects and results of playing the *YouTopia* board game. The *YouTopia_LAB* experience highlights the benefits of using board games to engage students in critical inquiry, democratic deliberation, and civic participation.

<i>RFCDC Category</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>n</i>
Skills	Analytical and critical thinking skills	28
	Skills of listening and observing	37
	Co-operation skills	37
	Conflict-resolution skills	27
Knowledge and critical understanding	Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability	20
Attitudes	Respect	29
	Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs	23
	Civic mindedness	19
Values	Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law	12

Table 1. Results of analysis of qualitative data indicating the number of students (out of 37) recognising that one or more of the RFCDC competencies have been used/exercised during the game session.

Summarised above (Tab. 1), results demonstrate how the board game has shown good efficacy in stimulating students to practise some of the RFCDC competencies and how it seems to promote democratic values such as equality, respect, and civic mindedness. Upon closer examination, students highlighted

some specific skills as the most exercised; all 37 students indicated that they exercised listening, observing and cooperation skills. A smaller but still relevant number of students declared that they strongly used critical/system thinking and they also had to deal with conflicting interests and possible resolution of those conflicts. Regarding attitudes, students said they exercised respect and openness to others' opinions. A total number of 20 students, out of 37, reported a good awareness of knowledge used and deepened while playing. Only 12 students spoke about the values of democracy, justice, and fairness.

Discussion and highlights

The *YouTopia*_LAB experience proves that board games with given mechanics and dynamics can be used effectively tools for political education and citizenship in school context, as suggested by several researchers and case studies from the past ten years (Cruz-Martinez *et al.*, 2022; Constantinescu, 2015). In a GBL module based on games with a cooperative mechanic, as the *YouTopia* board game, students are stimulated to the principles of a democratic process and governance in a more engaging and participatory way and can deal with the sense of governance (Glas *et al.*, 2019; Blokland *et al.*, 2019). However, some remarks about the structure and the key points in preparing a GBL module for civic education should be highlighted.

First and foremost, selection of the game is the first step and requires a good knowledge of game mechanics and a precise planning of educational needs. Games based on deck building and tile placement, such as *Democracy: Majority Rules* and *Daybreak or 7 Wonders*, require players to assess risks, anticipate consequences, and adapt their strategies drawing on changing circumstances. Cooperative games such as “Pandemic” or “Forbidden Island” encourage players to work together to achieve shared goals, fostering teamwork and mutual trust. Games with negotiation mechanics, such as “Diplomacy” and “Sheriff of Nottingham” provide opportunities for players to practise diplomacy, persuasion, and compromise. By engaging in these games, players can develop the interpersonal skills which are necessary for effective civic participation and democratic governance.

Secondly, the structure of the GBL module should be based at least on three phases: pre-game preparation, playing phase, and post-game reflection. Especially the post-game debriefing, results are critical for educators to maximise the educational potential of board games and inspire students to become active and responsible citizens in their communities and society a large scale. After playing the game, educators should therefore facilitate reflective discussions and activities to help students process their experiences, draw

connections to real-world issues, and consider implications for civic engagement. Extension activities may include debates, simulations, or civic action projects to further explore and apply concepts learned through the game.

Conclusions

In conclusion, GBL and board games offer unique opportunities to boost participation, politics, and active citizenship by fostering key competencies, democratic values, critical thinking, and civic skills. By immersing players in these scenarios, board games can support a deeper understanding of democratic processes and the importance of upholding them in civic life. Some specifically designed board games would stimulate students in understanding how connections between political decisions, policies, and practices have also ecological implications. Being engaged in strategic decision-making and problem-solving within the context of a board game, students can develop critical thinking skills essential for ecological literacy. Analysing feedback loops, predicting system behaviour, and evaluating the long-term consequences of actions all foster higher-order thinking skills that are transferable to real-world ecological challenges. By playing learners can develop critical thinking skills, more ethical reasoning, and a sense of responsibility in addressing environmental issues and promoting social sustainability.

The integration of GBL and board games into educational curricula can equip individuals with the knowledge and skills to become informed, responsible citizens who contribute positively to their communities and society at large. Moving forward, further research, in collaboration with schools and teachers are needed to realise the full potential of board games in fostering skill development for citizenship and promoting democratic values and practices in society.

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LUNA – Children talking about the moon, imagining fictional worlds of living in harmony with nature

Jeanette Hoffmann

Abstract Reading fictional literature and imagining possible worlds can support children to acquire language and literature in a narrative, participative mode, to make aesthetic experiences combined with experiences of their own lives, to grow up in a society where collective thinking, negotiation and imagination are cultural practices. This paper gives an insight into shared imaginations in a classroom discussion about a picturebook describing the experience of night in different natural environments.

Introduction

«Have you ever wondered why / The moon shines in the nighttime sky? / How every creature, plant and tree / Is subject to its mystery?» (Teckentrup, 2017b). The experience of night is an existential experience (not only) for children. In the moonlight, the world shines in a different light, appears darker, more mysterious, sometimes threatening, but also calming and gentle. In addition to numerous songs and poems about the moon, picturebooks tell of its appearance in many different ways. At the same time, the pictures also hide things, depicting life in harmony with nature in a unique, polyphonic way.

The study IMAGO (Hoffmann, 2023) is focusing these picture(book) narratives in their perception by kindergarten and primary school children in the multilingual context of South Tyrol (Franceschini, 2011). Within the context of an ethnographic literature reception study, we observed everyday practices in dealing with multilingual, rhyming, and wordless picturebooks in German-Italian- and Ladin-speaking kindergartens and primary schools. Based on the video transcribed conversations about the visual narratives we reconstruct the conditions of success for linguistic-literary-aesthetic learning (Mitterer & Wintersteiner, 2015; Spinner, 2008).

In this paper, selected sequences of read-aloud situations to the rhyming picturebook *LUNA* by Jutta Teckentrup (2017a) will be portrayed and analysed using key incident analysis (Kroon & Sturm, 2007). The question is

which aesthetic experiences the children have (with moon and night, animals and landscapes, pictures and language, rhymes and sounds, with the story and themselves) and how these aesthetic experiences contribute to democratic education processes. It is about shared imaginations (Sowa, 2015) in participatory settings (Naujok, 2023) from a resonance pedagogical perspective (Bismarck et al., 2020) and focuses on living in harmony with nature and its rhythms (Peterlini in this volume).

Reading literature – imagining possible worlds and making aesthetic experiences

Growing up in society is closely connected to narrative learning in social interactions, with negotiating ideas and imagining futures. While living together with others in continuously interactive processes children acquire language and literature, their selves and the world (Dehn et al., 2014). In this process an aesthetic approach to the world, to nature and culture, is of great importance.

Aesthetic perceiving and designing is part of the basic anthropological constitution of human beings. It distinguishes itself from the purposive-rational and scientific-objectivising approach to the environment. Mankind has cultivated this approach over thousands of years in the visual arts, music, literature and theatrical performance; however, it also plays a role in the perception of nature, architecture, cookery, clothing, etc. (Spinner, 2008, p. 22, translated by the author)

Literature is a medium to focus jointly on shared attention. Perceived in social situations like in family, kindergarten or schools it opens up various possibilities of world-making and thinking in drafts (Bruner, 1986). While talking about literature and regarding pictures in classroom interactions, possible worlds can be imagined, and linguistic-aesthetic experiences can be made in a participative process (Hoffmann, 2021; Wieler, 2024). The night as a special phenomenon of nature can be one of these experiences.

The broad field of aesthetic learning at primary school level includes, on an equal footing and in close connection with practical-creative work, the awakening of attention for large, significant phenomena of nature, city and art – e.g. for the play of clouds and light, the night with moon and stars [...] (Mattenkloft, 2014, p. 137, translated by the author)

When teachers and students come together and share their perceptions of visual and verbal narratives of the world narrative, *resonance* can take place

(Rosa, 2019). In this open and infinite process of resonance the participants are transformed by the interplay of being touched – by narratives and shared imaginations with others – and responding to this (Rosa, 2020). Language and literature play a central role in this process and therefore are important means of resonance experiences.

For human life, language is one, perhaps the decisive resonance medium. We let ourselves be touched by it deeply and innermost, and we then learn and are able to express ourselves in it and through it, to respond; to experience ourselves as self-effective and to transform ourselves. Such touching and responding takes place in the encounter between teachers and students, and likewise in the schoolyard conversation and classroom discussion between students; but it also, and often most sustainably, occurs in reading, in the encounter with literature. Human beings are not simply linguistic beings; they are also, by their very nature, by their very identity, characterised by the wonder of narrative resonance. (Rosa, 2020, p. 7, translated by the author)

This paper examines the participative processes of common imagining, meaning making, interactive negotiating, language learning and aesthetic experiencing in shared situations of literature reception in pedagogical contexts from a theoretical perspective of resonance and considering the multimodality of picturebooks.

IMAGO study

The study *IMAGO. Picturebooks – multilingual, rhyming and wordless – in kindergartens and primary schools in South Tyrol* (Hoffmann, 2023) tries to shed light on the significance of picturebooks in a region characterised by linguistic-cultural diversity in the context of children's language and literature acquisition in different educational contexts. This is done by reconstructing social practices of common reception situations out of an ethnographic approach.

The sample includes one kindergarten and one primary school in each of the official languages of South Tyrol: German, Italian and Ladin. The educational systems are organised separated from each other in different languages and only the Ladin one is trilingual in a peritetic way.

The data collection is done by audio and video recordings of reading-aloud situations with picturebooks in the different narrative forms. These were chosen by the pedagogues and teachers out of a book box we had offered. These multilingual, rhyming and wordless picturebooks are characterised by their experientiality (Dehn *et al.*, 2014) as they tell stories about loneliness and community, desires and fears, appearance and being. The observations are

accompanied by focused interviews with kindergarten and primary school children as well as with the pedagogues and teachers to gain an insight into the perspectives of the participants.

The verbal and interactional data afterwards are transcribed using the conversational analyses transcript system GAT 2 (Selting *et al.*, 2009) that also allows an insight in the constructive process of meaning making. In the framework of this interpretative classroom research key incidents are chosen out of the transcripts that reveal common structures in the particular and are interpreted using the key incident analyses (Kroon & Sturm, 2007).

This contribution concentrates on a classroom discussion in an Italian primary school in the Italian language class about a rhyming picturebook. Out of the 19 children of the third-grade learning group (8 girls and 11 boys) 12 children grow up in an Italian speaking family. The family language of the other children is bilingual Italian combined with the South Tyrolian Dialect, French, Czech, Spanish, Slovak and one family language is Polish. The class teacher chose the rhyming picturebook *LUNA* (Teckentrup, 2017a). The important meaning of the sound and rhythm of rhyming picturebooks is underlined in the empirical reception research as well as in the children's literature didactics (Belke, 2019; Merklinger & Wittmer, 2018).

Picturebook *LUNA*

The picturebook *LUNA* written and illustrated by Jutta Teckentrup (2017a) tells of the night experienced by different animals in various natural environments like forest, steppe, desert, ice, sky, jungle, beach, fields, ocean, mountainside, savannah, cliffs, and river. Each environment is designed on a double page with the respective wildlife and is accompanied by a text in rhyming couplets of two lines in the bottom of each page. From double page to double page there are decreasing and increasing moon phases which can tactilely be experienced in this peek-through picturebook.

The collage-like pictures are coloured in dark natural colours with shaded surfaces. Illuminated by the moon the landscapes and animals gain a special glance and attract the reader's gaze like the foxes roaming through the undergrowth of the forest, the migratory birds travelling along the night sky or the endangered puffins at the cliffs. The rhyming texts are poetical and philosophical and ask for imagining and reflecting the night-time with its silent slowness and lively activities at the same time. Text and pictures are narrating in parallel complementing and transcending each other.

On the double page with the mountainside the play of moonlight, stars, clouds and moonbows surrounding the mountains are the subjects of the narrative whereas the picture tells beyond that about a mother and a child bear marvelling the spectacle of light: «Above the mountainside at night, / The sky is filled with sparkling light. / As wispy clouds scutter by / A shining moonbow lights the sky» (Teckentrup, 2017b). This play of lights is the starting point of the classroom discussion in the reading aloud situation.

Key Incident Analysis

The class is sitting in the school's library next to the classroom for the reading aloud discussion. The teacher is sitting on a little chair with the book on her knees or rather in her hands open to the children. The children are sitting in half circles opposite to her on mats on the floor (Figure 1). In the following key incidents, a common structure of the reception situation becomes visible, the interplay between the shared imaginations of the story and the imaginations of the children's own experiences.¹



Figure 1. Reading aloud and imagining (© Jeanette Hoffmann).

¹ The transcripts of the original Italian classroom interaction are translated into English except for the parts read aloud by the teacher (T) which are left in Italian because of the rhyming structure of the picturebook. For the English text see the Chapter "Picturebook *LUNA*". The names of the children have been replaced by pseudonyms for anonymisation purposes.

“the mountains at night ((...)) are (--) illuminated” – Imagining the story

421	T:	((...)) then let_s go and see ((turns the page))
422	Children:	yes yes the mountains
423	Child:	italy
424	Leonardo:	but it is night
425	T:	<i>sono protette da miliardi di stelle le montagne di notte (-) sono ancora più b(--)</i>
426	Anna:	belle
427	Children:	belle
428	T:	belle mh
429	Mattia:	and there is also a rainbow
430	T:	the mountains at night it says here are even more beautiful because they are (--) illuminated
431	Luca:	by the moon
432	Riccardo:	by the stars
433	T:	by the moon and the stars eh (-) <i>un arcobaleno si è appena formato (-) e il cielo di luce ora è [macchiato]</i>
434	Anna:	[macchiato]
435	Child:	the moon is no longer full now
436	T:	it is no longer full eh it is true ((...))

Table 1. Imagining the story.

After the teacher has turned around the double page, the children immediately start with commenting on the pictures (Table 1), recognising the mountains (l. 422), connecting them with Italy (l. 423) as they live in the mountains of South Tyrol and relativising their appearance in the nighttime (Leonardo, l. 424). Later in the discourse they also draw attention to their discoveries, point out the rainbow (Mattia, l. 429) or the decreasing of the moon (l. 435). This active participation of the children – their responds were self-initiated and not caused by questions of the teacher – show their interest in the story and their attention on the pictures.

Another characterisation of joint reading aloud situations with rhyming picturebooks is the choral utterance of the rhyming words by the children: *stelle – belle, formato – macchiato* (Anna, l. 426, 434). The teacher is including the choral utterance of the anticipated rhyme words by the children waiting a bit before pronouncing them. She also hesitates at the end of the dialogue when she summarises the play of lights (l. 430) so that the children can add its origins: by the moon (Luca, l. 431) and the stars (Riccardo, l. 432).

“sometimes I went sledging at night” – Imagining one’s own experiences

436	T:	((...)) have you ever been (-) you go sledging?
437	Children:	yes::
438	T:	do you go at night or at day?
439	Children:	day
440	Alberto:	sometimes I went sledging at night
441	Kazimir:	by day
442	Leonardo:	I also went at night
443	Alberto:	when I went at night I saw also mh I saw also (-) many animals
444	T:	how did you see them if it was night
445	Alberto:	be because I also saw an owl that had two two big two big eyes beautiful beautiful bright
446	T:	eh but how did you see them if it was night?
447	Alberto:	because I had I also had a flashlight
448	T:	eh
449	Alberto:	on the sledge for
450	T:	ah okay though what is it that says here (-) who is it that lights us up the night? (.) who is it that [lights up] the night
451	Alberto:	[the moon]
452	T:	eh yes and usually when you go to the mountains sledging or hiking or at night you go when the moon (--) illuminates well eh that you can see well okay ((...))

Table 2. Imagining one’s own experiences.

Right after the imagination of the multimodal and rhyming story there follows a discussion about the own experiences in the mountains at night (Table 2). It is initiated by the teacher who asks for sledging, a probably familiar activity for the children. It’s especially Alberto who seems to have – based on the picturebook and the sociable conversation situation – a great desire to tell about his sledging experience in a smooth transition to the fictional story. In his story he saw «many animals» (l. 443) and «an owl that had two big beautiful eyes» (l. 445), which seems similar to that one of the book cover. The aesthetics of the story in picture and text seem to have particularly resonated and touched him. The question in this discourse between the boy and the teacher is not to what extent his story oscillates between fiction and reality but it’s the question of illumination and of the meaning of the moon at night also for us as human beings. With the question «who is it that lights up the night?» (teacher, l. 450) the teacher comes back to the picturebook and its main subject, the moon and its light. These are of great importance for all the beings

and for the whole ecosystem on the earth, therefore also for the children in this classroom.

Conclusions

The key incident analyses of participative read-aloud picturebook discussions at a primary school reveal different kinds of aesthetic experiences in a resonance space. On the one hand there are the experiences with nature, on the other hand the experiences with literature.

The picturebook gives an insight in different natural environments during the night all over the world, in wild animals' lives and different vegetations, and also in the moon phases. The key incidents show that in the classroom discussion about the picturebook the children appropriate the world in a conceptual and mindful way (for example regarding the moon phases or the meteorological phenomena) and also share their own live experiences of the world and the nature (for example a sledging tour in the mountains at night and the attention for night active animals).

The read-aloud discussion about a picturebook itself is a participative and democratic process, where meanings are constructed and imaginations are shared, where stories are told and experiences are made. The key incidents demonstrate that the aesthetic narration of the picturebook and the reading aloud classroom discussion open up possibilities for conceptual literature appropriations (for example its linguistic form in rhyming couplets) or aesthetic literature experiences (while rhyming in choral utterance or telling stories about one's own experiences enriched by fictional elements).

Children and teacher are addressed by the aesthetics of the rhyming picturebook and take part in a shared imaginative space with smooth transitions between fictional and real experiences in possible worlds. The resonance space allows mutual references in a participative process of seeing and listening, imagining and narrating, marvelling and enjoying. Aesthetic narratives and literary participation make a decisive contribution to growing into a democratic society and to a sensitive and mindful approach to nature.

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Ecology

On regenerative futures. Pedagogies of reconnection

Daniela Lehner

Abstract In this contribution I explore pedagogies that support the creation of a collective imagination of interdependence based on a convivial and ecological polis, a polis that enables collective decisions for the greater good. A convivial understanding of polis would mean being prepared to understand the world as relational and entangled instead of focusing on the dominant reductionism and separation of life that are based on worldmaking practices of modernity.

Polis and the traps of modernity

More than ever the world seems to be falling apart as we experience crises in every sphere of life. Sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals appear to be our big hope to preserve the world. But what do we actually want to preserve or sustain? Our current system is in many ways based on the imperial mode of living: the capitalist and neoliberal logic of endless growth, consumption, commercialization, anthropocentrism and individualism built on the myth of inexhaustible natural resources and on worldviews of exploitation and separation (Sarkar, 2001; Shiva, 2001; Speth, 2008; Burns, 2015; Brand & Wissen, 2017). It seems legitimate to discuss an «education for the end of the world as we know it» (Stein, et al., 2022, p. 278). This does not mean the end of the world as such, but rather the end of a violent logic ingrained in the modern-colonial world (Silva, 2014). Various authors (e.g. Hall, 1992; Escobar, 2007; Quijano, 2007; Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Mignolo, 2011) locate these modes of living within the violent forms of modernity. Vanessa Andreotti's book, *Hospicing Modernity* is a thorough examination of modernity's ambivalences. On the one hand modernity is a story of progress, development, civilization, humanism, science and reason, and on the other side a story of war, violence, imperialism, environmental degradation and ongoing colonialism. No matter whether we identify with this concept of

modernity or if we are critical of it, «it still conditions what and how we think, feel, desire, relate, hope, and imagine» (Andreotti, 2021, p. 24). We also live in times in which existence seems fragmented and separated from other living beings and the natural world (Esteva & Prakash, 1998; Conway & Singh, 2011; Escobar, 2020).

This deeper, older violence is the imposed sense of separation between ourselves and the dynamic living land-metabolism that is the planet and beyond, as well as the theological separation between creature and creator. This imposed sense of separation, or separability, is based on human exceptionalism, the idea that humans are a superior species that deserve to conquer, dominate, own, manage, and control the natural environment. The idea of separability is older than that of modernity itself. (Andreotti, 2021, p. 45-46).

Modernity with all its benefits is also a «civilization of death» (Mignolo, 2009, p. 161) and a naturalization of the «death ethics of war» (Maldonado-Torres, 2011, p.1) hidden behind the rhetoric of prosperity and modernization. Modernity centres on one universal human template based on enlightenment and rationality and it indiscriminately applied – to every country, every context, and everything in general. Global capitalism and extractivism have granted themselves the right to assimilate all other worlds, building on a modern epistemology that is based on the separation between entities, between humans and nonhumans and between mind and body. The logics of modernity have brought along many achievements, and at the same time they have homogenized the world as represented in its Eurocentric dominance. The world has become uniform, manageable and governable, based on imperial epistemologies, whereby our wealth is grounded on the exploitation of humans, animals and nature. The neoliberal is «dressed up in the robes of freedom, which is producing humans who are increasingly atomized, precarious, lonely and massified, controlled, detached from earthly ties and dependent on a sprawling megamachine that is accelerating the war on life» (Azam, 2022, p. 106). In this perception of the world, the living have become machines. Understanding is achieved by division, separation, compartmentalisation, atomisation and reductionism. These epistemologies have colonized our polis and educational systems (Selby, 2002; Conway & Singh, 2011; de la Cadena, 2015; Perry, 2020). Considering our current times of wars, global warming, species extinction, social inequality and poverty, the question arises if we have truly made collective decisions for the greater good?

On regenerative (educational) futures

The globalized structures of modernity discourage the view that life is based on community and we are confronted with an image of a singular and disentangled world. However, rebuilding community is essential for a regenerative future. How can we learn to acknowledge that the world is not a dead matter but an interdependent living universe in which we are involved, embedded and in interaction? (Hart, 2014; Akomolafe, 2020; Bozalek, Zembylas & Tronto, 2021). How can the world (*Mitwelt*) be perceived as our larger self, an *ecological self*, to create responsible and caring actions? (Abram, 1996; Macy, 2020). I argue that this also involves a shift in awareness that keeps us from engaging in behaviors based on exploitation of other living beings. Can there be a polis based on interdependence? Interdependence as a process of reconnecting to self, others and the world. This cannot be done just sporadically or on a purely intellectual level. Instead the practice and awareness of the interconnectedness of all life is part of a continuous process of remembering. Such reconnection relies on tapping into the intelligence that lies beyond our thinking minds and includes the wholeness of human experience. Interconnectedness is based on «a deep knowing that violence against nature is understood as violence against the self» (Brantmeier, 2019, p. 79). According to Plumwood (2002), we have to counter «the maladaptive forms of reason that radically distance us from the non-human sphere and disguise or disappear our ecological embeddedness and vulnerability, in order to develop a communicative, place-sensitive culture which can situate humans ecologically and nonhumans ethically» (Plumwood, 2002, p. 239). This shift would bring us back to a sense of interconnectedness with all life, which in turn promotes cooperation, care and respect. This is in essence what the polis, especially a convivial polis, would be: «a community of citizens, united in their efforts of fostering the good— that is, virtuous and prosperous— life (eudaimonia)» (Adloff, 2022, p. 9). A convivial understanding of polis would mean respect towards other points of view as well as being prepared to understand the world as relational and entangled instead of focusing on the dominant reductionism of life. For this we need to include not only human beings in our polis and ethics but all beings that we share the world with. This would also imply de-centring anthropocentrism «and the great separation between nature and culture, mind and body, which is at the heart of Western culture» (Azam, 2022, p. 107). Therefore, we need educational spaces that can support the unlearning of destructive practices of worldmaking and instead find out how education can serve life and the world.

Ivan Illich (1975) dismantled the world as a technological totality and postulated that we still need to find ways for a radical ecology. If we think about

a convivial polis, we need to think about new understandings of solidarity and collectivism and in some ways we also need to grow and show up. Growing up and showing up are a mature approach to life. This includes, among other things, recognising that «we can face the world in all of its complexity, plurality, and indeterminacy, and see and sense ourselves as part of it, without projecting our desires onto the world or treating it as an extension of the individual self» (Stein *et al.*, 2022, p. 281). For this we also need spaces and time for interruptions, interruptions from the pressure and catastrophism to change the world (Biesta, 2019; Stein *et al.*, 2022;). We need time and leisure to experience how completely different our life concept could be. Slowing down can be a revolutionary act (Brantmeier, 2019, p. 86). This is very distinct from trends to make education more flexible, autonomous or student-centred. Instead of focussing on the student or teacher it means putting the world itself into the centre of attention.

Yet this kind of education is disruptive to the sense of self, meaning, security, certainty, futurity. If growing up emphasizes the disposition to see and sense oneself as entangled with and responsible to a wider world/metabolism, then showing up is about how that sense of responsibility manifests. (...) Thus, alongside intellectual and affective dispositions, we also need to develop our atrophied relational dispositions: the dispositions that enable us to feel entangled with the pain, the brokenness and the ugliness of humanity as well the beauty and the joy of the undefinable world. (...) to the collective pain inflicted by the illusion of separation, and to emphasize the integrity, tensions, complexities, and joys of the process of restoring and maintaining relationships that have been violated (...). (Stein *et al.*, 2022, p. 283-284)

This relies on processes of reconnecting and the continuous re-sourcing, re-charging and re-generating. Especially holistic education aims at integration and connection with the community and the natural world. «It attempts to heal fragmented, decontextualized, robotic forms of human learning that have threatened impassioned inquiry in our pursuits to make sense and meaning of an amazingly complex, simple, and elegant existence» (Brantmeier, 2019, p. 80). This is also what deep ecology is about, the reconnection with all facets of existence (Naess, 1995; Macy & Johnstone, 2012; Macy, 2020). Joanna Macy and Molly Brown (2014) wrote the book *Coming Back to Life: The Updated Guide to the Work That Reconnects*, which suggests practices to reconnect to oneself, others and the world. These are practices that include writing letters to oneself from imaginary future selves, or from the perspective of a tree. It takes a significant effort to become aware of the aliveness of the forest or other landscapes with all our senses. It also includes feeling the pain that has been inflicted on life, which also includes feeling the pain of the so-called “bad guys“. Through

dialogical work and active listening, the pain and the beauty of the world are apprehensible. Re-connection involves connecting with all there is, the pleasant and the painful, the beautiful and the ugly (Macy & Brown, 2014). Stein et al. (2022) mention that many people seem to have an

aversion towards sensing or re-membering the visceral feeling of entanglement that emerges from a desire to maintain their perceived unrestricted autonomy, and their moral or political purity (Shotwell, 2016), in order not to be contaminated by the violence and toxicity of the presumably „external’ world. However, the feeling of visceral entanglement can also remind us that the world that we want to immunize ourselves against is already within us. The promise of separation, and thus, of purity, has always been an illusion. (Stein et al., 2022, p. 284)

Yet again, the words of Stein et al. highlight modernity’s trap of separation, which is only an intellectual illusion beyond an embodied or material level. Our education systems are based on these illusions and therefore they cannot prepare us for regenerative futures or for an end of the world as we know it. I am aware that the word “futures” is not unambiguous, as it is based on modernity’s linearity. As mentioned above, if we want to imagine regenerative educational futures we need to grow and show up and reconnect on various levels. A critical pedagogy of place as formulated by Gruenewald (2003) combines the critical pedagogical traditions of e.g. Freire and Giroux with place-based education towards ecological reinhabitation. Thus, a place-based education that is socially and ecologically critical challenges human and ecological oppression. As educators we need to expand the scope of our theory and practice to «include the social and ecological context of our own, and others’ inhabitation» (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 10). It also means not keeping students isolated from places outside the schools and universities but working and learning from/with communities, social movements and the natural world. If we want to promote the learning of reconnection we also need to question our current understandings of educational goals and achievement. These achievements must begin to include the social and ecological quality of communities. «Developing a critical pedagogy of place means challenging each other to read the texts of our own lives and to ask constantly what needs to be transformed and what needs to be conserved» (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 10).

Concluding and further thoughts

In this short paper I tried to formulate first thoughts on pedagogies of re-connection building on decolonial, deep ecology and on critical as well as ecological pedagogical approaches. Reconnecting to one’s self, others,

community, ecological and transrational worlds as well as growing up and showing up are just starting points of regenerative educational futures or an education for the end of the world as we know it. Critical place-based and holistic pedagogies attempt to create deeper learning experiences. And yet, there are many things we cannot even learn in schools or universities but rather from life itself. Deep transformation mostly occurs through radical life events that can be pleasant or painful and cannot be planned or created in classroom setting. Nonetheless, we can connect with life by going out and getting in touch with ideas and challenges of communities. We can start learning from social movements that strive for peace (Combatants for Peace) in times of war, fragmentation and polarisation. We can learn from indigenous movements and cosmologies to protect and take care of the world and other beings and become aware how the past, present, and the future are connected. We can start feeling and sensing that all that is happening „somewhere else’ is also connected to us and our lives. And we can start to create more vibrant, convivial, ecological and pluriversal forms of polis.

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Envisioning futures with the means of art. A pedagogical approach of polis in the context of education for sustainable development (ESD)

Gregor Eckert & Nina Grünberger

Abstract Digital technologies shape current societies. Global challenges, including climate change, exploitation, and injustice, underline the necessity for envisioning future scenarios. Exploring polis as a pedagogical setting for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and by using art for the development of potential solutions, we describe a key to unlock diverse future scenarios. We contend that art addressing the nexus of digitality, and sustainability enriches discussions on envisioning futures.

Introduction

In debates in cultural studies and social science, the question how to deal with uncertainties of the future is intense. This can be seen as the result of an ongoing acceleration of society (Rosa, 2005) and a fast development of digital technologies in specific. Digital technologies must be understood not as tools. Digital technologies can be seen as the main influencing factor of current society (e.g. Stalder, 2019). Alongside this development the global society is facing challenges concerning a more sustainable development (e.g. human-made climate change, post- and neo-colonial exploitation and oppression, poverty, and injustice). Again, we see the necessity of a discourse about future developments as well as of envisioning various future scenarios. This is a central moment in concepts of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). As one way of spaces for discourses we are describing limitations and opportunities of *polis* as a pedagogical setting for ESD in the context of digitality. In doing so, we link the challenges of a culture of digitality (e.g. Stalder, 2019) with questions of sustainable development (e.g. Grünberger, 2021; Macgilchrist, 2021). We need a *key* to unlock designs for diverse future scenarios. Art might be this key. Based on selected art projects, we will outline how these can be made fruitful for ESD. We assume that, in view of far-reaching changes in social constellations like the human-made climate change, it is necessary to envision the future in various versions. We are therefore consciously

concerned with the plurality of future designs (Hug, 2023). We will argue that art projects dealing with the relationship between digitality and sustainability make a contribution for envisioning futures. To envision various forms of future developments is the main part of ESD (UNESCO, 2020) and is related to the question of how we want to live today, regarding the living conditions of future generations (United Nations, 1987).

Polis as a space for social discourse

Polis can be understood as an early democratic community that implies ideas of ideals for a community, such as an ideal way of life or of education (Welwei, 2017, p. 251). Polis is known as an early democratic form, which enables citizens to actively participate in the community and in shaping present and future (Böhm, 2013, p. 14). Two points are noteworthy: First, polis aims at a high degree of participation. Second, an education oriented towards the polis is, etymologically speaking, always inherently political. To participate in the polis, humans need a form of early political and cultural education. The polis enables citizens to participate in the community of their hometown (ibid.). This includes decisions especially concerning the economic structure – the inhabitants are responsible for it. In any case, the polis was a place of active cooperation and co-creation, but also of exclusion and limitation of the most citizens as just a small circle of wealthy male citizens was really in response. One main discussion in Ancient Greece was the relationship between individual households (*oikoi*) and the polis and about rules for the economic relationships. Similar questions were raised in Hannah Arendt's *Vita activa* (2019).

When we compare the polis in Ancient Greece with possible forms of the polis today, the following three aspects are of great concern:

(1) Decision making: Who can participate in shaping the fundamental political and economic structures at which level? In the polis decisions on e.g. economic development were withheld from an elite section of the community. We have left such a simplified form of elite relationship behind us, but we still see an extreme unequal chance to influence such political decisions nowadays. We are currently seeing a much higher degree of participation opportunities, but there are invisible obstacles for living political participation. It is crucial to examine these differences in access to democratic processes. Education can be seen as an important means to enable citizens to participate.

(2) Economic success: On which level do we measure economic success? Economist Kate Raworth describes an upward movement in the question, on which level economic success should be measured throughout time:

Xenophon, by some viewed as the first economist and living in Athens in the 4th century BC, went on from posing questions on how to manage *oikoi*, individual households, to studying the management of the polis. In the 18th century, Adam Smith examined the level of the nation state, and Raworth calls now for the next step: «Ours is the era of the planetary household – and the art of household management is needed more than ever for our common home» (Raworth, 2017, p. 56f.). As in ancient Greece, successful management of the household would mean taking care of all members of the household (Unholtz, 2010, p. 166) – and that means at least making sure everyone has enough food to eat.

(3) Collective decisions: How should we design the relation of freedom of individuals and social groups and collectively ratified rules of the social community? This seems to be one of the most controversial questions nowadays, especially regarding the pollution of the planet. Today with a dimension of human caused climate change, the question becomes urgent, at which levels we restrict individual pollution by collective decisions and how do we make sure, everyone agrees on the decision and acts accordingly. Problems like climate change and resource extractivism being global problems, prospectively these decisions must be made on a global level – with binding effects to everyone. The only way this would be legitimate in our point of view would be in a democratic way. However, we are far from having such powerful democratic institutions.

Post-/Digitality and the Planet

Regarding our current society, we concentrate on two developments: first the context of digitality and secondly questions concerning sustainable development. These two challenges are not separated. It was shown how closely these developments are related to one another (e.g. WBGU, 2019).

The term digitality is used to describe a certain character of current culture (Stalder, 2019). It is emphasised that the logic inherent in digital technologies has an impact on the development of culture. The concept of post-digitality (Cramer, 2014) goes further and discusses the inevitability of digital technologies. These approaches assume that digital technologies are not tools that lose their effect on socio-cultural conditions if we put them aside. Digital technologies have effects on socio-cultural structures. Acceleration tendencies, quantification and tracking, self-tracking and general optimization efforts are combined with neoliberal market thinking and an emphasis on scientific access to the world. It is used to describe an increase in uncertainty and contingency, what is typical for post-digital societies (e.g. Leineweber, 2022).

Questions of alternative futures are also being exacerbated in discussion about more sustainable development. Human-made climate change and its effects make it necessary to discuss the question of how we want to live today and in future. Thinking of these challenges in relation to a culture of digitality in a differentiated way means not understanding digital technology only as solution to human-made problems, nor problematizing it as harmful. You can outline the relationship between digital technology and sustainable development at the following levels:

- (1) Challenge and problem: Digital technologies bring challenges for the mitigation of climate change such as carbon emissions, environmental protection issues in the extraction of rare earths and enormous amounts of old devices. The production process of digital technologies shows violation of human rights and postcolonial exploitations.
- (2) Envisioning: Digital technologies make climate change visible. Since the Club of Rome's report (Meadows *et al.*, 1972), computer technology has been used to make projections by dealing with globally collected data relating to human-made climate change. Digital technologies make developments visual (Chun, 2015).
- (3) Bringing solutions: Digital technologies play a role in curbing human-made climate change by enabling the development of renewable energy sources, making production processes more resource-efficient, etc.
- (4) Communication: Digital technologies serve to be able to conduct a discourse on the challenges of more sustainable development.

But digital technology is not a *neutral* development. We discuss a supremacy of certain IT companies under the term *digital capitalism* (Staab, 2020). The Internet and digital infrastructure have been seen as *the* democratic possibility in the 1990s. Today, a few IT companies regulate the IT market, which does not contribute to fairer development. All of this makes it necessary to develop the ability to think about and discuss alternative futures. We need the ability to reflect on the relationship between humans, nature, animals, plants, machines, digitality and technology, without becoming stuck in hardened structures. Art can help to do so. In *Staying with the Trouble* (2016), Haraway establishes a way of thinking that operates at the interface of biology, cultural studies analysis, and art (pp. 67ff). In *Symbiogenesis, Symptoiesis, and Art Science activism for staying with the trouble* she points out, that «enfolding each other is the vital motor of living and dying on earth». The term «symptoietic» is a development from «sym-poiesis» that means «making-with» (Haraway, 2017, p. M25). She uses this to make clear that everything is interconnected, even though supposed categories. This is of importance regarding a culture of digitality. Because digitalization aims at clearly recognizable and unambiguously defined categories into which the world could then be

classified. Digitality thus aims more at categorization than at thinking together. Art might help to think beyond supposed boundaries.

Art can do what digital technologies tend to prevent and Haraway demands: the thinking together of supposedly separate living beings, animals, plants, but also modern digital technologies. And that with regard to past, present and future. Radically new elements can be envisaged. But art, as technology, «is neither good nor bad; nor is it neutral» (Kranzberg, 1986, p. 545). Art can make designs for the polis discussable and expand the agenda with aspects that are beyond the status quo. Given the disastrous management of ecological systems, this is what is needed. Business as usual makes the catastrophe worse, a change of course can perhaps still prevent it. In the iterative interplay with politics, ecology and pedagogy, art can bring openings. But art is also «neither good nor bad; nor is it neutral» (ibid.).

We need a key to unlock designs for diverse future scenarios. Based on three artistic projects linking sustainability issues and digitality, we outline whether and how these can be fruitful for ESD.

The need for change and the power of art

To redesign the global economic and political structure is seen by many as an urgent and inevitable task. The management of the ‘planetary household’ is disastrous. We are already overshooting six of the planetary boundaries (Richardson *et al.*, 2023) and steer toward irreversible effects on climate change, while on the other hand we still have about 783 million people living in hunger (World Food Programme, 2023). This is in contrast to the idea of sustainable development, which is defined in the Brundtland-Report as »«development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs» (United Nations, 1987 I/2 §1). As this definition focuses on all living people (ibid. I/2 §4), it follows the logic of a ›planetary household‹. The basic needs of every member of the global household must be secured, otherwise it is not sustainable development.

This means, we have to decide on new ways to manage the planetary household in a democratic way. Enabling people to do so is a core task of pedagogy and ESD. And to be able to discuss about different futures, it is crucial to envision various future scenarios. Art can make designs discussable and expand the agenda with aspects that are beyond the management of the status quo. Art can be radical and doesn’t have to restrict itself to ›realistic‹ ideas and proposals. It doesn’t necessarily have to provide positive and

desirable visions, there is also a lot of power in spelling out ambiguous or negative futures, prolonging specific trends and emphasising different aspects.

This is not new. Robert Hausmann (2022, p. 12f, own translation) for example sees a big potential in speculation for aesthetic education. Speculations on future scenarios «can not only trigger learning processes in the sense of an exploration of unknown (potentially future and other possible) terrains, but also stimulate educational moments in the sense of an actively designed, productive approach to the present and the indeterminacies of the future» (ibid.). He finally asks if educational institutions should be «spaces of exploration for speculation and, consequently, real-experimental test zones for the forming of futures» (ibid., p. 13).

And Haraway describes the approach «New New Synthesis», which aims to link different disciplinary approaches to produce new models of the living world and ways of life (Haraway, 2017, p. M29). Haraway refers to the fact that we all emerged from a soup of bacteria and single-celled organisms can be understood as a rejection of the strong anthropocentric view that is often taken, especially in the context of digitality. To a certain extent, artistic approaches are needed, to make the complex relationship of all living beings, technology, machines, bodies, nature, etc. understandable. Haraway (2017, p. M33) describes such projects as «Science Art Activism for staying with the trouble».

Three examples of art projects

Now we discuss three art projects located at the interface of digitality, ecology, economy and sustainable development. They are in line of art projects which Haraway (2017, p. M35) describes as «case[s] of multispecies becoming-with, a model system in which scientists, artists, ordinary members of communities, and nonhuman beings become enfolded in each other's projects, in each other's lives. Each is an animating project in deadly times».

The Crochet Coral Reef (Christine and Margaret Wertheim)

Based on mathematic concepts of Daina Taimina, the sisters Christine and Margaret Wertheim started a project in 2005 that combines art, science, handcraft and activism for the protection of species and nature.

The Crochet Coral Reef is an ever-evolving nature-culture hybrid [...], that resides at the nexus of art, science, mathematics, community practice, and climate change. [...] The Crochet Coral Reef is an artwork responding to climate change and also a global community-based exercise in applied mathematics and evolutionary theory. (<https://crochetcoralreef.org/>)

The artists began to crochet coral reefs in response to the bleaching of coral reefs, using recycled materials such as plastic bags. Haraway has referred to this and the numerous satellite projects (Haraway, 2017, p. M36f). As such corals can be produced easily, this leads to the emergence of collaboratively crafted satellite projects.

We see the collaborative creation of an alternative world, which at the same time takes a stand against the man-made extinction of species and enables a connection to the materiality of corals.

Mitigation of Shock (2017-19)

In the project *Mitigation of shock* (Superflux, n.d.) the London based studio ‘Superflux’ draws the picture of a possible future: A world in 2050, where climate change resulted in a big temperature rise and weather extremes cause floodings on a regular basis. Supply chains collapsed and it is normal that there is hardly any food left in the supermarkets. In two exhibitions the studio has created realistic homes, in which visitors can walk around and experience an apartment set in this possible future. The possible future comes to life – and visitors can see and feel, what such an apartment looks like and can compare it to apartments they know. It is not necessarily a dystopian future. The work shows a very aesthetic way of adapting to this possible situation. By doing so, the main difference becomes very clear: In contrast to this future, we today do not face the necessity of producing food in our apartments.

ArchaeaBot by Alex May and Anna Dumitriu (2018-19)

As an example of Science-Art-Activism, we can see the *ArchaeaBot. A Post Climate Change, Post Singularity Life-form* (2018-19) by Alex May and Anna Dumitriu. It focuses on the relationship between nature and technology or biology and digital technology. The artists developed an underwater robot that illustrates «what ‘life’ might mean in a post-singularity and post-climate change future» (Dumitriu n.d.). The project focuses on negotiating the question of life forms in a post-climate change era and the elevation of artificial

intelligence over natural or human intelligence. The artists take up a primordial life form that can survive under extreme environmental conditions and reproduce it via digital technology. In the context of a planet-changing metamorphosis along digitality, one could say that digital technology here penetrates a primordial life form to live on in a post-climate change epoch without humans. Artificial intelligence and microorganisms could then colonise the planet.

Conclusion

It is urgently necessary to establish different approaches for envisioning alternative futures and discuss them in a community. We think art can be a central key to this. But visualising futures alone, detached from others, will not bring solutions to the big challenges. A strong community with democratic discussion and decision-making structures like a polis is needed to be able to really think about the future. And in our opinion, it also needs the possibility of allocating the appropriate space to other entities.

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Exploring education in the school-polis. Intersections between place-based education and public pedagogy

Cinzia Zadra & Maria Ventura

Abstract This article presents an exploratory research of an innovative learning and teaching project carried out by a secondary school for hotel management in South Tyrol. The initiative focuses on the ideation and management of a vegan restaurant located outside the school premises, providing students with practical experience in hotel management. This article presents the project's aims, theoretical underpinnings of the project analysis, methodology, initial findings, and outlines future directions for research and community involvement.

Introduction

This article discusses an innovative project in which vocational school students ideate and manage a vegan restaurant as a practical learning space replacing the conventional period of culinary internship in restaurants outside school. The restaurant is situated in a public building and serves as a unique learning environment that promotes sustainable diets, contributing to the broader community development.

The vocational education system in South Tyrol embraces a distinctive approach similar to the German dual system, which combines classroom learning with practical experiences (Bertuletti, 2019). Each academic year students participate in internships, for example in gastronomy establishments, to gain insights into the professional world. By immersing students in authentic work environments at an early stage, this system equips them with a comprehensive set of skills and a solid foundation for their future careers.

In line with the school's project, the restaurant offers an innovative and creative alternative for student internships, involving them in unique experiences. It also encourages reflection on a healthy lifestyle and the environmental impact, exploring new ways of working and fostering creativity. The restaurant promotes respect for animals by offering meals without meat, fish, and animal products. This is a contribution to health prevention and a commitment

to protecting ecosystems and the environment. In addition, the vegan restaurant offers a culinary exploration for students and clients, encouraging an open-minded approach to new taste adventures.

The school as polis

The purpose of this contribution is to analyse this school project through the lenses of public pedagogy (PP) and place-based education (PBE), and to assess its role in fostering a strong, cohesive, and active polis. PP and PBE mutually reinforce each other and promote practices that challenge dominant social and educational discourses, encourage school communities to re-imagine themselves and their cities differently, fostering extended learning contexts and collaborative networks outside of formal educational institutions.

In line with those approaches, the vegan restaurant is as more than just an immersive environment for students, offering them valuable practical experience in hotel management; according to the principles of the systemic approach, the restaurant constitutes the node of interconnection and interdependence between the school, the community, the polis, the individual citizens, the teachers, and the students that make up a projective and generative whole, despite the diverse and multiple perspectives and interests of the project participants. The main objective of this project is not limited to serving the school community alone. It aims to reach and positively impact residents and tourists by providing appealing vegan options. The vegan restaurant serves as a model for responsible practices, emphasizing the significance of making environmentally friendly choices in our daily lives.

The ultimate goal is to establish a participatory, sustainable, and inclusive polis by promoting conviviality and collaboration, leading to a sense of belonging, commitment, civic engagement, and social cooperation within the polis. Hartmut von Hentig originally coined the concept of the school as a polis (1973). Von Hentig presents a pedagogical concept of school democracy in which all students have the opportunity to experience their life and learning as something they can organise together and in a self-determined way, similar to the free citizens of the ancient Attic polis in its democratic heyday. According to von Hentig, the school can be seen as a political community in which individuals can experience the promises and difficulties of a larger society and relate to the places around them (von Hentig, 2003). The school-polis opens up to experiences that facilitate movement between education, school and work, and by forging links with the community, extends the places of school learning. This openness to the outside also means an openness to the inside: a

step in one direction also means a step in the other: the opening of the school as a community itself.

For the students, learning is not only about acquiring knowledge, but also about learning to act, to live and to work with others, and to be prepared for life.

The theoretical framework

The concepts of PP and PBE complement each other contributing to a pedagogical definition of the extended learning in the community. The integration of conviviality and collaborative efforts to shape a participatory, sustainable, and inclusive school-polis also echoes the ideas of Illich (2009/1973), who envisioned conviviality as a foundation for equitable and community-driven learning experiences. ‘Convivial’ was Illich’s technical term for a society in which it was possible to articulate a «relation between persons, tools, and a new collectivity» (Illich, 2009/1973, 12).

From a posthumanist perspective, expanding education through the lens of PP and PBE means embracing a new ethics of engagement in the politics of knowledge, where transdisciplinarity becomes a powerful force capable of producing innovative imaginaries of knowledge and society (Taylor, 2017).

PBE is an umbrella term that connects learning processes to physical places, particularly those beyond the confines of traditional educational institutions (Gruenewald, 2003b; Sobel, 2004; Smith, 2007; Smith & Sobel, 2014). This approach aims to establish a deep connection with nearby contexts, cultures, and environments through experiential, community, and ecological learning practices. PBE encourages learning beyond formal institutions by emphasizing extended contexts, where learning experiences are grounded in local contexts (Smith, 2002). PBE is trans-institutional, bridging various educational settings and viewing physical places as arenas for authentic and transformative experiences. This aligns with Gruenewald’s (2003a) argument that place-based learning can foster a deeper understanding of ecological interconnectedness and cultural diversity.

On the other hand, PP refers to a range of pedagogical practices in non-formal and informal contexts and «represents a wide variety of educational practices taking place inside various sites of education mostly outside the context of formal schooling, such as popular culture, the Internet, museums and parks, and other civic and commercial spaces [...]» (Wildemeersch & von Kotze, 2014, p. 314).

According to Giroux (2011) PP has the potential to inspire critical awareness and action within communities and has a transformative nature.

Educators should define intellectual practices that enable them to speak with conviction, enter the public sphere in order to address important social issues, and demonstrate alternative models for bridging the gap between education and the wider society (Giroux, 2003). PP focuses on the forms, processes, and places of education and learning that occur beyond formal schooling. Biesta (2012) provides a concise clarification of PP within educational interventions in the public domain. According to Biesta, ‘becoming public’ involves carrying out initiatives without knowing how others will respond. Biesta distinguishes between the ‘pedagogy for public’, which aims to teach citizens tolerance, respect, or commitment, and the ‘pedagogy of the public’, in which processes and practices of critical awareness take place. Examining the school project through this approach involves considering the public role of the school, which extends beyond its socializing and qualifying functions. On the contrary, the school remains open to the emergence of the unknown, leading to action in the area of subjectivation (Biesta, 2012, 2013). The approach to teaching is not «aimed at strengthening the ego, but at interrupting the ego-object, at turning it towards the world, so that it can become a self-subject» (Biesta, 2017, p. 57)

In conclusion, the intersection of PP and PBE offers a transformative approach to education and community development, creating a «new localisation» (Gruenewald and Smith, 2008, p. XIII), where students not only reside in a place, but also inhabit it.

Methodology and methods

Our research aims to understand and depict the experiences of students and teachers within the project’s framework.

During the first year of the project, we conducted interviews with five participants (three students and two teachers) to collect their thoughts and intentions. The interviews were conducted using a specific type of interview known as «undirected talk» (Demetrio, 2020, p. 150).

These long non-direct talks, lasting about an hour per participant, follow a loose and free-flowing structure, grounded in social interaction, where questions arise spontaneously in the natural cadence of dialogue. Although the researchers are provided with a predefined theoretical framework, they engage in conversations with the interviewees, generating questions in response to their narrations. The specificity of a non-directed talk lies in its ability to reveal unexpected themes, which facilitates a deeper understanding of the interviewees’ social reality from their perspectives.

Individual, extensive interviews were conducted with each participant, capturing their narratives in detail through recorded speeches. The data was then subjected to qualitative content analysis, using Mayring's methodology (2010). This method provides deep insights into our research questions by developing a category system. This aids the researchers in structuring information obtained from interviews and identifying patterns or common themes and also allows for inductive data analysis, which brings out the perspectives of the study participants.

First findings

The initial phase of the investigation revealed insightful perspectives derived from the interviews. The impact of collaborative planning among diverse stakeholders was reported to be transformative. Teachers and students engaged in a collaborative and egalitarian dialogue, demonstrating their shared commitment to the project's development. This participatory approach became integral in shaping the project's evolving practices. Two direct quotes from two teachers exemplify the theme that emerged from the data.

The planning process was tiring and led to extensive discussions. However, it also engaged and inspired many people both inside and outside the school, who made valuable contributions and provided insights that we teachers could never have generated on our own. (Teacher 1)

It can be challenging to implement something so radically new, as some teachers may not readily see the change from established practices. However, collaboration can make it possible. (Teacher 2)

Another emerging theme is the potential for new forms of learning, participation, and ecological awareness, particularly among younger generations. Among the reflections that have emerged, some educators have noted that the aim was not to redefine the traditional concept of schooling, but there has been a significant change in the attitudes of teachers and students. The path taken has also created an educational environment that acts as a catalyst for a new way of living and interacting in society. Reflecting on the role of the school in the community, a teacher stated that their intention was not to propose a new way of living and being in each other's company, «or at least not explicitly. However, now that you mention it, we do propose a new way of eating and socializing, which we believe is an education for society».

It can be said that the project promotes exploring new ways of living and can inspire those who share similar beliefs or those who are open to new

perspectives, as a student said: «Many customers visit because they are vegan, while others come to try it out and say ‘this is so good, now I’m going to try it at home’».

Other testimonies, such as that of a student who stated «I am not vegan, but I have learned that eating less meat is good for you and it tastes just as good, and cooking vegan is more creative», highlight how the project is positively influencing not only the students’ eating habits but also their creativity and open-mindedness.

The data analysis also reveals ambiguities regarding the concept of sustainability and ways to engage with it. An additional theme is the complexity and ambiguity of sustainability within the vegan choice. Educators expressed concerns about importing ingredients from different regions, prompting a discussion on promoting new food values and the meaning of the concept of food sustainability. The balance between sustainability and pragmatism was a point of contention of a teacher: «Although meat is not used, the sustainability of using imported ingredients such as avocados from Mexico and spices from India is questionable. It may be necessary to approach this issue differently, perhaps by explicitly stating new food values». Suggestions for alternative approaches, such as a ‘frugal restaurant’, were considered. Educators deliberated on the educational implications and the potential risk of deviating from the school’s traditional practices. Conversely, a student perceived the project’s role as a form of silent activism toward sustainability and recognized its value as a meaningful educational endeavour.

In summary, these initial findings provide valuable insights into the collaborative dynamics, transformative potential, and ambiguities surrounding the ongoing vegan restaurant project. These themes establish a foundation for further exploration and analysis within the broader context of education, sustainability, and community engagement.

Further steps and conclusions

Expanding the research through large-scale questionnaires would offer diverse perspectives on the collaborative aspects shaping the project’s educational system. An examination of the involvement and collaboration between institutions would provide an overview of the interconnectedness that shapes the educational system forged by the project. By analysing the network of relationships and partnerships, synergies and potential further developments can be identified.

Additionally, it would be interesting to investigate the participation of students and schools in what Taylor (2017) describes as quiet activism:

examining how the educational community engages in deliberate forms of activism can reveal the values and principles that underlie a collective ethos. This perspective could provide new insights into the role of education in fostering informed and socially conscious citizens. Further research can facilitate the analysis, development, and innovation of new projects within the education system. By involving various stakeholders in the process, a collaborative environment can be established, allowing for the flourishing of ideas and resulting in the implementation of innovative educational practices.

If, like Biesta, we ask ourselves what kind of educational work and project is able to «reclaim or reinvigorate the public sphere» (2012, p. 683), we can answer with him that the project studied is «an educational intervention enacted in the interest of the public quality of spaces and places and the public quality of human togetherness» (p. 684). And so the school becomes a polis in von Hentig's sense, it becomes a “laboratory school” (1973, p. 26), that transcends the limits of the traditional school structure, offering opportunities for out-of-school learning and experience, that contributes to the growth of the out-of-school community itself and «creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizen» (Sobel, 2004, p. 7) .

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Educational practices for building social ties. *TEDDY per il quartiere*, a collective resignification of the neighborhood

KEATS Aps – Kantiere Educativo per Azioni Trasformative
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Abstract *TEDDY per il quartiere* is an educational project designed by KEATS Aps dedicated to children aged 4-11. The project aimed to create an educational experience in which children had the chance to build relationships, cultivate expression and learn, through the construction of a collective narration, and to give new meaning to their borough. Democratic and participatory practice guided the experience: heuristic dialogue, active listening and cooperative writing. Major interesting outputs were observed.

Introduction: *TEDDY per il quartiere* project

TEDDY per il quartiere – literal for TEDDY for the borough – is an expressive experience with children aged 4-11 designed and delivered by KEATS Aps, held at two different times and places, in summer 2020 in San Fruttuoso borough in Monza (Italy) and in summer 2022 in Crocetta borough in Modena (Italy). The project was a local and situated educational intervention linked with the social, temporal, spatial and historical conditions of each location. It aimed to create an educational experience during which children could generate a space of relationship, expression and learning, through the creation of a collective narration and the construction of many artifacts intended to leave new aesthetic traces in the neighbourhood. Those artifacts were meant to revitalize the beauty of the area.

The word TEDDY on the one hand draws inspiration from the popular TED talks: short, powerful talks, aiming at spreading relevant concepts. On the other hand, TEDDY refers to the Teddy Bear – the famous stuffed toy – as a reference for the children’s collective imagination.

Moreover, the project’s aim was to recognize children’s right to fully participate in the society, as citizens, bringing out their different ways of living in the city.

The project gave life to an «educational dispositif»¹ (Massa, 1987) built on two principles: active listening (Sclavi, 2003) and democratic participation, based on the assumption that children think, create and make connections and all their hypotheses – even the fictional ones – are epistemic tools; ways to learn about the world.

The project's main assumption was related to the idea of the child as a citizen of the world, whose thoughts and desires have a deep cognitive tension that should be recognized and whose value should be sought in all possible ways in order to return it a value.

What happened and why

TEDDY per il quartiere was originally conceived in Monza during summer 2020 in response to the summery poor educational offer that followed the first phase of the pandemic situation. The district's Council noted several critical issues related to families with children:

- the difficulty in managing time and domestic spaces;
- the need for qualitatively relevant training experiences for children;
- the lack of sufficient, widespread, and homogeneous support from the local and national network in caring for children's time.

Since KEATS was involved in the experience through the district's Council, TEDDY became a summer educational project implemented through a Citizenship Pact between the city's Public Administration, the district's Council and some local associations. TEDDY was, thus, the first summer project to start and took place mainly in the open spaces of the neighbourhood, such as two public green areas, that weren't used by the citizens.

A total of 27 children aged 4-10 residing in the San Fruttuoso neighbourhood of Monza participated in the project².

The second edition of *TEDDY per il quartiere* took place during the 2022 summer in Modena, in Crocetta borough, a suburban area. Crocetta is a

¹ The notion of «dispositif» is formulated by Riccardo Massa starting from the use of the term made by Michel Foucault (1994) about the «dispositif of sexuality» (Foucault, 1976). Foucault describes the «dispositif» as «a heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements» (Foucault, 1994, p. 25).

² Participation in the project was free from admission/access requirements. The only constraint was the maximum number of participants (48 participants) established to ensure the participant - educator ratio.

neighborhood that desires to be crossed by a redevelopment and regeneration of its spaces.

As in the Monza's project, TEDDY in Modena was developed according to the neighbourhood families' needs in order to offer their children a relevant summer educational experience. The spaces covered by the project were all part of a public park – a green area sparsely inhabited during the day. In this case, the project was commissioned by Caritas Diocesana Modenese – which wanted to offer children and young people in the neighbourhood new opportunities for socialization and new experiences of participation in the life of their local area. The project also involved a group of volunteers.

TEDDY's heart

When developing *TEDDY per il quartiere*, KEATS worked on the following research object: how can the borough, the community and children interact with each other?

As a result, the purpose pursued by KEATS resulted in starting a process of children and community activation, giving a reinterpretation of the area's Genius loci and starting a process of urban regeneration and citizens participation. The focus was on the active dimension of citizenship as a means of achieving the political gesture that is proper to educate. The experience was able to reactivate inter-individual communication – making evidence of the community potential of the neighbourhood – and, at the same time, to re-think the borough as a polis.

In this sense, with TEDDY, KEATS has turned on and motivated the citizens (children and adults) to voluntarily participate in the project's development.

Children were involved at an expressive level through the educational experiences and the democratic practices.

Monza citizens offered themselves as volunteers, taking the role of chaperon, while others took the role of sentinel of the district, accompanying children from their homes to the place where TEDDY's activities were held.

Participants' mothers were actively involved at the organizational level in Modena, in administering meals and setting up break spaces; in doing so, they became an integral part of the actual development of the experience. In this way, a virtuous dialogue was created between community and children, making both parties integral to the actual development of the experience.

The educational experience of *TEDDY per il quartiere*: the designing process

In the two contexts and in the two reference communities, TEDDY has not been conceived as a format to be replicated, but rather as a nuanced and complex experiential dispositif capable of listening and understanding the peculiarities of the two areas. In this sense, expressive languages – narrative, graphic-pictorial-sculptural, digital, performative (musical and theatrical) – have been proposed as mediators to deeply engage with certain central aspects of the relationship between child and territorial context.

Both of the laboratory experiences proposed by KEATS Aps have developed along a similar macro-structure: the creation of a fictional educational pact, the development of a collective narrative for each group, and a final restitution event open to the entire community in the area.

The educational experience generated a deep dialogue between the “reality” (the district and the park explored through the educational activities) and the “fiction” (expressed by imagination in the collective story, where the borough was the narrative set).

The project, starting from the setting up of the educational experience – which is a place other than the “world of the common life” – that has made possible to work on the dimension of desire, enabling a re-appropriation of the power of imagination among the participants. Moreover, the dimension of desire has become tangible thanks to concrete gestures.

The TEDDY experience in the San Fruttuoso district in Monza began with a fictional framework, defined by certain narrative key points, and with the exploration of various expressive experiences, mediated through the creative languages mentioned above. The leitmotif of the educational experiences offered by TEDDY was: “awakening”. Awakening as a metaphor for the children’ recapture of social spaces, of expressive and learning experiences and as a metaphor for the post-lockdown experience.

Specifically, the first narrative key point that started the entire process introduced the theme of the workshop: You have awakened from a long hibernation, Il bears... who are you now? Where are you?

So, the first week was dedicated to explore and discover the surrounding environment through body language, narrative (writing short poems) and graphic expression (graphic representation, frottage of the elements found in the surrounding space). It also involved inner exploration and discovery through musical, sculptural and body language, so they would think of themselves as characters in a common story.

Later, the narrative key points brought the participants to explore the area, paying attention to the people they run into (the citizens). In this way, common

citizens became the characters of fantasy stories. Day by day, the district became the narrative set of the individual narrative texts written by participants. The second week was dedicated to making connections between each children's individual text, creating a storyboard.

Then, the last week was dedicated to the composition of the soundtrack and to the dramatization of the collective narration.

The experience realized in the public park in Modena was quite different. It focused on the idea of citizens "occupying", "invading" and "swarming" a place, actively taking possession of it, living and giving new meanings to it. For this reason, the final stage of the entire process was the book *The famous invasion of Sicily by bears*, written and illustrated by Dino Buzzati and published periodically in 1945 on the *Corriere dei Piccoli* magazine.

The expressive process was developed from macro to micro, from the external world (the surrounding environment, the borough's places) to the inner world (the children's personal meanings of the borough).

Even in this case, the process took place through the co-construction of a collective narration, created by two groups of children, using some narrative key points that encouraged the passage from the expressive experiences to the writing process.

The process started from the exploration and the discovery of the surroundings, with a particular focus on the landscape's elements, observing, drawing, mapping the park and the nearby area: where are we? What can I see around me?

Then the focus was turned to the local houses and in order to observe them, participants took part in a «transurbanza» (Careri, 2006), a walk through the surrounding area. The walking experience makes the relationship between the citizens and the neighbourhood deeper and more intimate; and this can be considered as a peculiar form of knowledge. Walking together through the streets of our city allows us to re-name the places, even the corners that we see everyday. Our gaze makes the places ours and gives them a new value, creating a cognitive map to orient us.

These experiences brought the participants to the related narrative key points, such as: Did a narrative set emerge from the borough's exploration? Which can be the name of this set? What kind of houses can we see in This place? etc.

The process went on with the discovery of the peculiar borough's history and with the exploration of the soundscape – which triggered the creation of a musical composition.

Then the participants paid attention to the district's citizens, as in Monza's experience.

The last days were dedicated to the subjectivation and re-signification of the children's residence area, observing the borough's most relevant places according to each child and focusing on the relationship between places, life experience and identity.

So, the related narrative key points were: which meanings do you give to the place where your alter ego lives in the story? What does the story express about you?

Methodology: democratic practices

The entire educational process has been developed around the experimentation, carried out by children, of certain democratic practices borrowed from French institutional pedagogy (Oury & Vasquez, 1967) and Italian popular pedagogy (Lodi, 1970). These practices have allowed children – who are a fundamental part of the community and the area but often do not have a voice to exercise their freedom of expression as citizens – to speak out about their neighbourhood, expressing what image they have of it, how they experience it, and how they would like it to be, as they dream of it.

In particular, the democratic practices experimented by the participants included:

- Speaking about the experiences lived together through a moment of reflection, self-assessment, group evaluation, that took place at the end of each day. The process is called «Ça va ou ça va pas». The educators also took part in this process.

- Experimentation with «heuristic dialogue» (Lorenzoni & Parigi, 2020) practices through the creation of a suitable space for the convergence of different ways of looking at the world and positioning oneself. Mutual listening and conversation were placed at the centre of the educational practice. As Paulo Freire (2002) said that «it is not in silence that men make themselves, but in dialogue, which is a meeting of men, through the mediation of the world».

- Participation in some decision-making processes. At the end of the entire project, children were actively involved in the design of the final moment, choosing the way to present their collective narrations (reading aloud, dramatization, etc.), defining the necessary materials and setting up the spaces. In Monza each group chose the method of final restitution of their collective narrative (reading aloud, dramatization, etc.), just as the two groups of participants in the project in Modena entirely planned the final restitution event, defining its form, the type of experience to offer to families and all citizens.

Particularly interesting was the final moment of TEDDY in Modena, which took the form of a “rendering”, or rather a collective, physical, and symbolic retracing of the places and experiences encountered through the entire project. “Rendering” because the restitution took the form of a translation of the two-dimensional image of the process into a three-dimensional and profound image. During the rendering, the entire community listened to the voices of children, accessing the collective narrations that emerged within the two sub-groups, delving into their respective imaginations, and connecting with the dreams and desires of the children regarding their living environment. Furthermore, the rendering allowed all citizens to submerge themselves in the ritual moments (group singing) and in the spaces of the park that were inhabited during the project.

- Cooperative and collective writing. Participants in both projects have experimented themselves with individual writing practices in the form of free-text writing and the practice of collective writing based on everyone’s free-text contributions.

Writing a text collectively requires a great deal of work, since it is a process that places a group of children in front of a cooperative learning activity. First, each child writes their own thoughts, and then all the individually produced texts are read. Afterward, the group edits what was created in terms of corrections, cuts, simplifications.

The purpose of this work is the creation of a text that is not the sum of everyone’s writings, but a common good that belongs to each and every one, because it contains the ideas, thoughts, dreams, and desires of all those who have actively participated in its creation.

This form of educational experience is based on a forward-looking vision, centred on the becoming and subjectification of every citizen, on existential, social, and relational levels. It is based on what the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire (2002) defined as «dialogical, democratic, and courageous education that engages in discussion with every individual about their right to participation».

TEDDY’s transformative effects

A process of re-signification of the area itself took place from the interrelationship of children, families, community and neighbourhood through an experience of collective participation.

The project's outcomes³ can be considered the effect of a situated learning process. Specifically, the situated and local learnings generated by *TEDDY per il quartiere* were:

- for children a new ability to express themselves creatively with peers and adults. Specifically, the act of sharing the collective narration with family members and with the citizens of the neighbourhood gave children the opportunity to creatively express themselves and to include the whole community within this process.
- for families and caregivers, a new and desirable social interdependence. In this sense, from the participants point of view, TEDDY allowed them to experiment themselves with new forms and ways of being together.
- a renewed sense of participation in the social and territorial context. Everyone involved took care of the space, crossing it daily and taking part in the ferment made possible by the activities.
- The experience made it possible for all the people involved to live in the spaces as a collective. Moreover, in Monza and in Modena as well, the outdoor spaces of TEDDY assumed new meanings for citizenship:
 - 1 in Monza the attention paid to the two green areas allowed the participants to give them a new meaning in their own cognitive map: from being experienced as a walking-by places or places to walk dogs, they became places to meet and rest in groups, to take part in expressive processes, to interact with other citizens. In addition, the green areas inhabited by TEDDY since the conclusion of the project have been reclaimed for all the following years and have begun to host more and more cultural events.
 - 2 in Modena the area where TEDDY took place was in the middle of a process of regeneration, involving the important architect Renzo Piano and the artist Edoardo Tresoldi. As a matter of fact, TEDDY was the first experience of living the new social function of the place, allowing the aggregation of the whole community. The artifacts created during the project and left in the Park during each day caught the attention and the interest of the citizens or of the passers-by. In fact, they stopped in order to watch the children's artifacts, to speak with them and to ask some questions about the project in progress. In this way, the citizens rediscovered the Park's transversal beauty and built, collectively, a new shared representation of it.

³ The results of the project were collected, in the case of TEDDY in Monza, through a final survey, sent to each participating family, divided into two parts: one for parents and another for participants. In the case of TEDDY per il Quartiere - Modena the results were identified through two focus groups (one intermediate and one final) with families and with a moment of evaluation - mediated by playful experiences - shared with participants.



Figure 1. «What colour can water be?»
Teddy per il Quartiere – Modena © Valentina Costa.

So, from a more symbolic point of view, all the actors involved took care of the space, crossing it daily and taking part in the excitement made possible by the activities. The experience gave the entire community the opportunity to feel the space as collective and, consequently, to change their vision of it.

Conclusions

The experience of *TEDDY per il quartiere* was relevant in understanding how the neighbourhood can be understood as a common good for children, families and the citizens involved in the final event. This happens when it becomes possible to reactivate in subjects a drive to desire and participate through the educational experience, recovering collective meanings and expressing their imaginative capacity to generate shared visions of the present and the future and to act a transformative function in the world of everyday life.



Figure 2. The frottage technique, in *Teddy per il Quartiere* – Monza.
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Truth dare create in the city spaces. Educational practices to support the creativity of children between three and six years old

Alessia Rosa & Michela Bongiorno¹

Abstract The spaces that surround kindergartens represent an environment to explore and to co-build encounters, collaboration and citizenship spaces. This contribution intends to present part of the survey Creative Practices 3-6 aimed at exploring the educational proposals in the field of creativity, through a mixed method approach. The collected data intend to give an account of how the creative experiences supported by artistic or natural elements, can represent a potential space for encounters, collaborations and active citizenship aimed at the realisation of a common good.

Dire fare creare negli spazi della città. Pratiche educative a supporto della creatività dei bambini tra i tre e i sei anni

Continuità, Spazi e Creatività: intrecci educativi e di senso

Lo sviluppo cognitivo, emotivo e psichico dei bambini si realizza attraverso l'incontro e il confronto con persone, oggetti e spazi (Guerra, 2017), all'interno di un reticolo relazionale prezioso in cui ogni elemento svolge un ruolo importante.

Per quanto riguarda le potenzialità educative dello spazio esterno, e della polis in particolare, tale principio ha trovato in diverse esperienze di educazione prescolare una profonda integrazione all'interno delle proposte formative, sebbene sia necessario constatare come in molti contesti, gran parte del tempo educativo si realizza ancora all'interno degli edifici. Il Sistema

¹ L'articolo è risultato del confronto costante tra le autrici. A. Rosa ha scritto i primi due paragrafi (*Continuità, Spazi e Creatività intrecci educativi e di senso*; *L'indagine Paruche creative 3-6*) M. Bongiorno il terzo (*La scuola e la polis pratiche di conoscenza immersiva*) e le conclusioni.

Integrato di educazione e di istruzione 0-6, finalizzato in primis a garantire a tutte le bambine e i bambini, dalla nascita ai sei anni, pari opportunità di sviluppare le proprie potenzialità di relazione, autonomia, creatività e apprendimento per superare disuguaglianze, barriere territoriali, economiche, etniche e culturali (D. Lgs. 65/2017), trova nei processi e negli strumenti di continuità verticale e orizzontale importanti basi d'azione. La continuità verticale all'interno dei percorsi 0-6 riconosce e valorizza le competenze acquisite da ogni bambino all'interno di una prospettiva longitudinale, mentre la continuità orizzontale, attraverso la relazione sinergica tra scuola e territorio, consente ai bambini di costruire mappe di senso del reale, in cui le conoscenze e le competenze (indipendentemente dal dove sono state acquisite) trovano progressivamente senso, applicazione e rinforzo.

Gli spazi che viviamo nella quotidianità ci permettono di delineare le categorie utili a orientarsi in altri ambienti sulla base di specifiche aspettative che possono poi essere confermate o disattese, ma sono comunque funzionali (Baroni, 2008). Realizzare esperienze educative significative in ambienti esterni, risponde dunque ai bisogni che caratterizzano la crescita dei bambini e permettono la costituzione di quel processo dinamico che configura l'attaccamento ai luoghi (Giani Gallino, 2007) e conduce progressivamente alla loro presa in carico e alla cura.

La città rappresenta oggi lo scenario più diffuso in cui i bambini vivono all'interno di comunità molteplici (Amendola, 2009) e dunque come sottolinea con forza Monica Amadini (in Bertolini, Guerra, 2020) ogni bambino «avrebbe bisogno di camminare per le vie della città, con la sensazione di calpestarla e appropriarsene, partecipando a ciò che accade e tessendo relazioni. Il contesto urbano può diventare accessibile se lo si può percorrere, sperimentare, scoprire, contemplare: in altri termini, se lo si può “abitare educativamente”» (Iori, 1996).

Sulla base delle premesse qui sinteticamente delineate all'interno dell'indagine *Pratiche creative 3-6*, finalizzata a rilevare le modalità atte a supportare il pensiero creativo dei bambini frequentanti la scuola dell'infanzia, è stato esplorato il ruolo attribuito in tali processi al territorio. La correlazione tra territorio e creatività è insita nell'ampia e complessa definizione di quest'ultima, per la quale rimandiamo alla letteratura sul tema per una più complessa trattazione (Rosa, 2023; Kaufman, 2010). Ci limitiamo a evidenziare un generale accordo sia nell'identificare un ruolo importante dei fattori sociali e culturali nell'influenzare i processi creativi (Steiner, 2000; Sawyer, 2003, 2007), sia nel riconoscere l'esistenza di una connessione tra pensiero creativo, pensiero critico e problem solving (Robson, 1974).

A fronte di una qualunque situazione problema il soggetto richiama a sé le diverse esperienze funzionali a identificare le informazioni che reputa

necessarie per la soluzione, e organizza i dati raccolti creando associazioni adeguate e talvolta nuove (Testa, 2010). La possibilità di vivere esperienze all'interno di spazi autentici e non artificiali consente ai bambini di "toccare con mano", ma sarebbe più corretto dire con tutti i sensi, gli artefatti risultanti di molteplici processi sociali, culturali e storici, individuando modelli e contenuti utili a leggere e interpretare situazioni simili o diversificate, all'interno della mappa di senso sopra citata.

In definitiva attraverso l'acquisizione di sguardi divergenti e creativi i cittadini, a partire dalla più tenera età, possono cogliere la bellezza che caratterizza l'ordinario, parallelamente, e individuare strategie molteplici per far fronte alle situazioni problema che caratterizzano il quotidiano (Leggett, 2017).

L'indagine *Pratiche creative 3-6*

Con l'obiettivo di indagare le modalità e le proposte attraverso cui le abilità creative vengono stimulate all'interno delle scuole dell'infanzia l'attività di ricerca *Pratiche Creative 3-6* si è avvalsa di una strategia di ricerca esplicativa secondo un'architettura sequenziale (Trincherò, 2019) e di un approccio mixed method (Burke, Onwuegbuzie, Turner, 2007). Più precisamente è stato condotto un primo studio di tipo quantitativo volto a rilevare le caratteristiche del fenomeno oggetto d'indagine, successivamente completato e approfondito attraverso uno studio qualitativo al fine di comprendere in profondità le specificità delle pratiche rilevate. Per la fase quantitativa è stata predisposta un'indagine esplorativa a cui hanno aderito liberamente e autonomamente 3669 docenti della scuola dell'infanzia che hanno compilato un questionario a domande chiuse e aperte.

Tra gli ambiti indagati nel questionario vi era il ruolo del territorio nel sostenere le pratiche educative. Sono dunque state selezionate le esperienze raccontate dai docenti che richiamaavano proposte in continuità orizzontale con il territorio e in modo specifico con la città. Sono quindi state selezionate le esperienze inerenti alle tematiche della cura del territorio e la sua esplorazione, la cittadinanza, l'ambiente e la città, per un totale di 286 percorsi. Tra i docenti che nella risposta aperta hanno presentato tali percorsi, 131 si erano detti disponibili a un'eventuale intervista in profondità sui temi trattati.

Di questi 131 docenti circa il 10% ha effettivamente dato seguito a tale disponibilità. Sono dunque state svolte 14 interviste semi strutturate con l'obiettivo di comprendere come le esperienze creative e la polis possano intrecciarsi. A partire dalle narrazioni raccolte sono state delineate le categorie a cui ricondurre il mutuo accrescimento che scuola e città sviluppano.

La scelta dell'intervista, già riconosciuta come «tecnica di raccolta delle informazioni più diffusa nelle scienze sociali», è stata effettuata in relazione alla «sua natura di processo comunicativo che si instaura tra intervistatore e intervistato» (Addeo & Montesperelli, 2007) e ha permesso di contestualizzare e approfondire i dati raccolti. Il grado di strutturazione delle interviste condotte è medio, sono infatti state stabilite le domande da sottoporre alle intervistate, ma sono state accolte eventuali digressioni e approfondimenti da parte delle rispondenti. Parallelamente per quanto attiene la direttività i contenuti sono stati definiti a priori, mantenendo un certo grado di autonomia da parte dell'intervistatore nell'approfondire eventuali tematiche emerse nel corso dell'intervista, come la variabilità dell'ordine delle domande, in relazione a quanto le intervistate di volta in volta hanno condiviso. Tale aspetto è particolarmente importante in quanto: spesso le narrazioni si riferivano a eventi collocati in tempi diversi e seguendo un flusso di pensiero diversificato.

L'organizzazione e l'analisi delle interviste hanno integrato professionalità attinenti all'ambito pedagogico e urbanistico. La presenza di tali prospettive di lettura rappresenta a nostro giudizio un valore aggiunto all'interno del processo di analisi. I contenuti, che verranno descritti nel paragrafo successivo, sono stati organizzati, a partire dal basso, nelle seguenti macrocategorie inerenti attività di:

- Esplorazione del territorio attraverso le istituzioni e le professionalità che lo costituiscono;
- Esperienze di cura del territorio;
- Studio del patrimonio immateriale, delle tradizioni e della cultura popolare, finalizzato a processi di attaccamento al territorio;
- Conoscenza della polis attraverso i servizi ai cittadini;
- Scoperta del territorio quale ambiente di interazioni sociali;
- Utilizzo del territorio come estensione della scuola;
- Sostegno di attività di autonomia e personalizzazione.

Tali macrocategorie non coprono tutti i possibili campi di esplorazione del territorio ma si caratterizzano per una molteplicità di prospettive di indagine, che vanno dalle tradizioni all'attualità, passando per l'arte, i servizi e le relazioni, in definitiva configurandosi come opportunità di crescita nell'ottica della cittadinanza critica e attiva.

La polis e la scuola: percorsi di conoscenza immersiva

Durante le interviste le docenti sono state invitate a raccontare attraverso quali attività, e secondo quali modalità organizzative, i bambini erano

supportati ad “abitare educativamente il territorio”, ossia quali esperienze erano abitualmente organizzate dalla scuola o proposte dalle realtà territoriali. La prima modalità si può ascrivere a una logica esplorativa attraverso le istituzioni e le professionalità che costituiscono la polis. A tale proposito è possibile citare gli interventi di cui ci ha parlato L.B. da parte del Corpo della Guardia forestale, del WWF, dei Vigili del Fuoco, con cui sono stati organizzati incontri a scuola e visite alle sedi di tali enti. In questo modo gli edifici in cui le istituzioni cittadine risiedono prendono forma per i bambini, diventando elementi riconoscibili. Inoltre, le professioni acquisiscono significato in relazione alla loro ricaduta e ruolo sulla comunità.

La seconda macroarea raccoglie le esperienze di cura e presa in carico del territorio da parte dei bambini in un’ottica di cittadinanza attiva. Soprattutto a partire dall’ambiente nella sua componente naturale, che permea e circonda il territorio e le istituzioni. La scoperta della dimensione ecologica rappresenta in molte delle esperienze raccontate occasione per prendersi cura dell’ambiente e della cosa pubblica in generale. Ad esempio, T.G. racconta come i bambini della sua sezione si sono stupiti e mobilitati attraverso la “sottoscrizione” di un manifesto affinché il grande albero del giardino non venisse scarabocchiato dai compagni delle altre sezioni. In tale processo di riconoscimento e cura dell’elemento naturale in comune è possibile leggere l’acquisizione di competenze di cittadinanza attiva, e la volontà di individuare regole utili al benessere di tutti, aspetto quest’ultimo stupefacente data l’età dei bambini. Gli alberi sono inoltre fonte di ispirazione in altre tre esperienze, (riportate da A.C.; M.A.S. e R.R.) attraverso il coinvolgimento del Corpo Forestale dello Stato, del Comando unità forestale, ambientale e agroalimentare e di Legambiente per le pratiche di piantumazione degli alberi. Elementi del reale e immaginativi si fondono poi nella narrazione di C.G. che racconta come lo scoiattolo nero che vive nelle aree a parco della zona è divenuto lo «scoiattolo Nino, [...] il personaggio mediatore e che ci ha fatto scoprire il territorio».

Il terzo ambito è riconducibile ai processi di attaccamento al territorio attraverso l’esplorazione del patrimonio immateriale, la tradizione e la cultura popolare. L’identità e la specificità che rendono ciascun luogo unico vengono trasmessi ai bambini grazie al coinvolgimento di artigiani, artisti e famiglie. A.C. racconta ad esempio l’intervento di «un esperto trullaro» che ha introdotto i bambini in una tradizione antica e nelle peculiarità delle costruzioni che rendono riconoscibile il territorio e la cultura ad esso correlata.

In altri casi, come illustrato da C.G., è la vendemmia, per la quale sono stati coinvolti esperti e nonni, che ha permesso ai bambini di ripercorre alcune fasi del processo agricolo in modo immersivo, pure restando all’interno della scuola. Gli ulivi, la produzione di olio e le tradizioni culinarie, tutti elementi tipici del territorio della scuola in cui insegna P.F., sono oggetto delle attività

in classe, assieme alla trattazione delle origini romaniche della città, nel tentativo di «riportare anche la scuola a una apertura sul territorio, perché è un'istituzione, quindi se è mia, se la faccio mia proprio come insegnante, come genitore, allora diviene realmente nostra» richiamando i principi propri delle comunità educanti. Tale rapporto con il territorio non è ascrivibile solo a pratiche passate, ma anche a quelle più attuali dell'industria locale e delle fonti di riciclo e sostenibilità. L'insegnante L.B. nell'illustrare il contesto in cui la scuola è inserita fa riferimento a materiali di recupero delle aziende locali, e alla possibilità di approcciare in modo concreto le tematiche della sostenibilità ambientale.

La conoscenza della città attraverso i suoi servizi ai cittadini è poi un ulteriore ambito di aggregazione. Biblioteche, musei, gallerie d'arte sono solo alcuni degli esempi che sono stati citati nelle interviste svolte. In alcuni casi le attività vengono realizzate all'interno di iniziative e contesti squisitamente dedicate ai bambini, in altri sono aree e strutture destinate a un consumo più ampio. Al primo caso può essere ricondotta l'esperienza di T.G. in cui i bambini sperimentano la sezione 0-6 della biblioteca in una logica di continuità tra gli spazi scolastici e cittadini, al secondo la capacità dei docenti di intercettare le mostre temporanee o permanenti che possono integrare e supportare le proposte didattiche loro oggetto di interesse.

Il territorio diviene poi ambito di incontro e confronto e merita di essere conosciuto anche come ambiente di interazione sociale, funzionale allo sviluppo di competenze socio-relazionali.

La città, il territorio e i suoi servizi, le sue componenti antropiche e naturali rappresentano un luogo ricco, al cui interno i bambini possono muoversi con diversi livelli di autonomia e interagendo con coetanei o adulti attraverso modalità differenti. La scuola dell'infanzia può rappresentare un luogo in cui sperimentare tali relazioni all'interno di contesti ludici e pratiche di drammatizzazione.

Il territorio infine viene richiamato in diverse esperienze al fine di sopprimere a mancanze strutturali dei contesti scolastici soprattutto in relazione alle aree verdi, collocandosi in continuità spaziale con la scuola. In tale prospettiva sono state aggregate le risposte inserite sotto l'etichetta "utilizzo del territorio come estensione della scuola".

Le testimonianze raccolte e le esperienze effettuate ci conducono infine a individuare un'ultima categoria, riguardante gli spazi aperti quali cortili e giardini a cui le insegnanti riconoscono la potenzialità di "sostenere la conoscenza dei bambini attraverso percorsi personalizzati e autonomi". Negli spazi esterni è possibile valorizzare l'esplorazione autonoma e le potenzialità di ogni bambino in una logica di relazione personale tra conoscenza, crescita e territorio.

Conclusioni

I dati acquisiti danno conto di come la relazione continuativa tra scuola dell'infanzia e polis possa divenire spazio di incontro, collaborazione e cittadinanza attiva finalizzata al bene comune (Rossi-Doria, 2014) accogliendo progetti di continuità orizzontale e nutrendosi reciprocamente degli stessi principi di sviluppo, in un sistema di corrispondenze funzionali ai processi di transfert educativo e di crescita.

Nel corso degli ultimi decenni tale relazione tra scuola, territorio e forme di cittadinanza attiva è stata riconosciuta a livello strategico e internazionale come dimostrano ad esempio gli obiettivi 4 e 11 dell'Agenda 2030 e i traguardi definiti dall'ONU in cui vi sono specifici riferimenti all'infanzia e agli spazi pubblici. Anche nel quadro *Early Childhood Education and Care Initiatives* dall'Unione Europea viene individuata la partecipazione dei bambini alla vita politica e democratica come elemento importante per la crescita delle istituzioni comunitarie. Tutti questi sono obiettivi ambiziosi che non possono essere collocati solo nei percorsi scolastici, all'interno di realtà artificiali o rimandati alle istituzioni superiori.

La polis si pone dunque come chiave di volta autentica per nuove e crescenti opportunità educative a partire dalla scuola dell'infanzia.

La polis può infatti rappresentare per la scuola, lo spazio per la costruzione di un luogo di cura esterno a sé: «invece di portare all'interno di un edificio scolastico frammenti che riproducono la città, camminiamo col nostro passo lì fuori, tra le cose reali» (*Goodman, the grand piano*, 1942 in Pileri, Renzoni, Savoldi). Le esperienze raccolte ne danno testimonianza configurando future e possibili forme di implementazione.

Attraverso l'impegno costante delle reciproche istituzioni, che di fatto costituiscono la polis, emerge con forza che «la città è in sé stessa un ambiente educativo, e possiamo usarla come tale se impariamo a maneggiarla, controllarla o modificarla» (*Ward, the child in the city*, in Pileri, Renzoni, Savoldi, 2022), rispettandone l'evoluzione passata, le molteplici configurazioni sociali e culturali e impegnandoci in azioni di cura che ne garantiscono lo sviluppo futuro. Tutto questo a partire dall'infanzia.

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Beyond the classroom. Innovating learning environments in dialogue with the city

Gina Chianese & Barbara Bocchi¹

Abstract The paper presents some research data about the project *Wide-spread educational ecosystem: innovative and connective networks between schools and the city* aimed at defining an educational ecosystem between school and city. According to this idea public city spaces become “decentralised classrooms”, supporting social cohesion and intergenerational connections. This vision requires establishing a connective perspective between different stakeholders (schools, town planners, architects, universities, municipalities) in order to generate new learning landscapes.

Oltre la classe: innovare gli ambienti di apprendimento in dialogo con la città

Fare scuola fuori dalla scuola, oltre la scuola

Il concetto di ambiente di apprendimento si afferma nel contesto educativo all'interno del paradigma costruttivista per cui l'apprendimento costituisce il risultato di un'interazione tra il soggetto e l'ambiente e si caratterizza – indipendentemente dalla teoria di riferimento – per la sua natura situazionale e il costituirsi quale prodotto di una costruzione attiva da parte del soggetto attraverso forme di collaborazione e di negoziazione.

In tale scenario, la scuola è invitata a farsi contesto di apprendimento che si caratterizza «come laboratorio di esperienza, come comunità di discorso e come palestra di cittadinanza» (Mortari, 2007, p. 46). Scuola che per tutto il '900 – in un'ottica di ricerca e sperimentazione – ha supportato l'idea di un

¹ Il contributo è il frutto del lavoro congiunto fra le due autrici; tuttavia sono da attribuire a Gina Chianese i paragrafi *Fare scuola fuori dalla scuola, oltre la scuola* e *La città come dispositivo educativo*; mentre a Barbara Bocchi i paragrafi *La ricerca-azione per avviare la trasformazione* e *Ambienti di apprendimento oltre l'aula*.

“fare scuola fuori della scuola” sviluppando congiuntamente movimenti pedagogici innovativi e progettazione urbana.

Di qui la necessità per la scuola di travalicare limiti – fisici e non solo – e operare sinergicamente con il territorio e la comunità più ampia, ponendosi «non [come] un dispositivo concluso, ma una struttura diramata nel tessuto delle attività sociali» (De Carlo, 1972, p. 65).

In tale ampia visione l’ambiente di apprendimento si caratterizza come un *ecosistema di apprendimento* che non fa riferimento ad un contesto fisico in quanto il focus è spostato dall’istituzione all’organizzazione dell’apprendimento. In quest’ottica l’aula, comunque, non scompare, ma si caratterizza quale *home bases*: ossia punto di riferimento di partenza dal quale si avviano percorsi e diramazioni che portano verso l’esterno e viceversa, intrecciandosi, dialogando, trasformandosi reciprocamente anche da un punto di vista spaziale. A tal proposito è possibile leggere l’esperienza dell’architetto olandese Hertzberger che, in un parallelismo fra scuola e città, passa dal concetto di corridoi scolastici a *learning street* da quello di aula a *learning landscape* intendendo con tale termine un paesaggio mutevole, in continuo flusso, in grado di assorbire e adattarsi ai cambiamenti, di accogliere gli interessi più specifici ma anche quelli più mutevoli. Un luogo in cui è possibile sentirsi a proprio agio e allo stesso tempo appartenere a un insieme, a uno spazio aperto, a una rete di strade e piazze in cui tutto è volto a favorire contatti, confronti ed esperienze coniugando la dimensione individuale con quella collettiva (Hertzberger, 2008, pp. 37-38).

Diventa logico il volgersi verso attività e metodologie attive ed esperienziali, attività in contesto e in connessione con la comunità esterna e con il contesto urbano per dar vita a veri e propri ecosistemi diffusi di apprendimento in cui la scuola è chiamata ad avviare relazioni di reciprocità con l’esterno, ponendo termine a una visione di isola autosufficiente seppur inserita nel più fitto dei tessuti urbani (De Carlo, 1972).

Tali azioni osmotiche, di dialogo e di reciprocità possono portare quale effetto anche a una disaggregazione dell’edificio scolastico stesso verso la composizione di un vero e proprio *educational park*. Con tale termine si intende l’integrazione della scuola con il contesto urbano attraverso un’azione di riequilibrio nella diffusione e condivisione di spazi, soprattutto per le attività extrascolastiche (Wolff & Rinzler, 1970).

Ciò implica un coinvolgimento e una condivisione di un’idea di rigenerazione urbana vista in senso olistico e comunitario che coinvolge gli spazi circostanti, le questioni riguardanti la mobilità, la condivisione di spazi e strutture che diventano di comunità e non più ad uso esclusivo.

Tale idea inquadra la scuola non più soltanto come spazio fisico ma anche – e soprattutto – come fulcro di sviluppo sociale e di comunità, consentendo,

inoltre, di farsi ganglio attivo e proattivo di un Sistema Formativo Integrato (Frabboni, 2007) in cui l'azione dei diversi stakeholders intenzionalmente formativi sono virtuosamente integrati fra loro verso una comune e sostenibile idea di sviluppo umano.

La città come dispositivo educativo

Dal discorso esposto discende, di conseguenza, la necessità di riappropriarsi della città da un punto di vista pedagogico costruendo una comune cultura educativa degli spazi pubblici. Ciò si traduce, quindi, per un verso nel riconoscimento del valore educativo, sociale e civile dei luoghi pubblici; dall'altro nella progettazione di azioni intenzionali di s-confinamento dall'aula scolastica verso il territorio valorizzando le funzioni di incontro, scambio, sosta, gioco, comunicazione e sviluppo di comunità. In tale visione l'evoluzione della città e quella dei cittadini converge verso una sintonia di sviluppo avviando, inoltre, dei processi di creazione di nuove forme urbane di apprendimento (Geddes, 1970) che necessitano, quindi, di conciliare aspetti architettonici con quelli educativi oltre che didattici. Costruire o rigenerare in tal senso uno spazio scolastico non è un compito esclusivo di alcune discipline; piuttosto se «interpretato come spazio attivo di educazione è competenza dell'architettura, ma anche della pedagogia e della didattica. È dal confronto tra le discipline che si delinea un'idea di scuola sincronizzata all'evoluzione sociale» (Femia, 2020).

Si fa strada l'idea di spazio pubblico quale luogo di apprendimento diffuso, socialità e partecipazione, di educazione ai valori della condivisione sottesi ad un'idea di sviluppo in termini di partecipazione e di cittadinanza attiva.

Una strada, una piazza, un giardino ecc., costituiscono luoghi che portano insiti elementi e caratteri di conoscenza non immediatamente accessibili ma che se riletti in chiave progettuale possono trasformarsi in luoghi di crescita e di apprendimento. In tal modo non sono più spazi-uditori o da attraversare passivamente, ma piuttosto spazi attivi, di invito all'azione e all'interazione attraverso un pensiero e un'attività progettuale che li caratterizza in termini di apertura e accoglienza, di messa in rete con altri luoghi o sistemi, di (ri-)generazioni temporanee o permanenti.

La città, letta in chiave educativa, assume quindi le caratteristiche di una «piattaforma urbana di apprendimento connettivo» (Faiaferri, Bartocci & Pusceddu, 2017) fra diversi sistemi e intelligenze, incluse le tecnologie, per potenziare la funzione attiva e didattico-educativa della città.

Diventa quindi essenziale, nell'immaginare lo sviluppo della città e della cittadinanza inclusiva e sostenibile lo sviluppo di nuove forme di

collaborazione inter e transdisciplinari a partire da nuovi lessici condivisi in un processo a spirale aperta di apprendimento reciproco e trasformazione continua.

In tal senso le forme architettoniche mirano a restituire i valori e i fondamenti pedagogici ed educativi derivanti da questo dialogo e confronto assumendo, dunque, una visione olistica capace di prospettare delle visioni integrate e allo stesso tempo innovative in quanto strettamente legate a bisogni ed esigenze contestuali unite all'idea di uno sviluppo umano sostenibile negli stili di vita e nelle prefigurazioni future di cambiamento.

La ricerca-azione per avviare la trasformazione

La ricerca avviata nel settembre 2023 ha l'obiettivo di definire progettualità per elaborare ecosistemi educativi-connettivi fra scuola e città. Dato il carattere attivo e trasformativo del progetto è utilizzata la ricerca-azione come forma di ricerca sociale secondo il modello a spirale proposto da Kemmis e McTaggart (1986) che, a partire dall'idea di ricerca, prevede la ricognizione sul campo, definisce le fasi di attuazione, fino a giungere a una valutazione e revisione del piano generale e, dunque, sviluppo di ulteriori fasi. Il progetto prevede quattro fasi, nel dettaglio:

- Fase di Pianificazione, analisi e ricognizione.

In questa fase si va a creare un "soggetto collettivo" coinvolgendo i differenti stakeholders (docenti, dirigenti, rappresentanti dei comuni) nel processo di ricerca attraverso incontri sia in presenza sia online. Come gruppo ristretto di ricerca (dirigenti e loro referenti) si procede ad analizzare le progettazioni presentate nell'ambito del Piano Scuola 4.0 del PNRR e dei PON Edugreen, prestando particolare attenzione all'idea di ambiente di apprendimento espressa.

- Fase di esplorazione e Osservazione Critica.

La ricognizione sul campo coinvolge osservazioni dirette degli spazi interni ed esterni alla scuola per mappare e affinare la comprensione del contesto. L'osservazione del territorio adotta cinque elementi chiave: percorsi, margini, ambiti, nodi, riferimenti (Lynch, 1964) per avviare una ri-negoziazione di significati in prospettiva pedagogica e didattica. L'esplorazione diventa un'operazione critica, selettiva e interpretativa, preparando così il terreno a una rappresentazione dello "spazio del possibile". Immagini fotografiche, rilievi e mappe derivati dall'osservazione contribuiscono al confronto nei Focus Group con insegnanti, genitori, nonni e bambini per identificare mappe cognitive e affettive.

- Fase di analisi dei contenuti emergenti.

I contenuti emersi da mappe e Focus Group sono oggetto di un'analisi dei contenuti. Questo passaggio mira a comprendere l'“immaginario urbano” e il contesto ambientale attraverso criteri di appartenenza urbana, affettivi e legati ai ricordi.

- Fase di attuazione.

Sulla base degli indicatori emersi vengono elaborate proposte di microtrasformazioni urbane per definire spazi di apprendimento diffusi sul territorio e progettazioni innovative, con un focus particolare sulla didattica innovativa. Queste proposte sono successivamente supportate dall'azione dei Comuni per la loro concretizzazione.

- Fase di follow up.

Le progettazioni vengono monitorate in prospettiva longitudinale per consentire di rilevare quanto lo spazio ri-progettato abbia incoraggiato l'avvio di didattiche innovative all'interno della scuola.

Ambienti di apprendimento oltre l'aula

In questo contributo si riportano alcune riflessioni derivanti dal lavoro svolto nella fase di pianificazione, analisi e ricognizione attivate grazie ai primi contatti con le istituzioni scolastiche e l'analisi del concetto di idea di ambiente di apprendimento esplicitato nelle progettazioni relative al PNRR Scuola 4.0² e al PON Edugreen.

Sono stati, quindi, identificati i nodi delle progettazioni presentate facendo emergere attraverso l'analisi testuale quei passaggi che facevano diretto riferimento a cosa i progettisti/insegnanti intendessero per “ambienti di apprendimento”.

A partire da un primo stralcio che intende ambienti di apprendimento come un'aula che il docente può, finalmente, addobbare secondo la propria sensibilità educativa. È un'aula bella, colorata, curata, attrezzata con strumenti specifici per insegnare la materia. È un'aula che, finalmente, si arricchisce di tutti quegli strumenti che ogni docente è sempre stato costretto a trasferire in continuazione da casa a scuola, e da scuola a casa. È un'aula in cui possono nascere piccoli angoli attrezzati per i ragazzi con disturbi dell'apprendimento (4.0 PN02 12/2023)³.

² In dettaglio ha riguardato l'Azione 1- Next Generation class Ambienti di apprendimento innovativi Azione 2- Next Generation Labs-Laboratori per le professioni digitali del futuro.

³ Il codice alla fine degli stralci indica il documento dal quale è tratto ai fini dell'analisi testuale.

Questo primo stralcio ci permette di fare alcune considerazioni interessanti. Come riporta in un'ottica contestualista Pepper, contesto e soggetto non sono elementi separabili e il contesto «non è una parte aggiunta, come una morsa che tiene insieme un certo numero di blocchi» (Pepper, 1942, p. 238). Così anche per Piaget: «L'organismo e l'ambiente costituiscono un tutto indissociabile, ossia [...] bisogna far posto a modificazioni adattive che implicano sia una strutturazione propria dell'organismo, sia un'azione dell'ambiente, dacché i due termini sono inseparabili l'uno dall'altro» (Piaget, 1952, p. 18).

Il concetto di prospettiva ecologica dello sviluppo, come delineato da Bronfenbrenner (1979), evidenzia l'importanza del contesto come un sistema che influenza significativamente la qualità delle esperienze educative dei bambini. Questa visione sistemica si lega al concetto di curriculum implicito (Gariboldi, 2007), particolarmente rilevante nel contesto del primo ciclo scolastico, dove si manifesta attraverso la dimensione organizzativa. Quest'ultima include variabili come spazi, attori, regole e relazioni, elementi spesso sfuggenti alla consapevolezza e all'intenzionalità degli insegnanti. Tuttavia, questo aspetto organizzativo si rivela di notevole rilevanza educativa a livello formativo e didattico.

La stretta connessione tra la funzione scolastica e la forma architettonica emerge come un tema chiave in questa prospettiva. Tuttavia, si sottolinea che questa connessione spesso si sviluppa in modo unidirezionale, dove la forma determina la funzione. La determinazione anticipata della funzione sembra condurre a spazi che non possono adeguarsi in modo flessibile alle riflessioni sulla natura dell'apprendimento e alle sue evoluzioni, soprattutto in risposta ai cambiamenti sociali, demografici e alle nuove sfide educative.

Questo approccio consentirebbe di costruire spazi che si evolvono con il tempo e che sono in grado di adattarsi alle nuove sfide e alle trasformazioni della società.

In un altro stralcio si legge:

gli ambienti scolastici diventano spazi laboratoriali, ambienti di apprendimento dove è più facile che l'approccio divenga di tipo operativo, in cui le maggiori responsabilità pratiche (cura del materiale, del rispetto dei tempi, organizzazione del lavoro) favoriscono una migliore sedimentazione delle conoscenze apprese e maggiore quantità di competenze acquisite. L'aula si propone, quindi, come luogo di formazione, sviluppo e valorizzazione di competenze e potenzialità (4.0 PN02 12/2023).

Si introduce l'idea della mutua interazione tra lo sviluppo degli apprendimenti e i contesti di riferimento. La formazione della conoscenza diviene un processo intersoggettivo e la riflessione su di essa si avvale della reciproca interazione situata (Hacker, Dunlosky & Graesser, 1998). La cognizione situata si svolge in un tempo, spazio e luogo ben focalizzati, ma al contempo

riconosce la non prevedibilità di ciascun contesto, configurandosi quindi come adattiva: ciò che avviene in una relazione formativa non può essere standardizzato (Kirshner & Whitson, 1997; Clancey, 1997).

Le specifiche culture e i distinti domini del sapere interagiscono all'interno delle comunità di apprendimento con gli individui, costruendo sinergie inedite di volta in volta. La scuola, situata in uno specifico tempo, spazio e contesto culturale è il punto di sintesi tra una tradizione scolastica e le nuove prospettive di cambiamento futuro. Essa promuove l'interiorizzazione degli atti formativi, custodisce e trasmette un passaggio del testimone che definisce l'identità peculiare di ogni comunità di apprendimento. Il significato della scuola si ritrova nella sua corrispondenza con gli ambienti di appartenenza, che comprendono spazi aperti e chiusi, interni ed esterni, riflettendo la cifra costitutiva della storia e del presente della comunità stessa nel contesto locale. Le classi si aprono agli ambienti esterni, poiché l'apprendimento è situato tra un interno e un esterno in continua interazione. La relazione formativa non si limita più a considerare come l'ambiente scolastico possa influenzare gli studenti, ma si focalizza su una relazione evolutiva e interdipendente (Santojanni, 2017).

In un Istituto Comprensivo che ha adottato già dei cambiamenti rispetto agli spazi interni alla scuola, si sottolinea come ciò si riflette anche sull'intera comunità docente.

A seguito della trasformazione degli ambienti, secondo il modello delle aule tematiche e utilizzando gli ambienti polifunzionali, il nostro istituto si prefigge di cambiare modalità di insegnamento/apprendimento: dalla trasmissività si passa alla co-costruzione del sapere, all'apprendere facendo e cooperando con gli altri, in un ambiente immersivo ed emotivamente coinvolgente ed accogliente, in cui il docente ha prevalentemente il ruolo del regista e del facilitatore (4.0 PN07 12/2023).

Come riportato da Mura (2007), spazio e didattica sono una diade che non ci permette di scindere i problemi dell'uno da quelli dell'altra e i problemi sono tutti riconducibili alla concezione cui si ispirano gli edifici scolastici compresa l'organizzazione dello spazio e della didattica. L'edificio standardizzato e le aule-uditorio, funzionali all'esigenza di istruzione di massa del secolo scorso, richiamano l'immagine della stasi e della divisione: passività del discente, ripetitività dei contesti e delle modalità di apprendimento, divisione del sapere in discipline settoriali. Il mondo esterno alla scuola è invece caratterizzato da movimento, interconnessione e interdipendenza: l'esatto contrario quindi della stasi e della divisione.

L'ambiente di apprendimento nel momento in cui è pensato collegialmente e comunitariamente si rivela una grande opportunità, perché consente di osservare la scuola da un'altra prospettiva, facendo riferimento a un nuovo stile di vita per il quale è opportuno progettare nuove soluzioni in grado di mediare

l'aspetto maggiormente pratico e teorico in campo didattico (Gomez Paloma & Vanacore, 2020).

In tal modo è possibile passare

dal modello tradizionale a un modello che permette ai docenti di personalizzare lo spazio di lavoro, adeguandolo a una didattica più attiva e di tipo laboratoriale. La finalità che ci si prefigge di raggiungere è accrescere la motivazione, la socializzazione, l'apprendimento e aumentare il benessere di tutta la comunità scolastica (4.0 PN07 12/2023).

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The community-based digital archiving practice in a pedagogical perspective. Reflections for a more sustainable city

Maddalena Sottocorno

Abstract The task *Creation of a Digital Documentation Centre on Sustainability Practices*, planned in the Multilayered Urban Sustainability Action project (MUSA), aims to develop a digital platform to make visible a culture of sustainability in the geographical area around the University of Milano-Bicocca, in the city of Milan. The paper presents the theoretical premises for this study and its practical features, showing the pedagogical implications of this action.

L'archiviazione digitale *community-based* in una prospettiva pedagogica. Riflessioni per una città più sostenibile¹

Il progetto MUSA e la sfida della sostenibilità

Il lavoro di ricerca di seguito presentato si colloca all'interno del progetto MUSA (*Multilayered Urban Sustainability Action*), avente come capofila l'Università di Milano-Bicocca². L'area attorno all'ateneo diviene il contesto di interesse prevalente per il progetto, che ambisce a essere un laboratorio di sostenibilità urbana per tutta la città. A tal fine, si prevede la collaborazione tra diversi atenei milanesi, per promuovere iniziative su più fronti relativi alla sostenibilità ambientale, economica e sociale.

Il progetto è organizzato in sei aree, denominate *Spoke*. L'azione *Creation of a Digital Documentation Centre on Sustainability Practices* si colloca nello *Spoke 6 - MUSA Society* "Innovazione per società sostenibili e inclusive" e ha

¹ Contributo realizzato all'interno del progetto MUSA – Multilayered Urban Sustainability Action, finanziato dall'Unione Europea – NextGenerationEU, PNRR Missione 4 Componente 2 Linea di Investimento 1.5: Creazione e rafforzamento degli "ecosistemi dell'innovazione", costruzione di "leader territoriali di R&S".

² Si veda: <https://musascarl.it/> (ultima consultazione: 01/2024).

come obiettivo quello di realizzare una piattaforma digitale per rendere visibile e condividere la cultura della sostenibilità presente in questa area geografica (Berni *et al.*, 2023; Sottocorno, 2023)³. Il lavoro è portato avanti da un'équipe multidisciplinare⁴, che ha individuato come cornice di riferimento per definire la sostenibilità l'Agenda 2030 delle Nazioni Unite (United Nations General Assembly, 2015), che ne dà conto da una prospettiva integrata, dove gli aspetti ambientali, sociali ed economici sono tra loro interrelati. Accanto ad essa, un altro riferimento è il *Green Deal Europeo* (Commissione Europea, 2021), che rileva come i cambiamenti climatici e il degrado ambientale costituiscano una minaccia enorme per l'Europa e per il mondo. All'interno di esso si evidenzia come sia necessario predisporre delle azioni sinergiche volte a ridurre le emissioni nette di gas a effetto serra, a incentivare una crescita economica dissociata dall'uso delle risorse e a garantire l'inclusione delle persone vulnerabili.

Se l'Agenda 2030 e le politiche europee possono essere considerate degli strumenti utili per comprendere come affrontare la sfida della sostenibilità, esse vanno associate a un ripensamento critico delle strutture economiche, politiche, sociali e culturali che hanno determinato le attuali disuguaglianze globali. Si tratta di assumere un approccio di indagine sui fenomeni di tipo *ecologico*, che consente di osservare le esperienze nella loro complessità e attraverso uno sguardo che contempi la reciprocità delle dimensioni che le caratterizzano (Ferrante, Galimberti & Gambacorti-Passerini, 2022).

In questa cornice, il Centro di Documentazione Digitale sulle Pratiche di Sostenibilità intende rappresentare uno strumento per codificare e rendere accessibile la *cultura della sostenibilità* presente sul territorio interessato dal progetto, intesa come «una forma di capitale sociale che indica il grado di coesione civica, la natura dei rapporti di collaborazione istituzionale, l'ampiezza e la profondità dei legami di solidarietà [che si sviluppano tra gli attori di uno stesso contesto geografico]» (Malavasi, 2018, p. 12). A tal fine, si intende avvalersi del contributo di molteplici *stakeholder*: soggetti istituzionali (ricercatori, studiosi); esponenti del privato sociale; rappresentanti delle

³ L'azione *Creation of a Digital Documentation Centre on Sustainability Practices* si inserisce all'interno di un *Work Package* denominato *Cultural District*, di cui fanno parte anche l'azione *Creation of an Open-Air Lab for Culture Sustainability*, in stretta sinergia con quella nominata, per intenti e soggetti che vi lavorano e l'azione *Main Public Engagement Event: Festival GenerAzioni*, connessa ma realizzata da un gruppo di ricerca differente.

⁴ L'autrice di questo contributo lavora nel progetto come assegnista di ricerca. L'azione a cui si fa riferimento ha come referenti Franca Zuccoli e Nicoletta Ferri. Fanno parte del gruppo di lavoro anche Francesca Antonacci, Manuela Tassan e Giulia Schiavone. Monica Guerra ha un ruolo di coordinamento dell'azione stessa e dello Spoke 6 nel suo complesso. Le persone nominate e chi scrive afferiscono al Dipartimento di Scienze Umane per la Formazione "Riccardo Massa" dell'Università di Milano - Bicocca.

imprese. Il gruppo di ricerca, infatti, ritiene significativo far convergere in una piattaforma l'esito di un lavoro volto a comprendere se e come la sostenibilità, parallelamente ai documenti ufficiali in cui vi si fa riferimento, possa essere definita e praticata attraverso azioni specifiche, a seconda degli attori che le mettono in campo.

Un Centro di Documentazione Digitale sulle Pratiche di Sostenibilità

L'archiviazione digitale

Lo studio, dunque, prevede la realizzazione di un osservatorio digitale che documenti e renda accessibili le buone pratiche attivate da molteplici attori per rispondere alla sfida della sostenibilità da un punto di vista ambientale, economico e sociale. Scopo di questo strumento è quello di far emergere e mettere in rete queste esperienze significative, affinché siano ancora più efficaci.

Le pratiche da catalogare possono essere pensate come un *patrimonio culturale immateriale*, espressione che identifica «le prassi, le rappresentazioni, le espressioni, le conoscenze, il *know-how* – come pure gli strumenti, gli oggetti, i manufatti e gli spazi culturali associati agli stessi – che le comunità, i gruppi e in alcuni casi gli individui riconoscono in quanto parte del loro patrimonio culturale» (UNESCO, 2003, Articolo 2). Alqahtany e Aravindakshan (2022) sottolineano l'importanza di portare avanti dei processi di urbanizzazione tenendo conto della sostenibilità del patrimonio culturale, definendo delle politiche pubbliche orientate in tal senso. Intendendo le buone pratiche di sostenibilità come patrimonio culturale, appare coerente chiedersi da un lato se siano compatibili con le dinamiche di urbanizzazione all'interno delle quali si inseriscono, dall'altro se le pratiche stesse contribuiscano a modificare i processi di urbanizzazione in cui si sviluppano. Se l'intero progetto MUSA, dunque, ambisce a migliorare la vivibilità della città di Milano, l'azione qui descritta intende comprendere l'apporto che in tal senso possono dare i professionisti della conoscenza, coloro che lavorano sul territorio per la coesione sociale e la diffusione di cultura o che fanno impresa.

La progettazione della piattaforma è supportata da un lavoro di indagine della letteratura che intende rispondere a un quesito prevalente: *Che cosa significa costruire un archivio digitale? Quali caratteristiche dovrebbe avere e in che modo la letteratura di riferimento sul tema può essere utile per immaginare un centro di documentazione digitale inerente le buone pratiche di sostenibilità nel territorio dell'Università di Milano-Bicocca?* È stato dunque

esplorato l'ambito delle *digital humanities* (DH), per comprendere come allargare le possibilità dell'archiviazione tradizionale avvalendosi delle opportunità connesse con il Web 2.0.

In generale, parlando di archivi digitali, si fa riferimento a differenti centri di raccolta, a seconda dei materiali in essi presenti (Sugimoto, 2016). Esistono archivi digitali di *dominio culturale*, con un'enfasi su aspetti diversi: le tecnologie informatiche e comunicative utilizzate per realizzarli; le collezioni catalogate; l'interazione con l'utilizzatore. Vi sono poi archivi digitali di *dominio non culturale*, che contengono dei materiali non convenzionali, relativi alla cultura pop o agli effetti di disastri naturali, di cui viene dato conto con strumenti amatoriali. Un aspetto che permette di espandere le potenzialità delle raccolte tradizionali riguarda la dinamicità dei supporti informatizzati (Varela, 2016), che consentono di modificare i materiali in essi contenuti, che possono variare grazie agli sviluppatori (*external dynamism*) o grazie agli utilizzatori (*internal dynamism*). Infine, nella letteratura si rileva come gli archivi digitali, analogamente a quelli tradizionali, pongano questioni critiche, che riguardano i costi, gli aspetti legali, la possibilità di essere mantenuti nel lungo periodo, l'effettiva utilizzabilità degli stessi, il livello di interazione con gli utilizzatori (Sugimoto, 2016).

L'archiviazione digitale come attivazione di una comunità culturale

Se l'educazione, come altre sfere dell'esistenza, è impegnata nell'orientare una possibile *svolta ecologica*, nel senso che è chiamata a dare il proprio contributo «nel promuovere progetti, attività, conoscenze, competenze, stili di vita improntati a una visione del mondo e a dei comportamenti ecosostenibili» (Ferrante, 2022, p. 15), è bene domandarsi quale possa essere il valore formativo e pedagogico di un progetto che intende raccogliere, conservare e rendere accessibili delle buone prassi di sostenibilità attraverso una piattaforma digitale.

Un riferimento in tal senso, si rileva nell'approccio *community-based* all'archiviazione digitale (Ridolfo, Hart-Davidson & McLeod, 2011; Cantillon, Baker e Buttigieg, 2017; O'Quinn, 2022), che interpreta la costruzione di un database come un'attività che coinvolge un gruppo di persone che si riconoscono in una cultura comune e che vengono guidate nel racconto e nella codifica della stessa e nel suo divenire un oggetto materialmente accessibile, attraverso la digitalizzazione di immagini, racconti, oggetti... Questo modello di ricerca si concretizza in alcune azioni peculiari (O'Quinn, 2022):

- Raccolta dei materiali da archiviare attraverso interviste individuali, focus group, brainstorming, momenti di immersione nella comunità di riferimento da parte del ricercatore.
- Catalogazione del materiale e codifica dei metadati con la comunità di riferimento. Questa azione implica la possibilità di presidiare la *sovranità del dato*, ovvero di mantenere la corrispondenza tra il dato stesso, il pensiero e gli intenti della comunità.
- Costruzione progressiva dell'interfaccia digitale, in modo tale che essa corrisponda alle esigenze e alle aspettative dei partecipanti (*iterative design*).
- Dialogo con il gruppo di riferimento rispetto alla sostenibilità dell'archivio, ovvero al suo mantenimento nel lungo periodo.

Tali azioni, che implicano che gli studiosi di *digital humanities* siano in contatto costante con la comunità di riferimento e attraverso il dialogo con essa identifichino ciò che risulta significativo per la costruzione di un archivio, rimandano al modello partecipativo di indagine in campo educativo, in cui «ai ricercatori è richiesto di ripensare la direzione di senso della ricerca empirica: da ricerca “sulla” pratica diventa ricerca “nella” pratica e a questo scopo [chiede agli studiosi di porsi] nella qualità di facilitatori di processi euristici e di riflessione sull'esperienza» (Mortari, 2013, p. 138).

Poste queste premesse, le ricercatrici hanno iniziato a mettere in campo delle azioni per rappresentare la cultura della sostenibilità del quartiere attorno all'Università di Milano-Bicocca, che verranno progressivamente trasposte in materiali fruibili all'interno del Centro di Documentazione Digitale, che assumerà la forma di un sito web. Per veicolare un processo di riflessione sull'agire, il gruppo di lavoro intende raccogliere attraverso degli strumenti di ricerca di tipo quantitativo e qualitativo le buone pratiche di sostenibilità che gli attori del territorio mettono in campo⁵. Si stanno realizzando, inoltre, dei materiali originali di tipo digitale, che danno conto dei molteplici modi in cui la sostenibilità può essere studiata e incentivata⁶. Per agevolare un dialogo costante con la comunità territoriale, invece, vengono periodicamente realizzati degli eventi, rivolti alla comunità accademica e alla cittadinanza.

Al fine di rendere trasferibile e comunicabile la conoscenza sviluppata attraverso la piattaforma, si prevede di depositare in essa dei contenuti di tipo scientifico e divulgativo, con l'intento di raggiungere un pubblico variegato (ricercatori, organizzazioni, cittadini...). Per favorire la partecipazione di tutti

⁵ Quale strumento per una prima raccolta delle buone pratiche di sostenibilità è stato predisposto un questionario da sottoporre agli enti profit e no profit del territorio, individuati attraverso un lavoro preliminare di mappatura. Successivamente, si prevede di condurre delle interviste in profondità da realizzare con i soggetti ritenuti più significativi.

⁶ Si veda il podcast *Sustainability and the city* realizzato da questo gruppo di lavoro: <https://www.spreaker.com/show/sustainability-and-the-city> (ultima consultazione: 01/2024).

gli *stakeholder*, valorizzando un approccio partecipativo alla costruzione dei metadati, l'archivio sarà presidiato dalle ricercatrici, ma allo stesso tempo avrà una sua dinamicità e permetterà l'inserimento di contenuti da parte degli utilizzatori⁷.

La città che apprende e la sfida della complessità

L'azione di costruzione di un archivio digitale secondo le caratteristiche fin qui delineate può essere inquadrata in una visione di città intesa come *polis*, ovvero un contesto in cui sia possibile sostenere un processo di apprendimento collaborativo, che si realizza in diversi contesti (scuole, università, imprese, associazioni, enti culturali), attraverso il supporto di attori molteplici (soggetti istituzionali, operatori sociali e culturali, imprenditori) (Balázs, 2019). La città è pensata nella sua complessità, come un organismo che apprende. La ricerca, quindi, diviene un'occasione di riflessione e uno stimolo al cambiamento all'interno della stessa:

l'indagine è strettamente legata alla realizzazione di obiettivi progettuali e di trasformazione del contesto territoriale di riferimento nella direzione di rendere lo spazio pubblico [dell'area geografica su cui sorge l'Università di Milano-Bicocca] un luogo di partecipazione sociale e di costruzione continua di conoscenza sui temi della sostenibilità ambientale, economica e sociale. In tal senso, essa può contribuire a realizzare un *apprendimento trasformativo* per le organizzazioni, i cittadini e i ricercatori coinvolti, collocandosi nella prospettiva più ampia delle *learning cities* (Berni *et al.*, 2023, p. 162).

La piattaforma, dunque, potrà diventare uno strumento con il quale democratizzare il processo di conoscenza (Dewey, 2004), poiché intende raggiungere non solo esperti in ambito scientifico e tecnologico, ma più in generale tutta la cittadinanza. Avvalendosi delle potenzialità connesse con la moltiplicazione degli ambiti di apprendimento (Ferro Allodola, 2021), essa potrebbe rappresentare un riferimento per valorizzare le buone pratiche di sostenibilità del territorio e promuovere delle azioni utili a costruire una città più giusta sotto molteplici aspetti, consolidando una comunità di pratica che agisca in questa direzione (Wenger, 2006). Si auspica, inoltre, che il Centro di

⁷ Ridolfo, Hart-Davidson e McLeod (2011) hanno elaborato un modello di lavoro chiamato *Sustainable Ecological Archive Approach to Metadata* (SEAAM), enfatizzando il ruolo degli utilizzatori nella costruzione di un archivio: «La nostra filosofia si basa sull'idea che l'ecologia di un archivio digitale sano (*ecology of a healthy digital archive*) richieda un impegno costante da parte del maggior numero possibile di parti interessate e che idealmente la capacità di far crescere i metadati per gli archivi digitali sia più nelle mani delle comunità di *stakeholder* e meno nelle mani dei designer e degli archivisti» (p. 8).

Documentazione Digitale possa garantire l'accesso a un *vocabolario fondato su premesse di pensiero ecologiche* «che possano rivelarsi significative nell'ambito educativo per dar vita a ricerche, esperienze, contesti inclusivi e sostenibili in un mondo in rapida trasformazione che ci interroga profondamente su chi siamo e soprattutto su chi e che cosa desideriamo e possiamo diventare» (Ferrante, 2022, p. 23).

Lo studio, dunque, intende offrire un'occasione ai soggetti coinvolti per definire le proprie pratiche alla luce di una visione multidimensionale e critica della sostenibilità, cercando di comprendere come esse si concilino o si trovino in contrasto con le direzioni di crescita del territorio della città di Milano, individuando nella piattaforma un'occasione per identificare un patrimonio culturale immateriale, frutto di esperienze consolidate, ma anche un'opportunità per riconoscersi in una comunità culturale di riferimento e uno strumento di comunicazione all'interno di essa.

Per quanto riguarda le direzioni ulteriori che tale studio potrebbe delineare, si individua la possibilità che le premesse che lo sostengono siano utilizzate per dare conto delle buone pratiche di sostenibilità in altri contesti istituzionali, quali servizi educativi e scuole, per capire come il lavoro dei professionisti possa essere orientato ad una sostenibilità in termini multidimensionali e critici. Chi educa, infatti, dovrebbe comprendere la propria responsabilità pedagogica all'interno del *paradigma della sostenibilità* (Loiodice, 2018), al fine di garantire un futuro equo alle future generazioni. Ciò significa primariamente problematizzare radicalmente le questioni

che generano la complessità della fenomenologia educativa; una problematizzazione che spinga chi è quotidianamente impegnato nel mondo della pratica ad evitare la facile tendenza ad applicare procedure operative standardizzate rispetto ad una realtà che risulta incompressibile dentro i confini disegnati da dispositivi ermeneutici precodificati, per cercare, invece, una comprensione quanto più possibile larga e profonda del fenomeno educativo (Mortari, 2018, pp. 17-18).

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The Arts

Cinema as research. From Monte Olimpino to the cinema of children and “madmen”

Nazario Zambaldi & Andrea Piccardo

Abstract The text builds on a collaboration with Andrea Piccardo that came about for the exhibition in Bolzano dedicated to Bruno Munari (www.munari-movimento.com). In the exhibition in particular, a section was dedicated to the Research Cinema of the Monte Olimpino’s workshop produced by Bruno Munari with Marcello Piccardo and his sons, including Andrea. The collaboration continues at school, at the Pascoli High School in Bolzano, with students and for PEA with an exhibition dedicated to the experience. Andrea Piccardo with Nazario Zambaldi at the conference initiates the dialogue that continues here starting with the Monte Olimpino workshop.

Cinema come ricerca. Da Monte Olimpino al cinema di bambini e “matti”

Introduzione

La breve premessa intende dichiarare l’intento di questo scritto, che è anche raccontare e valorizzare un’esperienza, sottolineandone la rilevanza estetica e pedagogica, ma è soprattutto quello di focalizzare come questa azione creativa, produttiva sia al tempo stesso pedagogica e artistica, in una direzione simile a quella indicata in un recente articolo per Bruno Munari (Zambaldi, 2022b). In quell’occasione si era ipotizzato un Munari “sistemico”, intendendo con questo aggettivo proporre una lettura particolare dell’irriducibilità “esclusiva” di Munari all’arte, alla pedagogia, alla ricerca, in un’ecologia che collega questi e altri aspetti dell’agire creativo, poetico, al vivente. Lo stesso ci pare valere per il lavoro che qui si testimonia, nato insieme allo stesso Munari ma che in seguito si distingue nel senso e nel metodo (Piccardo, 1992). Oltre che nell’impossibilità di essere ridotti a etichette, questi percorsi sono per noi accomunati dal fatto di presentarsi come una sintesi evidente di arte, ricerca, apprendimento. Detto con una formula orientale, il lavoro di gruppo

attraverso il cinema diviene una *via come metodo*, in cui scienza e vita si intrecciano nella pratica, una via con un cuore, una via rivolta alla conoscenza spirituale e alla realizzazione di sé (Capra, 1982). Nella stessa prospettiva possiamo citare Arnheim, per il quale la collaborazione tra il percepire e il pensare, nella cognizione, risulterebbe incomprensibile se quella separazione esistesse, ovvero, riferendosi al Tao e alla legge del Tutto scrive:

Il carradore, il carpentiere, il macellaio, l'arciere, il nuotatore, attingono la propria abilità non accumulando fatti concernenti la propria arte, né mediante l'energico allenamento sia dei muscoli sia dei sensi esterni, ma attraverso l'utilizzazione della parentela fondamentale che, al di sotto delle distinzioni e delle diversità apparenti, unifica la loro Materia Primaria con la Materia Primaria del mezzo attraverso il quale essi operano. (Arnheim, 1974, p. 7)

Secondo Arnheim – la cui prima opera è dedicata significativamente al cinema (Arnheim, 1932) –

seppure i greci abbiano infine diviso percezione e ragionamento, affinando le tecniche di quest'ultimo, la visione diretta resta la fonte prima e finale della saggezza: anche per Aristotele l'anima non pensa mai senza un'immagine (Arnheim, 1974, p. 17).

Il cinema come ricerca: il laboratorio di Monte Olimpino

Procediamo quindi, come per il lavoro “scientifico” di Munari, nella lettura di questa esperienza con e attraverso il cinema come “art-based research”. Lo Studio di Monte Olimpino, laboratorio di cinema di ricerca, nasce nel 1962, nella località omonima, vicino a Como, per iniziativa di Bruno Munari e Marcello Piccardo. «Sulla collina di Monte Olimpino, negli anni fra il 1962 e il 1972, con Bruno Munari e i miei cinque figli, ci siamo reinventato il cinema (come produrre realizzare e distribuire un film), e finalmente abbiamo scoperto il cinema fatto dai bambini» (Piccardo, 1992, p. 7). Per circa dieci anni lo Studio di Monte Olimpino, in seguito ampliato in Cineteca, infine Cooperativa di Monte Olimpino, rappresenta un luogo distintivo della ricerca cinematografica in Italia. In questo periodo lo Studio produce e realizza una cinquantina di film - quasi tutti assai brevi, più un lungometraggio conclusivo – suddivisibili in due gruppi diversi: film di ricerca e film di informazione pubblicitaria.

Come Andrea Piccardo racconta, il primo film dello studio è un «documentario» (Piccardo, 2012, p. 87), con anticipazioni di quell'atteggiamento di ricerca che emergerà gradatamente: *Arte programmata*, sulle opere d'arte cinetica esposte nella sede di Olivetti in galleria a Milano. Il periodo che segue

è molto fertile, determinato da una intuizione che crea un innovativo rapporto con il cinema, non più solo veicolo di spettacolo e di divulgazione, ma strumento di ricerca, capace di fornire informazioni inaspettate sia sull'oggetto profilmico, sia sul mezzo stesso. Cinema di ricerca e cinema di informazione pubblicitaria si incrociano continuamente nella storia dello Studio e la distinzione, che certamente è possibile in relazione alla committenza o al soggetto, lo è assai meno se si considerano i contenuti espressi in ciascun film. Sono film unici quelli che escono dallo Studio, ognuno con una storia e un risultato di immagini assolutamente particolari, ognuno con un lavoro di produzione, di realizzazione e di distribuzione che il gruppo attua con percorsi e risultati sempre diversi. Sono film da vedere. Anche quelli di informazione pubblicitaria, che divengono, negli anni, "cult" (Giusti, 1992). I lavori prodotti e realizzati dallo Studio costituiscono ancora oggi un riferimento significativo nella storia della ricerca cinematografica italiana e internazionale. I film di ricerca prodotti dallo Studio (reperibili insieme ad alcuni testi qui utilizzati sul sito curato da Andrea Piccardo www.monteolimpino.it) sono: *Arte programmata* (1962); *I colori della luce* (1963); *Tempo nel tempo* (1964); *Moirè* (1964); *Inox* (1964); *Sulle scale mobili* (1964); *Scacco matto* (1965); *Il mimo e l'oggetto* (1966); *Omega ricerca N° 2* (1966); *Upim ricerca N° 1* (1967); *I fratelli Castiglioni* (1967); *Fiat ricerca N° 1* (1968-69); *After effects* (1969); *Lungometraggio M.O.* (1971).

La metodologia di ricerca del cinema dello *Studio di Monte Olimpino* va contestualizzata a partire dall'incontro tra Bruno Munari e Marcello Piccardo che si conoscono subito dopo la guerra. Già nel primo periodo a Monte Olimpino, dove Marcello con suo fratello Osvaldo e le mogli lavoravano al cinema di animazione e ad altri progetti creativi, si raccolgono attorno a loro giovani collaboratori in una sorta di comune lavorativa, Munari era spesso ospite, come altri artisti e intellettuali della scena milanese degli anni Sessanta.

Lo Studio di Monte Olimpino lo hanno pensato e avviato nei primi anni 60 e per una decina d'anni hanno elaborato, via via facendolo, quello che loro stessi hanno definito "cinema di ricerca". Possiamo parlare di una metodologia del cinema di ricerca, ma in effetti contraddicendoci fin da subito perché in realtà ne sono esistite tante quante sono stati i film realizzati. (Piccardo, 2012, p. 87)

Infatti, ogni film è una ricerca originale, senza pre-giudizi o pre-intenzioni espressive: si trattava ogni volta di mettere in relazione le caratteristiche dell'oggetto del film (forma, contenuto, sostanza, materia, carattere umano o sociale) e quelle del mezzo cinema (dell'intero processo produzione-realizzazione-distribuzione) traducendole nella somma di immagini in movimento che scaturivano dalla sintesi imprevedibile delle due dimensioni: «Era un cinema

non campato soltanto nell'aria dell'immaginazione, ma attaccato anche a fatti di terra» (Piccardo, 1992, p. 30) ovvero un cinema agile, capace di andare di qua e di là ma di stare anche lì, aperto alla nostra curiosità dal primo all'ultimo gesto e anche in là, dove il lavoro non era su nomi di fasi chiuse, ma su operazioni da inventare facendole lì per lì. Veniva naturale chiamarlo cinema di ricerca. (Piccardo, 1992, p. 31)

Andrea Piccardo sottolinea come ad esempio la peculiarità della ricerca emergesse nel secondo dei film *Colori della luce* «dove la ricerca di come usare al meglio il mezzo fa un piccolo passo ulteriore aggiungendo il movimento ai “vetrini” di Munari, le diapositive composte da materie di ogni genere per le proiezioni a grandissimo schermo» (Piccardo, 2012, p. 88), dove appunto la variazione cromatica delle proiezioni di diapositive a seconda della luce – attraverso l'interposizione di filtri polaroid che, ruotati reciprocamente, scombinavano e ricombinavano colori, percezioni e sensazioni - può essere recepita dalle immagini in sequenza montate nel film. Come sottolinea Andrea Piccardo

si genera l'atteggiamento di liberazione della voglia di “vedere” senza schemi: prove e riprove, tentativi e aggiustamenti sono regolati esclusivamente dal divenire lì per lì delle variazioni che causano i movimenti di rotazione effettuati a mano libera con tutte le loro conseguenze legate a fattori come la velocità, la lentezza, l'improvviso, l'alternato, lo scatto e via via a scoprire nuovi possibili effetti sotto l'occhio attento della cinepresa. (ibidem, p. 88)

Nessuna “scaletta”, nessuna “sceneggiatura” a priori. «I film di ricerca li fa l'autore del montaggio, dando definizione ultima a tutto il lavoro precedente, concentrando nei minuti di ciascun film le sue intime volontà» (ibidem, p. 89).

Come riferimento ulteriore alla ricerca attraverso il cinema possiamo riportare «l'ultimo film fatto e l'ultimo gesto di autentica ricerca che autori di cinema possano pensare: che lo spettatore si faccia da sé il suo film» (ibidem, p. 88). Infatti, in *After Effects*

la proiezione di puri impulsi visivi colorati, figure geometriche dai forti colori su fondo nero, genera una persistenza retinica che si manifesta evidente nel cervello di ognuno al momento della sparizione dell'impulso sulla scena generando la stessa figura geometrica, immaginaria, ma nel rispettivo colore complementare, per una durata dipendente dalle personali condizioni di ogni individuo spettatore. (ibidem, p. 89)

Il cinema fatto da bambine e bambini

Il cinema fatto dai bambini comincia il giorno che la maestra, o il maestro, in classe domanda ai bambini se vogliono fare un film. “Bambini, volete fare un film?” (che vuol dire: siete d’accordo che facciamo proprio noi insieme, nel tempo di scuola, un film? siete d’accordo che lavoriamo insieme a fare cinema?). I bambini in prima elementare capiscono presto cos’è “fare un film”, e quando rispondono “sì” si sono già intesi tra loro quanto basta (e basta poco) per rispondere allegramente. (Piccardo, 1974, p. 17).

Questo è l’incipit del libro di Marcello Piccardo *Il cinema fatto dai bambini* la storia del cinema di ricerca a scuola (cfr. Piccardo, 2015a). Lo studio di Monte Olimpino nasce nel 1962 e chiude nel 1970, il “cinema bambini” nasce nel 1966 e continua per tutto il tempo che Marcello, oltre a Andrea e Elvira Vincelli a Pisa, continuano a dedicargli.

Tutto nasce, nel 1966, dalla disponibilità mentale che Marcello Piccardo e Bruno Munari hanno acquisito nel realizzare cinema di ricerca e che consente loro di rispondere positivamente a una domanda di una insegnante di una scuola speciale che il loro amico direttore didattico Giovanni Belgrano aveva portato da loro: possono dei bambini a scuola fare un film? La risposta confortante di uomini di cinema – perché no? – le consentono di lanciare ai suoi bambini la faticosa domanda: “bambini, volete fare un film? (Piccardo 2015a, p. 158)

Sul valore “rivoluzionario” di questa iniziativa (Munari la definiva una *rivoluzione nascosta*, ricorda Andrea Piccardo) sia nell’aspetto didattico-pedagogico che in quello linguistico-strutturale del mezzo cinema, leggiamo le parole di Marcello: «L’esperienza di dieci anni di cinema di ricerca ci basta a capire che il cinema fatto dai bambini è *un’altra cosa* [... ovvero] noi grandi non ne siamo capaci, se non attraverso i bambini, facendo del nostro meglio perché loro lo facciano» (Piccardo 1974, p. 113-114).

La “grande meraviglia” nasce con la proiezione del cortometraggio *La chitarra* fatto da bambine e bambini «speciali» che «fanno cose speciali» (ibidem, p. 114) con un capovolgimento che prosegue tanto nel rapporto tra bambini e adulti nell’authorialità che con la supposta normalità di bambini autori con disabilità. «Un ribaltamento concettuale non solo sul cinema, una demitizzazione del suo presunto elitarismo, ma soprattutto sulla scuola, i suoi modelli e metodi di insegnamento» (Piccardo, 2015a, p. 158).

Come Andrea Piccardo ricorda una distinzione è maturata dopo l’esperienza del cinema di ricerca con i bambini: sul piano pratico, la divergenza si era concretizzata nel fatto che Marcello voleva mantenere la spontaneità della domanda ai bambini se volevano fare un film, mentre Munari e Belgrano

proponevano di indirizzare le classi disponibili su contenuti suggeriti (un personaggio, un oggetto, un luogo, un animale...) cosa che Marcello considerava un potenziale condizionamento alle volontà dell'idea del film - ovvero della fase iniziale della ricerca – che sarebbe invece dovuta scaturire dall'insieme dei bambini (Piccardo, p. 194), primo passo importante per raggiungere una coesione necessaria allo sviluppo complessivo delle fasi di lavoro successive. Infatti, come Marcello racconta a proposito delle prime produzioni di cui si è scritto sopra che coinvolgevano insieme al figlio Andrea bambine e bambini anche con disabilità (Piccardo, 1992, p. 165)

il primo punto di divergenza è nato subito dopo *La chitarra* quando Munari e Belgrano puntavano sulla scienza dei grandi mentre Piccardo si concentrava sul movimento dei bambini, ovvero si trattava di riprodurre il momento *anche casuale* in cui l'insegnante domanda ai bambini: Volete fare un film? e moltiplicarlo. Munari e Belgrano non erano d'accordo, c'erano questioni da trattare di pedagogia didattica psicologia sociologia e teoria dell'informazione... [per Marcello Piccardo] il punto più scientifico da trattare era quel: *anche casuale*. (Piccardo, 2012, p. 166)

Il secondo punto di divergenza era il riferimento a Piaget come imprescindibile: alcuni viaggi di Piccardo, Munari e Belgrano a Ginevra furono seguiti dalla visita a Monte Olimpino di un gruppo di assistenti di Piaget. Seguì la produzione e la distribuzione da parte di Marcello di «film d'autori bambini» (ibidem, p. 167) narrata nel volume *Il cinema fatto dai bambini* (Piccardo, 1974). Andrea Piccardo commentando l'esperienza riferisce: «Quello che abbiamo imparato dal nostro lavorare il cinema nello Studio di Monte Olimpino detto in estrema sintesi, è che il linguaggio cinematografico non richiede apprendimento» (Piccardo, 2015a, p. 155).

A proposito di questo approccio che potrebbe apparire naive, basti pensare – rimandando eventuali approfondimenti – a Rossellini che scoprì come il cinema sia una forma del mondo, un modo di essere che è già nelle cose (Rossellini, 1997; 2017) o alla prospettiva «fenomenologica» di Pasolini per cui il cinema sarebbe il linguaggio della realtà (Pasolini, 1972). Secondo Marcello

per usare un linguaggio iconico è necessario un processo di apprendimento, per usare il linguaggio cinematografico questo processo non risulta affatto necessario: e ciò spiegherebbe il fatto che bambini di sei anni o bambini cosiddetti “subnormali” abbiano potuto realizzare messaggi cinematografici senza che nessuno gli insegnasse come si fa cinema. (Vincelli, 1975, p. 22)

Come riporta Andrea Piccardo

è evidente che tramite l'apporto della tecnologia si è creato un tipo di linguaggio di ordine totalmente diverso dal tipo di linguaggio adoperato massimamente dagli uomini, quello verbale. Mentre quest'ultimo comunica attraverso segni che indicano una assenza di ciò che denotano, il linguaggio cinematografico comunica attraverso una presenza dei fenomeni che denota, nelle loro dimensioni audiovisive (ibidem, p. 22; Piccardo, 2015a, p. 156).

Il cinema fatto dai “matti”: l'incontro con Basaglia

Abbiamo visto come l'azione su questo confine che attraversa linguaggi e istituzioni sia inclusiva anche nel coinvolgimento di bambine e bambini con disabilità evidenziando come

le implicazioni psicologiche nell'attività cinematografica dei bambini sono numerosissime: nella ricerca si attua un decentramento percettivo del soggetto nei confronti dell'oggetto, il processo percettivo si sviluppa nella continua presa di coscienza - attraverso le diverse esperienze visive e di movimento con gli oggetti - dei suoi momenti costitutivi, il linguaggio tende ad identificarsi con le realtà da esprimere, vi è in definitiva una organizzazione migliore e più ricca dello sviluppo mentale dei bambini. Il metodo messo in atto nelle scuole speciali ha dato dei risultati di grande interesse proprio in ordine allo sviluppo mentale e psichico. (Belgrano, 1968, p. 47)

Andrea Piccardo narra il seguito di questo cammino sul confine, nel 1973, a Trieste, con Franco Basaglia. A proposito del particolare rapporto contraddittorio con la “realtà”, Basaglia scrive il breve saggio *L'utopia della realtà* come risposta all'invito che lo psichiatra svizzero Christian Müller aveva inviato nel 1972 a lui e ad alcuni altri psichiatri che a suo giudizio tentavano strade nuove. Disegnate - aveva chiesto Müller - il servizio psichiatrico che voi ritenete ideale per una ipotetica città di centomila abitanti di un paese europeo o americano. A questa proposta Basaglia aveva risposto che non gli interessava affatto costruire un'utopia astratta, che sarebbe stata solo il riflesso dell'ideologia dominante o della sua personale ideologia. Gli interessava invece capire e sperimentare quali spazi, quali possibilità di utopia fossero realizzabili nella situazione concreta in cui lavorava, a partire dalle particolari risorse e vincoli di quel contesto, inclusi egli stesso e le persone con cui si trovava a operare. Un servizio psichiatrico che contenesse un elemento utopico poteva essere solo quello nel quale il tecnico aveva la possibilità di vivere praticamente la contraddizione tra il suo ruolo di potere e il suo sapere (Basaglia, 2005). Il Laboratorio P a Trieste sede dell'esperienza teatrale raccontata

da Giuliano Scabia (Scabia, 2018) - che è stato ospite in anni più recenti a Merano per il progetto *Casa Basaglia* diretto da Nazario Zambaldi (Zambaldi, 2022b) – accolse a Trieste nel 1973 un gruppo di lavoro ricordato da Andrea Piccardo (Piccardo, 2015a, pp. 167-169) con la produzione di nove film individuali nei tre mesi di permanenza, pur nelle difficoltà «tutti cinema puro» (ibidem p. 168).

Conclusioni: cinema ricerca come ricerca pedagogica

Dagli appunti raccolti pare emergere una inconciliabilità tra vita e forma, comunità e istituzione, pratica e teoria, ma la ricerca come qui viene intesa trova nella pedagogia e nelle arti la sintesi in divenire, in movimento, in azione, come in un film o nella vita, anche se dovessimo chiamare questa ricerca, piuttosto che anti-pedagogia – dati anche gli equivoci sulla cosiddetta antipsichiatria – non-pedagogia, come la non-scuola già ospite della piccola rassegna CRAterE a cura di Nazario Zambaldi a Bolzano, che è il progetto a scuola del Teatro delle Albe (Martinelli & Montanari, 2001). Basaglia, come scritto sopra, pone al centro la contraddittorietà necessaria con l’alterità, come in Piccardo - padre e figlio - resta aperta la contraddizione tra sapere e pratica evolutiva. Ivan Illich si inserisce in questa co-costruzione ludica, libertaria della “realtà” attraverso la descolarizzazione (Illich, 1972) e la convivialità (Illich, 1973) nell’urgenza sempre attuale di ridisegnare il rapporto con gli strumenti, per favorire efficacia e autonomia, per superare la distribuzione del potere in base ai saperi di presunte élite. Tutto ciò, lungi dall’essere teoria astratta, diviene esperienza negli ambiti educativi e in generale nelle organizzazioni che attraverso i linguaggi costituiscono la realtà sociale.

Questa alienazione rispetto ai mezzi nella ricerca sull’*Embodied education* attraverso teatro e arti (Zambaldi, 2017) cercava a scuola una mediazione partendo dalla smaterializzazione digitale per costruire prima drammaturgie e poi messe in scena teatrali e cinematografiche. Nella coincidenza tra la scomparsa progressiva del corpo a scuola (come nella società) e il silenzio delle generazioni oggi denominate riduttivamente «nativi digitali» (Prensky, 2001), emergeva il rapporto irrisolto tra mezzi e fini (ovvero la sottrazione di esperienza come prova del potere oggettificante). Il rovesciamento creativo e esperienziale di questa condizione limitante attraverso l’arte ha caratterizzato anche il seguito del percorso di Andrea Piccardo.

Piccardo ha infatti proseguito il suo cinema «capovolgente» (Vincelli, 1975) in altre forme e situazioni: dai film fatti dai “matti” degeni nell’Ospedale Psichiatrico di Trieste diretto da Franco Basaglia negli anni della “apertura” della istituzione manicomiale (1973), alla televisione fatta dai ragazzi in

varie tv libere (Livorno, Genova, Torino), alla televisione fatta dai ragazzi nel carcere minorile (Torino), fino agli anziani delle case di riposo, a detta dello stesso Piccardo sempre con la stessa consapevolezza di una rivoluzione possibile, che mai, proprio per questa sua natura, ha trovato adesione a livelli istituzionali.

A conclusione possiamo ricordare un tardivo riconoscimento “ufficiale” di Marcello Piccardo ricevuto nel 1996 nell’ambito della Mostra del Cinema di Venezia, quando l’allora Ministro dell’Istruzione Giovanni Berlinguer gli consegnò l’attestato di “pioniere del cinema nella scuola”.

Senza enfatizzare l’importanza del cosiddetto successo, su cui pure Piccardo ironizza, anziché chiudere, si intende qui aprire, partendo da queste note, una ricerca viva rivolta alla cosiddetta *media education* come spazio per integrare lo sbilanciamento astratto, iper-cognitivo, della smaterializzazione digitale contemporanea. Il teatro – come le arti e il cinema – mette al primo posto dalle sue origini la dimensione esperienziale, empatica, come ricorda il regista Peter Brook, ben prima delle neuroscienze cognitive (Gallese & Guerra, 2015). Esperienza e corpo, al centro dell’apprendimento a partire dalla scoperta dei cosiddetti neuroni specchio, indicano la via estetica – visiva e senso motoria – di una possibile fuga verso la libertà...

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The relational depth of field. The experience of the 00A Gallery between Merano and Trento

Carla Cardinaletti

Abstract This study investigates the fertile intertwining of pedagogy and the arts by reporting the experience of the 00A cultural association. This group of Italian artists aims to refigure our visual imaginary by re-dignifying photography as an artistic medium, an antidote to the nowadays visual saturation. Photography captures an instant in a frame, while the 00A opens its *diaphragm of reality-understanding* to the community with art exhibitions and out-reaching activities on photography culture so as to foster visual literacy.

Introduction¹

Does everything exist today to end up in a photography?

The aim of this essay is to provide empirical evidence by questioning Susan Sontag's (1973) provocative statement that claimed: «Today everything exists to end up in photography» (p. 23). Sontag wrote her brilliant essay «On Photography» in the early Seventies, just a few years after Debord (1967) theorised «The Society of the Spectacle», a fierce and lucid critique of the cult of *appearance* (Stanziale, 2002), while the concept of visual literacy² was formulated by scholars for the first time in the US (Bering & Niehoff, 2015). The fifty years since Sontag's landmark work has seen an enormous

deployment of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and their uptake by society radically affect the human condition, insofar as it modifies our relationships to ourselves, to others and to the world (The Onlife Initiative, 2015, p. 7).

¹ Translations from Italian and German are by the author.

² «Visual literacy can be defined as a set of abilities that enables an individual to effectively find, interpret, evaluate, use, and create images and visual media» (Lundy & Stephens, 2015, p. 1058).

In the light of these premises, the qualitative analysis of the case study firstly intends to demonstrate how contemporary photography could be a medium not only to build meaning, but also to cope with the «avalanche of images» (Fontcuberta *et al.*, 2019, p. 10), both taken and shared, of the present time.

According to Belting (2009), images do not exist *per sé*, but they «happen» (p. 75); therefore, this study aims, secondly, to trace the context in which the case study operates so to explore the participatory system of cultural and scientific actors involved. Accordingly, it investigates those aspects traceable to a multifaceted contemporary concept of *polis* based on the native Aristotelian vision: «A plurality of *poleis* in which distinct citizen bodies develop unique understandings of beauty, goodness and justice» (Ward, 2021, p. 4). Thirdly, this study likewise takes account of the outline of the hypothetical educational process which enables visual literacy in a «non formal» context (Parricchi, 2021, p. 174) for Adult Learning, conceived as «plural and polycentric knowledge intersection» (Dozza, 2018, p. 87).

Theoretical frame

The essay reports a problem-oriented case study, embracing both social sciences and the arts, not as such, but as powerful training tools recognised as key factors for the development of social wellbeing (Coppi, p. 42). Therefore, the theoretical frame is based on the epistemological model of complexity, which «provides connective tissue to the processual reconciliation of world knowledge and self-knowledge» (Dallari, 2021, p. 150) and fosters a constructive, open, dynamic model of knowledge able to welcome uncertainty and a plurality of visions (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2013). Edgar Morin (2001) states that relevant knowledge must tackle complexity, understood as that «link between uniqueness and multiplicity» (p. 38) that can spark original nexuses among seemingly distant fields of investigations (Casirati, 2008).

Accordingly, this contribution is designed by using the «metaphorical force of thought» (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2013, p. 71), namely borrowing from photography its key collocations as a compass in the narrative path of social science so as to explore the impact of the case study.

Methodology

This qualitative study reports the empirical research undertaken in 2023 among the cultural community of the Association 00A set between Trento and Merano (Italy). The author has been part of the Association since 2021 as an

artist, and since 2023 as exhibit curator of the auto produced projects of the 00A Gallery.

Moreover, the author is the life partner of the association's founding president, Christian Martinelli, who passed away in 2022, considered by his friends and colleagues the *soul*³ of the association. Thus, the commitment by the author and by the new steering committee⁴ in the association's activities must also be read in terms of the delicate immaterial balance between inheritance and dowry they have been feeling and engaging to honor⁵.

Therefore, the position of the researcher within the study was taken into paramount account. On one hand the overlapping of personal implications might be a weakness in terms of scientific reliability; on the other hand, it is a strength being the founding condition in reporting the case study itself.

Accordingly, the author thoroughly equipped herself with the lens of phenomenology (Mortari & Camerella, 2014), applied to case-study research method (Yin, 2009). Phenomenology asks the researcher to «pay attention» (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2022, p. 23) to the investigated phenomenon undertaking an inquiry not necessarily to generate knowledge, but with a focus on addressing «‘the things themselves’, experienced by the empirical self in the immediacy of the natural world» (Natalini, 2004, p. 23). Following the logic «of delicacy towards the lived experience of the other» (Mortari, 2008, p. 3), the phenomenon was approached with the awareness of the tension between intentionality and *epoché*, i.e. the process of bracketing the researcher's judgment «in order that he [she] will be free to interpret a separate reality» (Butler, 2016, p. 2036).

Focusing the subject

Shaking off the «preconceived webs» (Mortari, 2008, p. 6) has been the fruitful phenomenological endeavor to lay the foundation for the case study research, so as proposed by Yin (2009): a case study «enables an investigation that preserves *the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events*» (Pinelli, 2005, p. 10). Yin's (2009) method was considered the most suitable strategy of inquiry, since this empirical research (as single study) fits with the required outline: 1. it «investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth» (p. 18) whose boundaries are blurred with the context; 2. it «copes with the technical distinctive situation in which there will be more variable of interest»

³ Retrieved from Morandini's and Salvà's interviews (December 2023).

⁴ Composed by Andrea Salvà, Nicola Morandini, Massimo Giovannini.

⁵ Retrieved from steering committee's interviews (December 2023).

(*ibidem*), it «relies on multiple source of evidence» (*ibidem*), and finally it «benefits from the prior development of theoretical proposition to guide data collection and analysis» (*ibidem*).

Hence, a survey was delivered to minimise the previous described bias, and the responses from the limited number of participants (11), were explored further in structured interviews to the steering committee. «The case study database» (Yin, 2009, p. 118) was designed to master multiple data collection, including participant observations, fieldnotes, as well as archival records, so to «increase the *reliability* of the information» (ivi, p. 122).

A snapshot of the 00A Gallery⁶

The name⁷ of the Gallery is a metaphor for its mission: a 00A is the first frame of the photographic roll, that non-rewindable start of the film that allows it to be loaded into the camera. Firstly, the Gallery aims to create a community capable of pursuing a dialogue around this art form and its declinations, as claimed by the statute of the association; and secondly, it is a physical space where to exhibit contemporary photography. As reported by Giovannini, the original idea by Martinelli was to imagine various venues as to figuratively follow the number of photos available in the roll of a film (e.g. 001, 002, etc.).

As stated by founder Salvà, he and his friend Martinelli materialized their passion for the visible by founding the cultural association in Merano in 2014. With fellow artists interested in analog photography, through precise and scientific research they experimented the most immaterial *substance* ever: light. The crossover between epistemological and aesthetics investigation becomes the stylistic hallmark of the board of creatives of the cultural association.

Hence, the 00A counts at present 16 members, among artists and supporters, and since its foundation it has organized 21 photographic exhibitions for 19 artists, managing five venues (between Merano and Trento), and organizing artists' talks and conferences about photography culture.

The association is positioned as a small entity within the local cultural scene and is devoted to photography, especially analog⁸. It is however particularly prolific and boasts high-quality productions⁹, considering the minimal

⁶ Data retrieved from archival reports and interviews (December 2023).

⁷ The name was chosen by Christian Martinelli (Salva's interview).

⁸ The 00A seems to have filled a gap in the cultural scene of Merano.

⁹ This qualitative judgment is inferred by the fact that since 2023, the 00A is a member of the *Consortium for History of Science, Technology and Medicine* (participating in the group COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE 19TH CENTURY AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY:

public grants (by Municipality of Merano, and Province of Bolzano) that supplement membership fees, donations, and the generous participation of the board.

The relational *depth of field*¹⁰

The opening of the new venue in Trento in 2023, thanks to Giovannini's generosity¹¹, has given a boost to the design and production of artistic activities, enhancing a growing interest by other local photographers¹² and an international visibility¹³.

The consolidated and synergic partnership with Cooperative Mairania 857 has allowed not only to benefit from a pop-up venue in Merano, but also to co-product exhibitions and events¹⁴. In Trentino, the association has woven fruitful relationships with MUSE and Fondazione Bruno Kessler, fostering a process of *depth of its relational field* to the regional territory¹⁵, meaning the ability to keep the *focus* on different and distant relational fields (e.g. among members, between photography and photographic culture, between art and community). The survey reports that most of the photographers/members are linked to the association 1. *To share a passion for photography*, 2. *To deal with colleagues*, and 3. *To spread photographic culture*.

A triangulation of the data (Yin, 2009) shows that the association's board is the primary exchange core of knowledge sharing and event planning in line with the association's mission, benefiting from members' trust. In terms of internal dynamics, it seems that the small group «has its own intelligence, its own learning capability» (Capra, 1994, p. 6). Moreover, Giovannini states that members move «*in a unique way for the collective good, without prevarication or primacy of any kind*», reinforcing the autopoietic¹⁶ attitude traced by the data.

SCIENCES, TECHNOLOGIES, EMPIRES) and since 2024 it has joined the ESPh (*European Society for the History of Photography*).

¹⁰ «The depth of field refers to the range of distances over which objects are imagined with acceptable sharpness» (Stroebel, 1999, p. 120).

¹¹ Retrieved from Morandini's and Salvà's interviews.

¹² Morandini reports that in 2023 the association received six requests by artists to exhibit in the 00A Gallery.

¹³ Retrieved from Morandini's and Salvà's interviews.

¹⁴ Retrieved from Morandini's interview.

¹⁵ Ivi.

¹⁶ The term autopoiesis is borrowed from Maturana & Varela (1985), who meant the living being organized in a network that continuously produces itself.

The strength of the small group, as stated by Block (2018), feeds on «conversations» (p. 97) «where people show up by invitation rather than mandate, and experience an intimate and authentic relatedness» (*ibidem*). Reporting the 00A path, Salvà and Morandini underline the extraordinary exchange experience of attending *Villa Dolores*, Martinelli's house and studio, as the starting point of that «alchemy of belonging» (Block, 2018, p. 87).

In its «*vita activa*» (Arendt, 2017), the board acts «as being-in-the world» (Dal Lago, 2017, p. 15), setting the fertile ground for development of a cultural community comparable by analogy to the ancient Greek vision of the citizen able to combine the concepts of civic engagement and education. As reported by Ferrari (2021), the intertwining of the concepts of *polis* and *paideia* emerges already with Plato's studies; according to Buttafuoco (2021), the *polis* is the birthplace of community acting in its different forms, and it encompasses pedagogy as «the founding knowledge of democracy» (Sirignano, 2021, p. 126).

The ingredients of their commitment¹⁷ - enriched by common values - have created their social capital¹⁸, able to activate a phenomenon comparable to the «Resonanz»-effect as stated by Rosa (2016). In response to the concept of the «acceleration»¹⁹ (*ibidem*) of present times, the contemporary sociologist defines the resonance effect as a «*Weltbeziehung*»²⁰ «a multilayered phenomenon» (Rosa in Lijster, & Celikates, 2019, p. 76), to be understood as a way of being in the world in an emphatic reciprocity with the world itself, but also in the relationship between human beings. According to Rosa (2016), life is fulfilled when each person's life vibrates in resonance with the lives of others. As stated by Salvà:

[You have to imagine us]as friends on the rope trying to climb a very difficult mountain, where trust in the others and in oneself is an essential part of being able to overcome various obstacles.²¹

¹⁷ As result of the qualitative analysis of the participant observations within the board's meetings and the interviews the labels are: *care, dowry, enthusiasm, expertise, friendship, fun, inheritance, generosity, irony, levity, passion, research, sharing, slowness, trust, vision, tenacity, responsibility*.

¹⁸ «Social capital refers to connections between individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trust - worthiness that arise from them. In that sense, social capital is closely related to what some have called «civic virtue»» (McNeill, 2019, p. 126).

¹⁹ «The change in temporal structure that accompanied modernity» (Rosa in Lijster, & Celikates, 2019, p. 66).

²⁰ As claimed in Rosa's book's title.

²¹ As retrieved in Salvà's interview.

As in an artwork by Ansel Adams²², the parts in the scenery are disposed in different layers and create an image which is able to give back the complexity of the whole:

*If our gaze moves from 0 to infinity, at the same time it also moves from right to left, from top to bottom, tirelessly seeking new connections, new stimuli... new possibilities for growth (culture- and photographic-wise).*²³

The aperture of reality-understanding²⁴

A *latere* of art exhibitions, 00A organizes artists' talks and invites speakers from different academic fields so as to situate photography in a broader discourse of culture dissemination. The educational process is traceable both in an implicit form – via promoting high-quality visual projects – and explicitly, by expanding the internal cultural level in the field of photography and organizing conferences about the culture of photography. All the respondents of the survey share the view that artistic photography (and art in general) can have an educative role in the understanding of images, e.g.: «[to foster] *diversity and changing perspectives*», «*educating to look, to stop and think about 'what comes to me from an image' (i.e., information and emotions)*», «*to teach how to create a kind of mental firewall that can filter out the daily mad stream of images at the input*».

It seems that the 00A has taken up Fontcuberta's (2018) challenge, who asks to cope with the «*fury [emphasis added] of images*» (p. 233) in which we are immersed: the number of photos taken every two minutes in 2014 was larger than the total of pictures produced in the 19th century (Alison, 2015). That same year, the 00A was born as a small but unite group of passionate colleagues and friends, who translated the analog photographic *procedere* in their approach toward their artistic practice relying on slowness, research, balance, accuracy, presence. Although, according to the survey, more than half of the respondents have a dark room²⁵ and use performing technologies to achieve their artistic projects, analog photography seems to be representing an *attitude*, and not necessarily an artistic medium²⁶.

²² Most of the respondents to the survey answered Ansel Adams (or Group f/64), at the question: *How would you define the depth of field through a (published) visual work?*

²³ As retrieved in Morandini's interview.

²⁴ «The photographer adjusts the aperture to control the amount of light that is let through the lens, reducing and increasing the actual diameter of the lens» (Adams, 2002, p. 7).

²⁵ This datum has also to be read considering that the members are over forty (Salvà's and Giovannini's interviews).

²⁶ Data demonstrate that most participants consider a project concluded after a year.

In existential mathematics (...): the degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to forgetting (Kundera, 1995, p. 25).

In ten years, the over exposure of images has assumed rather uncountable proportions, and in a culture such as ours, which is totally dominated by images (Mitchell, 2017), in his lessons of the pandemic Morin (2020) also asks us *to change lanes*, i.e. to be aware that every technique we own risks divesting us of ethical, social, and political questions which belong to our minds.

In our liquid modern times (Bauman, 2008), «we are part of societies captive to short-term projects» (Dozza, 2022, p. 14), and we live a *hurried life*, since time is neither cyclical nor linear, but rather «*punctuated*, fragmented into a multitude of separate particles, each reduced to a point» (Baumann, 2008, p. 56).

In his *Six Memos*, Calvino (1989) already pointed out Visibility as a key factor for the New Millennium, stressing the need to develop a «pedagogy of imagination» (ivi, p. 92), not only as a poetic value, but above everything ethical and political (Ophälders, 2022). Even though the activity by the 00A does not propose a direct educational program, it is widely assumed that its presence in the territory is contaminating the community, given the relevant participation to its activities. Informal education encompasses non-intentional and implicit dimensions as well, meaning all the experiences able to produce learning and understanding - under the concept of *literacy* - the way to guide in the path of culture (Parricchi, 2021).

Conclusions

Looking back at Sontag's statement in our «onlife society»²⁷ (Floridi, 2015) and at the growing development of academic interest in the *visual*²⁸, that has dignified this field of research elevating it to science²⁹, has proved to be an impressive foreshadowing. Despite this, this empirical research has identified

²⁷ The word «onlife» was coined by Floridi «to refer to the new experience of a hyperconnected reality within which it is no longer sensible to ask whether one may be online or offline» (2015, p. 1).

²⁸ «The many contexts in which images dispense with words are relatively heterogeneous; they all share an expressive capacity of the image, manifested through visual representations or interpretations endowed with varying degrees of immediacy or complexity, which allow – and simultaneously require – reflective reading» (Luigini & Menchetelli, 2022, p. 13).

²⁹ Mitchell (2017) coined the expression *Pictorial turn*, meaning a scientific perspective to investigate the role of images regardless to the language by developing a new kind of visual literacy.

how the 00A, as a cultural community, is able to handle images with care while understanding (and sharing) them as a vehicle of *meaning*. In this sense, images are an artistic narrative *medium* proving the association's ability to discern what is worth ending up in a photograph among «everything».

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Collective agency in socio-ecological systems evaluated through theatre-based research

Sibilla Montanari

Abstract In current challenges collective agency is a key in shaping the polis. This work extends the reflection on agency, based on Sokol and the capability approach, to collective learning of socio-ecological systems according to Bateson's idea of Learning IV. In the scientific literature to date, research concerning collective agency assessment is not sufficient. Hence, a recent case study conducted in Scotland is discussed here, pointing out how forum theatre could contribute to collective agency.

Ecosystemic transformative learning

According to Enactivism, learning consists of embedded and embodied modifications (Maturana and Varela, 1992) and, in line with Deweyan thought, experience acquires formative value insofar as it shapes the environment (Dewey, 2014; Maturana & Varela, 1992), or, rather, socio-ecological systems (Folke *et al.*, 2016). Education and training are transformative and anticipate human development, guiding people towards future scenarios (Maggiotta, 2015). Taking account of ecosystemic transformative learning and the role of agency, theatre could play a pedagogical role in shaping the polis through coevolving meanings and experiences (Boal, 2011). Collective agency evaluation is crucial in reflecting how to extend learning to the entire community and socio-ecological systems. As explained in the last paragraph, forum theatre, in particular, has this potential (Ward *et al.*, 2022).

Enactive learning is based on structural coupling with the environment (Maturana & Varela, 1992) and the creation of individual habitus (Bateson, 2000), which are functional to human autopoiesis (Maturana and Varela, 1992). According to Maiese, it is necessary for the construct of habitus not only to include the cognitive but also the affective emotional dimension. Such criticism is addressed to Mezirow, who focuses on the habits of mind leaving affectivity in the background (Stapleton, 2021). Hence, Mezirow's four

learning ways could be redefined as: perspective-broadening, perspective-taking, perspective-shifting, and perspective-deepening (Stapleton, 2021).

According to the Ecosystemic view, transformative learning, intended as perspective-deepening, could correspond to Bateson's logical categories' Learning III (2000), which allows adaptive modification of habitus. In fact, the author ranks different types of individual learning as zero-order learning, protolearning, deuterolearning, and Learning III (Bateson, 2000). More specifically, deuterolearning is essential for human development, enabling us to solve similar problems with relatively less energy, through the incorporation of individual habitus (Bateson, 2000). Integrating transformative learning with Bateson's theory, and considering the affective dimension (Stapleton, 2021), we notice that the first three learning ways could be placed between deuterolearning, featuring a constant elaboration of one's own frames of reference, and Learning III, as a transformative learning.

In Bateson's view (2000), humans are predisposed to habit acquisition, thus deuterolearning. On the contrary, they experience more issues with Learning III, even though they can potentially access it, risking it will not lead to transformative learning, but to increased uncertainty and identity fragmentation instead (Bateson, 2000).

Furthermore, in an integral systemic view, Bateson (2000) also hypothesized an additional step, Learning IV, defined as a combination of ontogenetic and phylogenetic development, integrating individual, meso and macro-systemic levels in learning. Enactivism regards evolution not as the result of a single structural coupling, but rather as an interactive network's autopoietic achievement (Varela *et al.*, 2016). Hence, in this theoretical framework, Learning IV is an integration of ontogeny and, not human phylogeny, but rather systemic socio-ecological evolution at the integral level instead. In brief, the core of evolution lies not only in genetic evolution but also in learning. In accordance with this, Socio-Ecological Systems (SES) theories maintain that adaptation and transformation of such systems is possible through continuous learning (Folke *et al.*, 2016).

Agency in socio-ecological systems

Although Bateson does not explicitly refer to the construct of agency, he interprets the relationship between individual and environment as a single integrated system (Bateson, 2000). Hence, agency can be described as a recursive activity between the former's internal structure and the latter, which enables an organism's adaptive maintenance (Harries-Jones, 2017).

This view is in line with Enactivism, as the perpetual interaction process can modify the structure of agents while they are interacting. Moreover, it is determined by the agents' active role in creating, after each state they reach, the starting point for the next one, according to their own internal logic (Stapleton, 2021). Thus, those processes are not purely reactive (Stapleton, 2021). In addition, the internal structure and interaction processes facilitate or hinder individual purposes achievement, functionings according to the Capability Approach, namely non-heteronormed ends that enable personal self-realization and do not necessarily correspond to the common good (Costa, 2014; Sen, 1999).

In brief, all of us follow certain implicit or explicit cultural norms, which tend to remain unchanged, hence each individual interaction acquires its own pathways, differently from the interacting agents' initial expectations (Stapleton, 2021). Therefore, individual autonomy lies in the present moment, when individuals create their own meanings, as determined by the structural coupling resulting from the interaction between environment and internal normativity. This takes place through a constant creative reinterpretation of individual functionings (Stapleton, 2021; Sen, 1999).

Emirbayer and Mische (1998), echoed by the SES theory (Otto *et al.*, 2020), argue that agency should be intended in an embodied and dialogic way between individuals' both internal and external structures, in line with Enactivism (Stapleton, 2021). According to this view, it is necessary to omit contextual elements in favour of individual characteristics and, at the same time, let social factors encompass the individual (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Hence, a systemic socio-ecological approach, embracing Ecosystemic and Enactive theories, should interpret agency in agreement with Emirbayer and Mische (1998), that is as an embodied, interactive, experiential, and extended recursive activity aiming at complex adaptive systems' autopoiesis.

Additionally, the authors identify three dimensions of agency: routine, sense-making, and strategic agency (Otto *et al.*, 2020; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). These three time-based concepts are placed along a continuum and understood as interdependent. They are simultaneously involved in human agency, although, depending on temporal orientation, one may dominate over the others (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Due to this, agency can be interpreted as a process of constant interaction among habits, critical thinking, open-mindedness, and creative scenarios.

Another perspective on agency is elaborated by Bandura (2006), in a Socio-cognitivist view. According to him, personal agency can have an individual, proximal, or collective cause. This view, however, interprets agency exclusively at the personal level and, therefore, as a competence (Morselli & Ellerani, 2021). On the contrary, to understand the construct of agency as the

recursive activity outlined above, it is necessary to adopt the dual Senian framework of potential capacity and freedom to act towards one's functioning (Sen, 1999).

According to the capability approach, agency is the realization of self-defined values and goals through the ability to direct behaviours and actions. This includes, on the one hand, the effective power of humans to achieve their own functionings and, on the other hand, the freedom of choosing and realizing these aims, determined by the various relational components within interactive processes (Sen, 1999). This view is in line with the intentionality concept in Enactivism (Varela *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, the Senian framework seems to express more the role of the integral wellbeing in SES, in accordance with an Ecosystemic view, extending beyond the idea that people are simply a part of the systems they manage (Otto *et al.*, 2020; Sen, 1999).

One of the most recent elaborations of agency, integrating the capability approach with both Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Bandura's dimensions (2006) has been developed by Sokol *et al.* (2015). In this view, agency is a biophysical individual and psychosocial proximal process aimed at a socio-cultural collective dimension, rather than a mere individual competence.

The role of collective agency

The focus on collective agency in SES is not only necessary for personal functionings achievement, which might be lethal for the system or, at most, effective in the short run but not for a future generation (Sen, 1999). It is essential for the whole system. The difference between the concept of collective agency in Enactivism and Sokol's view (Sokol *et al.*, 2015) lies in the fact that, according to the former, agency is interpretable not as an evolutionary process but as a multi-agent organization. In this, an agent is an identity capable of acting to satisfy intrinsic needs for survival, called autopoiesis (Stapleton & Froese, 2015). This concept of agency is constantly in equilibrium among different dimensions and is a spectrum bounded, on one side, by machines or multiagent systems, such as swarms, and, on the other side, by so-called super-organisms, such as the human body (Stapleton & Froese, 2015).

In the middle of this range lies the multi-agent agency, characteristic of eusocial systems, such as communities of ants (Stapleton & Froese, 2015). Such organisms cannot live for long outside the community; therefore, eusocial systems are autopoietic, self-organizing, and self-generating because they can manipulate the external environment according to their own internal normativity, and also because they possess a certain level of interactional asymmetry among their components (Stapleton & Froese, 2015). However, such

communities are not to be idealized, since there are parasite phenomena (Stapleton & Froese, 2015). Classical eusocial communities are determined by a direct reciprocity of physical proximity and belonging. Instead, according to Nowak (2018), the principle of cooperation, added to the principles of mutation and natural selection theorized by Darwin (2018), also needs to consider indirect reciprocity in humans, such as reputation (Nowak, 2012).

Given the above, organizational learning is the process that enables the creation of an organization or community which learns (Alessandrini, 2011). In this view, the development of agency and, specifically, its proximal and collective dimensions, could enable organizational learning, allowing for the creation of learning organizations, or multi-agent agents. Hence, the point is not merely about viewing systems as educative (Dewey, 2014), but rather as a collectivity that learns (Levy, 2002).

According to Enactivism, removing autopoiesis from its biological component might be inappropriate (Varela *et al.*, 2016). The transition from biological to social cognition is based on the recursive interaction among agents who aim for the preservation of their own organizational identity (Stapleton & Froese, 2015; Rullani, 2004). In organizational learning view, human organizations reproduction, in their super-complexity, occurs through a process called organizing (Weick, 1995). This creates enacting environments, attributing meaning to certain aspects of reality and not to others, activating the former and inhibiting the latter, in line with Enactivism (Maturana & Varela, 1992). According to Weick (1995), the organizing is equivalent to sense-making and organizational culture, namely the set of expectations and recurring structures influencing agents in the system. In fact, interactions among people, the organization, and the environment, in a systemic socio-ecological sense, are influenced by both personal and organizational habits (Alessandrini, 2011). In this case, the organization becomes the context giving meaning to the world, a key point in the Enactive theory (Alessandrini, 2011). When two or more living systems interact, patterns of interaction are generated, and this collective experience becomes generative of meaning (Alessandrini, 2011), what Bateson (2000) calls the “connecting structure”.

A collective intelligence is an extended, shared, enhanced intelligence that leads to mobilization of competences to mutually empower people and the whole system (Levy, 2002). Thus, knowledge of the others is an essential source for collective memory and one that can never be fully accessed, except through collective learning occurring at the organizational and community levels (Levy, 2002). Nevertheless, until today, the Other is predominantly viewed as a stranger who limits personal space and reputation. Hence, situated learning and deuterolearning limit us in learning coherently with previous habits (Bateson, 2000).

<i>Systemic level</i>	<i>Systemic dimensions of agency</i>	<i>Ecosystemic transformative learning</i>	
Micro	Individual (influenced by proximal and collective)	Protolearning (Learning I) Deuterolearning (Learning II)	Perspective broadening Perspective taking Perspective shifting Perspective deepening
Meso	Proximal (influenced by individual and collective)	Transformative learning (Learning III) Organizational learning	
Macro	Collective (influenced by individual and proximal)	Coevolving learning (Learning IV)	

Table 1. Theoretical framework of ecosystemic transformative learning and its correlation with integral human development through individual, proximal and collective agency.

Collective agency evaluation

Collective agency evaluation is crucial to reflect on how to develop and promote ecosystemic transformative learning. In scientific literature, there is not enough research regarding its assessment (Ward *et al.*, 2022). According to Ward *et al.* (2022), collective agency could be improved through forum theatre (Boal, 2011). This method has already been used to assess transformative learning in participants, but never in the audience (Romano, 2016). Moreover, extending the reflection to the evaluation of ecosystemic transformative learning could provide further interesting results.

The study by Ward *et al.* (2022) interprets agency according to the capability approach and is based on the 3C capabilities model (Consciensation, Conciliation, Collaboration). In this model, agency is a capacity of individuals or communalities, either at the collective or at the institutional level (Ward *et al.*, 2022). Although agency is not specifically intended as a process, it refers to Freire’s theory (2011), focusing on individual and community learning, at the micro and meso systemic levels. According to Freire (2011), reflexivity occurs in action, and it is action itself, in line with Dewey’s theory of reflection on experience (2014). The reflexive method is intersubjective, and it assumes a constant critical evaluation enabling habitus transformation, beyond a cognitive dimension (Dewey, 2014). The consciensation process allows tacit knowledge to become explicit, modifying the understanding of reality and, consequently, giving action systems the possibility to change (Freire, 2011). In fact, according to the 3C capabilities model (Ward *et al.*, 2022), a community identifies alternative possibilities for action through the process of

consciensation and reconciliation. This turns routine agency into one full of meaning, leading to strategic action (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998).

According to Freire (2011), reflexivity enables consciensation through the emergence of generative themes, empowering a community's capacity to give meaning. This, therefore, provides the “grammar” that Weick (1995) calls organizing. In SES, even people on the fringes are essential nodes for the system and the coevolving structure of the niche they live in (Otto *et al.*, 2020). Based on these assumptions, socio-ecological systems' sustainability and their survival requires being in conjunction with the Other (Freire, 2011). Thus, the creation of an intelligent collectivity arises through agentive-reflexive practices moving beyond the deuterolearning of a specific habitus (Betson, 2000), developing a dialogic-reflexive epistemology (Rullani, 2004).

Ward *et al.* (2022) evaluate collective agency through participatory observation with field notes and a final focus group. Considering the ecosystemic transformative learning and limitations of Ward *et al.*'s study (2022), forum theatre has a transformative potential and could be a mode of policy formulation. Hence, community engagement is fundamental, and future studies could be implemented as below. The first step, consisting of narrating an oppression story or problem within the team, makes macro- and meso-level routine agency explicit. The second one, involving script writing and choosing characters for the show, facilitates reflection on the situation for team consciensation without changing the real story of oppression. The third phase, the action on stage, poses the problem to the audience who, then, replace actors applying their own solutions to the oppression story. This enables the consciensation of the audience, and eventually, by debating with the community and creating cultural synthesis, promotes collective sense-making and strategic agency.

In conclusion, it could be necessary to implement this study using initial, in itinere and final evaluations addressed to both participants and audience and comparing various levels of collective agency. For instance, initial evaluation could consist of team members self-assessment and focus groups on individual and collective agency defining evaluation categories. During in itinere evaluation, participatory observation integrated with field notes would be relevant. Lastly, final evaluation could involve self-evaluation and final focus groups, including team members, audience, and the community, in a longitudinal research.

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Pedagogical improvisation. Embracing the unexpected in school teaching

Laura Corbella

Abstract Improvisation is not yet a concept that is widely referred to indicate something positive. However, improvisation is an unavoidable mo(ve)ment in the educational world. Engaging schoolteachers in a research/training which involved improv games moved a significant number of insights about the educational relation and process that happen inside the classrooms. Pedagogical Improvisation emerged as an *intra-action* of four dimensions of the phenomenon of teaching.

Unavoidable improvisation, necessary improvisation

Improvisation is an unavoidable mo(ve)ment in the educational world, as it is in everything related to the “relational dance” between people tending towards a mutual adaptation and thus the adoption of a new shape, which did not exist before that encounter. The pervasiveness of the unexpected in the variable and complex educational scenario, especially in the school environment, is at the roots of this investigation. Improvisation is inevitable, especially in those relationships where subjects tend towards mutual appreciation and co-creation through distributed and collective modes of creativity (Sawyer, 2011). The school marked by *puer* centric, participatory, and democratic values, therefore, is the privileged place where pedagogical improvisations can take place, develop for short or long periods, leave significant marks, switch off and switch on again.

Nevertheless, in our culture, improvisation is not yet a concept that is widely referred to indicate something positive. The improviser is who approximates and does as well as he can. In other words, those who improvise should be kept away from education. Improvisation is a symptom of a lack of commitment to preparation: a real anathema to the society of performance and the pursuit of perfection. However, if one looks at the arts, improvisation has an entirely different reputation. Performative arts unveil, metaphorically, some

suggestive guidelines for educational work about improvisation. For example, improvisation in jazz music presupposes preparation: one cannot improvise without a good level of mastery of knowledge and skills. Neuroscience shows us how the very cognitive structure of improvisation processes exhibits a continuous seesaw between encountering the new and returning to the known (Clarke, 1988). And again, figurative arts show a non-conventional and playful attitude towards the unknown. From the 1940s onwards, the canvas becomes an arena where the artist is confronted not only with the physical materials and tools at his disposal, but with his interiority. Unconsciousness, gestural expressiveness, and the lived moment in the present of execution therefore became constitutive of artistic production, to the point of legitimizing error, imprecision, and chance in the artistic process. Nevertheless, art history agrees that these are strongly reflexive artistic movements that go through a great search for meaning.

Finally, theatrical improvisation is struck by the emphasis on the playful aspect, elevated to a learning mode. The disruptiveness and radicality of the experience of learning through play, so spontaneous in childhood and yet so removed in contemporary society is a key aspect of this research. Theatre education, through improvisation, has endeavored to devise tools to recover the freshness of the unrepeatable moment in the actor's performance: even when a certain degree of satisfaction is achieved in interpretation and gestures, the problem of the theatrical art lies in its intrinsic occurrence from time to time in the present (unlike, for example, in cinema). The actor builds up his repertoire of gestures and actions for the interpretation of a theatrical text, always recursively returning to the spontaneity, unrepeatability, and novelty of a gesture, in an apparent contradiction that, however, underlies the possibility of appearing credible on stage. Referring to the theatre/education metaphor (Cappa, 2016; Ferrante, 2017), and to my personal ten-year experience as an improvisation performer, theatrical improvisation has been the main reference for the research I have developed on Pedagogical Improvisation (Ben-Orin, 2016).

Getting schoolteachers to play

I developed a research design with the aim of grasping improvisation as teachers conceived it in their daily practice, in its nuances and characteristics. The research took place in four schools of Lombardy (Italy), from primary to high school, and involved 23 teachers. While the first part of the study consisted of classroom observations and videotaping, the second part involved teachers in research-training groups (Formenti, 2017). As it already happened

in other research (Lobman, 2005; Pelletier, 2020), the sessions of research-training consisted of a theatrical improvisation training followed by a deep discussion aimed at building connections and reflections with the improvisation they experience daily in the classroom.

Theatrical improvisation lends itself to an immediate and direct experience of certain components of the improvisational process which, on the other hand, through other arts (e.g. jazz) would only be mastered after many years of audio-tactile training. For theatre, on the other hand, one only needs, in addition to a guide, an empty space, and one's own body; play settings are simply realized through these elements. The didactics of theatre improvisation is also based on the training of certain individual and group attitudes that strongly resonate with those required in certain teaching and learning methodologies (cooperative, democratic, participative). During the «authentic experience» (Formenti, 2017) phase of the research/training setting participants experienced three improv game structures (the Ball, the Collective Story, the Goalkeeper) as happened in previous research (Pelletier, 2020) with variables of increasing difficulty from a session to the next one. It emerged clearly that one hot focus of the proposal was the disruptive quality of playing within a formal institution. It was pointed out by the participants how only the proposal of improv games, within such a change in the formative dispositive (empty classroom, bodies in a circle, humour, movement, collective pretense) provoked, in the change of form, also a change of substance, as a type of successive dialogical exchanges, as a type of collective experience in the group's historical memory. In fact, the practice of playing improv games was proposed

not to control the position, or to dominate the body, but to make it more receptive and sensitive. To control oneself to be able to abandon oneself, and in abandoning oneself to receive, welcome, and learn from living matter, a deconstructive knowledge, little tame and paradoxical, rich, and infinitely regenerating, because it is generative (Antonacci, 2012, p. 100, translation by the author).

In the research-training setting participants were considered as experts and co-researchers; I proposed an experience and some questions to better focus on a topic that was dear to all those present, and on which each one, starting from their own perspective, expressed reflections. This is a modality that is not often found in the Italian school system and yet felt the need for, as witnessed by the participants. Making a collective experience of a playful-corporeal matrix, followed by a pedagogical discussion between experienced teachers, means engaging different types of intelligences (Gardner, 2005), in the same common moment, without forgetting what is rooted in sensitive and immediate experience, and what connects participants to a more remote dimension of their being in the world: the body and play.

At the root of this approach is the desire to question the *habitus* (Formenti, 2017) of teachers, before specific technical skills. *Habitus* is understood as the «embedded systemic matrix» that makes one act appropriately to the «language game» taking place in the here-and-now situation. In fact, human action is driven by practical and implicit logics, which follow one another seamlessly between intuitive motions and bursts of awareness. Improv games seek to intercept and precisely train this dimension, through a succession of experiences that expose participants to a controlled unexpectedness, according to simple rules of the game, and that allow the experience of measuring oneself against one's own inner judge, one's own fear of the judgment of others, and one's own ability to connect apparently disconnected elements that emerge instantaneously. Entering the improv game means wearing a different dress, in which one allows oneself to stage playful, creative, amused, and even ridiculous behaviour; in which one allows oneself that feeling, which can initially also be embarrassing and unpleasant, of not knowing what to do, of being surprised and without answers.

Pedagogical Improvisation as an intra-action

The heuristic effort to grasp and describe the phenomenon of Pedagogical Improvisation with teachers moved a significant number of insights about the educational relation and process that happen inside the classrooms. The research dispositive engaged fruitfully the pedagogical knowledge of school-teachers about their attitudes towards the unforeseeable events of teaching, giving life to intense conversations that had sometimes had a rebellious color against the whole scholastic system. The process of results analysis triggered an epistemological turn since I found out that I couldn't "simply" build a thematic analysis for such an entangled topic, as it emerged from the data. That is when I embraced the concepts of «entanglement», «intra-action» and «string figures» (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2016) in my perspective of research. The neo-materialist or relational-materialist perspective is, as a matter of fact, a privileged way to grasp the relationships that constitute a phenomenon, embracing ecological and tentacular thinking (Corbella et al., *in print*). Finally, Pedagogical Improvisation emerged as the string figure (Haraway, 2016) that interconnects four dimensions. In the dissemination of the research, through an art-based process of analysis, I made these inter-connections visible and tangible (Corbella, 2023a; 2023b).

The unexpected

Firstly, Pedagogical Improvisation is connotated by the nature of the unexpected event and the subjective interpretation of what “unexpected” means. Everyone has their own perceptual spectrum of the unexpected. At the margins of this spectrum, we find the perception of the extraordinariness or ordinariness of the event: on the one side are the unforeseen events related to everyday school life, on the other those related to exceptional events. These events request an adaptive reaction, but don’t trigger a creative process. In the middle area of the spectrum, events are instead within a “magic” zone. The unexpected “magic” event could be the gift of a traditional bracelet, a pupil’s proposal for a reinterpretation of an exercise, the sharing of a personal story, an opinion expressed during a debate by pupils, a pupil’s admission of a difficulty, a divergent idea of a pupil during a workshop, a newspaper headline (examples retrieved from the data gathered during the research). The origin of these events often derives, though not solely, from what the pupils bring. Events that belong to this magic area are given pedagogical importance, and are therefore invested with a high desirability, are perceived as occasions, and are the spark of the beginning of shared attention by the class group, which experiences together something ‘new’, co-created. These events are not ‘managed’ to bring the situation back to the previous stage: they are invested with a creative attitude, and thus lead to a new stable situation.

Embodiment of the unexpected

Secondly, since unexpected events happen in the immediate time, a fundamental dimension of Pedagogical Improvisation is how teachers embodied their perceptions and reactions, and how they play the following instants after the unexpected took place. Improvisation in the classroom stems from the perception of unexpected input that often originates in the self-expression of pupils. The participants were inclined, from a bodily point of view to grasp, in different ways, the original input of pupils, with micro-postures and micro-body scores (Ferri, 2022). This kind of focused and stable attention to the other requires an expenditure of energy, as was noted by one participant during the research-training:

I maybe risk it, but I try. They were writing a text, and one calls me and I go to him, and I put myself in a strong listening position. And I perceived his pleasure to have my full attention. Another girl calls me immediately afterwards, but I was already

tired; therefore, I had less attention for her, and I perceived the contrast between her desire and my difficulty.

In this fragment, the quality of the other's perception, in its desire to be seen and heard, clearly emerges; and it is precisely this perception that stands in contrast to the teacher's attentional energy that is running out. While theatre play may be embodied in an apparently afinalistic way, teachers nevertheless detect an energetic theme that I consider fundamental and typical of the profession. Indeed, theatre play, in the research-education setting as well as when integrated into the teaching style, engages the teacher/actor in extra-everyday gestures (Barba, 1981), which function thanks to a great expenditure of energy while being linked to micro, pre-expressive movements. Participants spoke about energy that goes missing and what instead preserves it, such as certain teaching methods that could safeguard it. Teachers, participants said, are actors but also directors: with their movement they must move 25 other people, and in addition they also must take care of the "stage effects" of their proposal. They improvise a dramaturgy with the pupils, while they are engaged in improvisational directing, immersed between the bodies (Gamelli, 2011).

Classroom as an improvised scene

Thirdly, Pedagogical Improvisation put into light the performative grip upon school teaching as essential in building the playful and creative attitude towards what happens in the reality of classroom teaching. This dimension goes beyond the classical categories of school teaching and invites us to consider it as an artistic, artisan and performative act rather than only technical or content related. During the first meeting of the research/training, the question "How did you feel the body was stimulated in the theatrical improvisation experience you have just had?" triggered a discussion about the creation of a collective illusion, which is specific to theatre but also to school, and about those subtle adjustments and balancing that affect the body's energy in order to build a fragile illusion that everyone in the class needs to believe in, so that an encounter, a reciprocal vibration of the pupils with the teaching content and between pupils and teachers, can take place. Commenting on the Ball game, one participant said:

You construct a reality by inventing it, reality is invented: the ball does not exist, but you invent the ball because everyone believes it and it is enough for one not to believe it that everything collapses. Reality stands because you build it together.

The theatrical pretense, realized through special bodily expressiveness during the improvisation experience, has a counterpart in the classroom teaching experience. The nature of such a story, which is believed in within the classroom scene, is collective and participatory, and provokes improvisational developments and, thus, the impossibility of the teacher's exclusive monopoly on what happens. Gesture expressiveness has the purpose of making thought communicable, intelligible to others and thus re-embodied. The individual gesture in the improvisational dynamic is in fact more valuable when its expression is clean, clear, and comprehensible to the other participants in the game, and this has an immediate impact on how much that same gesture is imitable, embodied, and re-interpretable for everyone.

Performing school materiality

Lastly, the last dimension that surfaced thanks to the research is the relationship between teaching and school materiality, enlightening the crucial role of the teacher as not a passive receiver of the material disposition of objects, spaces and timings, but as a creative actor which can act between the constraints, creating something new. By improvising, teachers enter a performative relationship with the material, structural and regulatory aspects of the school, and this is made even more evident by the theoretical/practical application of the improvisational lens on the school context. Teaching methods are configured as technical knowledge at the teacher's disposal, which can be imagined as an equipment of proposals (exercises, activities, mediations) and a set of communication and management skills, not unlike the way a musician has one or more instruments and his or her audio-tactile skills to play them. This equipment is essential when making an impromptu educational decision. However, it has also been found that this knowledge is also foundational beyond extemporaneity: that to improvise you need to be very well prepared. A participant said:

The more you have thought about a proposal, the more questions you have asked yourself, the more those questions are circulating and therefore there is a greater possibility to improvise. (...) I ask myself though: how does the actor do it? (...) He sets his craft in motion.

Conclusions

In the last sessions of the research/training setting, participants declared openly that some structures of the school system did not allow education to be democratic and adaptable to pupils' needs. This makes possible two kinds of considerations.

Once thought about and discussed in the groups, theatrical improvisation revealed participants' role and agency in school's permeability to the unpredictable. From one point of view, the arts assert their crucial role in unveiling and investigating the *entanglement* of relationships that give birth to phenomena (Corbella et al., *in print*). However, those reveals have been possible thanks to the communal experience of the artistic set-up and the following peer-to-peer discussion. Those elements have been crucial to the definition of ways and practices for making teaching more adaptable and more hearing of pupils' voice. For this reason, we recognize one first fundamental characteristic of the transformation produced by this research: participation.

Secondly, Pedagogical Improvisation emerges as the teacher's ability of making possible the coexistence of different minds, interests, and ways of living, in and through the silent elements of school system. By becoming more aware of their role in the intra-action of elements of what "school" does, teachers become pivot of the double adaptation between subjects and structures. This process leverages the elasticity and flexibility of those same structures, giving rise to more harmonious shapes of coexistence. As Haraway (2016) would say, we *become with* what surrounds us; thus, by *seeing* what surrounds us, we can be more aware of what we do and what we could do differently.

I think that both aspects can be transferrable in other vital organs of the *polis*. The disruptive awareness of seeing what does not make possible democratic and sustainable ways of being together is desirable for all the crucial actors of organized forms of socialization. Also, the ability to improvise between constraints with the aim of making a form of being together more connected to here-and-now reality can be crucial to many other contexts of our society. For this reason, I hope improvisation will be furtherly investigated, with participated and art-based research processes.

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***Eutopia*, or: let's do as if the performing arts can educate to a more-than-human coexistence**

Alessandro Tollari

Abstract Ecological education can make use of various experiences that have arisen in the field of contemporary performing arts: a plurality of participatory practices which use ludic techniques. Among these *playful habitats*, *Eutopia* by Trickster-p is a performance-game that interrogates the possibilities of inhabiting the world from a more-than-human perspective. Through a reading of this case study, we advocate the usefulness of live arts for emancipation-oriented praxis of education in the Anthropocene.

***Eutopia*, ossia: facciamo finta che le performing arts possano educare alla convivenza più-che-umana**

***Playful habitats*: educazione ecologica e arti vive**

È possibile imparare a stare al mondo su un pianeta infetto? Come possiamo immaginare un'educazione che ci renda capaci di interpretare e affrontare i problemi contemporanei e di immaginare scenari futuri carichi di speranza? L'educazione ecologica è entrata recentemente sia nel dibattito pubblico sia nelle aule, in conseguenza alle evidenze scientifiche, alle emergenze della cronaca, alle politiche istituzionali, alle mobilitazioni dal basso. Una tensione pedagogica transdisciplinare, con una postura tesa tra tentazioni tecnicistiche e depoliticizzate, prossime al *greenwashing*, e umori apocalittici che amplificano l'ecoansia (cfr. Innocenti, 2022), in un clima di impotenza rinforzato anche, ovviamente, dalla pandemia (interpretabile come un epifenomeno dell'Antropocene).

Il mondo delle arti vive¹ (teatro, danza, *performance*, e anche arti visive, in un ibridismo crescente tra *black box* e *white cube*) ha ripreso – dopo i

¹ Per una introduzione alle *performing arts* si vedano Fischer-Lichte (2014) e Schechner (2017). Sul tema della partecipazione e dell'*educational turn in the arts* cfr. almeno Bourriaud

lockdown che lo hanno colpito, al pari della scuola – uno slancio di proposte inventive: azioni materiche e incarnate che operano in musei e teatri, ma anche sul territorio, animate da un'intenzionalità pedagogica radicale (cfr. tra i molti Freire, 1971; hooks, 2014), rivolte a pubblici vari, adulti e giovani, in un comune invito alla partecipazione, e all'elaborazione critica di questioni cruciali della *polis*, non ultimo il tema ambientale. Frequentemente, gli strumenti di ingaggio attingono al ludico (cfr. i classici Huizinga, 1967; Caillois, 1958): il gioco può facilitare la traduzione tra il linguaggio performativo e quello dell'educazione.

Giocarsi il mondo: *Eutopia* di Trickster-p

Vogliamo vagliare tale ipotesi sopra un caso studio che, tra questi *playful habitats*, riteniamo di grande interesse: *Eutopia* (2022) dei Trickster-p, compagnia svizzera associata al LAC di Lugano, formata da Cristina Galbiati e Ilija Luginbühl. Si tratta di un *performance-game* che mescola dispositivo teatrale e centralità della partecipazione spettatoriale – interesse distintivo del duo negli ultimi anni – con i meccanismi del gioco da tavolo: per questa ragione il lavoro ha visto una nutrita collaborazione transdisciplinare²; la ricerca, inoltre, si è avvalsa della più recente e illuminante riflessione teorica in tema di *game studies*³. La postura ecologica che anima *Eutopia* si colloca all'interno di una letteratura (ancora poco presente nella prassi scolastica)⁴ accomunata da una tensione a interrogare i rapporti tra umano e non-umano, e a offrire una visione complessa delle relazioni di tempo e causa.

Rimandiamo a Franco (2023) per una disamina dettagliata e acuta del lavoro in sé: in questa sede ci interessa tentarne una lettura che possa illuminare l'immaginario del fare educazione. La sua natura di dispositivo regolato consente, infatti, di individuare elementi discreti, che possono essere letti *come se* fossero parte di un percorso pedagogico-didattico⁵. Per questa ragione, inoltre,

(1998), Bishop (2023) e Coleman et al. (2023). Sui punti di contatto tra arti vive e questioni ecologiche si consigliano Lavery (2019) e Demos (2023).

² Simona Gonella e Yves Regenass per la drammaturgia, Zeno Gabaglio per il suono, Pietro Polsinelli per il game design, e lo Studio CCRZ per l'allestimento e la grafica.

³ Cfr. Zimmerman (2015), Bogost (2016), Nguyen (2020).

⁴ Tra le fonti dichiarate: Coccia (2018), Mancuso (2020), Tsing (2021). Ma si veda almeno anche Guattari (1989), Bennett (2010), Latour (2020).

⁵ Senza indulgere nel lessico didattico (peraltro richiamato) ci si basa qui sui cinque assi del Manifesto *Una Scuola* elaborato dal gruppo di lavoro di Francesca Antonacci e Monica Guerra di Milano-Bicocca: <https://unascuola.blogspot.com/p/manifesto-per-una-scuola.html>

abbiamo invitato Galbiati⁶ ad approfondire alcuni aspetti. *Eutopia* ci offre un'occasione eccezionale: quella di non avere le mani legate, bensì di *poter fare qualcosa*, seppur metaforicamente, per la salute ecologica del pianeta. Ma questo mondo – che (nel gioco dei prefissi *u-* ed *eu-*) ancora non è, e a cui vorremmo dire, con Zanzotto, “Mondo, sii, e buono” – come si presenta ai nostri occhi?

Contesti: spazio e tempo

All'ingresso, una ventina di spettatori viene raggiunta da Galbiati e condotta in uno spazio teatrale non convenzionale e intimo, avvolto dalla semioscurità e dal misterioso *soundscape* di Gabaglio (un bordone elettronico da cui emergono suoni ambientali). Alcuni punti luce delineano quattro o cinque postazioni con un tavolino e delle sedute. I partecipanti sono invitati a sedersi, formando sottogruppi, preferibilmente con persone ignote. Sullo sfondo c'è una *console*, da cui emerge la figura di Luginbühl. Questo l'incipit, affidato a Galbiati:

Tutto potrebbe cominciare così: con uno spazio vuoto. Ci siamo chiesti quanti mondi diversi può accogliere uno spazio vuoto. Col passare del tempo le cose nascono, crescono, si trasformano; e sarà probabilmente la vostra immaginazione a suggerire, a ciascuno e ciascuna di voi, se quello che accade nel territorio appartiene a un passato o a un futuro possibile. E non è importante che sia lo stesso per tutti.⁷

Il discorso rimanda a un tavolo di legno chiaro, al centro della stanza: una superficie poligonale irregolare con grandi caselle quadrate, che ricorda gli scacchi o il go. Una *tabula rasa* post-Apocalisse, o pre-Genesi, che allude criticamente allo spazio vuoto di Brook (1998) come notato giustamente da Franco.

La sessione di gioco (circa un'ora e mezza) è un tempo densamente cairologico, estraniato dal mondo esterno (che pure è, integralmente, di fronte a noi). Il ritmo è articolato in turni di gioco, cadenzati da Luginbühl, che ciclicamente scandisce le espressioni *il tempo passa* e *conseguenze*: l'inesorabilità cronologica si intreccia con l'imprevedibilità dei rapporti di causa ed effetto, vero motore di *suspence* nel gioco.

⁶ Tutte le citazioni testuali che seguono (quando non diversamente indicato) sono tratte da una conversazione a distanza intrattenuta con Cristina Galbiati, che ringraziamo vivamente per la disponibilità (oltre che per la condivisione di preziose indicazioni e per la concessione all'uso delle immagini).

⁷ Dal *teaser* di *Eutopia*, al link: <https://www.trickster-p.ch/it/projects/eutopia>

Lo spazio è, davvero, un'oasi – secondo la metafora di Fink (2008) – che emerge da un buio siderale, in un'atmosfera ovattata, in cui la sonorità avvolgente invita a un uso sfumato delle voci; le sedute morbide consentono sottili possibilità di movimento: ci sono gruppi che accettano il *setting*, altri “arrivano e si aprono immediatamente a semicerchio nonostante ci siano i tavolini”; e si possono notare posture chiuse o aperte, protese in avanti o desideranti di alzarsi in piedi.

Stili: obiettivi, mezzi, patti

L'obiettivo generale è da subito definito: cercare di imparare ad abitare il mondo in una prospettiva più-che-umana. Al centro del gioco ci sono quattro tessere colorate, dalla forte matericità – simboleggianti le comunità umane, animali, vegetali, fungine – che a ogni turno ciascun gruppo estrae a sorte da un contenitore di stoffa nera. La squadra si accorda su dove posizionarle nella scacchiera, in relazione a quelle altrui, e nel tempo ciascuna comunità si sviluppa, prosperando o deperendo, secondo proprie specifiche regole di interazione – con una “logica di tipo matematico” – opportunamente illustrate dal duo e riportate su schede informative. Nel tempo, mentre il mondo si popola, vengono introdotti altri obiettivi, specifici per ciascun gruppo; si aggiungono poi nuove regole, ulteriori tipologie di pedine e di possibili interazioni. Turno dopo turno, i giocatori prendono confidenza, sviluppano ipotesi, strategie, stringono alleanze, provano idiosincrasie.

È un gioco che, benché fedele al concepimento iniziale, ha visto la co-evoluzione delle sue meccaniche insieme ai pubblici che lo hanno attraversato, perché “non crediamo che, una volta che lo spettacolo è nato, sia finito: comincia nel momento in cui incontra il pubblico. È lì davvero il cuore del lavoro”.

Alla mediazione concorrono anche i corpi e le voci dei due *performer*. I quali, con grande studio, ora prorompono in discorsi regolativi ed esplicativi con fare da maestri da cerimonia, ora svaniscono dietro la *consolle* muovendo oggetti con precisione da *croupier*, ora si muovono sinuosi tra i gruppi facilitandoli con consigli a mezza voce, ora, in silenzio statuario, osservano – in un ribaltamento di ruoli – gli attori del gioco.

E ci sono i corpi dei partecipanti. I Trickster-p, memori della loro esperienza nel campo dell'arte relazionale (e in particolare nei *walkings* mediati da auricolari) sottolineano come nella partecipazione vi sia un'ineludibile questione di potere: “obbligare il pubblico a una corporeità che non gli appartiene”, ad esempio con richieste fisiche eccessive, “è un atto violento”; una struttura molto forte può, da un lato, essere una forma di controllo, e,

dall'altro, una guida a cui il pubblico può affidarsi, consentendogli così “di perdersi nell'esperienza – o quantomeno di avere la sensazione di poterlo fare – senza preoccuparsi”. Non esiste un equilibrio perfetto, perché le reazioni sono soggettive:

Sembra quasi che il mondo si divida in due: tra spettatrici e spettatori che hanno bisogno di essere guidati, e altri che possono avvertire costrizione nei modi della partecipazione. Si tratta, in definitiva, di stringere un patto con lo spettatore e la spettatrice: noi facciamo una proposta che tu puoi accettare o non accettare, ma entro un limite che non impedisca e non distrugga l'esperienza per gli altri partecipanti.

Incontri: partecipanti, requisiti, attese

Nel corso di numerose repliche in giro per l'Europa (il lavoro è fruibile in cinque lingue) i Trickster-p hanno incontrato un pubblico variegato, anche fuori dalla bolla del teatro. Se si esclude la prima infanzia, *Eutopia* è davvero per tutte le età. In un'occasione si sono trovati di fronte a “un pubblico esattamente diviso a metà, sette bambini e sette adulti”: situazione rischiosa,

perché uno spettacolo di solito è tarato su un'età o l'altra. Invece, inaspettatamente, i bambini si sono appassionati molto al gioco e hanno dimostrato grande velocità nella comprensione matematica delle regole (che spesso non è così immediata); gli adulti, d'altra parte, si sono lasciati trasportare dalle tematiche, perdendo anche un po' il loro ruolo genitoriale.

Ci sono anche gli adolescenti (provenienti dai licei ma anche da contesti migratori e di fragilità sociale) “che per timidezza non ti guardano neanche in faccia”, e “che hanno sempre pensato che il teatro fosse una cosa noiosa”; ma poi “arriva quel momento in cui si perdono nel gioco e si aprono”.

Se gli adulti possono essere capaci di un apprezzamento più distaccato, per i giovani della fascia universitaria, invece, “il tema lavora a un livello molto drammatico: *Eutopia* è qualcosa da cui possono uscire anche un po' scossi. C'è questo senso di un mondo che va in una certa direzione, di avere una responsabilità, e di sentirsi legati dall'impotenza”.

In generale, non vi sono requisiti obbligatori, ma inevitabilmente ognuno riversa nel gioco le proprie preconoscenze, credenze, simpatie; e di conseguenza “ognuno si porta a casa un diverso livello di riflessione, di approfondimento e di risonanza”.

Possibilità: il feedback come valutazione

Il gioco-*performance* presenta, alla fine di ciascun turno, un momento di verifica: Luginbühl, come accennato, tratteggia le *conseguenze* delle scelte operate dai gruppi. Alcune comunità, col passare del tempo, crescono (esistono generalmente tre stadi di sviluppo), oppure regrediscono o spariscono; si producono elementi di risulta, come scorie e spore, che influiscono sullo scenario. E così fino al termine della partita, quando, a sorpresa, emerge uno schermo dalla *console* sul fondo: appare un grafico colorato, che traccia l'andamento generale delle linee di sviluppo delle quattro comunità biotiche, segnalando equilibri e disequilibri. Così ne parla Galbiati:

Credo che quando giochiamo (a *Eutopia*, e in generale) lo facciamo proprio perché il gioco ci permette di perderci nel momento. È giusto così: l'esperienza sta proprio in questo perdersi. Però, in corso d'opera, a volte è difficile percepire tutta una serie di livelli di lettura che invece noi, come creatori, dopo tante repliche, riusciamo a riconoscere. Lo schermo ha un po' la funzione di riavvolgere il nastro, e di restituire la traccia del percorso che è stato fatto: consentendoti di farti stare sì nel momento, ma anche di proiettarti indietro, e poi di conseguenza anche in avanti.

Interessanti alcune considerazioni sulla significatività strettamente situata di una siffatta valutazione:

C'è stato un lungo periodo, all'inizio, in cui pensavamo di fare un sito in cui mettere tutti i grafici, per confrontarli. Poi ci siamo resi conto che, in realtà, sono molto leggibili per chi ha giocato quella partita, mentre vedere semplicemente dei grafici – senza tutta la storia che c'è dietro – rischia di ridursi a un confronto matematico tra linee che vanno più su o più giù.

Accanto a questa valutazione finale (volutamente collettiva, senza distinguere gruppi o singoli), vi è poi un inevitabile *loop* di feedback, impressioni e giudizi che aleggiano tra tutti i presenti. Ciascuno si fa un'idea dei propri compagni, delle squadre avversarie. E accade anche a chi conduce il gioco:

Ci sono dei gruppi dove, durante lo svolgimento, mi dico: “Ecco, quella è la mamma, quello è il figlio; lei probabilmente è la fidanzata del figlio”, cose così. E poi scopro che invece no, non si conoscevano per niente. Questa è una grande forza del gioco: persone completamente sconosciute che si mettono in azione insieme; e dall'esterno si ha la sensazione che si conoscano alla perfezione.

Per questo motivo, alla conclusione, più che attendere l'applauso, i Tricker-p aprono le porte, con l'invito a prendersi un tempo per condividere impressioni, scoprire gli obiettivi delle altre squadre, identificare errori,

analizzare discorsivamente il percorso, in una orizzontalità che coinvolge anche i *performer*.

Linguaggi: la *performance* come evento eccedente

È capitato più di una volta che alcuni spettatori esprimessero il desiderio di poter giocare a *Eutopia* come a un tradizionale gioco da tavolo. Su questo i Trickster-p hanno le idee chiare: “non viviamo una distinzione tra il contenuto e il contenitore che usiamo, la forma con cui andiamo a incontrare il pubblico: il nostro tentativo è sempre quello di farli andare insieme”. A partire dall’isolamento pandemico, “*Eutopia* è nato proprio dal desiderio di tornare a riaffermare questo essere qui e ora insieme, e di farlo in maniera sia formale sia tematica: quindi, l’essere insieme, il fare insieme”.

La questione ecologica, nota Galbiati, è un tema molto sentito: ma c’è sempre il rischio che il messaggio rimanga confinato a certi ambienti, non riesca ad uscire (*ex ducere?*) e raggiungere altri soggetti. E questo nodo “non è solo una questione di temi, ma è anche una questione di format e dispositivo”. È un problema di linguaggi (intendendo non solo, certamente, il codice verbale).

Quando si adottano format alternativi, può sembrare lo si faccia per desiderio di fare le cose strane. Ma il nostro è un tentativo di trovare un linguaggio. Non ci rivolgiamo a spettatori e spettatrici dicendo loro “questo è il messaggio”, ma semmai chiedendo loro “come possiamo parlare insieme?”. Gli rivolgiamo un discorso in cui ci possiamo reciprocamente incontrare, e che lui o lei possa fare suo. Per me in questo c’è qualcosa di educativo, in senso ampio. È ciò che oggi dovrebbe fare il teatro e l’arte in generale.

Emerge qui come *Eutopia* sia non solo gioco, ma anche *performance*. Certo, “si potrebbe fare un libretto di istruzioni con le regole, e il gioco starebbe in piedi lo stesso”, assecondando il desiderio di possesso da parte del pubblico, la brama di sentire che “il mondo è nelle mie mani”. È invece cruciale proprio l’intenzione di voler andare “contro il controllo che vogliamo avere come esseri umani”. Scopo che viene perseguito attraverso un “gioco sulle atmosfere” che viene dalla radice teatrale, e tramite “questa idea di scoprire a poco a poco il mondo”, le sue regole e possibilità, e scoprendo un po’ anche qualcosa di noi stessi. Un alone di mistero, un invito dentro un *habitat* in cui, sperimentando ambiguità e incertezze, si costruisce tentativamente una collaborazione del vivente: sul piano immanente del dialogo tra partecipanti sconosciuti, e sul piano metaforico delle comunità biotiche sulla *terra incognita* della scacchiera. Tutto ciò è “un elemento veramente fondamentale, che ha un valore drammaturgico, ma anche concettuale”: una forma che non può essere scissa dal tema.

Solo all'interno di un evento che, producendo un'altra realtà dentro la realtà, eccede il nostro controllo, e che – come direbbe Ingold (2017) sulla scorta di Dewey (1934) – ci attraversa mentre lo attraversiamo, lasciandoci da ultimo la compagnia di un irriducibile, inesauribile rovello: solo qui accade che possiamo fare, davvero, *esperienza*. Ed è questo il terreno su cui si gioca il performativo.

Un paradosso emancipante: per un insegnamento senza apprendimento

In conclusione, cosa abbiamo imparato? Non usciamo da *Eutopia* con in mano una soluzione per la questione ambientale. Forse, però, è cambiato qualcosa nel nostro modo di “stare con il problema”, secondo la celebre espressione di Haraway (2016). Se fosse un'azione pedagogico-didattica, potremmo chiederci: quale apprendimento è stato appreso? Probabilmente nessuno: pertanto dovremmo contestare l'ipotesi da cui ci siamo mossi. Ma ci giunge in soccorso la riflessione pedagogica di Biesta (2022), che – anche attraverso una puntualizzazione della lezione del maestro ignorante di Rancière (2008) – arriva a reclamare la scissione della correlazione causale insegnamento-apprendimento; come vi può essere apprendimento senza insegnamento, così vi può (e deve) essere un insegnamento che non miri all'apprendimento. Per affrontare, semmai, un altro compito: la scoperta di sé (e dell'altro: umano e non) da parte delle soggettività, in un processo di emancipazione, individuale e collettiva.

In questo solco si dissemina la fertile offerta che le arti performative pongono al mondo dell'educazione: una fioritura di *oggetti pedagogici non identificati*, ma fatti di corpi e processi sensibili, su cui poter porre la mano. Una letterale *manumissio* che può emancipare non solo l'allievo, ma anche il pedagogo, e aprire a futuri mondi (educativi e non) possibili e auspicabili.



photo (c) Giulia Lenzi, courtesy Trickster-p

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From art to empathy. Investigating the influence of arts education on Social and Emotional Learning of adolescents

Petra Iris Grabowski

Abstract This paper investigates cultural literacy's role in social cohesion and presents a case study on how Arts Education in school contributes to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). SEL skills are crucial for relationships, conflict resolution, and ethical decision-making, fostering a well-working Polis. Using a SEL competency framework, a qualitative analysis assessed SEL development in teenagers' art lessons, revealing cultivation across diverse art practices and contexts.

Introduction

The entwined realms of arts education, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), and the cultivation of social cohesion emerge as pivotal focal points, offering profound insights into the dynamics of a well-functioning Polis. This article unveils the empirical research undertaken as part of a doctoral thesis, an exploration that navigates the possibilities within art education for Social and Emotional Learning.

Social cohesion can be summarized “as collective attributes and behaviours characterized by positive social relations, a sense of identification or belonging, and an orientation towards the common good” (Moustakas, 2023, p. 1028). The positive impact of SEL, well-established in existing research, underscores its significance in supporting students' cognitive, social, and emotional development (Cefai *et al.*, 2018). As essential components for building loving relationships, fostering empathy, and making ethical choices, social and emotional competencies, often summarized as emotional intelligence, lay the groundwork for social cohesion. Furthermore, SEL competencies are fortified by a shared cultural understanding promoted through arts education.

The intersections between SEL and arts education have garnered attention, with arts education presenting concrete opportunities for social-emotional learning (Bowen & Kisida, 2019). However, a gap persists in research methodologies

providing actionable insights for implementation in practical settings. This article embarks on a journey of exploring how art-making in schools can foster SEL, contributing to the creation of a well-functioning Polis.

Theoretical background

Before delving into the empirical study, we first sketch a definition of arts education, termed ‘Kulturelle Bildung’ in a German-speaking context. It is an expansive field encompassing personality development through cultural forms of expression, arts, and play, serving as a prerequisite for cultural participation. Arts education, as a form of general education, enables children and young people to relate to themselves and the world through play, art, and culture (Bundesvereinigung Kulturelle Kinder- und Jugendbildung BKJ e. V., 2024). Crucially, arts education has been shown to foster social acceptance, reflective abilities, and empathy, essential for coexisting in a free and democratic system (Reinwand-Weiss, 2020).

Addressing the calls for increased cultural projects and recognizing the intrinsic link between culture and humanity, this article emphasizes that culture and the human being are not coexisting entities; rather, culture is human-made, and humans are defined by their culture (Recki, 2014). This intertwined relationship is based on humans actively shaping and constructing their surroundings within given circumstances.

Thus, cultural participation and production becomes a high-value opportunity for social participation. This exploration further probes into how arts education within the educational context of schools can promote personal growth and interpersonal competencies. As schools serve as the breeding grounds for the experiences derived from arts education, the crucial question becomes apparent: how should art be taught to facilitate engagement with society and oneself through artistic experiences? Simultaneously, the challenge lies in developing scientifically valuable approaches, methods, and measuring instruments that capture the essence of arts education's fundamental role in shaping individuals and co-creating social structures, thereby enabling meaningful participation in society. Despite the growing attention and acceptance of arts education in educational and political spheres, more research is imperative to establish its entitlement as a fundamental pillar within schools - a force extending beyond the niche of artistic expression. Arts education, extending beyond traditional academic domains, can play a pivotal role in fostering social acceptance, reflection, and empathy. After mapping in brief this theoretical concept of relations, these connections will be evidenced and entangled in the practical example of a case study.

Description of the empirical study and current state of art

To exemplify the theoretical entanglement, we turn to the case study “Social and Emotional Learning in Art Education (SEA)”. This study, conducted over the academic year 2021/22 with a secondary class in Meran, South Tyrol, Italy, explores the effects of a specific domain of arts education on teenagers' social and emotional learning developments. Within art education we find a wide range of related practices. Often more traditional subdomains of the applied arts, such as drawing and painting are coming into mind when thinking about art lessons in school. Considering the variety of domains there is an often overlooked field containing the three-dimensional areas of construction and shaping (González-Zamar & Abad-Segura, 2021). The study investigates within this domain the influence of spatial imagination and particular three-dimensional artistic practices (e.g. pottery, modeling, construction, and sculpturing) on SEL competencies during regular art classes (Figure 1).

The particular shaping and constructing practices are bodily and spatial orientated and allow a specific analogical educational experience of materiality, corporeality, and spatiality which appear more and more significant in a digitalized world (Sowa, 2017). In this context, the question must also be asked whether art education might have fundamental educational responsibilities in our digitalized world, referring to the physical involvement within this subject. And, if art education, in consequence might have a compensational role - in a more and more digitized school environment - where not all educational processes can be fulfilled in a digital realm because of their analogical and bodily nature (Krautz, 2021).

There is also a research gap in an interdisciplinary understanding that analyses in detail the interplay of poietic body-space conception and the formation of social and emotional skills (Farrington *et al.*, 2019). The lack of systematic research which entitles practical measures in art education in school is also partly caused by the variety of theoretical concepts and practical approaches of art education which occasionally are even contradictory. This study was didactically elaborated with the defined principles of a systematic, anthropological founded and relational art pedagogy (Krautz, 2020). This approach is founded on an anthropological view of humans as individuals who are always in relation to themselves, their surroundings, and the outer world. One example for the pedagogical approach employed was to (1) emphasize on the spatial design of the school garden, in order to connect the lifeworld references of the adolescents with the content-related and visual-linguistic potential inherent in works of art and images (Figure 1) (Uhlig *et al.*, 2021). (2) Focusing on the bodily and sensorial aspects of space, particularly within the familiar school

environment, the intention was to facilitate authentic engagement by allowing students to reflect, imagine, and design their inhabited space (Figure 2). This approach also provided them with the opportunity to physically explore the subject of interest, contributing to a more hands-on and immersive learning experience (Figure 1 and 2).



Figure 1. 2022, source own, location: in the school garden, Pupils use formations to test out a suitable spot for their own art installation.



Figure 2. 2022, source own, students organizing sculpted clay flowers according to the colour wheel in group work.

Research method and approach

Adopting an ethnographic approach, the researcher actively participated in the art lessons, collaborating as a kind of assistant to the art teacher who maintained the main leading role. In this mode the researcher could participate actively in the art making processes as tutor but also as co-creator which enabled the researcher to attend students' conversations while creating. It showed that with this co-creating relationship with the pupils a more trustful relationship was established. This was fruitful for conversations and later interviews because the hierarchical dimension of the teacher-student or adult-teenager relation was enriched with a common art production goal. Furthermore, it should be underlined that most of the lessons were held in an art studio-like atmosphere where both teacher and researcher functioned as assistants to the students by supporting them with their work while students had the freedom to work independently. This case study unfolded in two distinctive cycles: In the first cycle, small groups of students engaged in the elaboration of scale models, articulating their visions for the redesign of the school's garden.



Figure 3. 2022, source own, final art installation in the school garden: cloud in the colours of the rainbow, assembled with glazed flowers of crete.

This initial phase resulted in the creation of five detailed architectural models, autonomously produced by scholars in groups in a studio like working mode, a characteristic environment often employed in art classes where students have the freedom to move, talk, and exchange ideas. The second cycle saw the entire class collaboratively involved in the creation of an art installation. This phase included numerous class discussions after which students employed pottery techniques to craft approximately 100 pottery flowers. The final installation took the form of an artistic expression resembling a cloud, meticulously composed by the students arranging the flowers to create a rainbow-like colour arrangement (Figure 1 and 3). Beyond its visual artistic value, the artwork conveyed a meaningful message which was prominently displayed at the entrance of the garden. Data collection encompassed field notes, audio recordings, interviews with students in small groups, and photographic documentation. The aim was to encapsulate students' experiences and points of view.

Qualitative content analysis served as the chosen analytical tool in this study, integrating the approach of hermeneutic interpretation within the principles of Qualitative Content Analysis (Mayring, 2014). This approach combines coding, categorization, systematization, interpretation, understanding, and reflection (Vieira & Queiroz, 2017). In the realm of modern childhood research, particularly when aligned with the qualitative research paradigm, the objective was to undertake research from the perspective of the children/adolescents (Nentwig-Gesemann, 2013). “We would say that the hermeneutical

approach to text analysis is important. It reminds us that text understanding is not an automatic process of counting manifest text elements (like in Quantitative Content Analysis)” (Mayring, 2014, p.28). The coding process was therefore a reconstructive process: the individual coded sequences not only included the explicit statements of the students, but also implicit expressions were taken into account referring to “tacit knowledge” and here giving credit to Polanyi (2009) who stated ‘that we know more than we can tell’ (Polanyi, 2009, p.4). For example sequences containing ‘silent knowledge’ or ‘collective knowledge’ were coded when capturing collective spaces of experience. These create a conjunctive context of experience, which does not necessarily have to be negotiated theoretically as Bitter and Budde mention (2017), but which is available in its functionality atheoretically as the context of being of a social group. Reconstruction took also into consideration the respective form in which the students expressed themselves and communicated with each other because the kind of manner also documented something about the framework in which they dealt with a topic and the meaning they created (Nentwig-Gesemann, 2013). In two analysing phases the text material was coded by segments belonging to the different categories whereby multiple coding of segments was possible and this also underlined the intertwining relations of the categories. The study adapted five deductive main categories from the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2019) framework namely: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Each category was subdivided into at least five subcategories, considering the developmental stage of the students' age. The analysis process was facilitated using MaxQData, and the method employed was specifically defined as structuring content analysis (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2022). In a second step, twelve context categories were identified such as group work, individual work, class discussions, in the classroom, and in the garden and subcategories were created in order to also attribute the silent knowledge and collective knowledge of the students. These Inductive Categories which are used to structure the collected data (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019). Thus, two types of main categories provided a complex framework within the code relation browser of MaxQData, that considered overlapping coded sequences in the material, searching for connections and interrelationships between the categories of SEL and context. The common coded segments provided insights into which specific SEL processes were enhanced and in addition in which context. Thus, it was possible to gain a more profound insight into the occurrence of SEL and the influence of learning settings and teaching modes.

Findings

The empirical research conducted in this dissertation study, SEA, aimed to address lingering questions about the connection between art education and social-emotional learning, seeking to understand how SEL is fostered in art classes (Lashley & Halverson, 2021). The primary goal was to map empirical research results for instructional practice and establish aesthetic education as a key resource for individual educational processes and societal development.

The first set of outcomes revealed strong evidence of SEL with key triggers closely tied to aesthetic education (Wulf, 2007). Notably, social awareness and social management were found to thrive in art education settings through collaborative group work, dialogues, and art reviews. Common targets, idea sharing in collaboration, and self-organization were identified as significant to elicit SEL-competencies, e.g. empathy. In all the aspects mentioned above, the authentic participation of students/ willingness to participate showed to be significantly increased by the given target to find a common and collaborative way of artistic expression.

Moving on to Relationship Skills, the analysis within the context of SEL showcased efficient communication, positive relationships, and strengthened group cohesion resulting from group work and independent tasks. Self-organization within teams contributed to cooperative skills and constructive conflict resolution strategies. The freedom to choose topics allowed students to express political and cultural perspectives, particularly evident during group work and model construction.

In particular the perception of others (social awareness) within the SEL framework revealed a heightened number of coded passages compared to other categories. Self-organized teamwork, group work, and class discussions emerged as contexts promoting competencies such as perspective-taking, empathy, appreciation for others, and pro-social attitudes. The presentation of artworks served as a platform for pro-social positioning, showcasing students' differentiated perceptions of nature and the environment, especially after lessons in the garden.

Conclusion

This study contributes to our understanding of interconnectedness of arts education, SEL, and social cohesion as not merely a theoretical construct but a lived reality. The transformative potential of arts education in enhancing social and emotional learning and contributing to social cohesion became tangible through practical examples. Findings of this study suggest a number of

application-oriented implications, encouraging additional exploration and research in this interdisciplinary realm. As we navigate this entanglement, we shed light on the potency that arts education carries to significantly contribute in shaping not only the individual but also the fabric of our collective social existence.

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Figures

- Figure 1. 2022, source own, in the school garden: Pupils use formations to test out a suitable spot for their own art installation.
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Building resilience and resistance in emergency. The *polis* as a network

Sara Baroni

Abstract In the face of modern emergencies like pandemics and wars, the *pedagogy of emergency* represents an essential means of response. During Covid-19, the project *ripARTiamo!* engaged a network of student teachers, PhD students, the MultiLab and the internship office of the Free University of Bolzano and other partners to develop emotional expression activities for children. The contribution intends to reflect on the results of the project through the lens of a *polis* as a network, highlighting the importance of reestablishing interrupted relationships for sustaining resilience and resistance.

Introduction

The present time is dominated by the sense of instability and crisis. The media constantly forecast tragic news of rising wars and emergencies. When the pandemic emergency erupted, no one imagined its magnitude or consequences, which effects are being felt even today¹.

In the contemporary era, as the need to respond to pressing issues such as the climate crisis, mass migrations, poverty, and conflicts become increasingly urgent, it is necessary to reflect on the optimal course of action. The objectives of the Agenda 2030 advocate systemic actions toward a high quality education for all, fostering a more inclusive society by embracing a comprehensive approach to environmental, economic and socially sustainable future (United Nations, 2015). In this regard, one could grasp the lesson left by R. Baden Powell, the founder of scouting, who once said to his boy-scouts: «Leave the world a better place than you found it» (n.d.), emphasizing the importance of making a positive impact on society. This is what is ought to be

¹Research shows that the Covid-19 pandemic has had significant indirect effects on multiple areas of child development like school readiness, educational attainment, socialization skills, mental health, and others (Mulkey, Bearer & Molloy, 2023).

done to restore the centrality of education and its role for empowerment, equity, and social justice (Seitz, Auer & Bellacicco, 2023).

The ancient concept of the *polis* thus assumes a central role because it is precisely within it that the individual and the common wellbeing can be realized and pursued. According to Aristotle, a good *polis* (city-state) can facilitate the flourishing – *eudaimonia* – of its citizens, guarantee social justice, foster a sense of community, as well as provide opportunities for education and cultural enrichment. Even though Aristotle did not explicitly address the role of the *polis* in emergencies, it is reasonable to think that he would have asserted that the *polis* has the duty to protect its citizens and maintain order. This might involve mobilizing resources, helping those in need, and coordinating collective action to address the crisis. In other words, it is necessary that every citizen acts to face the challenging situations (Nicoll, 2011).

Despite the current time being strongly permeated by a climate of precariousness, insecurity, and anxiety, education seems to stand as one of the ultimate bastions that allow humanity to defend and still imagine a future (Petriani, 2024). The question is whether in our hypercomplex world it is still possible to manage situations in a network approach and if this can help overcoming the crisis by promoting resilience and resistance, conceiving the *polis* as an overarching idea of good, inclusive, and just society. The research presented here seeks to reflect upon this question.

The framework of the Pedagogy of emergency

The term *emergency* has been fully integrated into pedagogical discourse with various connotations, for this reason, it must be disambiguated and therefore defined. Emergency derives from the Latin *ex-mergere* meaning “coming to the surface”. In its broad sense it encompasses a wide range of processes: the educational emergency during the industrial revolution, leading to increased risks and infant mortality; the challenges posed by the hyper complexity of our time (Morin, 2000); the emergence of educational poverty, and others. Despite these broad interpretations, in accordance with the definition given by the *pedagogy of emergency*, the emergency refers to a punctual, devastating phenomenon that suddenly disrupts the existing order, and manifests itself in its material, psychological, and social consequences (Isidori & Vaccarelli, 2013). The pedagogy of emergency is a relatively young discipline inspired by militant pedagogy, meaning a science that caters to the needs of territories, and more broadly, of the social world, guided by civic values and citizenship (Tomarchio & Ulivieri, 2015). In a scenario of loss and trauma, the most urgent challenge for pedagogy is to identify strategies and

methodologies that can promote the *resilience* of individuals and the *resistance*² of communities involved. To reach these aims the approach that has been recognised as beneficial is the promotion of networking and collaboration between different stakeholders (Vaccarelli, 2017).

Networks: a foundation for resilience

For at least two centuries, people have been conceptualized as embedded in social structures and relations leading to a rich interdisciplinary research tradition around the *network* concept. A few of the key early approaches from which modern network research has developed are the formal sociology of Georg Simmel, the symbolic interactionism, the sociometry of Jacob Moreno, the Gestalt Psychology, the Field Theory of Kurt Lewin and the social anthropology, that has independently developed its own concept of networks (Arendt Fuhse, 2018). In general, a social network is a representation of the pattern of social relationships between a set of actors (*ivi*, p. 14). The word *network* itself is a metaphor that reminds of a web of interconnections, often depicted by knots and edges to represent these existing relationships between different subjects. These can be individuals as well as institutions or social groups that have built a connection with the others with a specific aim.

As recognised from psychological and pedagogical studies, *relationships* are fundamental to human development, to emotional well-being, but also for social integration, understood as the possibility to be part of a community and actively participating in social life.

Sharing an ecological view of the construction of resilience, the research conducted by Ebersöhn (2012) found out that in situations of chronic resource scarcity, such as food and water, what can make a difference for positive adaptation that offers responses to individual stress experiences is a “flocking response” rather than a “fight-or-flight” type. In this regard, research has already extensively demonstrated how relationships are key to resilience (Rutter, 2000; Masten, 2001; Ungar, 2012), and precisely for this reason, it is necessary to adopt a network approach that values human links and connections.

After the earthquake events in central Italy, the project “Velino for Children” of the University of L’Aquila showed that a network response was

² Resilience can be understood as «the ability to face stressful events, overcome them, and continue to develop by increasing one's resources with a consequent positive reorganization of life» (Cyrulnik & Malaguti, 2005, p. 30). According to Vaccarelli (2016), the resistance is its social counterpart, and it concerns the challenges faced by communities, social groups, and is connected to the active exercise of citizenship.

helpful to address the needs of the children, engaging them into outdoor activities together with associations of the territory and therefore helped them to cope with the tragic consequences of the event (Vaccarelli, 2017).

The project *ripARTiamo!*

The present doctoral research³, as well as the project, began in the first weeks of March 2020 when the pandemic emergency began causing shock and a sense of mourning in children and teachers that had to cope with the unprecedented situation of being locked down at home, with the express prohibition to enter school.

The idea of a project responding to emerging needs stems from a “communicative action” initiated by a group of primary education science students (Kemmis, MacTaggart & Nixon, 2014). By opening the debate to all university community members, they enabled the start of a “participatory endeavour” to address the identified needs.

The project *ripARTiamo!* aimed to give voice to the children and reconnect the threads of interrupted relationships that were missing. To reach these goals four teaching paths were published containing activities to encourage the expression of emotions through different expressive languages. Thanks to the cooperation with 14 different partners of the Autonomous Provinces of Bolzano-Bozen and Trento, it was possible to enrich the proposal and to obtain a large response. Sixty-two primary school classes and kindergarten sections have enrolled voluntarily, involving almost a thousand children in the project. Each child had the possibility to realise his/her own artefact that the teacher collected into a common one, that was sent to the organizers. In October 2020, “in-person meetings” took place in two partner Museums⁴. Children were able to share their lived experiences of the covid emergency in a broader community, having the possibility of revealing their feelings and representations of their resilience (see Baroni, 2022).

The research questions and the methods

The research objectives firstly included the need to understand what was happening in the field to perform a *needs analysis* and how school actors were

³ Detailed in the doctoral thesis “Educazione, emergenza, resilienza. Narrazioni dall’esperienza degli insegnanti partecipanti al progetto *ripARTiamo!* al tempo del Covid-19” written by the author.

⁴ The 20.10.20 at MUSEION in Bolzano-Bozen and the 23.10.20 at MUSE in Trento.

coping with the emergency. Secondly, it was decided to conduct and then document a *participatory action research* aimed at supporting resilience and hence the well-being of those involved. Thirdly, it was decided to investigate the transformative processes into the narrative reflections of the teachers.

Data have been collected through interviews, online meetings, focus groups, photos, and videos of the in person-meetings with the classes, a satisfaction survey for people involved into the days in the museums, and a reflective researcher diary.

Attention was paid to choose approaches that could best respect and value the participants' contributions: the constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006) and the participatory action research (Lewin, 1946). The former had the role to guide the data collection and analysis, while the latter helped to effectively address the emerging needs and to follow a recursive approach of knowledge building. Data have been coded repeatedly trying to respect the words of the participants and their meanings. In a second phase the results were discussed in the light of the theory. In this article some of the results obtained by listening to participant voices are presented.

Collecting meanings

Children

During the meetings in the museums, the classes that had participated in the project had the opportunity to express their thoughts about their classwork. Additionally, they were asked to create a representative artifact of the entire experience. They were free to construct their own “superpower” using craft materials, reflecting what they believed they had discovered during the lockdown. These reflections were then woven into a shared narrative. For example, a child created a dragon to represent strength, another made a heart to symbolize friendship with their classmates, while another one realized a garden as a good memory of quality time spent taking care of the plants with the family during the lockdown. A girl said that what she wanted to “bring home” was the participation of the class to the project *ripARTiamo!* because it helped her to stay in contact with her classmates.

Teachers

Teachers have been interviewed at different moments of the research. What is more interesting to notice about their reflections is the sense of gratitude

they convey for having had the possibility to become part of a project linking different school grades and territories and therefore being helped not to feel lonely. Quoting a teacher: «This was a very important occasion for us because our intention as teachers was to convey a sense of unity and solidarity among the pupils themselves and the families... We saw in this project an opportunity to open the windows towards other realities, other schools, and other interlocutors. It was helpful to say to the children “look, we are not alone, there are others who are experiencing the same situation, and they are facing it together!”» (Martina, focus group 2020). Furthermore, the project represented for them an important opportunity for innovating the teaching during distance learning. They felt legitimised to take care of emotions and relationships, and «proceeding in a different way» (Elisa, focus group 2022) than before.

Students and PhD students

For the group of the promoters the project represented an opportunity to act and being on the field even at a distance. Each of the 18 members participated actively by sharing his/her competences and talents to reach a common goal. Reported below are some of the inspiring thoughts collected after the meetings in the Museums: «(We learned) that together we can!; so much hope for the future; the realisation of a project that is the result of cooperation giving importance to education; together we manage to do everything!; my take-home learning is the satisfaction and joy of having succeeded; I feel like the children were able to express themselves freely realizing their superpower» (Project promoters, satisfaction questionnaire 2020).

University and partners

During the International Conference “Education Territory Nature” hosted online by the Free University of Bolzano-Bozen in December 2020, the professor Liliana Dozza – at the time director of the MultiLab - invited six of the institutional partners, the teachers, and the families to participate into the workshop session entitled “Fare rete comune ai tempi del Covid-19”. The aim was to give everyone the possibility to narrate experiences of the pandemic and share knowledge and meanings about the project realized together. According to the ideas that were shared by the representatives of the participant institutions, everyone perceived the importance of being “a node of a generative network” that can be activated during an emergency and beyond (Dozza, 2018). This has led to becoming aware of the value of being a network capable

of co-designing and implementing cultural initiatives in collaboration with other intentionally training subjects and therefore being able to respond to the needs of the territories (*ibidem*).

Final considerations

The analysis of the meanings shared by the participants allows us to confirm the initial hypothesis regarding the effectiveness of using a network approach to cope with emergencies. What strongly emerges is the awareness of the importance of “opening up” to the outside world, connecting with others and in this way *expanding* the possibilities of supporting children’s resilience, and, at the same time, creating learning opportunities for all. The museums, for example, reported that participating to *ripARTiamo!* further strengthened their existing collaboration with the university, leading to the creation of new training courses for future teachers. Teachers also expressed how the project experience helped them overcome feelings of disconnection and aimlessness, enabling them to develop creative activities to support children’s wellbeing (see Isidori & Vaccarelli, 2013). The children expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to participate and be recognized by a bigger community. On the other hand, the effective implementation of the project was satisfactory for the students and members of the university community, sparking new research interests in collaboration with schools in the territory.

Conceiving the *polis* as an open democratic system that can welcome projects, activities, and collaborative networks composed of learning communities could be the way forward to address the challenges of the present. It is through the formation of networks that information, knowledge, and innovation are spread, leading to greater community resilience, and fostering hope for the future (Dale & Newman, p. 24).

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Rudolf Laban's Polis.

How to live together rhythmically

Paola Crespi

Abstract Choreographer and movement theoretician Rudolf Laban (1879-1958) theorised extensively on the theme of rhythm, and he thought of rhythm as a methodology to understand reality in its more complex aspects, such as how we organise ourselves in societies, the shape this organisation should take and how might the individual relate to *Polis*. This paper will focus on Laban's proposal of allowing rhythm to guide us into living together in harmony in a non-hierarchical, non-binary, inclusive and ecological way.

Introduction

Choreographer and movement theoretician Rudolf Laban (1879-1958) theorised extensively on the theme of rhythm, and he thought of rhythm as a methodology to understand reality in its more complex aspects, such as how we organise ourselves in societies, the shape this organisation should take and how might the individual relate to *Polis*. This paper will focus on Laban's proposal of allowing rhythm to guide us into living together in harmony in a non-hierarchical, non-binary, inclusive and ecological way.

The paper starts with a contextualisation of Laban's intellectual impact on the society of his time, and it moves on to explore Laban's mostly unpublished notes and drawings held in the National Research Center for Dance in Surrey (UK). The point is to suggest that Laban the practitioner was utilising drawing as a methodology to think through his theories on rhythm. In his scattered notes, interrupted by drawings and diagrams, Laban was attempting to understand the nature of rhythm, but not as a purely theoretical concept, rather as the embodiment of *Polis*.

Rhythm-analyses: Idiorrhythm, Kakorhythm and Eurhythm

The main question we have been asked to reflect upon together in this collection is: how can *Polis* be imagined and lived in an educational environment? *Polis* is here understood as “living together” in a complex world, which is defined through ecology and arts-based research.

On reading this call, I was reminded of Roland Barthes’s manuscript *How to live together* (Barthes, 2013). In 1977, Barthes was appointed professor of literary semiology at the Collège de France in Paris. One week after his inaugural lecture, he started his first seminar by focussing on a quite interesting yet surprising subject: ‘How to Live Together’. The seminars explored the possibility of creating a community capable of including both collective rules and individual rhythms. The most important concept of his lectures was *idiorrhythm*. *Idiorrhythm* is derived from the Greek and it has to do with individual life rhythms, so that for Barthes, in idiorrhythmic societies, different rhythms connect in a harmonious way. Barthes discussion of *idiorrhythm*, however, resonates with and, we might argue, derives from debates surrounding the concept of rhythm that took place before the 1970s. One of these took place in Germany at the beginning of the 1920s, and it involved two art practitioners: Rudolf Laban and Rudolf Bode. Rhythm was understood by Rudolf Bode as the opposition of *Takt* (measure) and flow, and by Rudolf Laban with what may be called a polyrhythmic or even *idiorrhythmic* approach (see Crespi, 2014).

The main thesis put forward by Bode was that rhythm is a continuum and as such it is not graspable rationally. Rhythm as the antithesis of intellect does not allow a logical, harmonious force to govern the irrational, the chaos. It follows that even relations between individuals cannot be restricted within the too-narrow grids of rhythm understood as order and harmony. *Polis* here equates to an absolute absence of rules, with individuals left at the mercy of a chaotic ‘flow’.

In an article published in *Die Tat* journal in 1921, Laban answers to Bode and dwells on the concepts of *Eurhythm* and *Kakorhythm* in society. He describes as *kakorhythmic* those phenomena, whose constituent subrhythms we cannot perceive as regular. Laban also dwells on the relation between what he calls ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ rhythms (see Fig. 1) and this connection assumes in the text a socio-ethical dimension: it is a well-ordered rhythmic life that it is sought, not one where boundaries and rules impede the natural rhythm to express itself, but neither an ‘extreme’ one where irrationality reigns:

The individual has two options in order to harmonize or connect their personal rhythm [*Eigenrhythmus*] with the rhythm of all other happenings. They can either close their mind to what is alien to them or beyond their level of development, that is, to whatever is kakorhythmic relative to their skills; they will hedge themselves around with rules and practices, impose technical schematas on what is natural, and install security measures in order to exclude what they perceive as kakorhythmic. Or they can aspire to increase their skills to the ultimate in order to comprehend, and thus experience as eurhythmic, as large a part as possible of the all-encompassing rhythm [*Allrhythmus*]. (Laban, 2014, p. 77)

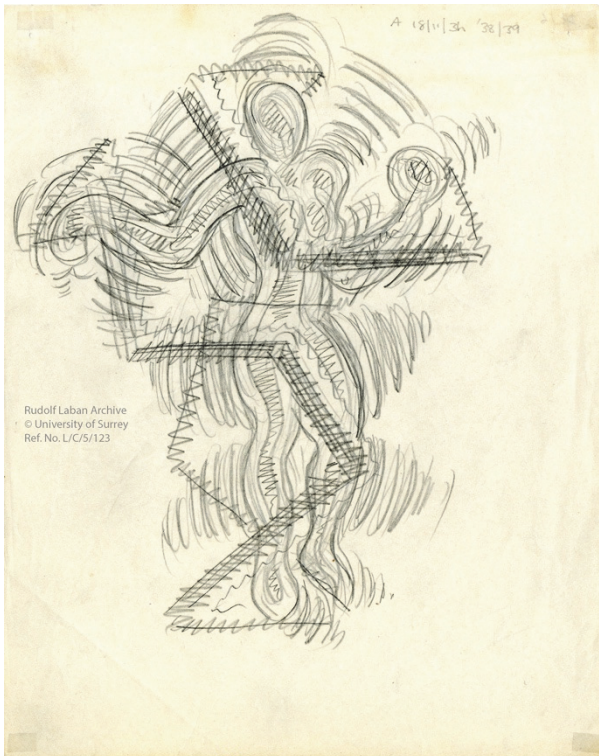


Figure 1. Laban, R. n.d. L/C/5/123.

In terms of art and education, it is in the *Festkultur* that Laban finds the ultimate expression of rhythmic education. *Festkultur* is related, in Laban's practice, to his movement-choirs, which were composed of non-professional and professional dancers and were performing in large-scale projects such as carnivals and national celebrations. Laban's vision for the movement choirs was for them to express the volkisch ideal of a communal experiencing of a higher mystical truth, which is here expressed as the eurhythmic:

The art of the celebration [*Festkunst*] is freer than pedagogy, philosophy, the applied arts [*Werkkunst*] and all other forms of development grounded in everyday life. The art of celebration is meant to connect to the all-encompassing rhythm in its complete and infinite variability through dance. Essentially, the Festival knows no kakorhythm. However, this type of art should not misuse its freedom, and should serve people's hearts, blending the inspiring with the astounding. Only when the Festival unveils the deeper eurhythmic meaning of what seems kakorhythmic by way of affectionate human guidance – only then has it accomplished its task as mediator of the experience of the all-encompassing dance [*Alltanzes*]. (*ibidem*)

Lastly, Laban wants to remind us of the aim of art and he argues that:

Art and education will be effectively eurhythmic, that is, they will sustain civilized man's perception of nature's fundamental eurhythm, when they cease trying to extend or constrict the individual's horizons with any schematic quantitative principle. (*ibidem*)

Rather than presenting us with an eulogy of the unrestricted flow of rhythm, Laban's 'rhythmanalysis' points towards an identification of *idi-orrhythm* as the key principle for living together as Polis. The divide between *eurhythm* and *kakorhythm*, between rationality and irrationality, between cosmos and chaos, is difficult to individuate: it is a delicate balance, what philosopher Michel Serres calls a *homorrhesis*: this is for Laban the place of rhythmic Polis.

Performing Polis: drawing as method

After this excursus in the debate surrounding the concept of rhythm in relation to art, education and society in the early 1920s in Germany (debates that influenced similar discussions among intellectuals that took place later, in the 1970s predominantly in France, as Barthes, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari exemplify), I will try to address another aspect of the call for papers, and that is: how might art practice and research help shaping an approach to *Polis*. I will here focus again on Rudolf Laban and his late work.

The aim of my interest in Laban is both to add a significant and overlooked voice to the ongoing debates on rhythm, and to argue for the value of a practitioner's insight into this prominently if not exclusively theoretical arena. Laban's attempts to define, analyse and understand rhythm are here discussed through an exploration and analysis of manuscripts and drawings held at the

National Resource Centre for Dance at the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom and reproduced with its kind permission.

Laban refers to rhythm in terms of both difference and repetition alternatively, in terms of duration and metric quantity. This exemplifies the character of rhythm itself, which Laban can be said, then, to have caught fully in its radical potential.

Rhythm is for Laban a key term which he explored throughout his entire life. And he did so, precisely in connection with a concept of living together which we might call *Polis*. Laban thought of rhythm at the same time as a quantifiable phenomenon (*Takt*) unfolding in space and a qualitative variable (rhythm itself). Laban studied rhythm's intensities in his *Effort theory* in English factories in the post-war period. This work resonates with but at the same time differs from Taylor's project of time-motion studies, in that rhythm plays the central role of resisting the impact of machine work on individual workers. Rhythm's effects on space and its impact on the dynamics of the moving body are also explored by Laban in his Choreutic theory (see Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Laban, R. L/C/5/139

In his notes he states that «the notion of recurrence in time is so prevailing that we overlook all the other rhythmical implications» (L/E/24/23), and he adds elsewhere that «rhythmical recurrence of resembling chance-happenings might delude our practical mind with hopes and beliefs of security. We think and feel» he continues, «to swim in an uninterrupted and continuous flow of causally connected situations without perceiving the frightening leaps of nature» (L/E/25/49). Laban is here referring to rhythm as repetition of happenings. On the other hand, he also sees discontinuity in the flow of existence as a source of novelty: «We never know which curious rhythm might break out like lightening from the chaos. There is hope!» (*ibidem*).

Elsewhere in his handwritten notes Laban refers to repetition and difference in relation to hope by stating:

The only thing that seems to be invariable is change [...]. This is a most consoling idea. It is the base of hope, the base of striving, the base of the possibility of directing our intentions and our will towards aims'... 'There is no obstacle to our regarding time in the non-Euclidean sense (like space, for example as finite and returning upon itself (lemniscatic field?))... rhythm is a – so to speak – plastical whole (see lemniscate). It is only our incapacity to embrace the whole, which induces us to explore the phenomenon bit by bit (sound by sound or arabesque by arabesque). (L/E/24/27)

Perhaps the clearest definition of rhythm comes in *Effort and Recovery*, his unpublished manuscript. Laban is here concerned with the topological aspects of bodies and space, and states that:

In its essence rhythm is a non-metric entity. [...] Rhythm is one of the non-metric positional relationships which appear in variable sizes and shapes in functional movements. Rhythm cannot be abstracted from happenings in space and is always the result of successive changes of non-metric spatial relationships (L/E/56/10).

In commenting on the 'new physics', Laban states that:

When magnitudes will be merged into the qualitiveness of a new mathematics, a much more general world-view will then result'. This will be one where 'metrical rule will be merged into the rhythmical one (L/E/25/49).

And one, we can argue, where we could live together in an inclusive and ecological manner.

Although some of these definitions, extracted from documents held in the archive, might seem to contradict one another, they acquire a different depth when worked through in Laban's drawings. In fact, he had a particular way of

utilising drawing to theorise rhythm, to explore it and to express it. In order to get at Laban's 'philosophy' we can as much look at his drawings as read his accounts of rhythm.

In order to understand and reconcile the inner (Effort) and outer (Choreutics) study of rhythm, Laban, later in life, relied on topological structures such as knots and Mobius strips (see Fig. 3 and Fig. 4) to devise his theories, something that resonates with the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Jacques Lacan and Michel Serres among others. These topological models sought to overcome the binary division of inside–outside and also to conceive of a continuous space of transformation without interruption, something that, it will be argued, comes to define Laban's ecological understanding of 'living together'.

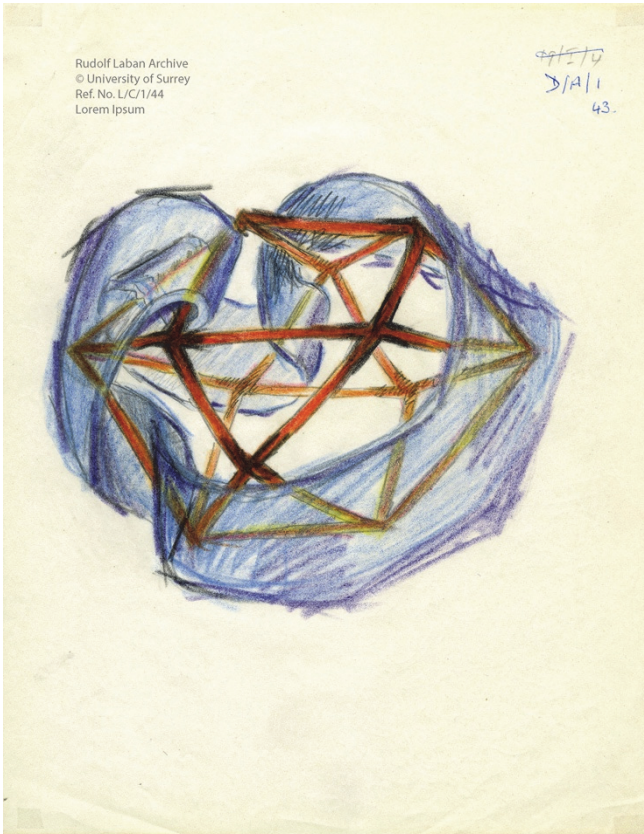


Figure 3. Laban, R. n.d. L/C/1/44.

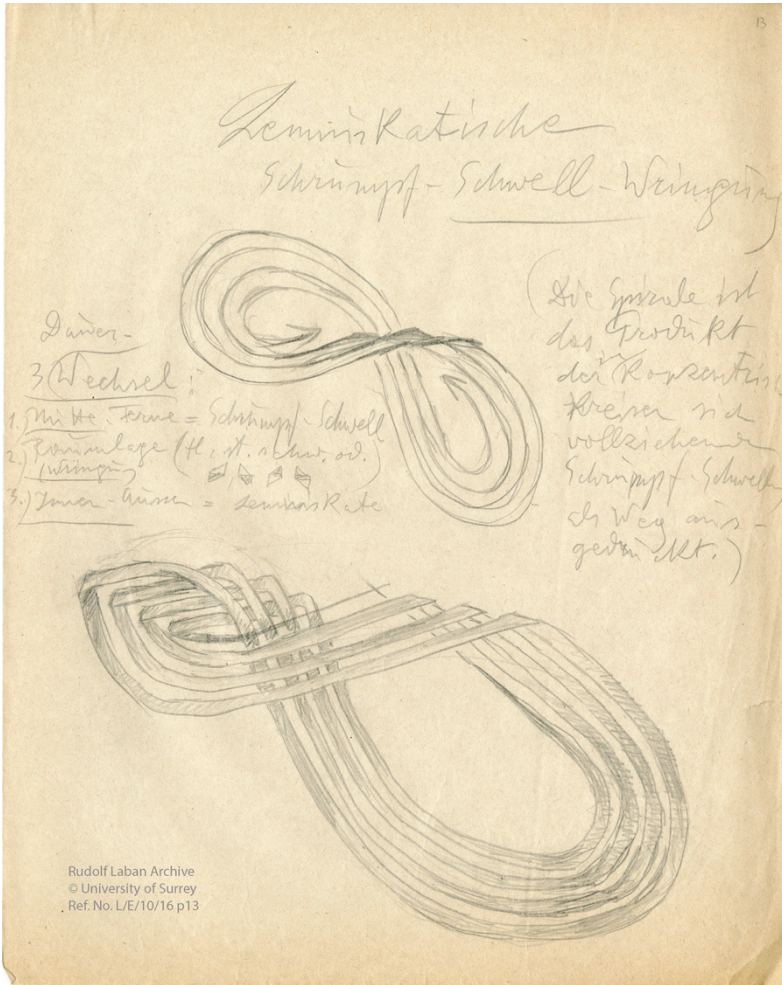


Figure 4. Laban, R. n.d. L/E/10/16.

Conclusion

Though Laban struggles in his writings to define rhythm, one can say that in his graphic philosophy, however, this notion acquires further depth and immediacy. Laban's hope that rhythm might be understood beyond dichotomies and his focus on polyrhythmia and, earlier on, on the balance between *eurythmy* and *kakorhythmia*, suggests an ideal of 'living and learning together' which is inclusive and aware of differences, which should be understood as

qualitatively ‘multiple’. If it is true, as for example the *City Rhythm* project in the municipality of Amsterdam (see Nevejan, Sefkatli, Cunningham, 2018) suggests, that rhythm can provide a sense of trust in city neighbourhoods, so that even violence and thefts diminish, I suggest that the notion of rhythm might take a central role in imagining the Polis and the educational environment of the future.

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Figure 1. Laban, R. n.d. L/C/5/123. Single and Double Figures in Spatial Forms \ A Figure in a Dodecahedron. Pencil drawing of a figure within a line tracing a continuous path around some edges of a dodecahedron. Reproduced with the kind permission of the © Rudolf Laban Archive, National Resource Centre for Dance Archive, University of Surrey.

- Figure 2. Laban, R. L/C/5/139. Single and Double Figures in Spatial Forms \ A Figure in an Icosahedron. Drawing of an arching woman within a line tracing a continuous path around some edges of an icosahedron, in pencil and green and orange crayon. Reproduced with the kind permission of the © Rudolf Laban Archive, National Resource Centre for Dance Archive, University of Surrey.
- Figure 3. Laban, R. n.d. L/C/1/44. Spatial Forms \ Lemniscate. Drawing of a lemniscate winding around an icosahedron, in blue, orange, purple, and yellow crayon. Reproduced with the kind permission of the © Rudolf Laban Archive, National Resource Centre for Dance Archive, University of Surrey.
- Figure 4. Laban, R. n.d. L/E/10/16. Choreutics \ Rhythmologie [Rhythmology]. Manuscript for an article about crystal forms; handwritten notes, symbols and drawings. Reproduced with the kind permission of the © Rudolf Laban Archive, National Resource Centre for Dance Archive, University of Surrey.

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Polis is understood in a very broad sense: living together in a complex world and society where all differences can find a way to coexist, where there is conviviality, good politics and active citizenship, as well as personal and shared responsibility arising from concern for the common good. The idea of choosing *polis* as the focus for the first PEA - *Pedagogy, Ecology and the Arts conference* in Merano (Italy) in September 2023 stems from the curators' strong emphasis on the social dimension and their interest in a pedagogy that is convivial, collaborative and ecological in an intersubjective and political sense. Ecology and arts-based research can provide a framework for individual and collective learning, with the aim of defining and constructing an inclusive and sustainable polis.

The authors of the chapters are researchers and practitioners from all over Europe: Italy, Austria, Germany, Greece and Denmark. Each author has succeeded in combining either two or all three pillars of PEA, i.e., pedagogy, ecology and the arts, and the editors have structured the book around the three themes, highlighting the focus of each chapter. During the conference, the papers were presented in the form of keynote speeches, oral presentations and workshops, which have been adapted and compiled in this book. The final contributions were enriched by dialogues and exchange of ideas that took place during the conference. We hope that reading this book will allow readers to experience some of the convivial and interactive spirit that characterized the PEA conference.

The PEA conference is curated by Sabina Langer, Evi Agostini, Denis Francesconi and Nazario Zambaldi. It aims to bring together learning and education, ecological thinking and the visual and performing arts in order to discuss the human and more-than-human conditions in an innovative way and from an individual and societal perspective. The three first letters of the three main themes – Pedagogy, Ecology and the Arts – form the word “PEA”: a legume, round and green. The curators like this play on words because of the irony, the humility of intent to be small and yet together, like peas growing in pods. Like a single pea, humans can achieve very little without the support of the community, society, and the rest of the world.