

DOSSIER

Childhood(s), social movements and the city: curriculum(s) and teacher training

Chronotopies of the Meeting: childhood, university and social movements***Cronotopias do Encontro: infância, universidade e movimentos sociais***

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ABSTRACT

This text aims to talk about the importance of the meeting between the university and social movements, focusing on the production of knowledge about childhood, as well as its politicization. Inspired by the work of Mayana Redin, we bring to the fore a story of Brazilian childhood forged in struggle, a story of social movements told from the participation of children, and the academic look at the participation of children in social struggles. It is in this sense that we named the discussion as a “chronotopy of meetings”, to the extent that we are interested in the stories and the political sense that permeate the possibilities of meetings between teaching, research, social struggles and children. To this end, we researched academic productions undertaken at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels of the Faculty of Education of the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) in the last five years, specifically in the field of Childhood Studies, in order to observe their correlations with the curriculum and the academic trajectory of the university, that prepares its teachers (*pedagogos*) to work in social movements. As a result, we signal the incipience and, on the other hand, the urgent need for research in this convergence of fields, affirming the importance of the displacements that such productions cause in the curriculum, in the socialized production of knowledge, as well as in the praxis of daily struggles.

Keywords: Childhood. University. Social Movements.

RESUMO

Este texto tem por objetivo falar da importância do encontro entre a universidade e os movimentos sociais, tendo por eixo a produção do conhecimento sobre a infância, bem como a sua politização. Inspiradas na obra de Mayana Redin, tensionamos uma história da infância brasileira forjada na luta, uma história dos movimentos sociais contada a partir da participação das crianças, e o olhar acadêmico para a participação das crianças nas lutas sociais. É nesse sentido que nomeamos a discussão como uma “cronotopia de encontros”, na medida em que nos interessam as histórias e o sentido político que atravessam as possibilidades de encontro entre ensino, pesquisa, lutas sociais e crianças. Para isso, pesquisamos produções realizadas na graduação e pós-graduação da Faculdade de Educação da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) nos últimos cinco anos, especificamente no campo dos Estudos da Infância, a fim de observar suas correlações

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com o currículo e a trajetória acadêmica da universidade, que habilita seus pedagogos para a atuação nos movimentos sociais. Como resultado, pontuamos a insipiência e, por outro lado, a urgência de pesquisas nessa convergência de campos, afirmando a importância dos deslocamentos que tais produções provocam nos currículos, na produção socializada do conhecimento, bem como na práxis das lutas cotidianas.

Palavras-chave: Infância. Universidade. Movimentos Sociais.

Introduction

Meetings are the ethical-political foundation of Education: the meeting of society with its desires and contradictions, the meeting between generations, the meeting between cultures, the meeting between knowledge, the meeting between people, the meeting between histories. Such meetings, however, are not given, but rather are built, imagined, defined, stressed in social dynamics. Like Education, we also understand research and teaching as dimensions the existence of which is forged in meetings.

With regard to research, firstly, there is a meeting with that which appears as a question, that which is open, that which establishes a new sensitivity, requiring study and displacement. Within research, other meetings are gaining space: between researchers and their themes, their questions, their backgrounds of studies, with theorists in the field, with other research and researchers, with subjects/interlocutors, with institutions, etc. Teaching, in turn, is constituted through meeting with students – who, in this case, are also educators –, with the established knowledge around which we anchor ourselves, with the policies, regulations and the requirements imposed by them, with everyday demands and their urgent search for answers, with the limits of knowledge established in the face of intermittent transformations in social dynamics.

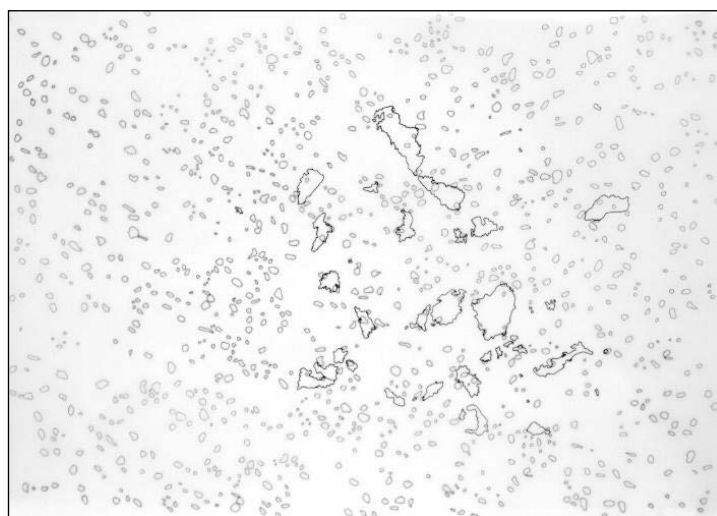
Among these many meetings that Education mobilizes, we want to draw attention in this text to the singularity and necessity of the meeting between the University and Social Movements, triangulated by the theme of childhood. More specifically, our interest is to discuss the meetings that occur between teaching, research and social struggles, specifically with regard to the presence of childhood, highlighting what can already be observed in the reverberation of these meetings within a state university located in the Southeast region of Brazil, where we work as teachers/researchers. To this end, we examine three research studies undertaken at our university in the last five years, in the field of Childhood Studies, as to their correlations with the university's curriculum and academic trajectory, which prepares its teachers (*pedagogos*) to work in social movements. What relationships emerge from this meeting? What can be observed about displacements resulting from these studies? In what ways are social struggles included in the training of teachers (*pedagogos*)? What place does childhood occupy in these areas?

As we have already argued, meetings are what ontologically give teaching and research their ethical dimension, as teaching or research do not exist without otherness. Educators/researchers themselves merge as others in the context of their teaching/research and in the face of the other subjects that compose it, whether they are the interlocutors, theorists, institutions, public policies, social demands... In the same way, struggles within social movements are only taken on through

meetings, both meetings that strengthen their very struggles, because it is combined with the union of peers, and meetings that reaffirm meanings of their struggles, through the meeting with rights violations, the curtailment of minimum conditions of existence and barbarism. Each meeting takes shape anchored in the perceptions that subjects and traditions evoke from each other. In this sense, we can say that there is an aesthetic in meetings that gives existence to the subjects therein – an aesthetic of the event, unusual and unrepeatable, but endorsed by individual, social and institutional histories.

Taking the aesthetics of meetings as revealing their ethical, political and epistemological dimensions, we sought a dialogue with the Brazilian artist Mayana Redin and her “Geography of Encounters”.¹ Mayana’s work creates cartographies based on the overlapping of places, redefining shapes and borders, creating abstractions and inviting us to imagine new geographies (Ramos, 2011). With her drawings, this artist promotes the meeting of landlocked countries, the meeting of the Sahara desert with the tributaries of the Amazon River, the meeting of the largest country in the world with the smallest country in the world, the meeting of countries that look at each other without seeing each other, the meeting of raindrops that meet the Greek islands at a specific and unrepeatable moment.

Figure 1: Rain on May 16 meets the Greek Islands



Source: Redin (2011, n.p).

A common theoretical reference among our investigations and Mayana Redin’s work is the philosophy of Benjamin (1987), both in terms of understanding history and in what he theorizes about the production of knowledge. “What if?” is a question taken up by this philosopher as a criticism of a conception of history treated in a naturalized way as a linear succession of facts. “What if?” is the question that awakens other times and other historical movements, as it raises the question of the fact that the past held other futures than just the one we experience today as our present. What if it had been another way? “What if?” is a question that lays bare the historical character

¹ The portfolio of the 8th Mercosul Biennial, which includes the series “Geography of Encounters” by Mayana Redin’s, as well as the details of her works produced between 2010 and 2013, including the series of drawings mentioned here, can be consulted at Redin (2011).

of the production of social reality and the political role of different generations in engendering its transformations.

Exposure of contradictions, as a task of criticism, is a methodology of thought that strives for openness to the formulation of new interpretations. It is what escapes, and not what is mastered, that is the foundation of truth and the fertilizer of knowledge. Juxtaposition of themes, questions, objects are methodologies expressed in the production of mosaics, collections and cinematographic montages that, in Benjamin's approach, give visibility to this form of thought. They place aspects of social reality side by side in order to create new meanings. We find this same method in the work of Mayana Redin: "By shuffling limits, representations and meanings, her maps reorder the world and establish other landscapes. Once again the question "What if it were possible?" seems to be at the origin of her images" (Albuquerque, 2011).

It is with this intention that we bring these three elements to the debate: childhood, university and social movements. How do they present themselves in the intermittent dynamics of social reality? Under what parameters does their meeting take place? What landscapes and borders do they draw? What perceptions do they open up to? What political status do they occupy in everyday life and in the field of knowledge production? What stories constitute them in their singularities? What stories emerge when they are juxtaposed?

Inspired by Mayana Redin's creation, we named the dialogue we are proposing as a "Chronotopia of Meetings", as we are interested in both the extensive design that Childhood, University and Social Movements mobilize, separately or together, but also in the stories and political meaning that permeate their possibilities of meeting. Like the rain, which on May 16th finds the Greek islands, the unique and unrepeatable moment of the event permeates the space of their meeting. In this sense, we use Bakhtin's concept of chronotope, which affirms the inseparability between space and time, between geography and history (Bakhtin, 2003; 2018). What chronotopes permeate and sustain this meeting?

Great and Small

Figure 2: Monaco meets Russia



Source: Ramos (2011, p. 212).

When the artist Mayana Redin promotes the meeting of the smallest country in the world with the largest country in the world, what perceptions of greatness is she inviting us to see? Approximately 145 million people today inhabit the Russian territory which covers an area of 17,100,000 km², a country with an economy based on agriculture, industry and minerals that comprises a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of around 1,776 trillion dollars. On the other hand, in Monaco around 32,000 inhabitants live within 2 km² and the economy, based on financial capital and tourism, generates a GDP of around 6,816 billion dollars. On what scale should we juxtapose the territorial sense and the political sense of these magnitudes? Why did the artist choose Monaco as the smallest country in the world, and not the Vatican, with a territory of half a km², less than 1000 inhabitants and a GDP of around 450 million dollars based on trade and services?²

When Monaco meets Russia, the artist reveals to us that the metric of greatness and, in contrast, the metric of smallness, is not a given criterion, but is rather politically constructed. Territory, sovereignty, economy, authority, histories in dispute. The meeting promoted in this drawing aesthetically reveals the consideration made by Leandro Konder (2003) that all “data” respond to specific questions and have a history of production, an ideological meaning. When the ideological meaning that permeates the production of data disappears, supposedly to give it a naturalized objectivity, what is promoted is its alienation in relation to the social reality from which it comes. Thus, we highlight the problematizing nature of art which, by inviting us to this political meeting based on a drawing, fertilizes questions and repositions “data” in the field of human production.

It is with this same tone that we put childhood on the scene, as a human experience and as a social category of a generational nature, proposing meetings and juxtapositions that politicize it in the face of these metrics of greatness. In this sense, we rely on Benjamin’s philosophy in the understanding that the concepts of “great” and “small” are designed and given meaning based on ethical, aesthetic and epistemological relationships. “They express not only formal relations of greatness, but, above all, relations of value and power” (Pereira, 2012, p. 30).

How is the history of childhood in Brazil shaped, if not immersed in the history of the struggle for rights? It is a story that presents us with hierarchies based on which specific knowledge and practices are organized, so often guided by academic production of knowledge itself, the designs of which make certain nuances visible, while making others invisible. Linking childhood experiences in Brazil to the history of social movements appears to inhabit this place of invisibilization, a non-place.

The act of uniting the two timelines of these stories seems to lay bare a vast repertoire of experiences that demarcate the presence of children in the social fabric in absolutely all thematic categories of the history of Brazil and the contestatory, revolutionary movements, the struggle to guarantee rights and of clashes in defense of specific ideals, which change according to the intersectional group or time frame at which we look. As in the emergence of “history from below” (Thompson, 1998, p. 229), a field that is structured based on the change in the historian’s view of the social subjects present and active in history, in addition to great men with great names, we

² The data presented for brief comparison purposes only were extracted from the IBGE (2022). The option to present more current data and not data relating to year 2011, when Mayana Redin’s drawing was produced, is justified by the origin and urgency of the issues formulated here.

understand that revisiting history seeking the presence of children in the most different contexts is an exercise that draws attention to the gap that still exists in the production of knowledge about the history of Brazil and the history of children.

Lúcia Rabello de Castro (2008) has constantly denounced that children's point of view regarding history, regarding society and even regarding their own experiences has been narrated by adults, who claim to be their translators and interpreters. History that does not include the children's point of view, says that author, will always be incomplete history, as it disregards a substantial part of society, both in quantitative terms, as children comprise a large group, and in terms of specificity of their ways of perceiving, living and narrating. There is a point of view that only children can give and, without it, there is a break in otherness in human reality: what children fail to say are ways of being and seeing ourselves that adults fail to access.

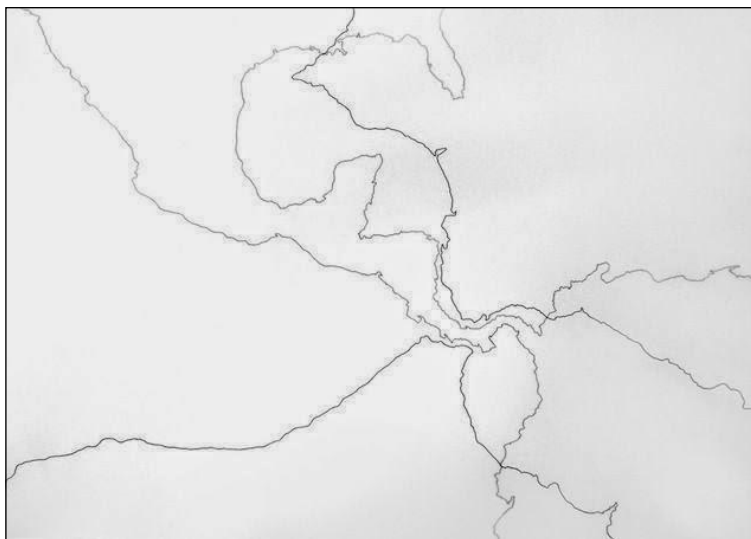
As such, we wish to draw attention to the need to reconnect the ties that unite childhood and historical social movements, a fundamental premise not only for accessing a more complete history of ourselves, but also for conferring ethical and epistemological justice to their presence and agency. In this process, it is important to consider everything from indigenous children, removed from their families and communities by missionaries and settlers, responsible for including them in the civilizing project and in the economic cycle of slavery (Paraiso, 2006), to children deterritorialized and brought to Brazil on ships, whether those that transported Portuguese orphans to facilitate the evangelization of Indigenous people (Ramos, 2008) or to marry members of the Administration (Rezzutti, 2018), or slavers, who brought African children targeted by a complex system that aimed to expropriate their souls, bodies, lives, bonds, stories and rights (Rossini, 2019).

Amid the contours of pain and suffering present in this succession of violations that mark the beginning of what was geopolitically named Brazil, the history of Brazilian children is also portrayed through these struggles. A history that we deny or falsify, like the narrative of miscegenation, built to make invisible the history of rapes of Indigenous and Black women and children and European orphans, which produced another category, that of Brazilian children. They later become victims of poverty, violence or the object of empty policies. For poor children, there were orphanages, asylums and apprenticeship guilds, where they were under the guardianship of the Church, the State and other adults. On the other hand, for children who were heirs of the elites, there were kindergartens, health care and preparation for the future.

Regardless of whether there is consolidated legislation, or whether the system in vogue wants to be democratic, for the child whose life experience occurs at the intersection of the various possible markers (class, race, gender, regionality, etc.), nothing is guaranteed. It is on this historical trail that children continue to be victims of massacres, both those that receive their own nomenclature (*Candelária, Acari, Complexo do Alemão*, etc.), and those perpetrated in everyday life, which are not given narrative contours of massacres, but which in practice increase the number of children we lose to wars that do not belong to them, but of which they are part.

Struggles

Figure 3: Straits of Gibraltar meet the Isthmus of Panama



Source: Redin (2011, n.p)

If the act of looking at history via the search for traces that attest to the presence of children in the most varied processes leads us to the inevitable realization that this is a history of successive violence and violations, on the other hand, this search also calls for the recognition of the presence of children in the processes of struggles that are providing us with important rights and achievements, as a people and a country. The politicization of childhood and its recognition as a social category involves the clash between “great” and “small”, as well as the consideration of inequalities that permeate the category itself, built under modern bourgeois ideology in contrast to a wide range of life experiences that are made invisible. In this vast and unequal human experience, what makes all children children? On what basis is belonging to childhood shaped? Of what straits and isthmuses are the experience of childhood and the theories produced about it composed?

If children are the fruit of their nation (Benjamin, 2002), it is also the narrowness of class that founds the isthmus of struggle. A quick search into the historiography of some of the best-known conflicts occurring in the world makes it possible to access works that indicate the presence of children in protest movements and social ruptures, which we have been talking about so far, both as agents and as targets of specific policies, such as the Paris Commune (Lissagaray, 1876), the Russian Revolution (Fulfaró; Souza; Silva?, 2020) and the Cuban Revolution (Duarte; Jacomeli, 2020), and resistance movements, such as escapes through forests in the context of the Second World War (Brecht, 2014; Fletcher, 2019), for example.

As a way of portraying necessary meetings, which Mayana Redin invites us to do, it is also possible to make reference to other experiences, in order to recover the memory of histories that are still little visited in the discussion about children and social struggles, such as that of the Bahia Conspiracy (*Conjuração Baiana*) (Valim, 2007). Taking place in the capital city of the state of Bahia in 1798, the Conspiracy had its beginnings marked by the leadership of the elites, who complained

about high taxes, but it soon became a popular movement that defended independence and republican values, with wide participation of poor, Black, and enslaved people and former slaves, including children.³

Our making a reference to a movement involving enslaved people is justified, as the presence of children in their midst is common place in the historiography of enslavement and can be seen in the analysis of documents on the purchase and sale of enslaved people, as well as in obituaries (Gutiérrez, 1989; Silva, 2013). Thus, it is possible to state that children were part of movements mobilized by impoverished and enslaved people, especially due to the fact that the very conception of childhood has been historically redesigned, respecting issues of class and race. Thus, considering the characteristics presented, in addition to the Bahia Conspiracy, we can also make reference to movements such as the Malês Revolt, the *Cabanagem* and the *Balaçada*, all of which were processes that involved the impoverished and working population against the local elites, the central government and the specific policies that made living conditions unfeasible in the different contexts in which they took place.

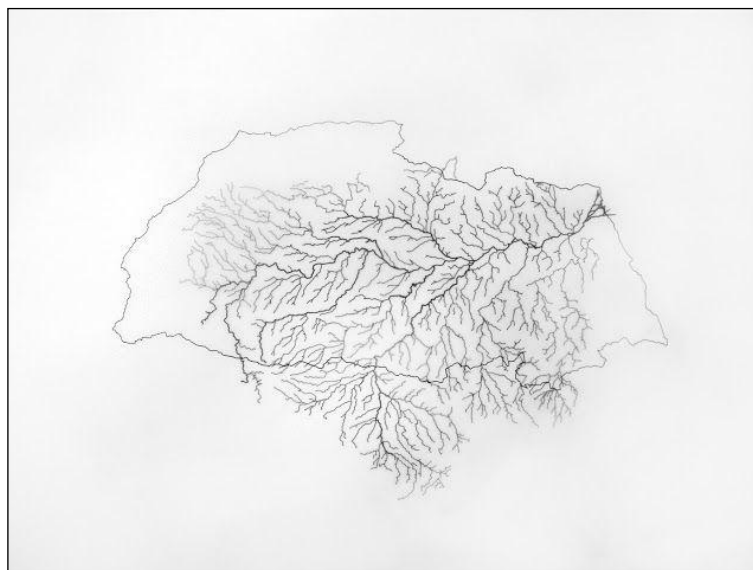
The historical interpretation of this trajectory, which mixes violation of rights and the fight for social justice, provides a legacy of contexts of power disputes and the production of narratives that crystallize violence and camouflage achievements. This explains why we are unaware of part of the histories that sustain us as a country and nation. Miguel Arroyo (2015), when reflecting on the relations between the State, educational institutions and social movements, highlights that the power structures that victimize workers, in the context of rural struggles, are not part of the curricula designed for them in schools, which in practice implies denying these workers the right to know this history and to stand up against it.

This also explains why, between 1997 and 2018, more than 80,000 rural schools were closed in Brazil (Alentejano; Cordeiro, 2019). It must be remembered that within them a meaningful curriculum was being built, including teacher training, articulated around university degrees in Rural Education. It is important to highlight here the speed with which the closure of these schools is decreed in the regions that most need it, such as the Northeast, where in 2019 alone, more than 29,000 rural schools were closed (INEP, 2018). At the same time, this same region has the highest illiteracy rates in Brazil, reaching 13.9% (IBGE, 2019). Hence the need to rethink on what basis knowledge and the meetings made possible by it are defined and produced in the curricula we practice in the institutions of which we are part.

³ Like most movements undertaken by the poorest parts of society, this movement also resulted in the arrest, death, drawing and quartering and exposure of parts of the leaders' bodies throughout the city, following the model of the European Ancien Régime. For further information, see: Bicalho (1999).

Knowledge and Struggles: transforming and creating

Figure 4: Sahara Desert meets the Amazon Basin



Source: Redin (2011, n.p).

Bringing together these dimensions – childhood, university and social movements –, which at first may seem so distant, to discuss our own experiences of knowledge production, in the academic field and in the field of social struggles, is to respond to the invitation made by Mayana Redin to recreate what is not given, bringing science, art and life into dialogue, to which Bakhtin (2003) also calls us. Bakhtin calls into question the social commitment of artists and scientists to social reality, demanding that they engage in more frequent dialogue with subjects in their daily lives. Without this dialogue, he says, both art and science are sterilized, as is everyday life, which is emptied of demands, anesthetized and impoverished.

A similar call is also made to the university and social movements, formulating demands and freeing them from possible sterility. If the university can often suffocate childhood in its aridity, when it moves away from social movements and their emergencies; social movements can also sterilize themselves by neglecting the specificity of childhood as a field in negotiating their struggles. While respecting their singularities and the political places they occupy in the social structure, universities and social movements are lacking: recognized as a place of theorization and training, if the university abdicates from dialogue with social movements, it sterilizes itself in an endogenous idealization; if social movements abdicate from theorization of their knowledge produced in the heat of the struggle, with a view to establishing and legitimizing it as capacity-building, they condemn their struggle to the same thing.

Based on Miguel Arroyo's (2015) questioning as to the contributions of the diversity of social movements to building a different teacher training curriculum, we seek to observe the ways in which these meetings take shape and content within the Pedagogy Degree Course and the Postgraduate Education Program at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, especially in relation to research in the field of Childhood Studies. Focusing on the curriculum in this dimension means assuming it as

the core of Education, as the axis around which realities, practices, policies, aesthetics and ethics compose themselves – and are composed –, put into dialogue by the implied action of those who meet each other in these spaces. In this way, cultural dynamics, social issues, economic demands, political disputes are structured through specific curricula, found in the most different times and spaces.

Here it is worth highlighting the political place of research activities at university: they are tributaries in the fight against desertification. As a rule, research in universities today is structurally and financially concentrated in postgraduate courses and supported by Scientific Initiation programs – of restricted scope, compared to the contingent of undergraduate students. In this spectrum, we have institutional research and also research that is presented as Dissertation and Thesis projects. At the university where we work, in addition to this common structure, which presents a Line of Research on Childhood and Youth, we have, in the Pedagogy course, a curricular component entitled Pedagogical Research and Practice (PRP), divided into mandatory subjects of a practical nature, which must be developed in a sequence, from the third to the fifth periods, with a prerequisite for their sequencing.

As it is a long-term curricular component, it offers a smaller number of places (30), in relation to course subjects in general (45), and is associated with the specific themes of each Department – among which is a Department that was created as the Childhood Studies axis (*Departamento de Estudos da Infância – DEDI*). Regarding its objectives, we highlight for the purposes of this text the possibility of research as a common element in undergraduate teacher training, which we understand as building sensitivity and exercising theorization. As an important fact, we highlight the significant number of students who find, in the PRP experience, an interest in continuing their academic training

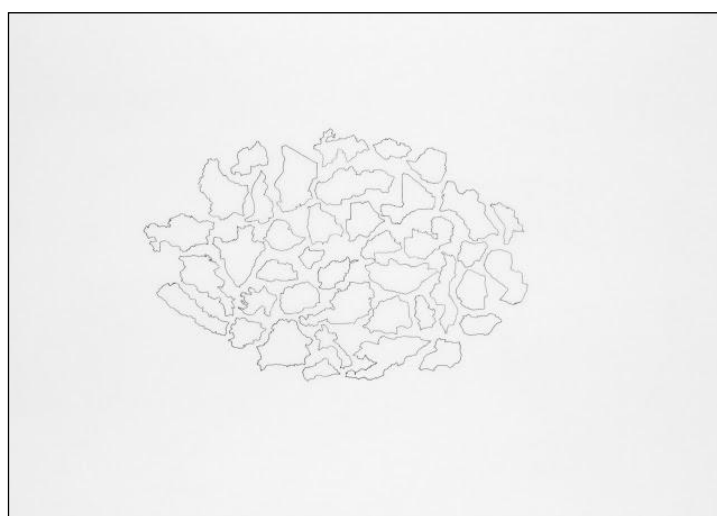
On these different fronts, research takes on new contours: institutional and inter-institutional research, organized by university professors/researchers (supported by the Research Scholarship internal selection program), Dissertation and Thesis projects, within the scope of Postgraduate Studies, the studies developed within the scope of the Scientific Initiation Program and the studies developed in the PRPs which, in general, result in Undergraduate Final Papers – considering that, after the PRP curricular component, students begin the systematization of their Undergraduate Final Papers, an activity that takes part in the last three semesters of the course, constituting a requirement for course completion and having a sense of articulation between the other curricular components, since it is here that what has been consolidated throughout the course and in the PRPs, in a theoretical or theoretical-practical way, must be announced.

Such research experiences appear as tributaries that present the university with new themes, demands and issues. They thus end up promoting daily transformations in the organization of elective subjects, in extension courses, as well as in new axes or working groups that gain space in congresses, publications, etc.; or even new curricular axes, in Undergraduate or Postgraduate courses, as they imply meeting with new studies and the need to reposition guidelines for training. An example of this is Deliberation 15/2019, which restructures the undergraduate courses at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), based on the Initial and Continuing Basic Education Teacher Training Program. It is important to say that the Faculty of Education was the institution's first academic unit to carry

out curricular reform there, rethinking the Pedagogy course in accordance with demands observed, discussed and negotiated since 2016 with the internal and external community, and respecting the training demands and work of teachers (*pedagogos*) in contemporary times.⁴

In no way do we intend to pretend not to understand the conservative character that the university historically also fulfills in the social structure of this country, worsening its inequalities. However, we highlight, in this text, the advances and transformations possible by understanding the pressures that occur internally at the institution: places of childhood in teaching, research, extension, in the creation of an institutional management department and in curricula are also the result of struggles. And where do these struggles take place, if not in the ethical duty to respond to social movements and social demands?

Figure 5: Meeting of landlocked countries



Source: Ramos (2011, p. 211).

As a way of making visible the meetings we have been talking about throughout this text, we performed a search in the research carried out in the Postgraduate Program in Education at UERJ, specifically in the Childhood, Youth and Education Research Line. With the criterion of highlighting studies that focus on childhood and social movements as fields of analysis and discussion, and prioritizing the last five years (2018-2022) of production, out of the 65 studies in the Line we only found only 3 on this theme, two of which were theses (Ph.D.) and one was a dissertation (Master's). Out of curiosity, it is important to say that two of these three productions were written by students who completed an undergraduate course at the aforementioned institution, having received Scientific Initiation scholarships and beginning their reflections within the Childhood Studies PRP. On the other hand, it is also important to draw attention to the need to strengthen ties between

⁴ Another example of capillarity was the institutional research entitled "The Child and Adolescent Statute and State Schools: impasses and tensions in care and education programs", undertaken in early 2000, which articulated the offering of PRP for undergraduate students and an extension course for training of Guardianship Counselors, in conjunction with Movements for the Fight for Day Care (*Movimentos de Luta por Creche*) and Movements for the Defense of Children's Rights (*Movimentos de Defesa dos Direitos da Criança*).

these fields, as a way of enhancing the meeting that we advocate here, after all, 3 in a universe of 65 represents only 5% of the Line's productions.

We know and it is necessary to make it public that the accumulation of knowledge production, considering this same thematic focus, exists beyond the aforementioned Line of Research and the institution to which it is linked – there being important research in different areas of Human and Social Sciences throughout Brazil. However, respecting the objectives of this article, as well as the spatial and temporal frameworks that we set out to think about here, we also justify our choice based on the meetings we have lived through in the experience of being together within the space we have built as researchers – a space perceived by us as both work and struggle. Thus, if the discussion allows us to think about possible meetings between the dimensions highlighted here, it is also necessary to emphasize the many mismatches (failure to meet with each other), expressed in the low number of studies that bring such dimensions together.

The three pieces of research that we found in the search we performed, and which best meet the discussion demands established here, are: the dissertation by Bárbara de Oliveira Gonçalves, defended in 2018, and the theses by Márcia Mara Ramos and Caroline Trapp de Queiroz, defended in 2021. Their research has as a point of convergence the fact that they put the meeting in the place of methodological strategy par excellence, designating with this name the act in the field, in addition to the theoretical and philosophical discussion that considers all scientific production as a meeting between the researcher and the subject or object of research.

In her Master's Degree dissertation, Bárbara de Oliveira Gonçalves (2018), proposes to analyze the role of children who work in social movements, specifically the Landless Rural Workers Movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra – MST*), investigating the articulation of children from the children's branch of the MST, known as *Movimento Sem Terrinha*, and seeking to understand how they perceive and position themselves in the face of social problems that they experience. Gonçalves' research allows us to observe children within one of the most expressive social movements in Brazil, highlighting the specificities of children's organization, from a theoretical perspective based on the Sociology of Childhood that emphasizes culture as a dimension that produces and is also produced by children's action. The positioning of children in the face of the social and political issues of their time, which affect them directly, is addressed by the author through observation of children's ways of organizing and understanding and fighting to defend their rights.

To this end, Gonçalves accompanied the children of the *Movimento Sem Terrinha* in Rio de Janeiro on two specific occasions, in 2017: in preparation for the Rio de Janeiro State Meeting (*Encontro Estadual*), held at the municipal school at the Campo Alegre Settlement; and at the 20th Rio de Janeiro State Meeting of Landless Children (*Encontro Estadual das Crianças Sem Terrinha*). As findings from her research, the author highlights the direct link of children to the political and economic life of society, through activities engendered within the Movement itself; violation of rights, expressed in concrete living conditions, as a determining factor for the demands raised by children and also for the social legitimacy they achieve; and prohibition of children's participation in spaces for political discussion and decision-making when it is aimed at social transformation, challenging the dominant ideology.

Márcia Mara Ramos (2021) also developed her research within the *Sem Terrinha Movement*, being one of the MST leaders responsible for holding the 1st National Meeting of Landless Children

(*Encontro Nacional dos Sem Terrinha*), which took place in Brasília in 2018, and which brought together more than 1,200 children from camps and settlements across the country. Speaking from within the movement where she grew up, was trained and for which she mobilizes her struggle, Ramos proposes to analyze the educational role of the struggle for land, examining the traces that denote the implications of this educational character in the training of Landless childhood within the MST. To this end, the author assumes that the production of another logic of social organization, for which the Movement fights, requires considering children as part of the class in which they are located, whose consciousness is formed in the context of historically disputed territories, in the context of the struggle for land and agrarian reform. Therefore, according to Ramos, children are conceived, in research and in the Movement, as political and historical subjects who contribute to the objectives of struggle right from their childhood, developing their sociopolitical training through rural education, the schools of which are organized towards actions of resistance and emancipation.

The analysis proposed by the author is based on the materialist and dialectical conception of history, calling on the philosophy of social praxis as an axis from which to read not only the process of the struggle for land in the MST, but also the 1st National Meeting of Landless Children, that she coordinated, and *Ciranda Infantil*, a space for collective training of children within the Movement. As part of the findings, Ramos highlights the mobilizations of Landless children as political instruments of the MST's childhood; furthermore, she draws attention to the connection of these instruments to the women's struggle itself, as these spaces reserved for children provide greater participation for women in the Movement; finally, the author reiterates the understanding that the MST's training spaces in the fight for land enable the effective participation of Landless Children in society.

The *Movimento Sem Terrinha* also appears as a field of the research done by Caroline Trapp de Queiroz (2021), alongside the Movement of People Affected by Dams (*Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens*) and three more specific movements, from which she seeks to think about children as political subjects in the relationships they weave in their experience of existing in the world. In her thesis, the author approaches childhood by observing the ways in which children deal with the tensions, demands and internal disputes of the movements they are part of, as well as the spaces in which they circulate. To this end, within a perspective of research as an act positioned and intertwined with the needs and objectives of each context where the investigation takes place, Queiroz puts into discussion the need to build a perspective committed to actually seeing what one sees in front of one, a premise which determines which children will fit into the concept of childhood, considered in their demands and specificities, while other children will remain invisible to an eye that sees, but does not actually see – and what it does not see justifies the continuation of the processes of violation and extermination of these children who remain on the margins of childhood.

Through the literary language of the chronicle, the author articulates her field records with the discussions raised, highlighting findings such as the proximity of women and children in the struggles against oppression; the collective as a guarantee of protection; affection as the main link in the constitution of different communities; the child's perspective as a sentient counterpoint to the anesthesia of the adult gaze; the power of anger as an emotion that also mobilizes children; and the need to recognize the singularities of children as a prerogative for understanding that the ways in which political actions are exercised vary.

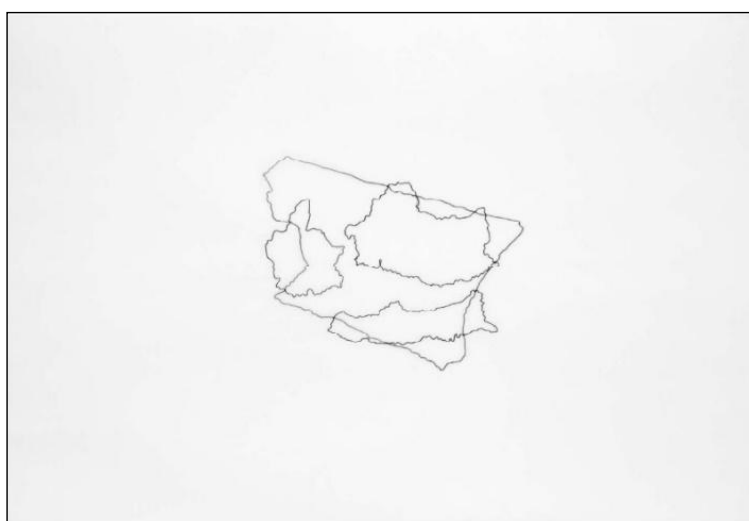
The three studies aim to give visibility to the political and active dimension of children in the movements of which they are part, in order to problematize the tradition of guardianship and protection from which childhood readings tend to be woven culturally and institutionally. Focusing on social movements, in addition to the important role of discussing the centrality of their historical struggles, is also a political strategy expressed by these studies.

Social movements emerge in the fight against inequalities, which deepen based on differences that, when taken as signs of power and prestige, produce places of subalternity and marginalization as counterpoints. Children are involved in this process, experiencing rights violations, revolts and uprisings. Their presence, in addition to being physical, is also drawn from action, participation and positioning, which pose as questions the need for protection, in the face of the historical violence of State repression, the opening of spaces for listening and dialogue for their specific demands, arising from the condition of being a child, and the definition of methods of political and aesthetic expression that meet these demands. It is these discussions that gain space in the aforementioned research, seeking to expand studies on childhood based on the perception of effective action by children in the social processes of struggle, confrontation, mobilization, change, building and production of meanings.

Understanding that childhood emerges as a concept within a Western, white and bourgeois context, which locates it in the relationship with the family, school and the State, is the same as assuming that it is not supported by the reality of children from the lower classes. Thus, the historicity of childhood, in its materiality, grounds the understanding that the emergence of looking at children also has other starting and ending points that are not colonized and are still little discussed. The historical significance of this understanding calls us to seek other meetings to formulate new questions and new perceptions about the ways in which we see, think and relate to children, questions that the university's meeting with social movements allows us to formulate.

Final considerations, or on possible and necessary meetings

Figure 6: Ribeira Grande and Rio Maior meet Feliz Deserto



Source: Redin (2011, n.p)

Contrary to what the names in Mayana Redin's drawing may suggest, at first glance, Lagoa (Lagoon) is a city in the Algarve region, Ribeira Grande (Big Creek) is on an island in the Azores and Rio Maior (Large River) is a Portuguese parish where the river was transformed into a dyke to better control its floods. The meeting that the artist invites us to between these places that bring water in their name and the desert is a movement that replaces the question of that which is "given" as a construction that brings with it an ideological meaning, as Leandro Konder (2003) recalls. This is because the desert in question, which meets the Portuguese regions, is a happy desert (Feliz Deserto) because it already has an entire ocean to call its own – an ocean that keeps it 6,000 km away from Portugal.

Thus, Feliz Deserto is not a desert in geographical terms. Located in the State of Alagoas (Brazil), this municipality is part of the country's coastal region where the climate is semi-arid. Aridity that finds happiness in the crystal clear waters that bathe it. Like the work of Mayana Redin (2011), the history of the municipality also tells us about meetings, specifically the meeting between the Dutchman Domingo Mendes and the Caeté people. It is difficult to find historical records about that European, beyond the few and complimentary words that the local city hall makes public on its website about the shipwreck that led him to populate the town. A town already populated by the Caetés. On the other hand, it is possible to know a story about these people that also tells us about a struggle. Named "enemies of civilization" by friends of barbarism, accustomed to hegemonic readings of historical processes that see Indigenous culture as primitive, the Caetés were so named due to the resistance with which they sought to preserve their existence and the culture of their people, in the face of the looting of their lands, the violence of colonizing and colonialist enterprises and the process of subalternization resulting from the production of fanciful and fallacious beliefs about them. Given this context, experienced and relived in the many meetings between white Europeans and native peoples, at what cost or under what assumptions was happiness founded in this desert? And what makes it deserted even today?

Lagoa, Ribeira Grande, Rio Maior and Feliz Deserto have as a point of convergence the fact that they are spaces that look like one thing, but are another. A lagoon (lagoa) that never was a lagoon. A big creek (ribeira grande) that could be something else. A river (rio maior) that is no longer there. A Brazilian desert that, happy or sad, is made of beaches and resistance. Following in the footsteps of Walter Benjamin (1987), we ask ourselves "what if" things were different? What if the names mentioned here were literal? What if the stories unfolded from other threads? Mayana Redin's meetings would certainly have a different design, a different intention. It is also in the name of what things can become, in the future that we are building based on the dialogues we are weaving today, that it is important to evoke the meeting between the dimensions of research and teaching, and also of the university and social movements, in the production of knowledge about childhood, the ethical, theoretical, political and practical place where we drive in our battle flags and from where we wage our struggles.

It is the university as a hub for the meeting of different types of knowledge that moves us, as teachers and researchers, to defend a production of knowledge that considers science, art and life in their ethical, aesthetic and political perspectives, as dimensions that need to be put into permanent dialogue, one problematizing the other in formulating its questions and fertilizing each other in the

reconstruction of the “data” with which we read the childhood experiences with which we relate. Without losing sight of the tension in the power relations existing in the hierarchy of knowledge, as well as in the spaces of production of this knowledge, we understand that it is no longer possible to make deserts known by naming them “happy” while, behind them, the trail of violence and silencing that unilateral and monological production evokes multiplies itself. If what we want is to democratize our social experiences, in the continuity of the historical struggle for memory, truth, justice and equity, it is important to begin a process of democratization of the very relationships from which we produce the knowledge that we make public in our research and in our teaching practice.

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