Article

LINHAS CRÍTICAS

Dossier | Listening and participation in research with (about) children

On listening to displaced children as rights holders in Mozambique and Brazil

Escuta de crianças deslocadas como sujeitos de direito em Moçambique e Brasil

Escucha de niños desplazados como sujetos de derecho en Mozambique Brasil

Marina Di Napoli Pastore Luciana Hartmann

Highlights

Displaced children, immigrants, and refugees narrate experiences of displacement and living in different territories.

Participatory and collaborative methodologies help promote children's sensitive listening.

Children's narratives and expressions should be considered part of public policies for children.

Abstract

Based on the understanding that children are subjects of rights, this article proposes a dialogue between research projects conducted in Mozambique and Brazil with children who inhabit different territories of passage, such as camps for displaced people and shelters for immigrants and refugees. Through methodologies that promote active listening to these children, it was found that a large part of the policies for displaced people focus on emergency issues and do not provide spaces for children's expression. This reflection aims to collaborate in the implementation of public policies that enable the full integration of these displaced children into the social life of their territories.

Resumo | Resumen

Keywords

Children. Minority groups. Listening. Public policies in education.

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Introduction

> On the way to the second camp, I remember asking about the work of doctors in this region:
> “How does the medical aspect work? I would like to send some children from the project there for evaluation...”
> “Oh, they go to the camp once a week, but there is no fixed base there. Which children?”
> “Some, I think, have scabies and a boy who is bleeding when he urinates.”
> “Blood? How do you look at these things?”
> My mind froze when I heard: “How do you look at these things.” Was he asking if, by any chance, I was violating some line of ethical knowledge about children's well-being? Or, more perversely, would I have seen the blood in the urine? I go back to that moment and answer: “I asked.”
> “Did you ask?”
> “Yes. I looked at him, and he had a look of pain on his face. So I turned around and asked: Are you okay? and he replied: My pee is coming out with blood when I finish.”
> The person looks at me with doubt. I return the same look. And I ask the medical team to evaluate it. The whole way, this dialogue stays in my head. What doubt would he have? I have many, and they must remain unanswered. That question now calls for another: how do the people who work with these children see them? Look, see? Have we worked with them or with programs about them, without them? The camp for displaced people approaches, and the work begins to take shape in the children who come to meet us. (First author’s Field Notebook)

This description, taken from the field notebook of one of the researchers, occurred after research and action work in camps for children displaced by war located in Northern Mozambique (Africa). Although it is an excerpt from a situation experienced there with one of the children, we believe that this excerpt portrays the daily lives of other children who live in spaces of passage, of transition: a gap between childhood and place, between child and knowledge.

As if children did not answer for themselves or if only adults were capable of answering for them. This description activates our interest in relating two research works conducted with children on the move, with common perspectives: the understanding of children as protagonists of their stories and producers of cultures, who have their understanding of their contexts and who deserve to be listened to. This article aims to emphasize the importance of listening to children, especially those in extremely vulnerable situations, who live in transit spaces, such as camps and shelters for displaced people, immigrants, and refugees. We believe that this listening is fundamental in the creation of public policies for children, as it guarantees the recognition of the child based on their references and experiences as a subject of rights.

Contrary to an adult-centric view of the services and spaces offered to children on the move, this article is sewn between the lines of thorough and attentive listening, aiming at a collective production of data on children's understanding of their realities. From the exposure to the context of two distinct transit territories, inhabited by children with — or without — their families, located in Mozambique and Brazil,

we seek to defend the importance of listening and direct participation of children in research to guarantee the construction of an ethical, aesthetic, and political space that defend childhood in its diversity of manifestations.

In this article, we seek to show how the theme arises in our research fields, emphasizing issues involving assistance and education, aiming to collaborate in the creation of public policies, national and international, that integrate displaced children, considering their conceptions, experiences, criticisms, and reflections on the realities they experience.

Displaced children: a theme revealed in the field

As Lopes and Vasconcellos (2006) mention in the article “Geography of childhood: infantile territorialities,” our theme also emerges from the field and the observation of territorialities inhabited/experienced/felt by children. In our recent research, we came across children living in camps or shelters for immigrants/refugees displaced due to political and economic crises or armed conflicts in Northern Brazil and Northern Mozambique. Accompanied, for the most part, by at least one family member, these children often had to leave their homes with only the clothes on their backs, a pair of shoes (if they had any), and little, if any, personal belongings. Many of these children did not have identification documents or any proof of education, information about their health history, or even references from other members of their families. Even more dramatic was the situation of those who traveled alone, without a responsible adult, rendering yet another classification: children on the move and unaccompanied.

Ferreira et al. (2022) raise three reflections on anthropological interfaces in public policies: 1) How do anthropology and other studies participate and contribute to the public policy debate, considering their methods and theoretical conceptualization?; 2) When are researchers invited to outline some possible paths for implementing public policies?; 3) How do these researches, particularly those involving children, impact public policies?

Inspired by the authors, we asked ourselves how field research, carried out through active and participatory listening to children, can collaborate to formulate specific public policies for children on displacement.

The text that begins the introduction allows us to reflect on the point about who listens to these children or who listens to what they believe they hear. Children who live in camps for displaced people or shelters for refugees tend to suffer various invalidations or silencing, specifically those that concern the specificities of being a child, their temporalities, territorialities, opinions, desires, memories, and experiences.

During a moment of listening to the children in one of the camps in Northern Mozambique, B., aged 15, said: “We were three siblings, but now we are two,” — the 20-year-old sister had been missing since 2020, and no one had heard from her. The family left their village, left their home, and in this coming and going, also

left their sister. At another moment, S., aged 17, cries when revealing that he had been alone there since 2019 and what he felt most was homesick: “I want to go home. Even if the house doesn't exist, if the *machamba* [garden] isn't the same. Home is where my family is.” R., 13 years old, resident of an immigrant reception center in Brasilia, Brazil, also talks about the journey:

> *Antes de venir para acá, para Brasil, nosotros estuvimos en Colombia, en el Ecuador y en el Perú, pero nos pasaron muchas cosas malas allá, pues nos robaron y... Îbamos allá a al a Ecuador hacia una vida mejor, pero nos robaron y tuvimos otra vez para atrás. (…) Llevamos un año caminando. A veces pegamos cola y a veces no, a veces caminábamos. Por la ruta. De noche y de día. (…) Nosotros vivíamos pues en la calle. Vivíamos en la calle porque a veces no teníamos para pagar un hotel para dormir. Así que como no teníamos, a veces dormíamos en la calle.*

The journey of R.’s family “hacia una vida major” took them through three countries, and after losing the few resources they had, they returned to Venezuela and then crossed the Brazilian border and managed to enter the country as asylum seekers.

In their few years of life, the three young people have already faced different roads, different shelter situations, and many losses. How did/do they deal with this displacement process? What are the impacts of these experiences on their bodies and behaviors?

In our ethnographic experiences, we have observed that policies for immigrants, refugees, and people on the move prioritize, to a large extent, shelter, security, food, health, hygiene, and the guarantee of social rights, which is understandable if dealing with contexts characterized by extreme vulnerability. These policies, however, provide little— or no— direct action or attention to what children think and feel. The examples above, from initial conversations, made us think about how the displacement and status acquired by these children end up being silenced, most of the time, in the name of a State of protection. How can we reconcile a State of protection with listening to children, favoring the creation of public policies for children, and especially with children in these spaces? Are displaced children deterritorialized or reterritorialized? What do they think about this, and how do they feel in these spaces??

F., ten years old, a Venezuelan sheltered in a shelter in Brasilia, comments on the shelters she visited in Roraima: “There were many families there in Boa Vista. We stayed in a refuge called Rondon 5. There were many families there. There was Rondon 1, Rondon 2, Rondon 3... Rondon 3 was full of sick people, aunt!”.

About life in shelters, M, aged 12, also from Venezuela, says:

> Then I came to Brazil and well, I stayed in Boa Vista for several months, I studied in Boa Vista… I lived in the Rondon 4 shelter for eight months. In Brasilia, I have been with my dad and stepmother for two months. I don't get along very well with my stepmother... Well, my present just now is good. I spent two months here in this house, in Brasilia. I have had a better time here than in Boa Vista. Oh, in Boa Vista, there were more people, and here there are not so many people. There were a lot of people there, but it was good. I thank God for everything.

For Haesbaert (2007), one cannot think about “deterritorialization,” which would be the loss or destruction of territory, “or rather, our processes of territorialization (to emphasize the action, the dynamics), without there being a reflection on its counterface, that is the intense and complex process of ‘(re)territorialization’, in its multiple aspects, here considering the multi-territorial process, of ‘concurrent coexistence of different territories’” (Haesbaert, 2007, p. 20).

Inspired by the reflections that Roselete Aviz de Souza (2012) constructs during her research on the relationship between listening and territory with children in Mozambique, we find the notion of “sound territory,” developed by Obici (2006), cited by the author, who invites us to explain the conditions of the subjection of listening, such as power relations, delimitation of territory, fabrication of subjectivities, among others. We, therefore, propose to think about the re-territorializations that can be carried out by children and young people in situations of displacement based on the establishment of new sound territories, which, in this research, involve the radicalization of their listening and the consequent repositioning of power relations between adults and children. These territories involve their bodies and experiences, their inhabited places, hiding places, escape, paths, and arrivals, often provisional. How are these so-called “transit” territories configured and inhabited for months and even years by children? We need to know the territories to be able to listen and understand children. To do this, we will now enter some camps for displaced people in Mozambique and shelters/reception centers in Brazil.

Displaced children are somewhere: ethnographic description of the camps

Our research has been carried out, as already mentioned, in two different countries: Brazil and Mozambique. Addressing the issue of migration and displacement in these countries requires, in our opinion, a description of the spaces in which migrant and displaced populations pass through as territories. Territories of arrival, passage, experience, and being. For short or long periods, camps have been home to many children. Knowing the configurations of these spaces allows us to adequately approach and understand the experiences and perceptions narrated by the children who live in them.

Our first description comes from the first author of this research, carried out in camps located in Mozambique. The province of Cabo Delgado currently has 90 camps for people displaced from the armed conflict occurring in northern Mozambique. On the border with Tanzania, Cabo Delgado is the scene of armed conflicts that have been occurring since October 2017, being one of the main points of attacks perpetrated by a non-state armed group against the civilian population.

According to Doctors Without Borders (2021), although the reasons for this conflict are multifaceted, the consequences are clear: almost 700,000 people are internally displaced, living in fear and insecurity, and without access to basic goods and services such as food, water, shelter, and health care. In 2023, the estimated

number of displaced people will exceed one million (Madureira, 2021, n.p). In the period between January and February 2023, the first author collaborated with a team from the *Project Capoeira for a Future* [*Projeto Capoeira para um Futuro*] in two camps for displaced people, each of which had an average of 12 thousand people, of which 5,000 were children/young people between 0 and 18 years of age.

In the first camp, known as the "place of arrival," the newcomers were grouped in a large house with 16 rooms, occupied by families of up to 4 people, until the other houses were available. Without bathrooms, with open spaces in communal latrines, people took turns. In this house, which made room for 64 newcomers, it always ended up "fitting for one more": the number of displaced people could vary, per day, by up to 250 new members. The houses opened up spaces for more people, at the same time that the structure was increasingly less welcoming. After around 15 days, the families were relocated to halfway houses, where they would stay until they could return to their villages and towns, when— and if— this was possible.

The houses, made of sticks and bamboo, covered with tarps, had two rooms and housed entire families. When there was no room, people divided themselves into welcoming families: those who welcomed newcomers who were left without homes. The tarpaulins, which served as a cover and roof, were donated by the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Humanitarian Agencies present there. If it rained or was windy, the tarps flew or tore. When a family moved, they took the tarpaulin with them, and only when there was another donation would the houses have a "roof" again. The families that stayed longer in the camp gained garden space (*machamba*) and planted and harvested crops. Those who had just arrived had to wait for new spaces to be provided.

The camp was divided into five neighborhoods, with around 350 families in each. Each neighborhood had a community leader who reported to the camp leader on crucial issues. It is worth mentioning that some families were made up only of "unaccompanied" children, who came without adults or remained in the place alone due to various causes, such as the disappearance or death of adult family members, the search for safety, the choice not to return, among others.

Among the other spaces, we can also list a large courtyard where some sporadic activities took place, such as football or volleyball, which depended on some external voluntary action; the mobile health clinic (which was actually stationary); the camp school; the church, intended for all religions except Islam (as the attacks carried out by armed groups are attributed to jihadist groups, banning the presence of the religion and the mosque was a form of punishment by the Government, although it disregards that the majority of the population is Muslim); Child-Friendly Space, where actions to protect children and women take place; and, finally, the newly built shed for capoeira.

The activities aimed at children at that time were only capoeira. It is worth noting that, in the first camp, the work occurred with 100 children.

The second camp, slightly smaller, had around 10 thousand people, of which more than half were children. The space was very similar to the first, with the difference that there was a more organized configuration since, as it was not a place of arrival, people were structured there like a village.

Those responsible for the children were more active and were present. In this camp, we were not aware of the existence of unaccompanied children. There was the clinic space, the school, the courtyard, the court, a recently opened NGO building, where activities were carried out with younger children, and also *machambas*. Like in the other camp, the houses were made of bamboo or sticks and covered in tarpaulin. There was no sanitation or garbage system, and the latrines were in the open.

At that time, with classes suspended due to school holidays, capoeira was the only activity the children had. For reasons of human and financial resources, in this second camp, it was only possible to work with 50 children.

The second description arises from the second author of this research in some of the transit territories in which Venezuelan migrants and refugees settle when they arrive in Brazil. In 2022, according to data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR - UN refugee agency), in Roraima, a state on Brazil's northern border, around 7,000 Venezuelans were living in 9 shelters coordinated by *Operação Acolhida* [*Operation Hosting*]. Created in 2018, *Operação Acolhida* aims to guarantee humanitarian assistance to Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Roraima, the main gateway to Brazil from Venezuela, through the integrated action of federal employees, military personnel, professionals from international organizations, and civil society entities. The number of Venezuelans who have left their country of origin since 2013 due to the political, financial, and social crisis exceeds 5 million. From these, as of June 2022, around 763,000 had already passed through or settled in Brazil. According to data from the R4V Platform (2022, n.p.), in August 2022, the country had granted temporary or permanent residence to 311,951 Venezuelans, besides 90,870 asylum seekers and 49,824 refugees hosted in the country. It is estimated that more than 30% of this migratory flow is composed of children and young people. How do these small migrants live? What do they do and think?

In January 2022, still under the restrictions of the COVID-19 (Corona Virus Disease) pandemic, we began research intending to verify the impact of the pandemic on the schooling of immigrant and refugee children. To this end, throughout the year, we conducted field research in shelters, NGOs, and reception centers in Brasilia (Federal District) and Boa Vista and Pacaraima (capital of Roraima and city bordering Venezuela, respectively).

Our research is methodologically guided by a perspective that we have called ethnographic-performative, which starts from the anthropological premise of observation and recording but is also crossed by artistic languages (Hartmann et al., 2020). In this way, observation is not just participatory; it is purposeful, poetic, and performative WITH the children. Children's histories emerge, thus, while

reading a book, playing theatrical games, sharing Brazilian and Venezuelan songs, creating toys with unstructured materials, or, simply, while adults and children blow soap bubbles because bubbles fly in the wind, without borders.

Our contact with Venezuelan children began in Brasilia at Casa Bom Samaritano, an institution located in a building provided by the CNBB, managed by the Institute of Migration and Human Rights and the Voluntary Association for International Service (AVSI) Brazil, which welcomes Venezuelan families for up to 90 days. The House has the structure to accommodate up to 94 people or 15 families and provides support within the scope of the *Project Hosted by Work* [*Projeto Acolhidos pelo Trabalho*] so that migrant families can find jobs and housing in the Federal District and the region. The families that arrive at Casa Bom Samaritano come from shelters in Boa Vista and voluntarily request relocation. For children, therefore, Casa is another territory of passage that they experience, as we have already read in the statements of F. and M. mentioned above.

Working with children in transit territories involves many challenges. One of them— perhaps the main one— is that you never know which of them will still be there the following week. We quickly understood that the activities would have to start and end on the same day. Another challenge was dealing with a wide age range, ranging from infants to teenagers and young people up to 18 years old, ensuring everyone's involvement in actions that were simultaneously fun and safe. Most children were also unaccustomed to group organization routines, common in school spaces, as they had stopped studying since leaving Venezuela.

In this context, the Venezuelan children began to tell us about their journey to Brazil[1], their time in different shelters in Pacaraima or Boa Vista, the family members who stayed… Many mentioned: “I came from Rondon 5”, “I lived in Rondon 1.” To get a clearer idea of how these shelters were configured, in November 2022, we decided to meet them in person.

There, the structure is organized in a way common to many refugee camps spread across the planet: a large, fenced plot of land with limited and protected access to ensure security, modular UNHCR houses organized in long corridors, common spaces for meals, bathrooms, health care rooms, documentation... And many, many children, walking everywhere. In some shelters in Roraima, there is the presence of an NGO, Pirilampos, which is especially dedicated to carrying out artistic and educational activities with children but its physical space and employees cannot accommodate all the children in the shelter, which can easily number a few hundred.

As soon as we arrived at the Rondon 1 shelter, which had just been added to Rondon 4, now having more than 2000 residents, we noticed a group of eight or nine boys[2] surrounding an army soldier who worked in Operação Acolhida. He

1 Oliveira (2021) will specifically address the challenges and displacements of Venezuelan children and adolescents in Roraima.

2 We can see here a clear gender division among the children who moved through the shelter, but we will not delve deeper into the topic due to the limitations of the article.

seemed to understand the reason for the approach and, smiling, distributed *dindins* (a type of popsicle) to everyone, reminding them that they should help clean the space. When we asked if they attended school, only one responded affirmatively. And when we asked about what they did in their free time and what they played with, they were unanimous in answering: “Nothing!” One added: “Before, we had a ball, but after it broke, we have nothing left to do.”

To this “nothing,” children respond creatively with different games, ranging from drawing in the dirt, made with a stick, to an improvised football game with a plastic bottle. But what is at issue here is not just what children do but what adults do not do. Most of the adults at the shelter are so busy ensuring the lives of the sheltered people are maintained that they are unable to listen to the children's demands, which could be as simple as some balls to play with.

Between places, policies, and actions: active listening with displaced children

Adults do not always offer children attentive and interested listening. And this often applies to the academic field and care practices, as they are still rarely included in analyses in the socio-anthropological field. In childhood studies, children are considered subjects of rights and participatory, but many still operate within Eurocentric and normative references, concepts, and discourses with adult-centric logic.

It is necessary to go beyond the obvious to understand the complexity with which cultures and societies approach and deal with children. The obvious, in contexts of studies on displaced children, with emphasis on those who live in regions to the South of the global map (such as those in this article), means operating from the perspective of lack, negativities, diseases, poverty, conflicts, of the migratory route, of what was left “behind.” Going beyond the obvious, in the case of our research, presupposes listening to children to understand, in their terms, their experiences in these territories of passage, also amplifying them as sound territories.

The denial of differences and diversities, both in contexts and in relationships caused by external and internal conflicts, seems to persist today, whether in policies or ways of thinking and working with children in the North of Brazil and Mozambique (Abebe & Ofosu-Kusi, 2016; Imoh, 2016).

At a time when, in different areas of knowledge, children have been talked about as social actors and agents of their process and how they organize and produce their lives through inter-relationships and their own and collective productions, it seems inoperative and, it is, in a way, dehumanizing, not listening to children and observing how their socio-historical-cultural being is constituted (Cabral, 2007; Faria et al., 2015).

Another point that catches our attention regarding displaced children is related to how their social structure has been understood or denied. Children have been placed at the mercy of a lack of social protection that follows a protocol already established in these places without there being an opening for dialogue with them. One of these examples happened on a Saturday morning when, in conversation with children in one of the camps, the following scene happened:

> It was around 9 am, on a somewhat cloudy day, when the children arrived, little by little, at a slower pace than usual. With gloves on their hands, they entered one by one and sat down on the floor. Some girls took off their gloves and placed them to the side, while boys used the gloves for capoeira training. When asked about that new accessory, they say: “We won at the agriculture queue.” Agriculture queue? But, well, what was that?
>
> D. O: every day, there is a new *bicha* [queue][3]: for seeds, for uniforms, for tarpaulin, for water. Today was agriculture: a truck came and told us to line up. They gave us a watering can, gloves, and a small shovel. I immediately took the glove for myself, I knew my mother wouldn’t even use it! But this watering can, I don't know who came up with this idea. It was better if they gave us a bucket so we could use it to collect water, take a shower, warm up, and drink tea. We’re not even going to do anything about this scene (watering can)! But ya, we're used to it. (First author’s Field Notebook)

This excerpt makes us reflect on two views: the role of NGOs in these camps and the place of children in their opinions.

Grosfoguel (2019, p. 76) argues that “South-South dialogues and alliances are important today more than ever. We cannot conceive a civilizational change without counting on allied political actors from the African, Asian, Latin American, and southern worlds within the north.” But, within these alliances, do not we also come across orders and impositions drawn in a vertical line, made by adults, without context or listening to/with/about children?

One of the policies to protect the rights of the children inside (and outside) these camps is focused on offering classes and guaranteeing their right to go to school. In the case of Mozambique, the school is located within the camp since the “outside” geographical space (although there are no walls in the camps) cannot accommodate the large number of children who live there. With a school built inside the camp, without mobility to come and go and without contact with other children, the school ended up being, once again, exclusionary.

In a conversation with a group of girls, they said they miss going to school. When asked whether or not they were enrolled, they stated: “Here we go to school, but it’s different. Nobody knows how we speak, and you know, this isn’t a school, there’s no wall, there’s no *casa de banho* [*bathroom*][4], we don’t even have TPC[5]. They say we don’t have paper, so that’s it, that’s it, and we’re left like that.” In the camps in Cabo

3 In Mozambique, the Portuguese used follows Portugal’ grammar rules. “Bicha” is the equivalent of queue, "fila," in Brazil.

4 “Casa de banho” is a term that, in the Portuguese spoken in Mozambique, refers to the bathroom.

5 “TPC” is an acronym for “trabalho para casa”, which means homework.

Delgado, education and classes were offered by a Swedish NGO and were necessarily carried out in Portuguese, without opening up the understanding of other mother tongues, such as *Makonde*[6]. The language factor, in a country with 32 mother tongues, as is the case of Mozambique, must be considered, especially with children who are in a situation of displacement, as armed conflicts are caused precisely by political disputes between different local groups.

In Brazil, some Venezuelan children sheltered in Roraima can enroll in public schools, but this does not guarantee their reception or integration. Language also appears to be an impediment. More than one child told us that some teachers often say: “We don’t speak Spanish here at this school!”

The school, understood as a right of children and a duty of the State, seems to be, in situations of humanitarian aid and emergency policies, something imposed that does not dialogue with the realities of children and does not even consider the very meeting space that the school occupies in the lives of children. Education in camps is also often distanced from reality or inserted into a logic that does not understand children as interlocutors of knowledge and wisdom and does not provide a basis for the current situation in which children find themselves.

Persist the barriers to an education that aims to be accessible, equitable, and active in children's participation and development, as government programs and humanitarian aid intend. We can mention some aspects, such as insufficient or non-existent physical space and school structure; the layout of classes and the subjects taught; the absence of teachers, and the unpreparedness of some; the use of physical violence as a form of punishment and coercion; the mandatory use of the Portuguese language, which hinder the understanding of the content and school development itself; the lack of materials, among other aspects (Costa, 2009; Basílio, 2010; Pastore & Barros, 2018).

Displaced children, placed in shelters, camps, or halfway houses, have their daily lives governed by actions that, in most cases, do not match their expectations, as in the examples mentioned above. Authors Tatek Abebe and Yaw Ofosu-Kusi (2016) open a discussion on how children are often seen from the perspective of vulnerability and innocence, being placed as “passive victims” and not agents of rights and active participants.

In an excerpt from the article “Beyond pluralizing African childhoods: Introduction,” when discussing the studies of African children, Abebe and Ofosu-Kusi (2016, p. 304) point out that:

> Children are seen as growing up in contexts removed from forces of modernity, infrastructures and technology. […] Nor are perspectives on African children deemed useful in and of themselves — as an end — but as an analytical tool to sharpen ideas about how childhood should be in the minority world.

If there is an understanding that Mozambican children, displaced within their own country, or Venezuelan children within South America, move due to crises, would be

6 Makonde is one of the Mozambican languages spoken in the Cabo Delgado region.

there room for a discussion within the “South-South” references about these crises in theories and ways of understanding childhoods?

A question arises as researchers in these scenarios: is there room for other forms of sharing through which topics such as education, housing, fears, insecurities, and traumas can be debated?

Betting on an affirmative answer, we invest in different participatory, collaborative, and performative methodologies through which listening to the children can be promoted and valued, as explained below.

Producing data with children: active forms of listening in favor of children

During our fieldwork, we carried out a reflexivity exercise, which we would like to share in this text: are the data produced by children, not only in interviews and questionnaires but in other forms of expression, properly validated by researchers? Is it public policies that leave children out, or are we, adults who carry out research, practices, and articulations, the ones who also do not fully consider their expressions and opinions?

The challenge we propose here is to think about how we can guarantee the participation of children, both in our research and in the construction of public policies, essentially those of protection and care within shelters and camps for migrants, refugees, and displaced people. How can we think about public policies that dialogue with children and their pluralities? How can we look for or develop references in which the presence of children and their tastes, smells, sensations, thoughts, voices, and productions appear? The first point is to understand the specificities of displaced children and the relationship they establish with the territories they inhabit. Understanding that no single form of childhood is temporally and culturally decontextualized (Prout & James, 1990), we dedicate ourselves to thinking about displaced children based on their paths, wanderings, passages, and arrivals.

By questioning childhoods in the plural, we also question this colonizing, adult-centric, and unique way of reflecting on theories, methodologies, and understandings about and of children and childhoods in their spaces and times. If we understand childhood as the result of crossing social variables (such as race, gender, sexuality, religion, place of residence, ethnicity, and social class), diversity cannot just be a finding; it is the starting point.

We consider the coexistence of identities based on cultural differences in the different ways of existing that are articulated in the common life of a camp or shelter. The different trajectories and specificities of life in these contexts produce the experiences of the children who inhabit these spaces. Seeking to access these experiences, we used different participatory methodologies. In addition to listening to the narratives during playful activities carried out in our field research, we selected to discuss in this article a methodology that is very representative of our

approach, body mapping, which contributed to provoking the reflection proposed here.

Gastaldo et al. (2012), based on a study carried out in Ontario with immigrant and refugee women, discuss the use of body maps and their definition as images of the body and its representation, in which there is a process of creating maps through the use of drawings, paintings and other art-based techniques to represent aspects of their lives, bodies, and emotions. Another article by Matos et al. (2018) describes the use of the body map as a possible narrative methodology about bodily practices; in children, it is used to identify behaviors such as anxiety and anger. Do children only narrate what adults are looking for, or can they follow safer paths for themselves if we allow different forms of expression?

When we understand, in our research, the body map as a feasible way of telling stories through which children express their feelings and experiences, we open dialogues with other expressive possibilities of children, positioning them as subjects of rights and protagonists of their stories.

In the camps in Cabo Delgado, for example, the body maps began a process of bonding with the children. More than identifying their traumas, the children were able to speak and be heard. In one of the reports brought by A., aged 13, when asked about the time he was in the camp, he said: “Since 2020, when we fled through the bush. But this is the first time I’ve been asked that.”

In his body map production, he reported how conflicts were being traced in his body and behavior: tension in his shoulders, nightmares, and chills. The suspicious eyes ruled out the possibility of closeness, which, after a certain insistence mixed with delicacy, pointed to a joint path: making the body map a bridge between suffering and pain, the openness to understanding and listening to what seemed prohibited.

Some children showed other possible paths: after talking about their experiences, they asked to draw and, almost unanimously, the drawings were a colorful house, a machamba, an encounter with a memory from the past, or a desire for the future. On the other hand, the work carried out within these camps and transit places rarely addressed notions of the future and perspectives beyond shelter.

We were also able to notice that pain perceptions varied according to gender. The boys talked more about memories, affection, and how much they missed home. The girls, in turn, talked about the pain they felt in their bodies and how they had started after the conflicts. Although each child had their particularities, we noted an emphasis on aspects involving longing for their previous life and home, as well as psychosomatic pain.

The children, in general, were receptive to the methodology used, and all ethical care was taken to ensure the safety of those who participated in the project, such as individualized monitoring and support from the occupational therapist. Many stories were brought up, and many sensibilities were addressed, touched, and opened.

During a conversation, in a particularly sensitive moment, one of the girls narrated the following scene: “It was night, and we heard footsteps. They knocked on our door, and *papá* [dad] told us to shut up. They left, and we left. But they hadn’t gone. They caught *papá* [dad] and told us to run. I only heard shots and screams, and I didn’t look back.” N., 15 years old, said she stayed in the forest, on an escape route, “for a few days. I think five,” until she arrived at camp. Her main memories evoked the hunger and thirst she felt and the fact that she couldn't stop crying about what happened to her father, for fear that “the worst could happen too.” After the story, we decided to do a dynamic with the children and talk about the situation mentioned and, to our surprise, a superior order stopped us, with the prerogative that “talking about death can traumatize children. Here we talk about positivity, notions of the future, and education.” When we tried to understand this order, we were surprised by the “we don’t talk about war here. War is a very heavy term to talk about with children. We use ‘armed conflicts’” (D., 28 years old, monitor).

These phrases, spoken by adults, show the split between reality and the disconnection with what is experienced inside the camps. If children talk about war, why does the term need to be different when listening to and welcoming these situations? Is it the children who are not prepared to talk about their traumas or the adults who still have obstacles and taboos in listening to what they have to say?

International Humanitarian Law distinguishes between two categories of armed conflicts: a) International armed conflicts, in which two or more States face each other, and b) Non-international armed conflicts, between government forces and non-governmental armed groups, or only between these groups. Its differentiation from the term war is the formal declaration or recognition of the status of war (Hussek, 2017). Governmental and international bodies establish these differentiations and, once again, do not consider the voices and listening of the children. When we carried out a dynamic with drawings, the children drew moments from the war, naming it this way: war. In a place where neither the State nor the policies or basic recognitions of being a child reach, why is International Law the one that defines children's feelings?

Final considerations

To conclude, we would like to return to one point: how have South-South theories interacted with displaced children? The reflection that emerges from the experiences in our two fields of research is that feelings, sensations, experiences, desires, and plans do not seem to come into play when the main issue for adults is survival and urgent social protection care.

Social and public policies in Brazil and Mozambique still have very little dialogue with the realities of change, with traffic, and, mainly, with sensitive, attentive, and participatory listening to children. The examples we brought, of moments shared and experienced within shelters and camps, were only possible because we related to immigrant, refugee, and displaced children as subjects of rights, full social agents in their differences, diversities, and otherness.

In South-South theories and childhood studies, over the years, paradigms have changed. However, displaced children and ways of working with them are still focused on problems, shortages, and the provision of so-called basic needs. To think with displaced children based on their listening is to rethink the forms of the South-South and the theories and marks of colonization still present in different countries.

Displaced children are children and, as Durham (2004, p. 498) states, “to call someone a youth is to position him or her in terms of a variety of social attributes, including not only age but also independence-dependence, authority, rights, abilities, knowledge, responsibilities, and so on."

Listening to children in a participatory way opens meanings and sensibilities to their worlds, territories, experiences, paths, journeys, and stops. When their words, gestures, songs, drawings, and opinions resonate, we will have public policies more in tune with their real demands.

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About the athors

Marina Di Napoli Pastore

Higher Institute of Health Sciences, Maputo, Mozambique
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5924-8719

Higher Institute of Health Sciences, Maputo, Mozambique
Professor in Higher Institute of Health Sciences (ISCISA), Maputo, Mozambique. PhD in Occupational Therapy from the Federal University of São Carlos (2020). Full professor at the Instituto Superior de Ciências de Saúde. Member of the research groups Infâncias Protagonistas: a collaborative proposal to create public policies for the integration of immigrant and refugee children in Brazilian schools; Grupo Crias: children, society and culture at UFPB; and LinCAr Arte África (FAPESP). Email: marinan.pastore@gmail.com

Luciana Hartmann

University of Brasília, Brasília, Brazil
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1203-5027

Professor at University of Brasília, Brasília, Brazil. PhD in Social Anthropology from UFSC (2004). Full Professor of the Performing Arts Course and the Postgraduate Program in Performing Arts at the University of Brasília. CNPq Research Productivity Scholarship – level 2. Leader of the Imagens e(m) Scene Research

Group. Coordinator of the International Research Network Protagonist Children: migration, arts and education. Email: lucianahartmann@unb.br

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Resumo

Partindo do entendimento de que as crianças são sujeitos de direito, este artigo propõe um diálogo entre pesquisas realizadas em Moçambique e no Brasil com crianças que habitam diferentes territórios de passagem, como acampamentos para deslocados e abrigos para imigrantes e refugiados. Por meio de metodologias que promovem a escuta ativa destas crianças verificou-se que grande parte das políticas para pessoas em deslocamento centra-se em questões emergenciais e não preveem espaços de manifestação das infâncias. Esta reflexão intenta colaborar na implementação de políticas públicas que viabilizem a integração plena das crianças deslocadas e na vida social de seus territórios.

Palavras-chave: Crianças. Grupos minoritários. Escuta. Políticas públicas em educação.

Resumen

Partiendo de la comprensión de que los niños son sujetos de derechos, este artículo propone un diálogo entre investigaciones realizadas en Mozambique y Brasil con niños que habitan diferentes territorios, como campos de desplazados y albergues para inmigrantes y refugiados. A través de metodologías que promueven una escucha activa de estos niños, hemos verificado que gran parte de las políticas para personas en movilidad se centran en temas emergenciales, y no proporcionam espacios para la expresión de los niños. Esta reflexiónpretende colaborar en la implementación de políticas públicas que permitan la plena integración de estos niños desplazados en la vida social de sus territorios.

Palabras clave: Niños. Grupos minoritarios. Escucha. Políticas públicas en educación.

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