

A school-environment between poetics, narratives and experimentations¹

Um ambiente-escola entre poéticas, narrativas e experimentações

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ABSTRACT

To rethink the clichés that surround both the school space and the environmental education field, we ask ourselves: what are the potentialities that flourish in what we could call the school-environment? By proposing an intersection of boundaries between the terms “environment” and “school”, we refer to a school environment that exists in its diversity of affections, encounters and events. Schools are currently the target of ultraconservative discourses that aim to suppress their inventive potential of creating other spaces and temporalities. In the course of this research, we opened ourselves up to the possibilities of inventive environmental forms of education and we also moved towards a resignification of the school space, while we experience the narratives, poetics and differences that inhabit it. In a municipal public school located in Florianópolis (SC), we invited ninth grade students and a group of workers to participate in workshops that enabled experimentations in environmental education on the following questions: what narratives and poetics populate this school-environment? How do these narratives relate to the differences and multiplicities present in this school-environment? The field diary was an important device for delineating these issues. In a collective process of creating other ways of relating to such a space, we carried out different experimentations with narratives and poetics along with this diversity of collectives that exist inside a school.

Keywords: Narrative. Experimentations. Environmental education. School. Difference.

¹ Research funded via study grant from the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES). Translated by David Ian Harrad. E-mail: davidharrad@hotmail.com

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RESUMO

Na busca de repensar os clichês que circundam tanto o espaço escolar quanto a educação ambiental, perguntamo-nos: quais as potências que pulsam no que poderíamos chamar de ambiente-escola? Ao propormos uma porosidade de fronteiras entre os termos “ambiente” e “escola”, referimo-nos a um ambiente escolar que existe na sua diversidade de afetos, encontros e acontecimentos. Escola que atualmente é alvo de discursos ultraconservadores que visam suprimir sua potencialidade inventiva de espaços-tempos outros. No percurso dessa pesquisa, abrimo-nos às possibilidades de educações ambientais inventivas e nos movimentamos também rumo a uma ressignificação do espaço escolar, adentrando nas narrativas, poéticas e diferenças que o habitam. Em uma escola pública municipal situada em Florianópolis (SC), convidamos estudantes do nono ano do ensino fundamental e distintos trabalhadores a participarem de oficinas que possibilitaram experimentações em educação ambiental em torno das seguintes perguntas: quais narrativas e poéticas povoam este ambiente-escola? De que forma estes narrares se relacionam com as diferenças e multiplicidades presentes neste ambiente-escola? O diário de campo foi um importante dispositivo para o delineamento dessas questões. Num processo coletivo de criação de outros modos de nos relacionarmos com tal espaço, ao realizarmos diferentes experimentações com narrativas e poéticas junto a essa diversidade de sujeitos escolares, mobilizaram-se as dimensões do afeto e do encontro em distintas práticas em educação ambiental.

Palavras-chave: Narrativa. Experimentações. Educação ambiental. Escola. Diferença.

The unveiling of a school-environment

Schools are currently being considerably questioned. As indicated by Masschelein & Simons (2014), their most emphatic critics position the school as a place of boredom, outdatedness, and apathy. As we have seen recently, it is also criticized for its political positions and ways of relating to knowledge, as is the case with ultraconservative projects such as the “School without Political Parties Project [*Projeto Escola Sem Partido*]”, which sees teachers as potential abusers of a “captive audience,” in this case underage students, even comparing them to pedophiles (PENNA, 2017). One of the most immediate consequences is that the terms “gender,” “sexuality,” and “race” are being systematically expelled from municipal, state, and national education plans. Moreover, teachers who address the issues of difference and identity in the classroom are also subject to persecution.

However, in setting of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had made face-to-face contact between the different subjects that go through schools unfeasible, the importance of schools as an environment of affections and possibilities of encounters, of socialization and sociability, becomes even more explicit.

When talking about the environmental education that takes place in schools, we can consider that both this theoretical-practical field and the formal teaching space mentioned above are widely problematized by academic research. When reflecting on the practices traditionally carried out in environmental education, we usually come across a series of elaborations that sometimes seem to crystallize and limit the possibilities of this field. Barchi (2014) questions the dangers of an environmental education with pastoral bias that seeks to impose a single way of understanding the environment, ignoring the multiplicities of possible existence. The author suggests that other forms of environmental education, often seen as maladjusted and unsuited to a hegemonic institutionality, also want to affect and make themselves present in educational spaces. As he adds:

It is an action in the gaps, in the crevices, through labyrinthine trenches of progress and overcoming, fleeing and escaping, in which these perspectives seek to act, because they know that they cannot, alone, establish supreme and unique, incontestable truths about environmental education and about a form of police that standardizes and controls ecological actions (BARCHI, 2014, p. 243, our translation).

Environmental education can be considered, in its most commonly presented form, as one of the main ways to achieve an idealized vision of “harmony” with the environment, although this vision of balance is hardly supported by biological theories about nature (CARVALHO *et al.*, 2011). The same authors state that environmental education is becoming an ecocivilizing promise, advocated by the values of living well ecologically. This mission is close to a belief of moral structure, where consolidation of the ecological subject is understood as a way of resolving the conflict between culture and nature. In this way, the perspective is to overcome a *civilizational malaise* that is generating degradation, discomfort, and unhappiness. As they argue:

In the sense of environmentalization of social practices, it can be said that the grammar of ecology in our time is, above all, moral: knowledge that serves for us to walk correctly around our “home”. In other words, the search

to operationalize a healthy environment for everyone interweaves learning processes and the construction of ecological identities that, to some degree, refer to normative aspects of individual formation, generating implications for the ways in which individuals and groups conduct themselves or should conduct themselves (CARVALHO *et al.*, 2011, p. 38, our translation).

Sampaio & Wortmann (2007) problematize, in the field of environmental education, what is being considered as natural or not, “so that what is understood as ‘natural’ does not have an intrinsic meaning, but is constructed in culture” (SAMPAIO; WORTMANN, 2007, p. 137, our translation). When analyzing discourses of elementary education teachers who participated in a continuing education course for environmental educators, the authors saw that their discourses sought “to define what is natural, putting in evidence what is not, and this last possibility should be reviewed and transformed” (SAMPAIO; WORTMANN, 2007, p. 137, our translation). Before judging or qualifying environmental education models as right or wrong, the authors invite us to reflect that they are important producers of ways of seeing, thinking, and relating to the environment.

Environmental education is constantly having to deal with its own clichés, including the repetition of images of fear and anguish driven by a world in environmental, social and political collapse (HENNING *et al.*, 2015), which often direct us to ways of exercising an “ecologically responsible” consumerism, subjected to market logics and that does not promote deeper transformations in the social sphere. As a stage for the creation of environmental education activities, the school can fall into the repetition of the same themes and discourses, but it is necessary to point out that resignifications and experimentations are also possible in this space. Henning *et al.* (2015) advocate the importance of “provoking the subjects with whom we live to think about possibilities of resistance and creation when looking at environmental education beyond the discourse of fear and danger” (HENNING *et al.*, 2015, p. 195, our translation), in order to turn to possible encounters with experimentation, politics and philosophy. Ruptures that can expand its field of possibilities:

When we think about environmental education practices at school, some actions immediately come to mind: planting a vegetable garden, working with waste recycling, developing a campaign linked to some environmental problem faced by the community in question, visiting a protected area, among others. We can say that these are some of the pedagogical clichés of the current environmental education scene. We do not mean that, because they are clichés, they are not practices that

produce meanings, ways of thinking about the environment and our relations with it. They are actions that are usually part of everyday school life and can bring students, teachers, and the community closer to questions about the environment, instigating their involvement with collective activities (SAMPAIO, 2017, p. 29, our translation).

Thus, can work at school regarding the environment go beyond these issues which are seen as typically “environmental”? As important and necessary as these activities seen as typical of environmental education are, what is or what should be an “environment”? An environment can also be interpreted and lived by its set of relationships, sensibilities and events (GUIMARÃES, 2010). Moreover, as we have become aware of the multiplicities that inhabit the school space, the issues related to differences have become central to the theoretical debate we seek to enter. As Hartmann provokes us: “if the school is thought of in the singular, how could it welcome the plurality of bodies, voices, and knowledge of its students?” (HARTMANN, 2017, p. 59, our translation).

Skliar (2003) points to a pedagogy of the Other that returns and reverberates within us, that can vibrate with the Other and does not intend to reveal or bare its mysteries. This author brings us a possible displacement between the other that is “close” to us, and, therefore, understandable, visible, and assimilable; and a radical other, therefore unassimilable, incomprehensible, and unthinkable. Furthermore, Skliar suggests the power that exists in the encounter and in affection with differences, especially in educational spaces.

Thus, this article aims to articulate inventive and affective encounters between environmental education, school, and difference. We move through possible (re)creations that can be catalyzed by different ways of thinking and doing environmental education in this space. Our starting point is in the sliding and vanishing lines that erupt in the field of environmental education. They are ruptures with a type of environmental education that affirms a pastoral bias towards a “global salvation” through the formulation of consensus seen as universal. We deviate from a vision that seeks to be totalizing, that prescribes behaviors and judgments considered to be ideal in order to achieve its goals and that describes environments without subjects which have endless multiplicities.

At the same time, we observe the cracks and crevices in which “other” forms of environmental education are sprouting, like weeds that grow uncontrollably. Forms of environmental education that may (or may not) constitute themselves as lesser (GODOY, 2008), that are attentive to the powers that emerge from subjects that come “from the margins” (REIGOTA, 2010) and are open to multiplicity and invention (GUIMARÃES; SAMPAIO, 2014). Forms

of environmental education that create fissures in the so-called sustainability device, which continuously entangles us through its networks of knowledge, power and subjectivation (SAMPAIO; GUIMARÃES, 2012).

This research is taken from the dissertation by Martins (2019), entitled “An environment called school: Narratives crossed by affections and encounters”. By entering a particular school as researchers, as will be narrated in the next section, we felt the need to approach theoretically the concepts of environment and school. By proposing a porosity of boundaries between these two terms, we invented by composition the word “school-environment”, an environment that exists through its multiplicity of affections, encounters, and events, which multiplies itself in an infinity of subjectivities, be they human or not: from the students that flutter around the classroom to the birds that visit the school’s guava tree; from the teachers that, gathered together, drink their coffee during the break, to the plants that sprout, grow, and branch in the outside areas, perhaps hidden from inattentive eyes. An environment that is present even in an eraser forgotten in some corner of this school. A school that is not a single and homogeneous environment, but countless environments that exist within themselves. Taking the risk of creating the term “school-environment” awoke this kind of reflection in us.

Experimenting (at) school with differences, poetics, narratives...

We are affirming a way of relating to the other, to other ideas, to other schools, to other lives. It can be a thought, a book, a building, a path, a question, a school, a human being. It is about the other, the stranger, the foreigner. The movement that generates the presence of the other, in thought and in life, is always destabilizing, moving, unsettling. It is also the engine that allows the world to be (seen, thought, and lived) differently (KOHAN, 2017, p. 604, our translation).

In the quote above, the author tells us about otherness, which necessarily destabilizes us, moves us and worries us, transforms us, and also about those others that inhabit the classrooms, the playgrounds, the canteens with their indelible presences. The school is this meeting place between many ‘others’, who bring memories, stories, and knowledge. But this meeting space can be potentiated or obliterated. Kohan states that “the School without Political Parties

project [*Escola sem Partido*] is one of the ways in which this fear of the renewing power of the school is materialized” (KOHAN, 2017, p. 595, our translation). He says that this renewal is based on Hannah Arendt’s premise, in which education only makes sense as a response to the fact that human beings are born into the world, these new generations being the ones who have in themselves the potential to reinvent the world. Kohan points to a way of thinking that is open to inventiveness as one of the forms of resistance to this project, school creations that reject the gray and authoritarian world of a “School without Political Parties”.

Skliar presents important contributions on the issue of differences at school, as well as pointing out possible ways to break with the logic of homogenization of subjects in this space. As he argues:

This discussion would gain nothing by adding something that has already been studied a great deal: institutional education, the educational institution, the school, is a product of what we call *modernity*. The conclusions, already known, about the relationship between modernity, education, and school are evident: the time of modernity and the time of schooling tend to be, like reproduced sheets, like decalcomanias, temporalities that only desire order, that are obsessed with classifying, producing homogeneous, intact, textual sameness, without fissures, safe from all contamination from the other; the spatiality of modernity and the school space tend to be, like blood sisters, spatialities that only sought to diminish the other far from his territory, his language, his sexuality, his gender, his age, his race etc. (SKLIAR, 2003, p. 198, our translation).

What possibilities of pedagogical experimentation can vibrate before the differences of the subjects at school instead of ignoring them? When thinking of other paths for environmental education in the school space, besides approaching the theorists that reflect on difference, we also dialogue with the invention processes described and proposed by Kasper (2014) and Guimarães (2010). We also enter affections and encounters as ways to destabilize the “research method”, if this method follows the models of the measurable, the representative, the impersonal and the disaffected. Narratives are a powerful means to establish this dialogue:

In this sense, our interest is to investigate how an environment (a wide and disperse network of relations) could be configured into a place (a more specific, more focused, but no less intricate plot), through a narrative (full

of meanings and experiences) built by us, researchers, from the discourses, drawings, and photographs woven by the people who live in a certain territory (GUIMARÃES, 2010, p. 14, our translation).

Considering the articulation between environment and school, and inspired by the possibilities of narrative and poetic invention with difference, we proposed the holding of workshops with staff and students of the Beatriz de Souza Brito Municipal Elementary School, located in Florianópolis, capital of the State of Santa Catarina. Our first contact with this public school was due to the fact that the first author of this article had worked temporarily in this space as a teacher in the 2016 academic year, although at that time he had no intention of conducting academic research. While working at Beatriz School, he was close to a school community that welcomed a multiplicity of subjects: students-teachers-staff of different sexual orientations, races, social classes, religions, nationalities (some students had emigrated from countries as different as Paraguay and Guinea-Bissau, as well as students coming from the interior region of Santa Catarina and northeastern states of Brazil).

The school-environment is also multiple and it is in this multiplicity that its power to create other worlds lies. Some questions were mobilized from this first meeting, triggering questions for doing and thinking with regard to the relations between environmental education and school, such as: how do these multiplicities converge, interact, conflict and pass through this school-environment? What narratives and poetics, whether oral, written, or visual, are populating this school-environment? In what ways do these narratives relate to the subjects that inhabit it, with their differences and multiplicities? How can we give vent to the multiple powers coming from the affections and encounters that permeate this environment?

The school-environment concept seeks to blur the boundaries that are usually imagined when discussing environmental issues at school. The school is also an environment in itself, in a sense closer to a stage of relationships, a patch of subjectivities embroidered in encounters. A space of crossings of different colors, beliefs, and ways of existing. We emphasize that the school is by no means isolated from the surrounding community, so that there are no precise boundaries delimiting where this school environment begins and ends.

Beatriz School is located in the Pantanal neighborhood, which is close to the Federal University of Santa Catarina, which provides the school with an intense interaction with the university community through extension projects, teaching internships, actions of different groups of the Programa Institucional de Bolsas de Iniciação à Docência - PIBIDs [Institutional Program of Scholarships

for Initiation to Teaching], among others. When the field work of this research was carried out, in the second semester of 2018, Beatriz School was attended by 486 students from the 1st to the 9th grade, in the morning and afternoon periods, and had a staff of 35 employees, including teachers and pedagogical and administrative support professionals. It is important to point out that the school management is elected democratically by the school community, a characteristic that is very important for its democratic administration and for community involvement in school matters.

The experimental and investigative workshops took place two years after the first author's experience as a teacher at this school². In this (re)encounter with its subjects, two main lines of encounter and experimentation were proposed. The first one involved four workshops during regular school hours with a group of 9th grade students, in a partnership established with the school's science teacher. The choice of such a group was mainly due to the fact that a large part of the students had been students of the first author of this article when he taught there in 2016, when they were still in 7th grade. These workshops had very diverse proposals, seeking to provide moments of creation of narratives and poetics about the school environment in different languages, whether oral, imagetic, written and even from the students' own bodies, in the case of a workshop that had the proposal to address the theatricality and performance of their narratives, from a perspective based on the work of Hartmann (2017).

The second part of the workshops took place with a group of teachers, administrators, and other school staff. These employees were selected based on an interest in achieving multiplicity of voices and positions within the school, without the pretension of presenting the discourse of certain individuals as "representative" of a certain group or category. However, the presentation and discussion of these activities will not be focused on in this article, but can be read in Martins (2019).

The creation of a field diary by the first author, who was the main mediator of the workshops with students and staff, was central in this investigative process. The diary was written during the workshops that were held with students and employees, acting as an important companion in the construction of narratives. Medrado, Spink and Mélo (2014) point out that diaries have been constituted historically as a confessional genre, which encompasses autobiographical records, personal diaries, memoirs, correspondence etc. Those authors go into in-depth discussion of this textual genre:

² This research was submitted to and accepted by the Ethics Committee of the university to which this research is affiliated, and the school staff and the students' guardians signed a Free and Informed Consent Form. The students signed a Free and Informed Assent Form.

In the same measure, we need to recognize that these texts assume in the lives of those who write and those who read them much more than a simple relationship between language and action. They are object of love and hate, depending on the moment in which the research is built. They are object of curiosity for those who have the desire to access them. One fears to lose them, like a friend. In short, they constitute actions that, therefore, produce effects, mobilize affections, are active in play (MEDRADO; SPINK; MÉLLO, 2014, p. 277, our translation).

Medrado, Spink and Mélo (2014) propose that diaries should not be used as “data collection instruments”, but rather as “active” characters in the design of research, seeking to break away from subject-object binarism and suggesting that they are also actors in the potentialization of research. In this way, the diary is not seen as an instrumental object, which records pure information, but rather as a being that produces intensities and mobilizes affections.

As those researchers add, diaries are “a set of fragments (in the format of topics, speech excerpts, flows), which are subsequently subjected to narrative organization” (MEDRADO; SPINK; MÉLLO, 2014, p. 282, our translation). It is in the diary that the speeches, contexts and dynamics of the field-theme emerge, where the researcher is encouraged to expose “his opinions, impressions, discomforts, in short the ‘affections’ produced in the encounter with their interlocutors” (MEDRADO; SPINK; MÉLLO, 2014, p. 285, our translation). It is an important means of reflecting on our doubts and anxieties, anxieties and pleasures, a true “living archive” to be reinvented and rewritten. We propose, therefore, that the field diary be viewed as an active part of this research, especially when narrating the affections and encounters that cross our bodies in the research gesture.

Our field notebook was prepared mainly before and after the workshops, seeking to develop issues that affected the first author, taking as a starting point the encounters triggered with this school-environment and its subjects. The sensations and desires that were most active at each moment during the investigative process are inscribed and written in it. We do not consider it to be an impediment to revisit and rewrite it at later moments, precisely because of its organic nature.

Narrate, poetize, affect...

As Oliveira provokes (2014): “can education research dance?”; followed by another thought-provoking question: “What form of life pulsates and does not stop moving in educational territories?” (OLIVEIRA, 2014, p. 284, our translation). Cartography was an inspiration for research as a method that is open to experimentation. By painting worlds, the researcher affects and is affected in the ensuing encounters. As the aforementioned author adds: “In these cartographic encounters, the elements of a given territory of investigation are always in a relationship of movement, defined only by their power to affect and be affected” (OLIVEIRA, 2014, p. 296, our translation). The cartographer has, therefore, the challenge of “giving language to affections that appear” (ROLNIK, 2007, p. 23, our translation), and to being displaced by them.

In this section we will present some of the pedagogical experiments that were done with Beatriz School students, in order to set in motion the concepts and theoretical propositions we formulated, especially those related to what we are calling the school-environment. We have chosen to present the field diary excerpts of two workshops carried out with a 9th grade Escola Beatriz class. It is worth mentioning that they are only a fraction among a great diversity of visual, oral and imagetic narratives that were created during the workshops.

In 2016, still as the students’ formal teacher, the first author made a proposal to them. Before developing the theme “environment” with the class, he suggested a photographic challenge. Armed with their cell phones, the students wandered around the school in search of flashes of what this “environment” might be within the school space. At this initial time we did not try to conceptualize it for the students, seeking a more or less approximate impression of what their “prior knowledge” about this term might be. The images, at a first glance, show nature without human presence. Only in one of them (out of a total of 112 photographs) is there a part of a student’s body, in this case, her feet. However, some human constructions and interventions, such as part of the school building, the houses in the neighborhood, and even a corridor, are present in some of the photos.

In the course of this research, the processes that accompanied the production of each photograph and the multiplicity of meanings became the target of our investigation. What are the powers that inhabit these images? How often can “pedagogization” of an image impoverish and enclose it? Instead of explaining and dissecting its meanings, we seek to let the poetry of these images overflow, to expand their senses and sensibilities instead of circumscribing them. Studies such as that conducted by Conceição (2017) which examines how images

that are considered to be clichés, made from concepts such as sustainability, can be re-elaborated by building new narratives. In the same vein, Guimarães & Silveira (2014) present the possibility of reconfiguring and reinterpreting clichés, taking as a starting point the cultural repertoires and everyday experiences we carry with us when we encounter an image. The authors provoke us with a disturbing question: “do images act”? Taking the answer to this question to be affirmative, how can we respond to the flow of their force, which is often impossible for us to stem?

The following is an excerpt from the field diary written on August 10, 2018, containing an account of the activity done with the photographs taken by the students two years earlier:

I arrive early at the classroom, giving me plenty of time to prepare the environment. I arrange three strings stretched in front of the blackboard, making a clothes line of images and words. On the two upper strings, I arranged twenty different images that had been taken by the students two years earlier, when I had challenged them to photograph the school “environment”. I challenged myself to break into shards the verses of poetry I had written inspired by their photographs. On the lower string, held there with clothes pegs, I put the individual words that had formed these poetic experiments I had with their images. From the potency of these imagetic narratives and the “word-shards”, my aim was to let the students’ perspective differentiate new poetics and narratives. Narratives pregnant with other narratives.

As the students arrive, I notice how this class has a great plurality of subjects, totaling 31 individuals on the roll call. More than half the class is Black. The number of girls and boys is more or less equal. Two of the students in this class have intellectual disabilities. These are just some of the differences that exist among these subjects, among many others.

I present the project to a class that has an attentive and thoughtful gaze. I explain to them how my research project will be and say how it will bring some challenges as it is being built. I point out that they will be co-creators of this research, which will focus on the encounters, affections, and relationships among the people in the school, and that we will work with the creation of stories and poetics, with photographs and theatrical games.

I take some of the exhibited photographs off the clothes line and talk to them about this process of creating images of the school “environment”. How we sometimes miss interesting details in the images, such as the bird’s nest on one of the school’s trees, or a black-billed toucan hidden in the branches. I emphasize the importance of developing the ability to read images. An ability that we use daily, almost without realizing it, when we read photographs, people, landscapes... I say how their images made me risk writing poetry. Poetry that I have broken down into the words that are on the lower clothes line.

We thought together about how, in the photographs, some patterns are recurring, such as flowers, for example. Why are there very few people in the photos? Is there really an absence of people and their bodies in this school environment? On the other hand, how was your body positioned when the picture was taken? How would you bring your own body into these images? What image of this school-environment would we make if we saw it with our big toe, our right heel, or our left knee?

What caught your attention? How was that day? What routes did the photographers take through the school? How would we map them? What hidden places did they go through? Looking through the other person’s eyes.

What does the image say about the other person who created it? How would you place yourself in the other person’s image? How would you narrate what is happening there? I try to propitiate small exercises, openings of space, for a dialogue with differences. Displacements and changing the way we see things.

Finally, I conclude: what does this image awaken in you? I ask pairs of students to choose an image and a word that somehow affected them, that aroused their interest. Taking affection as the main mobilizer of this choice.

From the chosen image and word, what kind of invented story or narrative could be imagined? The challenge is to create either a poem, or a short fictional narrative about the Beatriz School environment, taking an image and a word as inspiration. These narratives could be about the photographers who took the picture and what they were doing at the school. What does the school’s guava tree, which appears in one of the photos, have to tell us? Cause narratives to blossom forth by looking at these school-environments (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 – PROLIFERATION OF BLOSSOMING, RIVERS, NATURE...



SOURCE: First author's personal collection (2018).

The other workshop we would like to present, held on August 15, 2018, was partially inspired by theatrical dynamics from the work of Augusto Boal (1983), creator of the Theater of the Oppressed³, as well as from the first author's personal experiences with theatrical improvisation:

3 The Theater of the Oppressed brings together theoretical reflections, theatrical exercises and body games developed by Brazilian theaterologist Augusto Boal. Some of its characteristics are the search for democratization of theater, reflexive-critical practice with the purpose of political and social transformation, as well as contestation of the roles of the oppressed/oppressor in society. The dissertation "Environmental Aesthetic Education and the Theater of the Oppressed: Foundations and Common Practices", by Eduardo Silveira (2009), presents in more detail the power of the Theater of the Oppressed, especially in its closeness to and distance from environmental education.

Window onto the body

The Church says: the body is guilt.

Science says: the body is a machine.

Advertising says: the body is a business.

And the body says: I am a party.

- Eduardo Galeano (1994, our translation).

After meeting with Teacher Arthur and the students, I tell them that the class will be in the upper playground, where we will do some rather different dynamics. An activity that will involve the body, the environment, and the relationships between them.

After we all walked up towards the school's sports area, we formed a circle in the center of the playground. We start by waking up bodies that are still sleepy. I ask each one to start stretching (or to invent a form of stretching), so that the rest can copy it. Teacher Arthur and I jokingly suggest how science teachers walk with their bodies locked.

I put on some instrumental music and ask the students to walk around the circle that is in the middle of the court, first having the challenge to be silent. The students have strange looks on their faces. What is our former science teacher trying to propose? I ask them to pay attention to the way they walk and the sensations that accompany this displacement. Wander open to experience and what happens. After an initial strangeness, the ice melts and the body warms up.

I ask them to look at their companions. How difficult it is to look at the other, and, reciprocally, to be looked at. And, with the narratives that I am building, the school-environment is transformed. The body becomes heavy, dense, as if walking on the bottom of the sea. One feels the environment like a scavenger. A few moments later, the body is light as a feather or butterfly and the desire is to jump, to scream, to fly! At one point I ask them to invent a strange way to walk, a way to move bizarrely through space. Unique, singular. Laughter reverberates in the environment with the extravagant performances they invent.

I say a number and a part of the body. How about inventing unlikely matches between these parts? Two index fingers. Quite introspectively, everyone sticks the tips of the index fingers of their right and left hands firmly together. Three knees. It is clear that this will only be possible in a relationship with the other. Four backs. And the students' bodies compose the most curious architectures in the school landscape (Figure 2). They look like picturesque flower-people scampering around Beatriz' School yard!

FIGURE 2 – RELATIONSHIPS THAT BLOSSOM.



SOURCE: First author's personal collection (2018).

Five toes. Six heels. Some kind of art occurs in this encounter with the school-environment. Especially when we allow ourselves to affect and disaccustom our sensations.

I ask the students to go back to walking individually, but soon I make another unconventional request: that they get together with whom they consider to be as similar as possible to themselves. Some students almost instantly join together in pairs, like old friendships being reunited. However, several of them are left alone, waiting for someone to meet or relate to. And one of these students states emphatically:
- No one is like me.

Then I ask them to pair up with someone who is very different from themselves. It is thought-provoking to see how no one remains alone this time. I ask them to look for a few long seconds into the eyes of this person who is so different from them. One of the students even reverberates his gaze with mine. To vibrate with difference, to dance with it, as Skliar's

writings have invited me to do. And smiles and laughter, even if with a certain shyness, invade the space.

At a later moment, I explain to them the idea of the high, medium and low planes of occupying space in the theater. The challenge is to create the most inventive statues possible on these different planes. And these students' statues tell amazing stories of ballerinas and monks, herons and dragons, poets and athletes, superheroines and funk music lovers... How incredible the body is, and how performance makes it transmute, turn over, reinvent! It is also curious to observe the relations that are improvised between the statues (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3 – BODIES NARRATE, PERFORM AND AFFECT.



SOURCE: First author's personal collection (2018).

But we're already getting close to the end... Calming the steps... We stop. And we return to the circle. I ask them to socialize this brief experience and the sensations that accompanied it. One of the students smiles and says that all the classes at school should start like this, that it brings the class together and brings them closer, "leaving their cliques behind".

I also talk to the class about how challenging it is, as a teacher, to escape from disciplinary pigeonholing. To break with the idea of the body-machine that one kind of science brings, and think about how this same body can also be creation, sensation, art, among other infinite possibilities. Also to tear up the dehumanized environment, and see it multiply in encounters, relationships, and affections.

After saying goodbye to Teacher Arthur and the class, I leave the Beatriz school-environment with a pleasant party going on in my body.

The life power of the school-environment

In this article, we proposed the concept of school-environment in order to highlight how we consider the two elements of this conceptual composition to be imbricated, highlighting how this opened possibilities for us to create environmental education practices instigated by the notions of encounters and affections. Encounters that affect us. Affections that encounter us. Thus we chose to think and do environmental education: composing poetics and narratives from the multiplicities, from the differences that populate the school space. In this way, we point to how such a concept can be powerful in provoking unease and displacement in relation to clichés and crystallizations that often accompany environmental education that takes place in schools. It is our understanding that the notion of school-environment helps us to break with the idea that the school is be a place without nature – which we understand as plural – or that the environment is dehumanized, absent of sensitive and affective relationships that we can establish with it.

In this way, the environmental education we experimented with could expand the scope of what it is potentially capable of mobilizing in a school environment. By constituting a broader understanding of what an environment is – read, in turn, through the key of differences and relationships –, relevant and unique experiences could be developed with the subjects that cohabit the school. In this sense, it is interesting to comment that sometimes, during the development of the workshops at school, we noticed reactions of surprise, or rather, of non-recognition of the actions that were carried out, as environmental education practices. This made us reflect on how familiar some school activities in environmental education have become, so that proposals that are different, escaping these formats, are seen as something that is not environmental education. Therefore, we refer to a hardened and crystallized environmental education and move in search of other experimentations,

connections, narratives, creations, trying to transfigure what is understood to be and expected to be environmental education.

Revisiting the questions posed in the second section of this article, we can understand how such questions were fundamental in the inventive movement of research inspired by cartography. Multiplicities converge, interact, conflict, and cross the school-environment in endless ways. We could see, in the narrative of both the first workshop and the second, how the students affected and were affected by a multiplicity of beings and events: a guava tree, a little bird, a photograph, a mutual gaze with a colleague, theatrical gestures to be discovered in one's own body...

Through these encounters, this research proliferated narratives and poetics in the school-environment. An instigating example was the poetic writings made by the students in the first workshop, when confronted with the familiar-strange images they themselves made two years earlier. In these experiments, weaving relationships with the differences and the multiplicities of the subjects present, we tried to trigger inventive processes through the possibility of "changing the way we see things". We thus oppose a technocratic and productivist vision of education, which seeks to desert the school environment of its power of encounters and affections towards difference. Therefore, we turn to the school as a renovating and inventive force, capable of providing other spaces-times.

Before finalizing the text, we would like to say that we consider it fundamental to take back to the school some of the reflections and productions that it provided us with through this research. To this end, we chose a day when the school was open to the community, enabling presentations of their productions, workshops, musical presentations, among other playful and interactive activities. So we set up an exhibition of the narratives and poetics of Beatriz School students and staff, among a rich mosaic of activities, affections, and encounters that happened on that day. We close this text with a resounding excerpt from the field diary written on that occasion:

My *tsurus*, the little paper birds of different colors and sizes that I carefully folded in the days leading up to the event have spread all over the school. They fly under the hibiscus branches in the school. They hang from a clothes line. They occupy the outside walls of the classrooms. They are in the hallways, in front of the school office. Each one carries narratives and poetics under its wings. They are the images, discourses, and writings that have been produced by the people I have come across in this school. *Tsurus* that are an attempt to embody the fluttering affections that I experienced at Beatriz School. A school that is wings, life in movement, displacements.

The gates open and the children and teenagers begin to arrive. Some are still sleepy, others are already running around and doing stunts in the green areas of the school. Sounds of lives in the making, affectations in everyday life. Before wondering what this student will be when he or she grows up, what is he or she at this moment? In all his or her fullness of being and feeling? A creative force that constantly reinvents the environment around it.

Between meetings and greetings, the professionals of this school face yet another day of work, be it in the office, in the canteen or in the coordination office. The teacher enters the classroom. The blackboard is empty and there is room for many, perhaps infinite, worlds on it.

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Text received on 12/04/2020.

Text approved on 05/31/2021.