

THEMATIC SECTION:  
RESISTANCES AND REEXISTENCES  
IN EDUCATIONAL SOCIAL SPACES IN  
TIMES OF NEO-CONSERVATISM



## **Pirilampo-Schools Survival as a Way of (Re)Existing**

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**ABSTRACT – Pirilampo-Schools Survival as a Way of (Re)Existing.** This article target is to create a dialogue about various Brazilian schools' everyday struggles in order to survive. Getting along with negation and daily disqualification, lots of schools have been producing new senses in their practice to keep themselves alive. They survive, resisting and (re)existing. Nowadays there are other didactics, different temporalities, singular modes of responding to system impositions, among a great number and variety of produced manners which constitute schools dynamics. Considering the complexity of everyday relations, the processes of invisibility which act out in these relations as well as the solidarity networks, which stand out of this context allowing us to discuss the idea of surviving as a way of (re)existence. **Keywords: School. Everyday Relations. Survival. Resistance.**

**RESUMO – Sobrevivência das Escolas-Pirilampo como Modo de (Re)Existência.** O objetivo deste artigo é dialogar acerca das muitas lutas cotidianas pela sobrevivência das escolas brasileiras. Convivendo com negações e desqualificações diárias, muitas escolas vêm produzindo novos sentidos em suas práticas para sobreviverem. Sobrevivem, resistindo e (re)existindo. São outras didáticas, diferentes temporalidades, modos singulares de responder às imposições do sistema, dentre muitas e diversas maneiras produzidas que constituem a instância do fazer nas escolas. Considerando a complexidade das relações cotidianas, os processos de invisibilização que atuam em tais relações e as redes de solidariedade que delas emergem, discutiremos a ideia de sobrevivência como modo de (re)existência. **Palavras-chave: Escola. Cotidiano. Sobrevivência. Resistência.**

## Introduction

This article's main purpose is to discuss the many daily struggles of Brazilian schools survival, which are inscribed as subversions against a hegemonic model that subordinates them. As we propose mapping the specific potency of everyday knowledge that fits into the *spacetimes* of some schools, we do recognize a true capacity for historical and political resistance in such anthropological survival vocations. Although many rather opt for a dissatisfaction narrative produced by the counter-movements that overshadow such *knowledgemaking*<sup>1</sup>, the survival of these schools is right there, like the glow of the fireflies: a pulsating and fragile light.

Using a Pier Paolo Pasolini's narrative, written in the 1970s, as starting point and used by Didi-Huberman in his book, *The Survival of Fireflies* ('A Sobrevivência dos Vagalumes', in Portuguese, Didi-Huberman, 2011), where the Italian writer and filmmaker says that he used to go to a grove near Rome to observe fireflies and, at the same time regrets their disappearance, which he attributes to the city's growth and consequent imbalance of the natural environment. Didi-Huberman points out, however that the insects had not really disappeared and, that in order to see them in this new and very bright urban nucleus conditions would require a new 'way of seeing' more attentive and thorough, a look that shifted from ones' usual point of view. Therefore, the proposal here is to present flashes of fireflies – simple but powerful – sparkles that show themselves in solidarity networks, weaving alternative solutions as resistance movements in ways of being, doing and researching. We are thus dealing with *firefly-schools* knowing their intermittent brightness, since *firefly-schools* are in all education systems. They are always those far away from the major centers, have few classrooms and students, usually not invited to education department events and projects, located in remote places where there is no internet signal or even analog landlines phone, are the last ones to receive school and meals supplies, such as uniforms, books and ingredients for the students' meals. Those are the *firefly-schools*.

This research is conducted in Duque de Caxias municipality, a metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro State whose school system is composed to this date<sup>2</sup> of 180 schools, distributed in four city districts: Duque de Caxias (first district), Campos Elíseos (second district), Imbariê (third district) and Xerém. (fourth district). The schools we named 'fireflies' are in Xerém district and, by the Municipal Law No. 1369 of July 15, 1997, have been characterized as *'hard to reach'* schools, which provides a corresponding bonus payment to teachers who work in one of them. There are eleven school units, located within the Tinguá Federal Biological Reserve or in the access to it and, with the exception to the bonus received by the teachers they are subjected to the same regulations as any other schools in the municipality. However, compared to the other schools in Duque de Caxias, these school units shine like fireflies on a bright day. Overshadowed since they are located far from the city center, are small in size and quantity of students served, different

in the way they weave their daily lives in or near environmental zones, such hard-to-reach schools have been resisting the spotlights projected on them, which define as an ideal school the large units of the urban part.

Seeking the glow of fireflies when the big lights stay on is not a simple task, for it is about subverting or diverting our gaze from what is obfuscating us. More than that, is about making believable when much of the threads that weave our daily networks maintain the *Paradise's* brightness as a “regime of truth” (Foucault, 2007). Thus, we think that it is only possible to know these firefly schools' clarity through a *firefly way* of researching, so in this sense we researched schools to see fireflies, to seek for the interstitial, intermittent and nomadic space, situated in the unlikely, in the crevices and possible glares of the “after all” (Didi-Huberman, 2011). Reflecting on these firefly schools survival, may risk limiting the term to a set of speculations that regard them as subsisting after a loss. However, the meanings for the survivals narrated in this article, overflow this parameters since we are dealing with new ways of existing, (re)existences.

Didi-Huberman, philosopher and art historian, when researching the images of Aby Warburg notes that to grasp the sensitivity of the images it is necessary to have as a guiding thread a concept as fundamental as misinterpreted: the survivals. According to him,

[...] We are faced with an image as before a complex time. In this perspective, the work of art is not so easily resolved by history, but rather is presented as a 'dynamic meeting point' of some heterogeneous historicity and over determinations: relationships with multiple dimensions of life, with the ways of acting, thinking or to believe, without which every image would lose 'its own blood'. Thus there would be an internal dynamics of the images, a time of their own: dense, because it is formed of overlaps and mixtures between particular historical instances. The survival, from the German term *Nachleben*, is this time's name (Didi-Huberman, 2013, p. 41).

The impervious perspective that haunts the firefly schools and that sees their closure, certainly does not allow the contemplation of the flashes presented by the heterogeneous historicity that constitute them. These schools are, therefore, survivors in their ways of being and acting.

According to Latour (2012), survivals are directly related to modes of existence. Some groups according to the author, were constituted with other ways of weaving policies, relationships and existences. However, they live under the astonishment of a Western policy impregnated with a fundamentalism that is translated in all countries by undisputed values.

We are under ecological embarrassment - that is, under the embarrassment of this character named Gaia. Everyone finds themselves under the constraint of survival with all these collectives who have completely different versions of

nature, the beings of the world, the modes of relationships. All collectives are faced with a new situation: the tension of the Earth, this globe that erupts in all collectives, including the traditional ones (Latour, 2012, p. 506).

The fireflies that we research, in the same way, are showing their daily survival through their *practicedthought* refusals, negotiations, meetings, reinterpretations, their own experiences, movements, resilience and sustainability. In opposition to the fundamentalism of politics with its games of interests and powers, Latour proposes a new conception of composition and with such idea intends to overcome the modern and increasingly exhausted intransitive dichotomies. Composition, for Latour, is an expression that replaces the classic definition of politics: the common world is not established immediately, but it must be collected little by little to consolidate a diplomatic way, whatever is common to the different propositions, insisting on the dynamics of the collective, looking for a good articulation, the good cosmos (Latour, 2004).

We highlight the term diplomacy as a survival since it is constituted as a means of exiting the war situation, while seeking the collective's experience of the common world by modifying its essential requirements. In this sense, we understand the fireflies of this research (be they schools, practitioners or ways of doing research) as diplomats. Diplomats perform when the capacity for confrontation is exhausted. The fireflies experiences show that we are at war regarding composition, the beings of the world and cosmologies. Actually, this is not about a real conflict but naturalizations. The point is that diplomacy only exists because there is war. In the daily dynamics of fireflies there are no referees. There is only diplomacy where there are no arbitrators; and so, the diplomats defend their ways of existence, their survival, plunged into the exhaustion of the conflicts of worlds composition.

With the pluriverse utopia - a term created by James (1996) and deepened by Latour (2001) to question the idea of the universe - the survival of fireflies is entangled, provoking negotiations within a perspective of a common world's progressive composition. Pluriverse are natures understood no longer as a unity, but as plurality. According to Latour, by understanding reality of natures and, no longer the unity of nature we enter into a process that considers the multiplicity of all actors, human and non-human, who inhabit the pluriverse.

Having these initial propositions made about survivals, we want to articulate in this article and we will list the dynamics that enhance the glow of the fireflies dance that (re)exist, being one of this article intentions to present how, despite all contingencies, firefly schools survive somehow, identifying the ways some of these schools achieve their resistances, their daily struggles and solidarity networks, that is, ways that legitimize their brilliance. What emerges as result, making this attitude possible is the reflection on the different ways of researching. Identifying the flashes of everyday life requires attention to everything that happens (and also doesn't happen) in it and, also requires the perception that such a task is crossed by hegemonic observation struc-

tures, research methodologies, classificatory schemes that have shaped us as great spotlights, framing our ways of being, seeing and believing. Some other paths, however, acquire alternative trails characteristics as they differ from official roads, being invisible in academic circles.

We propose some clues to weave a firefly way of searching but do not pretend to deny other research methodologies in education, or even to affirm our considerations as a regime of truth for the field. We only intend to bring some provocations to the spotlight, just set up a few flashes in the pluriverse. To reach a *firefly-school* is not an easy task for the road to many of these schools is on dirt track. Everyday life *practitioners* of these school units, adventurers, dreamers, often take the risk of taking this road on days of unsuitable crossing. Everyone has many stories, at least surprising, to tell about the ways to get to school. The term practitioner runs through this article in order to name the common practice subjects, those of the *arts of doing*. De Certeau (1994) deals with “ways of doing” (walking, reading, producing, speaking), “ways of using” that weave into networks of real actions, which are not and could not be mere repetition of a pre-established social order or explained in the generalizations. Thus, we can affirm that the social practice networks occurs through “practitioners’ uses and tactics”, which insert in the social structure creativity and plurality, changing the rules and relationships between the domination power and the lives of those who practice it and are supposedly submitted to such power (Oliveira, 2012).

Didi-Huberman (2010, p. 77) states that “[...] there is no choice amongst what we see and what look back to us: we only have to worry about the ‘between’”. From this concern, we could know the survival of firefly-schools, identify and list their *practicedthought* potency and dialogue with the solidarity lived in these schools, discussing the ways how to research and promote social emancipation.

The daily development of participatory and supportive practices in all the structural spaces in which we are inserted, as well as the pursuit of expansion of its institutional role, assume, in this sense, capital importance in the fabric of social emancipation. The pedagogical practices developed in this perspective, due to their importance in the formation of the subjectivities of those who participate in them, appearing, therefore, as fundamental in this understanding (Oliveira, 2012, p. 12).

Above all, we can enunciate these practices as solidarity enhancers since they represent somehow, in the orbit of political ecology, the progressive composition of the common world (Latour, 2004). These are, therefore, propositions for a cosmopolitics in which the association of humans and nonhumans is established in a specific logic of the *spacetimes* here described. Hitchhiking from school to school when mud gets in and makes it difficult to access the firefly units, cattle that roar around classrooms and set school breaks, harvest bags shared among practitioners from different communities, these are some examples of solidarity knowledge of cultures that inhabit the pluriverse.

Solidarity is the knowledge gained in the ever unfinished process of enabling us capable of reciprocity through the construction and recognition of inter subjectivity. The emphasis on solidarity converts the community into a privileged field of emancipating knowledge (Santos, 2007, p. 81).

It is exactly the knowledge-solidarity that unites the fireflies. It is even possible to state, in order to better locate the solidarity we are dealing with in this article, that the knowledge-solidarity is a *knowledge-firefly*. How to forget the gratitude of a student's mother whom, happy to realize the reading skills of her daughter, decided to "fatten a chicken" to present the teacher, who lives in the city center and, according to her was the best she had to offer? They are small fragments of reciprocity, present only in the micro-relations listed as firefly knowledge and expressed in the teachers narratives who prefer to cross more than 100 kilometers daily, to reach their workplaces rather than working in a less distant school unit. Nonetheless, it is paramount to understand that fireflies have eventually built their beautiful luminous communities elsewhere, where they can promote a *lesser glow* which does not infer neither a scale or dimension, nor to a hierarchy. It corresponds, in this research, to what Deleuze and Guattari (2014, p. 35) call as "minor literature" by delving into Kafka's writings. It is an agency, a practice. According to the authors, "[...] a smaller literature is not that of a smaller language, but rather that a minority does in a larger language". Firefly schools are, therefore, producing a *lower brightness*; which is not, in fact, a lesser brilliance, but a brilliance that demands renouncing your search in the most likely places. Such renunciation is fully political and necessarily collective. As Didi-Huberman (2011, p. 55) points out, "[...] the live dance of fireflies takes place right in the middle of darkness".

The eco-political commitment to the firefly schools and the epistemological welcoming present in the good encounters with the educations others, present in the daily life of these schools that led us to choose the simple flashes of the fireflies, the very elements that allowed the intermittent sparkles dance to be cast as powerful as any other knowledge. Therefore, this means thinking about this debate with reference to firefighting practices that translate into actions, amplifying the possible field of democratic dynamics, supported by the conception that "[...] democracy is a daily political work of art that demands to act knowing that no one owns the truth and that the other is as legitimate as anyone" (Maturana, 2002, p. 75).

Let's turn now to a discussion on the ecology of knowledge notion so necessary to the eco-politics, woven into the fireflies (re)existence modes. The ecology of knowledge, a notion developed by Santos (2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2010), deals with the recognition of the epistemological diversity of the world. This diversity, also cultural and ontological, translates into a multiplicity of conceptions of being and remain in the pluriverse. It encompasses multiple modes of existence and, therefore, survivals.

The ecology of knowledge is a set of epistemologies that depart from the possibility of counter hegemonic diversity and globalization and aim to contribute to their credibility and strengthening. They are based on two assumptions: 1) there are no neutral epistemologies and those claiming to be so are the least neutral; 2) Epistemological reflection should focus not on knowledge in the abstract, but on knowledge practices and their impacts on other social practices. When I speak of the ecology of knowledge, I understand it as the ecology of knowledge practices (Santos, 2006, p. 154).

To conceive the ecology of knowledge as a practiced ecology suggests the canon weakening that understood ecology as a congregation of scientific knowledge. Latour (2004, p. 14-15), analyzing the ways in which society constituted the term ecology, contributes to this debate by stating that

[...] Nature becomes recognizable through the sciences; it is formed through the networks of instruments; it is defined by the interpretation of professions, disciplines, protocols; it is distributed in a database; it is argued through the societies of sages. Ecology, as its name implies, has no direct access to nature as it is; It is a 'logy', like all scientific disciplines.

The ecology of knowledge is a notion that intends to compose a dialogue between different kinds of knowledge that can be useful for the advancement of social struggles and, recognized as such by those who act in them. It is an profane proposition and as such requires some care. The ecology of knowledge is not realized in offices but concretized in some instances of long and plural dialogue, so that many voices and their knowledge can emerge, and, above all, the most timid and even inaudible voices are able to manifest themselves. It is therefore necessary that the environment be inclusive and welcoming enough for the diversity of knowledge to emerge, since it is a collective process of knowledge production that aims to reinforce dialogues in the composition of the common world. In addition, the ecology of knowledge is a process that does not have and should not have leaders despite the possibility of facilitating the discussion. It is a democratic construction of knowledge, in which processes are not distinguished from content and takes time. After all, democratizing knowledge is not made by calendar. In the field of education, some research have been producing prescriptive knowledge and, as a consequence, making education understood in many schools as a settled project in an instance of the instituted power that has the attribution of *thinking the pedagogic* of the teaching and educational networks regulating the institutions' *pedagogical work*. The ecology of knowledge is a collective effort, built collectively where knowing how to listen deeply is one of its principal tenets; and yet, as important as knowing how to listen, is not to hide the differences that exist between different subjects, movements and organizations. The ecology of knowledge is not an epistemological or political tool for dialogue be-

tween oppressors and the oppressed, but a strategy for creating collective strength in the struggle against oppression based on conversations between dialogue partners. Thus, a challenge emerges: how to stand up to scientific knowledge? In the world and in the relationships we live in this world, we know of the hegemony of scientific knowledge. Even when presented as homogeneous, this knowledge is internally endowed with gigantic diversity. Who dialogues with the ecology of knowledge needs to know and explore this diversity in their favor, weaving networks with the fireflies knowledge considered undervalued.

In the ecology of knowledge, the knowledge itself and, therefore, ignorance are intersected. There is no unity of knowledge, as there is no unity of ignorance. The forms of ignorance are as heterogeneous and interdependent as forms of knowledge. Given this interdependence, learning certain knowledge may involve forgetting others and ultimately ignoring them. In other words, in the ecology of knowledge, ignorance is not necessarily an original state or starting point. It can be an arrival point. It may be the result of forgetting or unlearning, implicit in a reciprocal learning process. Thus, in a learning process driven by a knowledge ecology, it is crucial to compare the knowledge being learned with the knowledge that is being forgotten and unlearned in that process. Ignorance is only a disqualified way of being and doing when what one learns is worth more than what one forgets. The utopia of inter-knowledge consists in learning other knowledge without forgetting one's own. This is the technology of prudence that underlies the ecology of knowledge. It invites a deeper reflection on the difference between science as monopolistic knowledge and science as part of an ecology of knowledge (Santos, 2010, p. 56).

In contrast, the firefly schools which would have to have their functioning thought within the specifics that they have, end up being launched under the same conditions as the other municipal school units. This very fact threatens the fireflies existence and the beauty of the woven solidarity amongst them. As the mother of a child enrolled in a fireflies-school unburdens:

[...] I need to get out of this place. I have to take my children to a better place because here they will be nothing. This school was once very good, but it's abandoned. Nothing gets here. There is no material, no book, no uniform. I already see this school closing and I have to think about the future of my boys.

This question is not local only. The schools shutdown in Brazil are becoming recurring events, but still draws little attention of those who settle in the regions where the spotlight is projected on overcrowded classrooms as a major problem of education. We do not claim that overcrowding in classrooms is no longer a big problem, but we need to point out that the emptying of school spaces, especially in regions with small communities, where the demands are inaudible, is also a denial of the constitutional right to education. .



The search for channels for the expression of these firefly schools survival resonates with Honneth's thought (2009), when dealing with the struggle for recognition. According to the author, there are shared belonging feelings that unite those who have not been recognized and, also help to understand solidarity knowledge as survival among schools and firefly communities. The motivations for participation or identity with struggles and social issues, come from this memory of disrespect experiences or rights deprivation. These questions have an educational role in society since they point to spaces in which there is no respect for the other and the resulting problems. In striving for recognition, practitioners are working with existing conflicts. "Thus, it can be said that some social movements arise from these conflicting relationships and are part of the struggle for recognition" (Gohn, 2009). According to Honneth (2009, p. 259),

[...] Engagement in political action also has a direct role for those involved in pulling them out of the paralyzing situation of passively tolerated demotion and thus providing them with a new and positive self-correlation. The reason for this secondary motivation of struggle is linked to the very structure of the experience of disrespect. [...] If such a state of inhibition of action is now practically overcome by engaging in common resistance, then a form of manifestation is opened for the individual on the basis of which he can indirectly convince himself of the moral or social value of himself: in the early recognition of a future communication community for the capabilities he currently reveals, he finds social respect as the person who continues to be denied all recognition under external conditions.

In what ways does it become possible to know such an eco-political power of these fireflies schools? Certainly not by prescription. We will present, at this moment, some clues that helped us in this path. Following Latour's thoughts, we enumerated five flashes that contributed to the structuring of our firefly way of research.

### ***Practicingthinking the First Flash: Searching Outside the Cave***

What drives the bioluminescence of fireflies is that it catches the eye of its partner. The male emits a light informing its approaching and the female makes the emission back to warn where it is. Fireflies emit lights to seduce and do so by sending intermittent signals and through their essential freedom of movement, their ability to make desire appear as the indestructible par excellence. Thus, we can say that fireflies dance. Fireflies do not light up to illuminate a world they would like *to see better*; it is, however, a dance of affection forming communities.

The seductive dance of fireflies makes it possible to understand the first flash - *research outside the cave* to find the fireflies. Only from good encounters with the fireflies was it possible to experience daily

cunning of these pluviverse beings. The need to leave the cave brought the possibility of entangling the threads that subvert a traditional model that dichotomizes research and object, and thereby embrace the ecological commitment as firefighter-practitioners. As Latour (2012, p. 411) states, “[...] in order to give new meaning to political ecology, we must abandon Science in favor of the sciences conceived as the socialization of nonhumans and also, abandon the cave policy for the policy defined for the society progressive composition of the good common world”. As we leave the cave, we find firefly schools and having a good encounter with each of them lead us through holes, animals, storms, communities, landscapes, hands that called for a ride, narratives, all articulated composing the pluriverse on their own times and ways of being, in order to survive themselves.

In the firefly search, we talked to many practitioners and we dialogued with principals, teachers and school staff. We also had the opportunity to talk with some parents and students from these units. We needed to ‘dialogue with the weather’ as well, which sometimes determined the ideal date for the visit, as happened with one of the firefly schools we visited. On the day predicted by us for the good meeting, the unit principal informed us about the poor road conditions for access to the school, caused by heavy rains the day before and the imminent storm. The visit took place on a beautiful sunny day, but not at the scheduled time, because we also need to respect the cattle traffic that went in the opposite direction.

### ***Practicingthinking* the Second Flash: Summoning Beings Able to Speak**

The movement that follows the fireflies dance is the summoning of beings capable of speaking. In this movement, we went in search of the powerful speeches regarding the ways of fireflies (re)existence. No doubt it is difficult to list such lines, especially when it comes to human and non-human associations. However, I tried to hear people, roads and animals. In some schools, I saw dogs that did not abandon their owners during class hours. In fireflies schools we perceive their circulation through the school space as something common; cattle and roads have such a strong relationship, that it produces in any human being that feeling of secrecy when frogs choose their favorite places in schools, places that are respected by practitioners without much fanfare: “it’s common”, one student told us. Monkeys like to climb the protection grilles for leftover fruit from lunch time and sloths do not cause astonishment. The knowledge that this animal’s claws scratches are quite dangerous, makes the communities around the fireflies schools to maintain the distance ensuring the good relationship between the parties. Unusual colored African snails sometimes appear and survive thanks, for example, to a preschooler who begs the teacher on his/hers knees not to kill it because is so beautiful. Ants, ducks, cats all speak and make up the *parliament of things*<sup>3</sup> (Latour, 1994; 2004; Stengers, 1993). Listening, however, will depend on the audience.

### ***Practicingthinkingthe Third Flash: propositions weaving***

As a practice of solidarity, we were invited to participate in a study meeting in which the school units shared their survival. In addition to practitioners of firefly-schools, there were also practitioners of the secretary of education, whose presence, however, did not characterize them as fireflies. On the contrary, the schools fireflies condition is sometimes defined from the inconsistencies of some denials produced within the departments of education.

[...] On this traditional debate, what is the effect of political ecology? The very expression says it clearly. Instead of two distinct arenas, in which one would try to aggregate the hierarchy of beings and then choose between them without never reaching it, political ecology proposes to convene a single collective whose role is precisely to debate this hierarchy - and come up with an acceptable solution. The unifying role of the respective categories of all beings, political ecology proposes to displace it from the dual collective arena. It is at least what it does in practice when it jointly prohibits the natural and social order to ordinate, definitively and separately, what counts from whatever does not, what is connected or what should remain separate, what is inside or outside.

Regarding the proposition weaving the study group of fireflies-schools allowed the good articulation, that insists on the dynamics of the collective rather than a hierarchy woven into formulations and based on a separation of powers.

### ***Practicingthinkingthe Fourth Flash: Exploring the Common World***

From the weaving propositions, we walk through the fourth flash: *exploring the common world*, which is based on the composition of learning deals that bets on a horizontal relationships mode, strengthened by an ecology of knowledge. Therefore, it was necessary for us to attend training meetings organized by the Education Department

Such meetings, in general, are intended to provide the firefly-schools with vertical knowledge so their practitioners may develop a prescribed practice. It is interesting to realize that: (1) there is an initial perspective that knowing and doing are different instances and, that the former should guide the latter; (2) the knowledge offered in these meetings are not related to the daily issues of the firefly-schools. These are times when firefly-schools practitioners do resist in various ways.

This movement insists to impose on the fireflies survival a bicameralism, which according to Latour (2004, p. 371), is the expression of political science to describe representative two-chamber system: "The aim here is to describe the division of powers between nature (conceived as a representative power) and politics". While to the firefly-schools is offered a 'conversation circle', what happens at the meeting is

a 'listening circle', in which the Education Department practitioners assume the position of an Upper House politicians, who designates identities and what one must think about/at *spacetimes*, in which they do not participate on a daily basis. As Latour (2004, p. 243-244) affirms,

Politicians, as we well know, do not exercise their ability over another reality - the social world, values, power relations. They partake the same skills as scientists, but with other knowledge. [...] But what politicians add of their own, is a certain sense of risk from the multitude of excluded people who can haunt the collective to be taken into account this time. [...] All the competence of politicians is to live in this permanent risk that when they try to form a 'we' they are surprised by more or less inarticulate shouts: 'you maybe, but not us'.

### ***Practicingthinkingthe Fifth Flash: For a New Constitution***

Political ecology is yet to invent itself, because it no longer rests on any transcendence, but on the quality of accompanying collective experience. In this sense, we can say that in the group of firefly-schools that we follow a trajectory began for a new constitution, starting from propositions of the units collective.

Certainly the flashes proposed here are located in some other methodological alternatives and, possibly, nothing innovative is being presented in the field of Education research. However, the reflection on our ways of research already drives a much needed movement in the field: to think the pluriverse with the associations of humans and non-humans that are inscribed in other logics, other practices. Our attempt is to survive with the fireflies, following each glow emitted without the filters of the modern paradigm.

### **The Seductive Dance of Fireflies**

We transcribe below the speech of a firefly-teacher interviewed in the research:

The drum and I, we relate as a waking up call on Mother Earth. The drum represents for me the pulse of Mother Earth, the heart of Mother Earth beating along with my heart. I cannot start the day with the children without this connection to Earth because we became one at the time of production and creation, because the fertility that Earth presents us is latent in our productions. I found that by using the drum beat starting the class, we can make that connection. So the kids come in, we make a circle. Our *good morning* is through the drum's beat. We wake Mother Earth in us and by beating the drum next to our heart, we are connecting with Earth. All my work in building this ethnic identity goes through this waking up, goes through this *religare* with the Great Mother, which is the Earth welcoming us, that we walk upon, that feeds us ... At this moment talking about all this makes me absurdly emotional because my work in a downtown school was interrupted. Due to greater forces of intolerance

to this work I switched schools and went to a smaller, invisible one. But these students are very much alive inside me. It is a very large work of awareness ... the sensible has been finding a lot of resistance in the urban. Not only in the urban, but in the minds that have crystallized in the educational field. But I believe that the sensitive, it penetrates, the subtle penetrates the dense and the sensitive defeats the aggressive. So that's what I bet and no matter where I'm going, this job is in me and it goes with me. I know that I will continue to encounter resistance, but I need to resist with this connection force to the Great Earth because it is this connection that feeds all my resistance and deepens the sensitive.

The interviewed firefly-teacher has been working in the Duque de Caxias municipal network for 15 years. The teaching experience produced a soft and sweet voice that translates into this connection and constitutes her as belonging to the pluriverse. The teacher's classes start with a large circle that is formed around the drumming and with one of the students who takes Serafina, an anthurium cultivated by the class and a participant in all activities. The teacher began these practices at school after spending time in an indigenous village in the northeast of the country. She performs this ritual on daily basis and establishes with her students a relationship of complicity incomprehensible to many practitioners who do not share this ecological way of being and interact with the world, of such composition between humans and nonhumans. Despite the looks that repudiate her, the teacher persisted in her practice and, found a welcome in the solidarity on the firefly-schools networks. Only in a *space-time* in which the *parliament of things* is the principle of (re) existence, the seductive dance of the fireflies can be observed. Fireflies don't dance to illuminate cities, to show their sparkles to the humans, to make a spectacle of nature for us! Fireflies dance to seduce each other.

Like them, daily flashes are produced to promote a relationship of affection by the teacher. They are not made as a means of exhibition for the great spotlight, for the society of the spectacle. They, therefore, need to settle in darker *spacetimes* to allow such reproduction. "You have to know that, in spite of everything, fireflies have elsewhere formed their beautiful luminous communities" (Didi-Huberman, 2011, p. 50).

It is worth considering, however, that even forming an atopic and anachronistic community, fireflies are on the agenda. They are cataloged and studied by modern science in their laboratories and framed in encyclopedic classifications. In 1887, physiologist Raphaël Dubois isolated in some fireflies an enzyme that he named *luciferase*, which acts on a chemical substrate, *luciferin*, in the phenomenon of bioluminescence in fireflies. It seems limiting to place the *lucioles* under a projector, in an attempt to better observe as well as examine them dead, pinned on an entomology researcher's desk. However, despite this brief flash of nonconformity, we must constantly exercise reflection on all knowledge's fabrications modes as valid. The looks that repudiate the teacher's practice are structured on exclusionary ontology. The issue here is the consideration of plural practices, as legitimate as any others.

To know the fireflies, you have to watch them in the present of your survival: you have to watch them dance alive

in the middle of the night, even though that night is swept by some fierce projectors. Even for a little while. Even for little to be seen: it takes about 5,000 fireflies to produce a light equivalent to a single candle (Didi-Huberman, 2011, p. 51).

As already mentioned here, the knowledge ecology contemplates the equivalence of knowledge, placing both hegemonic and all the others, even the subordinate ones, on the same plane. We need, however, to explain that this article is devoted to subordinate, minor and fireflies knowledge. There is already much academic production that legitimizes the knowledge named as scientific. For this reason, we think that the firefly dance can only be understood at the time of the ball.

Latour (1994; 2004) contributes to the reflection on this subordinate knowledge and the many possibilities of being in the pluriverse, when deals with the concept of *parliament of things*. According to the author, natural scientists created a parliament, the laboratory, in which they, and only they, spoke on behalf of certain things. Social scientists created the Republic, where only the sovereign could speak on behalf of the citizens, therefore, on one hand, scientific representation, on the other, political representation. In both there is a double possibility of betrayal: the epistemological (to what extent can scientists speak in name of things?); and, politics (to what extent does the sovereign speak in the name of citizens?). With the concept of *actor network* this double task is reviewed.

Network relates to flows, circulations, alliances and movements, without referring to a fixed entity. A network of actors is not reducible to a single actor, not to a network and not even to the idea of a non-author actor, representing something external to him. It is composed of heterogeneous series of animate and inanimate elements, connected and in agency. The network of actors differs from the traditional sociological category of actor, which does not include non-human components. Nor can it be confused with a link that predictably connects stable and defined elements, since the entities by which such network is composed, whether natural or social, can redefine their identity and their mutual relations bringing new elements. Thus, a network of actors is both an actor plus/and a network: an actor whose activity consists in weaving relationships with new elements, and a network capable of transforming its components. Thus, taking up the issue of political and scientific representation, the concept of actor network allows us to reflect on the fragmentation of the world installed by modern science. "There are no two branches, only one, whose products can only be distinguished afterwards and after common examination" (Latour, 1994, p. 141). There no two problems of representation, only one.

Within the scope of networks there are translation operations that encompass, at the same time, nature and society, subject and object. Hybridization practices engender all space that we no longer talk about two types of representation, but only hybrids or quasi-objects. As Latour (1994) points out, the modern constitution paradox is to develop

purification practices as an ideal to be achieved, while simultaneously multiplying hybrids these quasi-objects that cannot be purified. To confirm the practice of hybridization, Latour enunciates the quasi-objects throughout a parliament of things. This parliament is not an utopia or something for the future; already exists as a thought experience. The parliament of things supposes an image of science as a practice of mediation, sharpening new sensibilities aimed at the proliferation of hybrids, thus their entry into the collectives. The two senses of representation (scientific and political) come together in the parliament of things, which recomposes the continuity of the collective. There are no truths; there is mediation, hybrids, articulation between humans and nonhumans.

The parliament of things celebrates the non-modernity of scientific practices, defined as mediation practices for scientists are not the only things' representatives, considering that they speak alongside other actors. In this sense, the parliament of things presents itself as a principle of multiplicity: every new representative of things will be added to others, through interests relationships and alliances. This principle is opposed to the principle of conquest, which is in the name of a moralizing ideal that separates the scientific from the non-scientific, establishing a demarcation between science and other human practices. The multiplicity principle, in contrast, is the actors connecting networks: performative alliances connecting one another, resulting in many representatives who speak on behalf of things. To the ontological multiplicity of things corresponds the multiplicity of their representatives. Science is, in this case, only one among other representatives of things. Scientists are not conquerors who claim a truth, a reason in the name of science. There is no unifying center with the judging power; there is not a critical thinking, applicable to all facts.

However, it should be emphasized that by evoking the parliament of things, Latour is not seeking to surpass or overpass, for that matter, our belief in objective truth, because if so, the parliament would function as a court that would judge one truth as outdated in order to assert another.

[...] We still believe in the sciences, but instead of looking at them through their objectivity, their coldness, their extraterritoriality - qualities that they had only one day due to the arbitrary treatment of epistemology - we will look at them through what they have always had. Interestingly enough the audacity, experimentation, uncertainty, warmth, strange mix of hybrids and the crazy ability to reconstitute social ties. We only remove from them the mystery of their birth and the danger their clandestinity posed to democracy (Latour, 1994, p. 141).

This is not a judgment, a renewal of the heterogeneous to the homogeneous. The parliament of things is, after all, an affirmation of the coexistence of scientific practices with other human practices.

The conception of a parliament of things also involves a redefinition of the relationship between science and politics. In the context of this parliament it cannot be said that scientists speak only of facts while politicians are concerned with values and relations between men. The parliament of things enunciates hybrids of facts and values, hybrids of humans and nonhumans. Therefore, there is no way to set up a demarcation border which will divide scientific facts and human values.

Latour (2004) summons us to think that these hybrids that emerge in our collectives, demand for a philosophy and a policy that may welcome and take them as a discussion target. I return to the beat of the firefly-teacher and her drummer, as a clamorous call for the parliament of things and the knowledge ecology to be the structuring principles of everyday dynamics.

### **Conclusions: What to do? Political ecology!**

Did the fireflies disappear? Certainly not. Some are very close to us, brushing us in the darkness; others departed beyond the horizon, trying to recreate their community, their minority, their shared desire elsewhere. Firefly-peoples when they retire at night seek, however they can, their freedom of movement, fleeing from the projectors, trying to do their best, tuning their desires and sending their flashes toward others.

In this article we have sought to summon firefly images on the threshold of their survival, always moved by the urgency of escape, always close to those who, to carry out their projects, hide in the night and try the impossible, risking their own existence. And in this search, we have found ways of doing political ecology. Latour (2004, p. 359) says that “[...] to offer political ecology a legitimate place, it would be sufficient to bring the sciences into democracy”. Throughout this text, we have sought to list human and non-human associations in the constitution of the common world as a mode of (re) existence for firefly schools. Thus, being a firefly-school belongs as a policy of nature, causing these many sciences to weave many democracies.

Politics, once translated as ecology, does not become simpler. Instead, it gets complex. It becomes more demanding and procedural. It requires argumentation and composition, as the beings of the firefly-schools have been doing. Above all, it takes time and cunning. It requires survivals that cannot be woven except within a firefly context.

The firefly dance on this article does not configure our research on schools but yet, an invitation to the ballet in which we have experimented other democracies and political possibilities, as well as the perplexity and composition of the good cosmos. We started this proposal as researchers and came to the end of it as fireflies, committed practitioners with the political ecology and the weaving of the nature policies. The fireflies survival are also ours, as we also subscribe to the new constitution. It is in this context that we inscribe our commitment to a



potent and creative firefly-education, in a smaller, invisible but never of lesser glow, that departs from the pluriverse's associations to weave propositions with the collectives. The flashes issued here offer methodological clues to the Education field. They are not determinations or statements. They just flash intermittently, suggesting other modes of inquiry.

When we map the survival struggles as modes of (re)existence in firefly-schools, we find many subversions woven into a model that subordinates them. Such modes of (re)existence are crossed by the complexity of everyday relationships, by the invisibility processes that act upon them and by the networks of solidarity that emerge from the practices of the beings of these schools. In this way we could understand the eco-political power of each of the school units we knew<sup>4</sup>.

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## Notes

- 1 In everyday school studies, we often write together in italics words that cannot be understood in isolation, trying to overcome dichotomies.
- 2 Text produced in May 2019.
- 3 The notion of parliament of things will be presented in detail below.
- 4 This article is part of the Thematic Section, *Resistances and Reexistences in Educational Social Spaces in Times of Neo-Conservatism*, organized by Inês Barbosa de Oliveira (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro) and Rafael Marques Gonçalves (Universidade Federal do Acre).

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