

## ARTICLE

**LATIN AMERICAN EDUCATION AND ITS LABYRINTHS: ABOUT RESISTANCES,  
INSURGENCIES AND UTOPIAS**DANILO R. STRECK<sup>1</sup>ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7410-3174>  
<streckdr@gmail.com><sup>1</sup> Universidade de Caxias do Sul (UCS). Caxias do Sul, RS, Brazil.

**ABSTRACT:** In this article, the labyrinth is used as a metaphor to characterize the Latin American educational reality in its current complexity and its historical conditionings. The objective is to understand these labyrinths' intricacies and contribute to the search for possibilities to construct alternatives that point out ways. The first part of the text references works from literature, the social sciences, and education that reveal the various facets and dimensions of the labyrinth. In the second part, there are identified tasks to help deal with the challenges of the labyrinth: popular education as a place of resistance and the creation of untested feasibilities; the discovery of forgotten and silenced protagonists; education for a critical and solidary cosmopolitanism. The conclusion points to three ingredients of a utopian vision for education: the imagination that affirms the possibility of rising above the possible and seeing the mazes, not as a fatality; the condition of creating projects through which one can act on reality immediately and mediate; and acting with a certain degree of certainty.

**Keywords:** labyrinth, latin-American pedagogy, resistance, insurgency, utopia.

**A EDUCAÇÃO LATINO-AMERICANA E SEUS LABIRINTOS: SOBRE RESISTÊNCIAS,  
INSURGÊNCIAS E UTOPIAS**

**RESUMO:** No presente artigo, o labirinto é usado como metáfora para caracterizar a realidade educacional latino-americana em sua complexidade atual e seus condicionantes históricos. O objetivo é compreender os meandros desses labirintos e contribuir na busca de possibilidades para a construção de alternativas que apontem saídas. Na primeira parte do texto, há referência a obras da literatura, das ciências sociais e da educação que revelam as várias facetas e dimensões do labirinto. Na segunda parte, são identificadas tarefas para ajudar a lidar com os desafios do labirinto: a educação popular como lugar de resistência e de criação de inéditos viáveis; o descobrimento de protagonismos esquecidos e silenciados; a educação para um cosmopolitanismo crítico e solidário. Na conclusão, apontam-se três ingredientes de uma visão utópica para a educação: a imaginação que afirma a possibilidade de elevar-se acima do possível e ver os labirintos não como uma fatalidade; a condição de criar projetos através dos quais se pode incidir sobre a realidade imediata e mediata; e o agir com um certo grau de certeza.

**Palavras-chave:** labirinto, educação latino-americana, resistência, insurgência, utopia.

## LA EDUCACION LATINOAMERICANA Y SUS LABERINTOS: SOBRE RESISTENCIAS, INSURGENCIAS Y UTOPIAS

**RESÚMEN:** En este artículo, el laberinto se utiliza como una metáfora para caracterizar la realidad educativa latinoamericana en su complejidad actual y sus condicionantes históricos. El objetivo es comprender las complejidades de estos laberintos y contribuir en la búsqueda de posibilidades para la construcción de alternativas que señalen salidas. En la primera parte del texto hay referencia a obras de la literatura, las ciencias sociales y la educación que revelan las diversas facetas y dimensiones del laberinto. En la segunda parte, se identifican algunas tareas para ayudar a enfrentar los desafíos del laberinto: la educación popular como un lugar de resistencia y la creación de inéditos viables; el descubrimiento de protagonistas olvidados y silenciados; educación para un cosmopolitismo crítico y solidario. La conclusión apunta a tres ingredientes de una visión utópica para la educación: la imaginación que afirma la posibilidad de elevarse por encima de lo posible y ver los laberintos no como una fatalidad; la condición de crear proyectos a través de los cuales uno puede enfocarse en la realidad inmediata y mediata; y actuación con cierto grado de certeza.

**Palabras clave:** laberinto, educación latinoamericana, resistencia, insurgencia, utopia.

### INTRODUCTION

The image of the labyrinth takes us back to a magical world of fears, heroes, and fantasies. Who does not immediately recall the famous story of Theseus and the Minotaur in Greek mythology? The son of Aegeus, king of Athens, the hero Theseus kills the monster with the body of a man and the head of a bull that demanded the sacrifice of virgins and had until then defeated all who ventured to face it. This mix of animals and people inhabited the underground of the vast labyrinthine palace of King Minos, from the island of Crete. It was Princess Ariadne's idea to provide a ball of thread that would allow the safe return of Theseus. It is a vibrant story for interpretations, from the demand for sacrifices, the figure of the hero and the woman - passionate, intelligent, and transgressive — to the image of the monster presented as a combination of animal and person. This is part of the labyrinth, where reality and fiction intersect.

This blending of reality and fiction is even more evident in *Faun's Labyrinth*<sup>1</sup>, in which Ophelia, who moves to a military camp with her mother, leads a life tormented by her sadistic and cold stepfather Vidal, a captain in Franco's fascist forces. With the help of Mercedes, the cook, she enters a fantasy world in which she meets a faun, a deity half-people and half-goat who makes her believe that she is a princess who is passing through this world and that, after fulfilling three tasks, she will be able to return to the world she came from, which is her true world. The labyrinth is also part of the personal experience in our daily lives, from when the GPS leaves us, and after a few turns, we return to the same place to complex existential situations when we confess that we are "lost." They can be experiences of the realm of play, like the one I lived through with my 5-year-old granddaughter in a live labyrinth about two meters high in the square of a town in the state's interior<sup>2</sup>. With people coming and going in opposite directions and on all paths and shortcuts - even knowing it was a game - the experience never failed to generate a sense of fear and insecurity. What if the little girl started to cry? What if something happened to someone? The fact is that everyone was looking for a way out, and the phrases that were heard most often were "not this way" and "let's go back." But there was also an atmosphere of expectation because everyone knew that somewhere there was a way out.

---

<sup>1</sup> *El Laberinto de Fauno*, film directed by Guillermo del Toro and produced by Warner Bros. Pictures (2006).

<sup>2</sup> The labyrinth of the city of Nova Petrópolis, in Serra Gaúcha (Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil): <http://www.gramadocanela.com.br/labirinto-verde/>

In other words, the labyrinths are very diverse. Although it is impossible to dissociate the personal and existential labyrinths from those we live as a society, in this reflection, we will focus on a labyrinth that is geographically, socially, and culturally more extensive: the labyrinth of education in Latin America and the Caribbean. We must say, as a methodological caveat, that, as the authors of this reflection, we have an ambiguous relationship with this labyrinth: as educators and as persons, we are inside the labyrinth as well as other professionals, parents, and social movement activists. As researchers, we feel committed to identifying and understanding the meanderings of this labyrinth and, with work and a bit of luck, to help weave some threads to find a forgotten ball that can be used more effectively. It is an attempt, even if we feel inside the labyrinth, to move to transcend this experience in the search for exits.

The reflection is divided into two parts. Initially, there is a reference to some works that use the figure of the labyrinth as a metaphor for Latin American reality. We can anticipate that this labyrinth has many levels, some hidden in the underground, being part — in a paraphrase of the concept of "epistemology of absent knowledge" by Boaventura de Sousa Santos — of our world of absences (SANTOS, 2000, p. 246). It also has diverse, interconnected compartments, among them that of education. And then questions like: what are the monsters that devour our children's and young people's hope? In the name of what future are the sacrifices of millions of anonymous victims being made? Moreover, in the case of overcoming or defeating a monster, how can one not remain trapped in the same labyrinth?

Orlando Fals Borda describes Latin America's unfinished revolutions as an ontological dilemma. He recognizes that past generations have made changes. Nonetheless, the fact that we are constantly haunted by the question of who we are and where we are going would indicate that the task has not been completed and that the challenge of a profound social renewal remains: "There has to be a decisive moment in history when the perplexities disappear" (FALS BORDA, 2009, p. 396). At the end of the same article, the author recommends that we continue preparing, with all resources and with "science and patience," the actions and strategies that encompass all spheres of life, the quality of the changes, and their direction (2009, p. 418). Paulo Freire would add, along with patience, impatience to avoid the risk of accommodation.<sup>3</sup>

In the second part of this reflection, we try to identify some Ariadnes with their threads or find some fauns that can help us think and build another world. Faun is the god of the forests and the shepherds in Greco-Roman mythology and symbolizes fertility. Fauns like to party, play the flute, dance, and drink and they have a keen sense of direction, an ability that allows them to guide travelers through the forests. Guidance and joy in what we do as educators are important ingredients to imagine and make a less unjust and less ugly world.

## ON LABYRINTHS, SOCIETY, AND EDUCATION

A visit to Latin American literature shows us how the labyrinth has been a frequent theme of great poets and writers. Jorge Luis Borges, in his poem "Labyrinth," expresses the feeling of almost impotence within a reality in which, over the years, "straight galleries twist themselves into secret circles":

Zeus could not untie the nets/ of stone that surround me. I have forgotten/ the men I once was, I follow the hated/ path of monotonous walls/ that is my fate. Straight galleries/ twist themselves in secret circles/ at the end of years/ (...) I hope this was/ the last day of waiting. (BORGES, 2020, n. p. ).

The labyrinth generates uncertainty about what comes after, but without breaking the link that connects it to the hope of a way out, even on the deathbed. Gabriel García Márquez (1989), in *The General in his Labyrinth*, portrays the last days of Simón Bolívar, a 46-year-old man, prematurely decrepit, surrounded by betrayals and divisions among the peoples he wanted to see united in a great homeland.

---

<sup>3</sup> In the notebook *Virtudes do Educador* [Virtues of the Educator] (1982), Paulo Freire brings a critical reflection on the virtues of the educator and presents the following tensions in the search for coherence: between discourse and practice; between word and silence; between subjectivity and objectivity; between here and there; between spontaneity and manipulation; between theory and practice; between patience and impatience, between text and context.

Among his deliriums, he would say disconnected sentences that, according to the narrator, fit into one: "They did not understand anything" (1989, p. 18). When, as death approaches, the doctor speaks of the benefits of "holy oils" to be up to date with matters of conscience, the present and the future become confused in Bolívar's head, and he feels himself in the labyrinth:

The general paid no attention to the skill of the answer because he shuddered at the dazzling revelation that the mad race between the evils and their dreams was reaching the final goal at that instant. The rest was darkness.

- *Carajos!* — he sighed. — How will I get out of this maze?

He examined the room with the clairvoyance of one who reaches the end, and for the first time he saw the truth: the last borrowed bed, the pitiful dressing table (GARCÍA MARQUEZ, 1989, p. 18).

The labyrinth is also solitude. Octavio Paz (1984), in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, seeks to understand the soul of the Mexican people in reflections that, to a good extent, are valid for other Latin American peoples. Loneliness, for him, has a double meaning: the rupture with a lost world, which generates a feeling of orphanhood, of nostalgia for a body from which we were torn away. Nevertheless, solitude is also the space to create another world. "We have been expelled from the center of the world and are condemned to search for it through jungles and deserts and subterranean labyrinths" (PAZ, 1984, p. 188).

For this, perhaps, the paths of João Guimarães Rosa's (1968) *The Great Hinterland* can be used. After all, as the character Riobaldo reflects, the sertão is "where people's thoughts are formed stronger than the power of the place" (1968, p. 2). In another passage presented as a great emptiness, it is in this place, "the size of the world" (1968, p. 59), that the force of resistance capable of transcending the conditioning of the place itself is generated. It is a dangerous place of shootings and killings, but also where "even a simple burial is a party" (1968, p. 47).

These brief references to Latin American literature show the heuristic power of the labyrinth metaphor, and it is no coincidence that it is welcomed in reflections of an academic nature. In the social sciences, the book *Latin American Labyrinth* stands out. Octavio Ianni (1993) looks at the scenario at the end of the last decade of the last century and concludes that the type of nation predominates in Latin America is still pertinent. According to Ianni, we would have "a precariously formed nation, with periods of dynamic articulation and disarticulation. It develops through surges and spasms, setbacks and advances, ruptures and falls. It always starts again" (IANNI, 1993, p. 34). In our "labyrinth of ideas," despite a general tendency towards westernization, a variety of tendencies mix as in a kaleidoscope. That is why, says Ianni, "reality seems not to conform to ideas, notions, concepts (...) In the vast and intricate mirror image in which Latin America reveals itself, concepts and ideals seem misplaced." (1993, p. 122).

More recently, discussions on (de)coloniality have sought to interpret the new facets of the colonial heritage that manifests itself in the objective conditions of organization and functioning of society and impregnates subjectivities. They are relations of power, knowledge, and being, in which it is clear that the so-called "backwardness" of Latin American societies is, in the expression of Walter Dignolo (2011), the dark side of modernity. Furthermore, again the labyrinth appears, this time enunciated by Aníbal Quijano when he argues that the coloniality of power established on the idea of race is a basic factor in the national and nation-state question. In Latin America, the European model of nation-state formation was imposed by dominant groups that perpetuated power structures around colonial relations. "Thus, we still find ourselves in a labyrinth in which the Minotaur is always visible, but with no Ariadne to show us the longed-for exit" (QUIJANO, 2005, p. 125).

Education has its labyrinths that, in turn, are inserted in this labyrinthine world presented by our writers and social scientists. At this point in the discussion, it is pertinent to introduce Comenius, who is known in education mainly for his work *Didacticus Magna* (1985), but who, among other writings, we must highlight the one entitled *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* (1967). The book was written in times of social upheaval in Bohemia (today, the Czech Republic), when the author was a refugee in his own homeland before he left for exile for good. It is about a traveler who wants to get to know his society and soon realizes that the lenses with which he sees the world are made of illusion, and the rims are the customs. Alluding to the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur, the guide warns that the

labyrinth of that palace was child's play compared to the labyrinth formed by the molding of this world, particularly at that historical moment.

Just as in Comenius' time, the current world is undergoing enormous transformations that are reflected differently in different parts of the globe and are perceived and apprehended differently in knowledge and practice. Today's field of education has a vast store of knowledge about the intricacies of this labyrinth, from the classroom to teacher training, curriculum composition, and policies. Therefore, here are just a few examples that have a more immediate link to the labyrinth metaphor.

One of the expressions of the labyrinth is the feeling that, despite our efforts, we are always running behind. This is evident in the profusion of statistical data that allows us to measure ourselves and others. For example, the conclusions based on the results of the 2015 PISA exam, and easily confirmed by other data, point to two facts: a) that there has been significant progress in the population's access to basic education and issues such as the decentralization of teaching practices to dialogue with local realities; b) that, despite the efforts to reformulate public policies in the last decade, there is still a large gap separating us from developed countries. The data also point to the fact that socioeconomic conditions impact more strongly on the results of poorer children and youth, that is, maintaining or even increasing the gap between those for whom the years in school make more or less difference (DIAS; MARIANO; CUNHA, 2017).

The labyrinth does not manifest itself only in statistics. However, it is expressed in the relationship between teachers' illness and working conditions, from low salaries, overcrowded classes and possibilities of professional qualification. Behind the data hide faces and bodies that suffer and still see in retirement the possibility of leaving the labyrinth, in a situation of impotence before the Minotaurs of today (PENTEADO; SOUZA NETO, 2019). This, nevertheless, does not only happen among teachers: also students, from elementary school to graduate school, are affected physically and psychically, which reveals itself not necessarily in diseases but is expressed in the form of indiscipline, violence, failures, and evasion<sup>4</sup>.

Finally, the institutional entanglement with the withdrawal of public power and the non-valuation of education as a right of all citizens is an intricate labyrinth built by our Minos, in reality to preserve the Minotaur and continue to feed it with lives hindered in their development. We refer here to Pablo Gentili's book, *O labirinto da desigualdade* [The Labyrinth of Inequality], in which he reflects on the manufacturing of this labyrinth, especially through public education policies. He says: "The discredit, stigmatization, and humiliation to which the public school is subjected daily are, in good measure, one of the best ways to promote the expansion of private education in Latin America" (GENTILI, 2016, p. 128).

Frigotto (2014) analyzes how the labyrinths of education are situated in the larger labyrinth of the reconfiguration of capital manifested in neoliberal policies of deregulation, labor flexibilization, and destruction of the public sphere that, ultimately, would be exposing the exhaustion of the — albeit always weak — civilizing dimension of capitalism. The problem would be in the fragility or inoperability of the theoretical referential, many of them with the prefixes of post or neo that fail to capture the materiality of the mediations and determinations that constitute the set of relations within a new order of sociability ruled by capital. It is as if these prefixes had the magical power to show the way out of the labyrinth of the Minotaur, disregarding the historicity of the construction of social relations.

The recent popular demonstrations in Chile make it clear that life in the labyrinths of education has its limits. The price of public transportation may have triggered the 2019 demonstrations, but they are, along with other sectors of society, the same penguins of 2005 who are fighting for education as a right (HERNANDEZ SANTIBAÑEZ, 2018). This struggle takes on a special dimension because Chile is the most profound neoliberal experiment in Latin America and is seen today, in Brazil and in many other Latin American countries, as a model to be followed.

## **ARIADNE'S THREAD AND FAUNS: WHERE ARE THEY?**

The question we ask is about possible ways out of the labyrinth. Is there such a thing as Ariadne's thread? Or would we have so many threads at our disposal that we feel entangled? Wouldn't

---

<sup>4</sup> Data on income and school dropout can be obtained on the INEP portal. Available at: <http://portal.inep.gov.br/>

we be paying attention to the fauns that point out paths in the forest, perhaps to at least find some clearings?

In this quest, it seems important to us to avoid some pitfalls. The first is the allure of the siren song of progress based on technological determinism. The use of digital technologies today should be integrated into teaching<sup>5</sup>. Paulo Freire already said that one of the most regrettable things for a human being is to be an exile from his time, which in reality is a combination of different times:

My land is the dramatic coexistence of disparate times, mixing in the same geographical space - backwardness, misery, poverty, hunger, traditionalism, magical consciousness, authoritarianism, democracy, modernity, and post-modernity (FREIRE, 1995, p. 26).

Another well-known trap denounced by Simón Rodríguez (2006) is the "copy-paste" of successful educational policies elsewhere. Thus, models are always available that present themselves as the salvation for our education. What could be seen as a sign of educational cosmopolitanism is, in fact, an attestation of ignorance about ourselves and the world.

The traps are so interesting because they have something magical about them when the mediation for reaching a certain end is disregarded. Many threads are scattered about, and in each of them, we tend to see the promise of a safe exit from the labyrinth. Staying with the metaphor of threads, perhaps an important task in Latin American education is to weave more consistent and reliable threads. For this, too, there is no recipe, and there are many places where these threads are being woven, as well as diverse ways of weaving them with various instruments handled by different subjects.

To avoid the trap of generalizations, it seems more reasonable to enter into dialogue about perspectives to weave more consistent threads. It is in this spirit that we identify some tasks that, in our view, have the potential to help us deal with our labyrinths. These tasks are related to research work developed in the research group "Pedagogical mediations and citizenship"<sup>6</sup> in partnership with many groups and researchers in Brazil and abroad.

## **Popular Education as a place of resistance and the creation of viable novelties**

In his speech at the presentation of Doctor Honoris Causa to Oscar Jara (2018) by the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, the honoree argued that we should think of all education as being "popular." To this end, he defined popular with three complementary senses. The first one, in the sense of a right of all citizens, indistinctly. All people should have access to a public, free, secular, inclusive, and quality education throughout their lives, and it is the state's role to provide the resources and tools for this.

The second meaning of popular concerns what is usually referred to as "popular sectors," that is, those portions of the population — the majority, in the case of most Latin American countries — that are the victims in a structurally unjust social and economic system. In other words, the popular indicates an ethical-political perspective of education and the place that deserves priority attention.

The third meaning of popular in education concerns the political-pedagogical movement of individual and collective subjects, organizations, and institutions that work and fight to create dignified living conditions for all. Popular education, in this sense, is the pedagogical dimension of popular social movements that, in their resistance and insurgency fights, create knowledge that can range from innovative formulas to create cleaning and hygiene products with discarded cooking oil to more democratic forms of leadership and organization.

From the second half of the last century, the second and the third sense of popular are constitutive for what we know today as popular education and have been developed in a wide variety of places: in youth and adult education, in rural education, in health, in social service, in social movements, in solidarity economy enterprises, in schools and universities, among others (STRECK; ESTEBAN,

---

<sup>5</sup> This text is being revised during the pandemic of the new coronavirus (COVID-19), and much of the school and academic activities are being transposed to digital platforms, probably generating changes that will impact the future of education from the technological support that reconfigures the times and places of education. It is important to see this impact in the context of broader social change (SANTOS, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Address in CNPq's Directory of Research Groups: <http://dgp.cnpq.br/dgp/espelhogrupo/3627>.

2013). It contains some characteristics that should be highlighted at this point while bringing questions that indicate that we are facing a concept and a motion practice:

By affirming the political non-neutrality of education, it poses the challenge of rethinking the very meaning of politics as an inherent dimension of education. In times of dogmatism and of the "non-partisan school,"<sup>7</sup> this task cannot be postponed. In this context, important initiatives of political formation arise, such as the project of the "Escuela de Formación Política Carlos Ometochtzin," directed by Enrique Dussel, in Mexico.

Popular education has its habitat in the struggles for liberation. Who are today the subjects of popular education, and where are the places of popular education? How do these diverse subjects and places articulate with each other — for instance, schools and universities with social movements? Popular education relies on dialogue as a method for change. What are the possibilities and limits of a dialogical education within a broken society, from the family to the church, the media, and other institutions and structures?

Popular education is a place for radicalism, as opposed to sectarianism. We again avail ourselves of Paulo Freire: radicality is serene and open for him because it is not afraid to change or overcome itself. "Sectarianism is sterile, it is necrophilic. Radicality is creative, biophilic. The radical strives for purity; the sectarian is content with puritanism, which is an act of purity" (FREIRE, 1995, p. 66); in other words, purity is the combination of ethics and aesthetics, beauty, and decency.

Looking at the history of Latin America in the last decades, many threads have been woven into popular education practices. Some of them were very well used and helped at least to better understand the labyrinths of power by penetrating them and realizing that it is not impossible to face the Minotaurs and find the way out again; other threads and yarns may have been misused or given to inept hands. Nevertheless, the threads continue to be woven with the patience and hope of today's Penelopes.

## **The uncovering of forgotten and silenced protagonists**

In Latin America, there is a rich pedagogical experience practically unknown. One of the consequences of this is the generally unsuccessful transplantation of policies and practices from other contexts, and we lack a backbone that supports a consistent educational perspective. The recent attacks on Paulo Freire's work and legacy are a symptom of the "elites of backwardness" (SOUZA, 2017), who paradoxically consider themselves the vanguard of progress; this memory, in addition to not being of interest, is bothersome and needs to be erased.

At least four strands could be integrated into this memory. The first of them comprises the original peoples representing great diversity in Latin America. In Brazil, for example, we know little about the contribution of the Guarani people to education within community life, with its rituals and the appreciation of each person represented in the "soul-word" (MELIÁ, 2010). The pedagogical wealth of the ancestral peoples is also expressed in the deep connection of humans with nature. In Popul Wuj, the Mayan sacred book, people are formed from corn, one of the main food sources for many native peoples. If, in the Judeo-Christian myth, the origin is in the clay, here it is in the corn:

Then they began to talk about the creation and formation of our first mother and father. His flesh was made from yellow corn and white corn; from the mass of corn were made the arms and legs of a man. Only corn dough went into the flesh of our fathers (RECINOS, apud BARBOSA, 2019, p. 35)

The other aspect is that of the blacks who, although forced into slavery, did not fail to develop a rich culture in artistic, religious, linguistic and social organization expressions in the new land. Today, the quilombo can be seen as "an educational project of society" (NUNES, 2019, p. 153), and quilombola education is a way to affirm another possibility of education. As remembered by Nunes, despite the attempt to erase its origins, the multiplicity of knowledge of the African world resisted and reinvented itself in the ways of "knowing how to react, knowing how to think, knowing how to find,

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.escolasempartido.org/>

through unusual paths, places of refuge, welcome and pedagogies not only of survival but of an existence, still full of meanings from the memories of the African world that were not chained" (2019, p. 154).

The third strand would be that of the critics of the colony, in which we find figures such as Bartolomeu de las Casas and Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala. The latter reveals in detail in his chronicle to the kings of Spain the abuses and cruelty of the invaders. It is the *pachacuti*, the end of the world or the world inside out, which is established with the arrival of the Europeans. The drawings reproduced below show education under the whip and the vision of the colony's authorities. From Guaman Poma, we can see how the indigenous person embodies the ambiguity of the colonized (MORETTI; STRECK, 2019, p. 128). In contrast, he presents a detailed denunciation in figures and words in the chronicle of more than a thousand pages. On the other hand, after accounts of incredible violence, he ends with the phrase of near resignation, "But there is no remedy."

**Figure 1** - Drawing 266. The cruel choirmasters and the school are teaching their students to read and write to be good Christians.



Source: Available at: [www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/684/es/image/?open=id2690171](http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/684/es/image/?open=id2690171). Accessed on: 30 Apr. 2020.

**Figure 2** - Drawing 271. Six animals that the poor Indians of this kingdom fear: the inspector, a snake; the Spaniard from "tambo", a tiger; the steward, a lion; the indoctrinating priest, a *zorra*; the scribe, a cat; and the chief cacique, a mouse.



Source: Available at: [www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/708/es/image/?open=id2691317](http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/708/es/image/?open=id2691317). Accessed on: 30 Apr. 2020.



It is worth mentioning, however, the presence of women, which can be represented in the figure of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651–1695). Challenging the patriarchal society of her time, Sister Juana dared to study and discuss with the intellectuals of the time, especially the clergymen. Reflecting on the text "Answer to Sor Dilotea de la Cruz," Marcela Gómez Sollano and Ana María del Pilar Martínez Hernández (2019) summarize the contribution of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz to Latin American pedagogy thus:

Thus, she made self-education, her love for letters, and scientific knowledge an ordaining reference for her daily activity, understanding, and reason. However, in addition, she opened the way for the voice of women to take shape and occupy the scene, not only of those who preceded her, "learned, feared, and celebrated women," although also of those who, by letting their words and teachings resonate, made their own the pedagogical ideals of equality and equity (SOLLANO; HERNÁNDEZ, 2019, p. 152).

As a fourth strand, we can identify the educational ideology present in the independence movements and in the constitution movements of the new Latin American republics, in which men such as Félix Varela y Morales and José Martí in Cuba stand out, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, in Argentina, José Pedro Varela, in Uruguay, Manoel Bonfim, in Brazil, and women like Maria Luiza Dolz y Arango, in Cuba, Salomé Ureña y Díaz, in the Dominican Republic, Soledad Acosta de Samper, in Colombia, and Nísia Floresta, in Brazil.

Simón Bolívar himself, according to Adriana Puiggrós (2019), can be seen as a pioneer in the construction of modern school systems in Latin America: "of public and compulsory education, the education of women, the transmission of citizen knowledge and universal culture. He anticipated university autonomy, the retirement of teachers, and the system of competitions" (PUIGGRÓS, 2019, p. 166). An important source of inspiration for Bolívar in education was his master Simón Rodríguez with his criticism of the imitation of the metropolises that, for centuries, subjected the people to abandonment and ignorance. This would be the "inveterate evil" of America, causing the greatest obstacle to effective independence, and apathy (RODRÍGUEZ, 2006, p. 185).

Numerous other threads could be woven from the vast body of pedagogical practices and reflections in Latin America that, in a certain way, flow into the movement of popular education or, more broadly, into emancipatory pedagogies that have Paulo Freire as their basic reference<sup>8</sup>. All this makes up the framework of critical or emancipatory pedagogies that we have today in Latin America and that, to a good extent, are covered up. They are, therefore, indispensable material to weave threads that can help us find our way out of the labyrinth.

## **Education for a critical and solidary cosmopolitanism**

The third important place to weave the threads is the formation of world citizenship, citizenship for a critical and solidary cosmopolitanism. For those linked to academic activity, the internationalization discourse has become a kind of mantra, a new Arianna's thread. The order is to internationalize because, in a globalized world, the market demands professionals who can understand the demands beyond national borders. Without allowing ourselves to be co-opted by this new siren song generally driven by an instrumental and mercantilist vision of education, it is necessary to recognize that today citizenship needs to be understood in an expanded way, including local and regional traditions (UNESCO, 2018). For example, what are the national government's limits to dealing with environmental issues affecting the entire planet? What is extranational responsibility in the waves of migrants fleeing famine or political repression?

From the point of view of popular education, we can argue that internationalization is not an invention of universities that need it to position themselves better in international rankings or prepare elite professionals. A closer look at social movements shows that international or global connectivity is part of their very identity. Some of the most expressive examples are the international organizations of indigenous peoples, rural workers in La Via Campesina, and of women in the World March of Women.

---

<sup>8</sup> We refer here to the two sourcebooks of Latin American pedagogy that bring together fragments of these various strands (STRECK, 2010; STRECK; MORETTI; ADAMS, 2019).

Based on these movements, education can think of criteria and strategies for another internationalization. One of them is to see itself as part of a movement to transform society. Suppose there is a hegemonic globalizing force commanded by market interests. In that case, there are also movements, in the North and the geographic South, that promote the strengthening of citizenship focused on fairer relations among people and more responsible with the nature of which humans are part (AMIN; HOUTART, 2004). José Martí, in *La Edad de Oro*, narrates to children, "The story of a man told by his houses." The tale leads to a walk through history, from when people lived in caves to today's houses with doors and windows, going through Aztec, Egyptian and Persian houses, among others. Moreover, it ends with the message: "Now all the peoples of the world know each other better and visit each other (...) as if the happy time had begun when men treat each other as friends, and come together" (MARTÍ, 1994, p. 70).

Another challenge is overcoming reductionist dichotomies such as history/nature, scientific knowledge/popular knowledge, and theory/practice, and overcoming disciplinary barriers in the construction of knowledge. Knowledge democracy is about providing access for all to existing knowledge and conditions that consider democratizing the knowledge production process (OPENJURU *et al.*, 2015). In research, for instance, this involves transdisciplinary practices in which different academic disciplines dialogue among themselves and integrate the knowledge of practice to co-produce scientifically more robust and socially more relevant knowledge. World citizenship challenges us to keep present in education the interconnectivity of relationships that go beyond classical geographical, cultural, and epistemological barriers.

## AS A CONCLUSION: WHAT ABOUT UTOPIA?

This article, centered on the image of the labyrinth, is based on the understanding that hope, in the Freirean sense, is an ontological necessity for human beings, especially for education. As Freire (1992, p. 10) testifies in the first pages of *Pedagogy of Hope*: "I am not hopeful out of sheer stubbornness but out of an existential and historical imperative." Without denying hopelessness in the face of adverse conditions as a concrete fact, hope is an indispensable driving force in the struggle for a more dignified human existence and a better world.

In this sense, there is a close relationship between hope and utopia, as well registered in the book *Hacia una pedagogía de la imaginación para América Latina*, by Adriana Puiggrós, Susana Jsé and Juan Balduzzi (1987). After analyzing the precarious situation of education in Argentina and other Latin American countries, the authors affirm the possibility of utopia as an imaginary and a "source of realizable projects" (PUIGGRÓS; JSÉ; BALDUZZI, 1987, p. 288). The denial of this possibility would have its origin in short-sighted perspectives, in reductionisms that fear widening the view, and in fundamentalist positions from the right and the left. They say: "Utopia moves between imagination and the possibility of influencing the production of projects capable of operating on immediate and mediated reality with a certain degree of certainty" (2018, p. 292). There is in this phrase a combination of three elements to characterize utopia: a) the imagination that affirms the possibility of rising above the possible and seeing the labyrinths not as a fatality, without exits; b) the condition of creating projects through which one can operate on reality - immediate and mediated; c) and acting with a "certain" degree of certainty, that is, accepting a degree of temporariness in acting, without which one falls into dogmatism.

At the beginning of the reflection on the labyrinth, Jorge Luis Borges recalled in his poem that he wished this was the last day of waiting to leave the condition where the straight galleries ended up twisting into secret circles. Paulo Freire (2000, n. p.), in "Canção óbvia," gives his testimony of what this waiting means, saying that "Who waits in pure waiting/lives a time of vain waiting(...) I will not wait for you in pure waiting/because my time of waiting is a/time of doing."

In addition, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, in the poem "Our Time," speaks prophetically of the days we live in: "This is a time of brokenness/ a time of broken men," a time in which we live, according to him, "of tiny borrowed certainties." Therefore,

I stay quiet, I wait, I decipher./Things might get better./Things are so strong/But I am not  
things, and I rebel./I have words in me seeking a channel,/they are hoarse and hard. Angry,

energetic,/compressed for so long,/they've lost their meaning, they just want to explode. (ANDRADE, 1999, p. 30).

Words suddenly explode in the classroom, the street, and other places where education takes place in countless forms of insurgent and creative social and educational practices. In the search for exits from the labyrinth, there are meetings and mismatches of bodies and ideals, and different voices cross each other. Among resistance and insurgency movements, which are not in unison, education can become a space in which the search itself — even if inside the labyrinth — feeds curiosity about who we are and where we are going, questions that, deep down, summarize the task of educating.

## REFERENCES

- AMIN, Samir; HOUTART, François. *Mundialización de las resistencias: Estado de las luchas 2004*. Bogotá: Desde Abajo, 2004.
- ANDRADE, Carlos D. de. *A rosa do povo*. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1999.
- BARBOSA, Lia. Popul Wuj e a pedagogia maya da milpa. In: STRECK, Danilo R.; MORETTI, Cheron Z.; ADAMS, Telmo (Orgs.). *Fontes da pedagogia latino-americana: heranças (des)coloniais*. Curitiba: Appris, 2019. p. 23-36.
- BORGES, Jorge Luis. *El labirinto*. Available at: <https://www.poeticous.com/borges/el-laberinto?locale=es>. Accessed on: 30 Apr. 2020.
- COMÊNIO, Jan A. *Didáctica Magna*. 3. ed. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1985.
- COMENIUS, John A. The Labyrinth of the Earth and the Paradise of the Heart. In: PIAGET, Jean. *John Amos Comenius on Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1967. p. 35-64.
- DIAS, Bruno F. B.; MARIANO, Sandra R. H.; CUNHA, Robson M. Educação básica na América Latina: uma análise dos últimos dez anos a partir dos dados do programa internacional de avaliação de estudantes (Pisa). *Revista Pensamento Contemporâneo em Administração*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 11, n. 4, p. 1-26, 2017. doi: 10.12712/rpca.v11i4.1065. Available at: <https://periodicos.uff.br/pca/article/view/11321/pdf>. Accessed on: 30 Apr. 2020.
- FALS BORDA, Orlando. Las revoluciones inconclusas em América Latina. In: FALS BORBA, Orlando. *Una sociología sentipensante para América Latina*. Compilador Victor Manuel Moncayo. Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre, 2009. p. 395-418.
- FREIRE, Paulo. *À sombra desta mangueira*. São Paulo: Olho d'Água, 1995.
- FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogia da esperança*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1992.
- FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogia da indignação: Cartas pedagógicas e outros escritos*. São Paulo: UNESP, 2000.
- FREIRE, Paulo. *Virtudes do educador*. São Paulo: Veredas, 1982.
- FRIGOTTO, Gaudêncio. As novas e velhas faces da crise do capital e o labirinto dos referenciais teóricos. In: FRIGOTTO, Gaudêncio; CIAVATTA, Maria. (Orgs.). *Teoria e educação no labirinto do capital*. 2. ed. São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2014. p. 29-70.
- GENTILI, Pablo. *O labirinto da desigualdade: educação e injustiça social na América Latina*. Rio de Janeiro: FLACSO Brasil, PPFH/UERJ, 2016.

GUIMARÃES ROSA, João. *Grande Sertão: Veredas*. 6. ed. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1968.

HERNANDEZ SANTIBAÑEZ, Ivette. Ativismo da Juventude no Chile: das desigualdades educacionais urbanas às experiências de convivência e de solidariedade. *Educação & Realidade*, n. 43, v. 3, p. 837-863, 2018. doi: 10.1590/2175-623678811. Available at: [www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S2175-62362018000300837&lng=en&nrm=iso](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2175-62362018000300837&lng=en&nrm=iso). Accessed on: 30 Apr. 2020.

IANNI, Octávio. *O labirinto latino-americano*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1993.

JARA, Oscar. *Discurso de Oscar Jara em 12/09/2018*. Entrega do Título de Doutor Honoris Causa na UFRGS. Porto Alegre: UFRGS/Pró-Reitoria de Extensão, 2019.

MÁRQUEZ, Gabriel G. *O General e seu labirinto*. 2. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1989.

MARTÍ, José. *La Edad de Oro*. La Habana: Editorial Pueblo y Educación, 1994.

MELIÁ, Bartolomeu S. J. Educação guarani segundo os Guarani. In: STRECK, Danilo R. (Org.) *Fontes da pedagogia latino-americana: uma antologia*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2010. p. 37-55.

MIGNOLO, Walter D. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*. Durham: Duke, 2011.

MORETTI, Cheron Z.; STRECK, Danilo R. Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala: entre resistências e subalternidades na pedagogia (des)colonial. In: STRECK, Danilo R.; MORETTI, Cheron Z.; ADAMS, Telmo. *Fontes da pedagogia latino-americana: heranças (des)coloniais*. Curitiba: Appris, 2019. p. 121-134.

NUNES, Georgina H. L. Abdias do Nascimento. O quilombismo como projeto educativo de sociedade. Quilombo e quilombismo: primeiras aproximações. In: STRECK, Danilo R.; MORETTI, Cheron Z.; ADAMS, Telmo. *Fontes da pedagogia latino-americana: heranças (des)coloniais*. Curitiba: Appris, 2019. p. 153-164

OPENJURU, George L.; JAITLE, Namrata; TANDON, Rajesh; HALL, Budd. Knowledge Democracy, Community-based Action Research, the Global South and the Excluded North. In: BRADBURY, Hilary (Ed.). *The Sage Handbook of Action Research*. 3. ed. Los Angeles: Sage, 2015. p. 481-488.

PAZ, Octavio. *O labirinto da Solidão e Post-Scriptum*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1984.

PENTEADO, Regina Z.; SOUZA NETO, Samuel de. Mal-estar, sofrimento e adoecimento do professor: de narrativas do trabalho e da cultura docente à docência como profissão. *Saúde soc.*, São Paulo, v. 28, n. 1, p. 135-153, 2019. doi: 10.1590/s0104-12902019180304 Available at: [www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0104-12902019000100010&lng=en&nrm=iso](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0104-12902019000100010&lng=en&nrm=iso). Accessed on: 30 Apr. 2020.

PUIGGRÓS, Adriana. A herança pedagógica de Bolívar. In: STRECK, Danilo R.; MORETTI, Cheron Z.; ADAMS, Telmo. *Fontes da pedagogia latino-americana: heranças (des)coloniais*. Curitiba: Appris, 2019. p. 165-174.

PUIGGRÓS, Adriana; JSÉ, Susana; BALDUZZI, Juan. *Hacia una Pedagogía de la imaginación para América Latina*. Buenos Aires: Contrapunto, 1987.

QUIJANO, Anibal. Colonialidade do poder, eurocentrismo e América Latina. In: LANDER, Edgardo. (Org.). *A colonialidade do saber: eurocentrismo e ciências sociais. Perspectivas latinoamericanas*. Buenos

Aires: CLACSO, 2005. p. 107-130. Available at: [http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/sur-sur/20100624103322/12\\_Quijano.pdf](http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/sur-sur/20100624103322/12_Quijano.pdf). Accessed on: 30 Apr. 2020.

RODRÍGUEZ, Simón. *La defensa de Bolívar*. El Libertador del Mediodía de América y sus Compañeros de Armas. Caracas: Ediciones Rectorado, 2006.

SANTOS, Boaventura de S. *A crítica da razão indolente: contra o desperdício da experiência*. São Paulo: Cortez, 2000.

SANTOS, Boaventura de S. *A cruel pedagogia do vírus*. Coimbra: Almedina, 2020.

SOLLANO, Marcela G.; HERNÁNDEZ, Ana Maria P. M. Sórora Juana Inés de la Cruz: Uma pedagogia do autodidatismo feminino no século XVII Novo-Hispano. In: STRECK, Danilo R.; MORETTI, Cheron Z.; ADAMS, Telmo. *Fontes da pedagogia latino-americana: heranças (des)coloniais*. Curitiba: Appris, 2019. p. 135-152.

SOUZA, Jessé. *A elite do atraso*. Rio de Janeiro: LeYa, 2017.

STRECK, Danilo R. *Fontes da pedagogia latino-americana: uma antologia*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2010.

STRECK, Danilo R.; ESTEBAN, Maria Teresa. (Orgs.). *Educação popular: lugar de construção social coletiva*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2013.

STRECK, Danilo R.; MORETTI, Cheron Z.; ADAMS, Telmo. *Fontes da pedagogia latino-americana: heranças (des)coloniais*. Curitiba: Appris, 2019.

UNESCO. *Global Citizenship Education: Taking it local*. Paris: Unesco, 2018.

## DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**The author declares that there is no conflict of interest with this article.**

The translation of this article into English was funded by the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de Minas Gerais - FAPEMIG, through the program of supporting the publication of institutional scientific journals.

**Submitted on:** 12/16/2020

**Approved on:** 07/06/2021