

Dossier: SCHOOL SPACES AND ARCHITECTURES

## **SCHOOL SPACES AND ARCHITECTURES. MATERIALITIES, REGULATIONS AND BODIES IN THE PAST AND PRESENT**

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The school, that institution that was born with and contributed to the formation of the modern world, closed its doors to contain the spread of Covid-19. Very shortly before we met, a disciplinarily plural group, formed mainly by historians, pedagogues, sociologists, anthropologists, architects and communicologists from Brazil, Mexico, Colombia and Argentina. First in Mexico City (Mexico) in June 2018 and then in August 2019 in Cordoba (Argentina). We were brought together by an interest in reflecting on spaces and architectures in schools, without imagining that in 2020 a pandemic would disrupt the world order. At that time, online classes, remote education and home schooling were strategies adopted by most governments as a safe way to continue with the processes of school-based education. Although they had already been tested and implemented at different educational levels, and could even remind us of past forms of distance education through the postal service and radio broadcasting, the accelerated spread of the disease imposed the generalized incorporation of these strategies without being free of contradictions and resistance.

Gradually, schools have taken on new forms, the members of school communities have learned to relate to each other virtually, domestic spaces - now publicly exhibited - have been reorganized and re-staged to house functions and activities that were thought to correspond only to the school, while school buildings look empty, placing space at the center of the concerns of politicians and specialists: from reflections on virtual space to questioning how to rearrange physical spaces, perhaps through modalities that combine

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face-to-face and virtual modes in a possible staggered return to schools. It also raises the obsolescence of a walled school whose weakness was highlighted by the pandemic, and proposes the construction of new school architectures that ensure the health of its inhabitants and are compatible with the educational trends of the digital age. Although school architecture and school spaces, or spaces for teaching, are not a new topic, the pandemic has shown us its centrality, as a topic, but also as a fruitful approach, since at least for the last thirty years it has been a promising field for educational research in Latin America.

In these new situations, in transit and whose destiny we cannot know with certainty, it seems to us a great opportunity that *Educação em Revista (Education in Magazine)* publishes the papers presented at the First Workshop on Spaces and Architectures in the School, organized by Laura Cházaro, Inés Dussel and Carlos Ortega at the Department of Educational Research of Cinvestav in Mexico City in 2018. This Dossier continues the reflection initiated at that time and whose first results were already published in the *History of Education Yearbook (Anuario de Historia de la Educación)* [Vol. 20, number 1, 2019]. In this issue we proposed works that think school spaces, their architectures and their materiality from different disciplinary and conceptual perspectives in order to provide some guidelines that allow us to imagine with all senses ready the future of schools.

The research gathered in this *Dossier* brings together approaches from sociology, anthropology, geography, pedagogy, communication and history, and is aimed at unraveling the multiple implications of architecture and school spaces in the culture and organization of society. Here we offer some cases from Brazil, Mexico and Argentina, which illustrate a disciplinary, geographically and temporally varied dialogue, so necessary in the current conditions of schools. We can say that the six texts gathered, plural in approaches and methodologies, form a coherent whole for thematic and analytical reasons. A common characteristic of the articles presented is the focus of the analysis on space as a material dimension of school life, be it pedagogical practices or the very experiences of planning and inhabiting that space as schoolchildren, teachers, designers, politicians and public officials.

It is worth asking why the body, as representation and as performance, is so central when we talk about school space? Policies and institutions themselves, when planning spaces, come face to face with bodies, whether they are the bodies of children or teachers, as well as those of animals and other things or objects. At a very general level, school space involves architecture, the materiality of buildings and the school in its relationship with neighborhoods and then with cities. As Henri Lefebvre shows, it implies a relational dimension that involves disciplining, directing, controlling, producing and recreating bodies. These conditions occur in spaces such as hospitals, laboratories or schools, and specifically in classrooms.

Whether in Mexico, Brazil or Argentina, the authors agree that the material approach implies an analytical commitment that forces us to seriously reflect on how to think about school architecture-space? Marcus Levy, Alejandra Castro and Carlos Ortega answer this question by making laws material objects of reflection. Each of them is concerned with educational reforms which they analyze as a source (Levy) and as the implementation of a certain space (Castro and Ortega).

Marcus Levy, from the historian's perspective and based on Carlo Ginzburg's (1986) indexical model, immerses his readers in the central epistemological question about their sources (the archive). In *"The regulations for the construction of public-school buildings in Brazil: the example of the state of Paraná in the first half of the century"* (*Os regulamentos para a construção dos edifícios escolares públicos no Brasil: o exemplo do estado do Paraná na primeira metade do século*), Levy asks himself how to account for the investment policy of the Brazilian state. Like other

historians, he turns to the codes, regulations and instructions specifically aimed at the operation of primary schools in Paraná (Brazil), between 1903-1938. Levy does not want to drown out the voices of other subjects, for in addition to the school authorities, he shows how much these administrative materials imply a multiplicity of voices that need to be brought out of the interpretative darkness and put into dialogue. The archive is a body that, in order to write the history of architecture, presupposes a dialogue and not a mere collection of decrees. According to Levy, the writing of the history of architecture requires an indicative path and a methodology of interpretation that allows it to avoid both *dejá vu* and the abysses of anachronism. For the latter, he makes use of the four levels of interpretation used by the Jewish sages of the 13th century, known by the acrostic PaRDeS (פֶּרְדֵּס), with which the deep meanings of the sources are revealed.

With the same impulse that aims to strengthen the analytical approach of space and materiality, Alejandra M. Castro delivers the *article School spatiality, focus readings and dislocations in the (un)construction of an object (Espacialidade escolar, leituras de foco e des deslocamentos na (des) construção de um objeto)*. From a sociological perspective, without ceasing to appeal to philosophy, the author analyzes the link between educational policies and spatiality. Resulting from a broader project, the article takes as an empirical field the political texts that express the educational policies to guarantee the right to education and the compulsory nature of secondary school in Argentina. It focuses on the National Education Law No. 26.206 (LEN) of 2006, which extended the compulsory nature of the initial level to more years, making secondary school compulsory and increasing the hourly load in elementary school through the extended school day. In order to account for the meaning of social inclusion, the article sets out to elucidate "how and in what ways the spatial is articulated or disarticulated with these educational policy purposes". Thus, the author begins by turning into a question something that is regularly assumed to be a given: what is being said when we talk about school space? To answer this question, she draws on the anthropological and sociological perspectives of Henri Lefebvre and Doreen Massey. The main contribution of this epistemological reflection is to show that the school space is a multiplicity of possibilities, from the materiality of the building, the trajectory and distances; but also, a device that produces bodies and their meanings, an institution and a place of socialization. The more dimensions we show, as the author says, the greater the challenge of constructing its specificity. In her empirical work, precisely, what she seeks is to resolve how the political, in the case of the 2006 law, is implied, becomes an inclusive action (performative of the body) in school spaces. What the article shows us is how much remains of the political relations that order the school space, however neutral, formal and abstract it may be presented either as law or in the forms of occupation. Space is political and, in that sense, its meanings, its materialities and the experiences that make it possible are contingent and historical.

Carlos Ortega, like the two previous authors, starts from official decrees, post-revolutionary architectural projects and experiments to create new school spaces for workers. *The article Learning to inhabit the school architecture of the new urban order (Aprender a habitar a arquitetura escolar da nova ordem urbana)*, (Distrito Federal, Mexico, 1932) deconstructs the space using its multiple dimensions: as part of urban projects for Mexico City, as the architecture of a school and as a place for teaching. Thus, Ortega puts on the same edge of his questioning: bodies, architecture, public and urban space, and educational decrees and policies. Specifically, the article analyzes how a group of technicians and politicians, led by the functionalist architect Juan O'Gorman (1905-1982), participated in his idea of creating a new urban order, taking advantage of the reform of the political regime of the Federal District, capital of the country, and seeking the means to govern this city that did not stop

growing. The author emphasizes how the Emiliano Zapata Elementary School, built in Colonia Industrial S.A., not only represents the functionalist architecture inspired by Le Corbusier (1925). By analyzing the remains of that school and the colony itself, the author manages to show how much of the technical or functional architecture was first and foremost a political project, a program that sought to reprogram the bodies of children and teachers through a modern rationality. The fear of the disorder of the people, already shown during the Revolution of 1910, should not be repeated. Building a school was a technical and political act, which sought to materialize a new order, one that would favor a productivist rationality, one that would transform the popular classes into healthy workers. In Levy's analysis, the writing of history requires the historian to stop considering his sources as inert evidence of the past, and to know about architecture he refers to the complex grammars of the sources. Ortega's text also shows us that writing history also involves the body of the historian. Indeed, in order to learn about the learning spaces of the last century, he turns the city into a visitable, knowable testimony. Thus, the author walks to discover in the streets of today's city the various traces of the sources. The urban design is the archive and, as the author demonstrates, in its different vestiges the arrangements and political projects of the elite of technicians and architects of that time are shown.

The articles by Rosalía Menéndez, Laura Cházaro and Daniel Hernández think of the school space from the complex relationship between objects, subjects, animals and things. While institutionality matters, its existence takes shape through the relationships between things: whether in classrooms, communication technologies or laboratories.

Daniel Hernandez offers an analysis of space by placing the question of change and novelty at the center. He wonders how to bring the classroom in tune with technological changes and how to innovate school spaces. Interested in the phenomena of what he calls "educommunication", he analyzes and discusses the possible variations in the relationship - communicative- between the teacher and the students if we change the physical arrangement of things in the classroom, such as chairs or blackboards. These changes, according to the author, would enable "more active and participatory methods of teaching and learning." From a communication perspective, he thus explores different classroom designs, such as the "active design" that promotes didactics of learning by discovery, exploration, experimentation, critique and analysis; or the "learning zones" model based on the idea of breaking away from uniform spaces or classrooms. Based on the "Classroom of the Future", a project developed at the Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology of the UNAM, the author proposes integrating ICTs into the educational process and creating new collaborative spaces beyond the classroom. For Hernandez, the educational space should be translated into "learning architectures", where computers, but also furniture, blackboards and pedagogies can promote and work on the skills required by students for the 21st century. In that perspective technology is not reduced to the computer or tablet, it implies considering the objects and things that, inside and outside the school, make it work.

From a perspective of the cultural history of science, Laura Cházaro's text aims to illuminate the relationship between spaces and knowledge. Entitled *Clinical and experimental teaching spaces: hospitals and laboratories in Mexico City, 19th century (Espaços de ensino clínico e experimental: hospitais e laboratórios na cidade do México, século 19)* focuses on how materialities, bodies, things and even animals circulate in the teaching of medicine in the previous century. Deconstructing the practices of medical teachers and students, it demonstrates that teaching spaces are not one-dimensional, neither in representation nor physically. Medicine, like other scientific disciplines, is taught in hybrid spaces and times. With her case study, the author shows how the teaching of medicine took place in hybrid spaces, such as the hospital-school-

laboratory, since the National School of Medicine could not be understood without the clinical and experimental space of the Hospital de San Andrés. These spaces, today overshadowed or taken separately, show how the bodies that are intended to heal, as well as those of the professors and students themselves, are created and recreated. Not only by the demands of the medical discipline but also by the political tensions that constitute these spaces, for example, the school versus the hospital, the hierarchies between teachers and students and even the theoretical debates between experimentalists and clinicians.

The question of bodies and teaching spaces are the central theme of the article by Rosalía Menéndez, “*Architectural space and the regulation of children's organs: Classrooms at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century*” (*O espaço arquitetônico e o regulamento dos órgãos das crianças: As salas de aula, no fim do século XIX e com o início do século XX*). This article reveals the complex relationship established by the bodies in the school space by using the reconstruction of plans of “type” schools proposed by doctors and hygienists, officials of the Ministry of Public Instruction, between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. First, she shows how the configuration of the “modern” school space implied the control of children's bodies, an issue demonstrated in a wide bibliography. Second, the author highlights other dimensions involved in the complex co-construction of school-age bodies and spaces. Examining designs or recommendations for the construction of school buildings, Menéndez makes us see how things or objects and bodies, depending on the design, follow, respect or adopt certain regulations and distributions. Furniture, school materials and bodies are regulated, live certain proximities or distances and densities. Through the representation of planes, the article by Rosalía Menéndez reveals the importance of spatial materialities, or how things and bodies shape the spatial.

In sum, the most important contribution of the articles gathered here is twofold. On the one hand, they confirm the analytical and thematic richness of what has been called the spatial approach or turn. But they also offer situated, local reflections of these theoretical approaches. Not only because the cases presented here come from experiences and situations in Latin America. Above all, because each author engages in a dialogue, confrontation and replication with their theoretical references and methodological inspirations. Whether as historians, anthropologists, sociologists or communicologists, each one offers, in his or her particularity, an enormous thematic and theoretical richness to approach this spatial turn. A second contribution of the Dossier is its timeliness in the face of our Covid-19 experiences. Read from the pandemic, each text already offers a genealogy of how bodies, diseases and technology, in short, things and their spatial arrangements, have taken the current configurations in schools.

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