EXORDIUM

AN URBAN PEDAGOGY
OR THE IMPLICIT PEDAGOGY OF URBAN SPACES

UNA PEDAGOGIA URBANA O DELLA PEDAGOGIA
IMPLICITA DEGLI SPAZI URBANI

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The city narrates and its architectural structures convey their functions, their wealth, their power and sacredness. They can also tell a tale of violence and fear, of the logic of power, of discrimination and denial. They transmit information, implicit messages that shape and form, giving life to that "*conditioning power*" or "*unconscious influence of the environment*" which signifies pervasiveness and performativity or *education*. Cities, then, are potentially *educational*, but they can also be *miseducational* when they are at the service of anti-democratic and anti-educational logic. They can impoverish and transmit messages of hate, violence and discrimination by colonizing the minds and hindering reflective and creative thinking. Space, is then, a "*pedagogical operator*" which, in the wake of Foucauldian pedagogy, is able to influence the educational process, starting from the *implicit pedagogy* that insinuates itself into a structure, thus making it the daily spokesperson for ideologies.

La città narra e le sue architetture possono raccontare delle loro funzioni, di ricchezza, potenza e sacralità, ma possono anche raccontare di violenza e paura, di logiche di potere, discriminazione e negazione. Trasmettono informazioni, messaggi impliciti che mimetizzandosi plasmano e formano dando vita a quella *"potenza di condi-*

*zionamento"* o *"influenza incosciente dell'ambiente"* che significa pervasività, performatività o *educazione*. Le città, allora, sono potenzialmente *educative*, ma possono essere anche *diseducative* quando al servizio di logiche antidemocratiche e antieducative. Possono impoverire, trasmettere messaggi di odio, violenza e discriminazione colonizzando le menti e ostacolando il pensiero riflessivo e creativo. Lo spazio, quindi, come *"operatore pedagogico"* che, sulla scia di una pedagogia foucaultiana, è in grado di influenzare il processo educativo a partire da quegli *impliciti pedagogici* che si insinuano nel costruito rendendolo quotidiano portavoce di ideologie.

## 1. That process (even unconscious) called education

What is education and what it means "to educate" is a complex thing, unclear today and for this reason debated by pedagogy. Etymologically, the verb "to educate" derives from the Latin "*educere*" and literally translates as "pull out, raise, conduct". It refers to intentional action aimed at promoting the development and growth of specific cognitive, intellectual, aesthetic and moral human faculties. This definition ends up identifying, in the act of educating, a human action intentionally oriented to the transmission of knowledge, skills and *cultural "habitus"* by changing the behavior of the educated. Defined as educational are all those "agencies" characterized by an educational intentionality, such as the school (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2001). These features on one hand help us to define the term education, whilst on the other hand leads us to reflect on the very variability of the term. It is, in fact, linked to the historical-cultural context in which it is utilised: it is a fluid definition and refers to a plurality of meanings and applications, some still unexplored. For this reason, education is a practice highly connected to the dimension of time and *space*, a *continuous process* which accompanies human beings throughout their life (*lifelong education*), in every context of their (*lifewide education*) and which nurtures even their *depths* (*lifedeep education*), emotions and ontological dimension (Dozza, 2012; Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2001; Loiodice, 2019). It

is a process that is not only ontogenetic, in that it does not stop in the here and now, but is also phylogenetic, in that it connects all spaces, all times and individuals. It does not always connect them intentionally, in a direct and explicit way, but can also connect them involuntarily through time (history) and space (living environment), which is then disseminated in their collective memory.

In this sense, it is highly suggestive how important it is to ask ourselves how we are intimately connected with everything around us, and how much the contexts in which we live influence us. How much are we ourselves and how much is the result of a gradual construction of structures and superstructures that have determined our ways of thinking and acting? Johon Dewey (1916/2012) defines this as the result of the *unconscious influence of environment*. How much then does this implicit dimension contribute unconsciously to everyone's educational processes? How much does culture influence us?

These are profound questions related to Complexity theories (Bocchi & Ceruti, 1985; Cambi, Cives & Fornaca, 1991; Morin, 1993). These theories attribute to the environment, understood as a system of connected and interdipendenti parts, an indispensabile role in the construction of our identity. Complexity theories connect our lives, our experiences, our minds and our destinies. This is because there is an entire implicit underground world scattered throughout our daily life which continues to contribute to the individual and collective *weltanschaung*.

When we speak of education, we are not referring only to the forms of transmission of formal and direct knowledge, but also to the forms that are based on unconscious, informal and implicit processes. Education forms and shapes individuals depending on how they are linked to their social groups, to culture, to its ways of thinking, of acting (Dewey, 1916/2012), of building and living.

Dewey, in fact, speaks of education, both as a process of nutrition attentive to the growth of individuals, and of «transformation of the quality of experience to the point that it participates in the interests, purposes and current ideas of the social group» (Dewey, 1916/2012, p. 11) to which it belongs. In this sense, the environment becomes not only a place of the experience of individuals, but

also a place of construction of common and shared meanings. The environment is not just what surrounds us, it is not only physical, but also cultural. It leads the individual to «see and feel one thing rather than another, leads him to formulate projects [...], induces him to seek beliefs and weakens others» (Dewey, 1916/2012, p. 12) and mutates it by promoting or preventing, stimulating or inhibiting the characteristic activities of a human being (Dewey, 1916/2012). This distinction between the physical environment and cultural environment is a legacy – still existing today – of the Cartesian division between *res cogitans* and *rex extensa*. It has no more reason to exist since both must be thought of as two parts of a single system, able to interact and influence one another. Indeed, writes Dewey, «there is no direct influence of one human being over another, outside the use of the physical environment as an intermediary» (Dewey, 1916/2012, p. 32).

The environment becomes for Dewey, a place of social relations, sharing and negotiating meanings in which an individual does or «what he can do depends on what others expect, demand, approves or condemns» (Dewey, 1916/2012, p. 13). This can occur directly, through formal education, or it can occur through tacit methods of knowledge assimilation. For example, through the spaces and implicit messages that they contain. This means that the social environment is capable of exerting an educational and training influence that is unconscious and independent of formal and intentional educational action. In fact, Dewey distinguishes three functions of education: direction, guidance and control. If the first two semantically derive from the etymology of the word "educate" and refer to the action of helping people in their development and growth processes, the third function refers to something that happens outside and is hetero-directed. This form of education is a process of indoctrination, colonization and disciplining of minds and bodies. Control disguised as education and steeped in violence and coercion (Dewey, 1916/2012, p. 27), becomes an instrument in the hands of power and which leads the individual to «subordinate his natural impulses to public or common purposes» (Dewey,

1916/2012, p. 27). In fact, entire systems of government and theories on the state have been constructed on these concepts. Consequently, the concept of education and its practice have been seriously influenced. They have been subordinated and placed at the service of the systems of government and ideologies on which they were based. Just think of the totalitarian and dictatorial systems that have used education as an instrument of ideological indoctrination and as a means of "normalization" of practices and theories otherwise would have found no consensus. In fact, «the most permanent and effective types of control are those that act from moment to moment, continuously, without deliberate intentions on our part» (Dewey, 1916/2012, pp. 30-31). They insinuate themselves tacitly and find themselves dispersed in the culture, in the collective memory, in the *formae mentis* and in the spaces of everyday life. Forms of an *underground education*, of an *underground pedagogy* that shape and educate all those who come into contact with it daily. But this is not a form of conscious education, it is not a form of education capable of producing critical, reflective thinking, but which leads to acting «blindly, unconsciously, intelligently» and «in purely blind response, even the direction is blind» (Dewey, 1916/2012, pp. 33-34).

## 2. Pedagogy and ideology: the political dimension of education

When we utilise the word "*politics*" or the word "*ideology*" in relation to that of education, it is easy to come across conflicting opinions. The debate is between those who say that education is a political practice and that politics spreads through education; and those who want to de-politicize education and to keep the school an apolitical and non-partisan institution and avoid transforming it into a place of transmission or ideological production. In this contribution we shall not argue these viewpoints, but rather examine the deep link that exists between *ideas*, *practices* and *education*. An argument that could be resolved by restoring to the word "politics" its original meaning, one that is linked to the responsibility of each for the *res*

*publica* and to grasp the deep link that exists between pedagogy, education and ideology. The words ideology and politics, in fact, are linked to human being and their relationships with others. These two terms are part of the ontological dimension of the human condition. The word "politics" derives from the Greek πολιτική (politiké) and from πόλις (pólis, city), and literally means "that which concerns the polis", "which concerns the city". Therefore, politics concern everyone and education must form individuals with a sense of responsibility, belonging and care towards their environment. Similarly, the word ideology is identified as a

constitutive and indispensable component of the way in which the human being thinks about and experiences reality. From this perspective, ideology is any system of ideas about the world – explicit or implicit – capable of guiding the existence of an individual and the community. (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2001, p. 12).

[It] always expresses a particular position with respect to the world and presents it in the form of truth about the world itself. These are the criteria by which each individual mentally constructs a configuration of the world and, on the basis of this, to think and act (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2001, p. 12).

Ideology acts on us, takes root in our ways of thinking and acting and in determining our behaviors.

Although the word ideology has almost disappeared from social and political life, it still influences our lives and our knowledge. Ideology is inevitably intertwined with our education and training, because education is always mediated by individuals with specific ways of seeing and thinking. Therefore, ideology has not really disappeared, it is lived and practiced unconsciously by people, but above all it is also implicitly absorbed by spaces and the physical environment. Environment and spaces, in fact, can be carriers of ways of thinking and acting that condition our behaviors and our hermeneutic structures, because they are imbued with ideologies. Education can play a dual role in this regard. On the one hand, it can be used as a control instrument, an ideological spokesperson and a moment

of indoctrination to dampen minds and points of view. On the other hand, it can become an instrument of resistance to help recognize what the cultural, social, political and economic context implicitly transmits us. Education can play a role in creating new possibilities, through the formation of critical and reflective thinking. Historically, was Marxist ideology that gave education a key role as a decisive element of the material structure of a society in a specific historical moment (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2001).

The material structure of society [...] is profoundly conditioned by all the ideological discourses that seek to conceal its mechanisms of domination. It is necessary to proceed with the unmasking of the role that education plays within all largely latent and invisible practices of power [...] and instead identify in education a key device to appropriate and use to overturn traditional power structures (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2001, p. 13).

In this way, education becomes an instrument of resistance. When this happens, the self can develop without conditioning and can enhance its singularity. Only in this way can people free themself from a totalizing ideology. Education can become an element of mediation between the individual and the *ideological apparatuses of the State* (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2001, pp. 14-15), which are the family, religion, school, politics, law, culture and information, as well as methods of construction of space (architecture and urban planning).

## 3. Space: "a pedagogical machine"

In the second half of the twentieth century the relationship between school and ideology gave rise to heated debate. The protagonists were intellectuals like Luise Althusser, Pierre Bourdieu, George Lapassade and Ivan Illich (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2001). In this context, the school become identified as an *ideological apparatus of the State*. It was identified as the legitimator of the hierarchical structure of society. The blame was given to *traditional pedagogy* and thought

was given to dismantling these pedagogical structures, by *deschooling* society. (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2001).

Within this debate, there is also the work of Michel Foucault. He worked on the relationship between *power* and *knowledge,* and on the influence of one on the other. «On the one hand, knowledge is produced by power and becomes its bearer and confirmation [...]. On the other hand, knowledge conditions the life of power» (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2001, p. 22). Within this relationship a decisive role is given to *space,* which than becomes a "*pedagogical dispositif"* (Mantegazza, 1995; Massa, 1987). A pedagogical dispositif is a heterogeneous set of discourses, institutions, architectural adjustments, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, philanthropic propositions (Foucault, 2011). It inevitably has repercussions on the educational processes of the social context to which it applies and on the individuals.

The subjection of the individual is the result of how power, operating in a largely capillary and invisible way, uses the fields of knowledge and the institutions in which knowledge is used to manage every aspect of subjective life, restricting it in precise rules of a moral nature, defined in relation to specific parameters of truth (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2001, p. 22).

But what power is Foucault talking about? Not the violent power of abuse and threat, but the power that

Shatters into a thousand streams, penetrates individuals, grows in the folds of their most intimate perceptions of themselves and the world, crosses and determines their daily lives, governs their pleasures and suffering, the existential purposes that arise, one's own bodies (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2001, p. 22).

A "micro-distributed", disseminated power that conducts its disciplinary action through «the scientific statutes of knowledge, moral practices, political architectures, institutional organizations» (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2001, pp. 22-23) and also through the

construction of spaces. In this way, the discipline becomes implicit, and the messages reach individuals indirectly and educate them.

In this contribution, we will try to investigate space as an informal, indirect and implicit educational dispositif, as a pedagogical *"machine"* (Papi, 1978). We will investigate spaces as a *pedagogical dispositf* capable of transmitting messages, modifying ways of thinking about reality, acting and also interpreting it through a building and through its architectural and urban structure. In this sense, space is never neutral. It is, as stated by Giandomenico Amendola, full of *discourse* and *rhetoric* (Amendola, 2016). Space as an instrument becomes a "*pedagogical operator*" (Mantegazza, 1999), a "*pedagogical subject*" (Gennari, 1988) which «embodies power and exercises it silently and anonymously, establishing educational purposes, guaranteeing the assignment and respect of the role, determining the relational modalities» (Chello, 2019, p. 295). In fact, the structure of spaces can be dictated by "*ideological codes*", those systems of rules, which consciously or unconsciously transmit «a conception of space linked to *a priori* conceptual instruments» (Gennari, 1988, p. 28). These rhetorical intrusions end up manipulating the culture, experience and "educativeness" (Gennari, 1995; 1998) of space and transforming education into a persuasive dispositif, occult propaganda, conditioning stereotype (Gennari, 1988, p. 28).

The protagonists of these dynamics become our cities. They are the result not only of the innumerable ways constructions evolve over time, but also of those ideological sedimentations that have acted in the past and still act through architecture, and also of the methods used in constructing public and private spaces. These spaces are also not neutral and have hidden educational purposes. It is in the city, writes Lazzarini, that human experience is condensed and expressed, it is a meeting place, a place of differences, a lived, inhabited, crossed, perceived and experienced space. A complex text because it is the result of the intertwining of textures, of time and of different levels, the outcome and origin of many stories (Lazzarini, 2011) and of our stories.

## 4. The city: "a book of stone"

The architectural structures narrate and creates in our cities a real *"buzz"* (Amendola, 2013). They can convey information about their functions, but they can also communicate wealth, power, sacredness, well-being, happiness, but also prohibitions, discrimination, abuse. (Amendola, 2013). The great architectures have always played a decisive role in the ideological construction, in the creation of rhetoric of power, in the transmission of knowledge and also in the ways of educating. "Architecture tells", with its incomparable narrative power (Amendola, 2013) and transforms the city into *"books of stone"* wrote Victor Hugo (cit. in Amendola, 2013, p. 1) a "*living text*" in continuous metamorphosis (Lazzarini, 2011). These books are full of meanings, ideologies, history, rhetoric that spread through monuments, large squares, houses, streets and institutional places. Simply "being" they produce axiologically dense and orienting discourses. We think, for example, of the great architectures of power such as temples, cathedrals, castles, palaces and towers, eloquent signs of command whose communication strategies were based on three main elements: volume, height and ornaments (Amendola, 2013) with the objective of legitimizing power and communicating it. Or think of the great dictatorships of the last century that used the built space «as an instrument of propaganda and legitimation. Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin wanted to represent themselves and the historical project of which they declared themselves bearers in the architectural and urban forms» (Amendola, 2013, p. 23). The main characteristics are the eclecticism and the gigantism of the buildings with the specific task of «marking the unbridgeable asymmetry between State and citizen-subject» and «representing the regime and speaking to the great masses» (Amendola, 2013, p. 23). This is the case of large monuments such as the "Volkshalle", also called the "Ruhmeshalle" of Berlin, designed by Hitler and the architect Speer, or the "Palazzo della Civiltà del Lavoro", the "Colosseo Quadrato", built by Mussolini. Monuments to which "not only a legitimating function but also a pedagogical function" was en-

trusted (Amendola, 2013, p. 29) especially in a society, like the Italian one, still largely rural and whose cultural level was very low. A pedagogical function capable of producing educational discourses, indeed detrimental, because they are marked by the transmission of values, principles and behaviors in line with the ideological structure of fascist policies.

Even today, cities produce *discourses* that can tell about right, beautiful, participatory, welcoming, safe and sustainable cities, but can also tell about *hostile cities* (Pizzigoni, 2017), *aggressive cities* (Toynbee, 2015), of *"anticittà"* (Boeri, 2013) and of *panic filled cities* (Virilio, 2004). In these cities' negative dichotomies such as security-danger and trust-fear (Bauman, 2005) have a particular importance. They awaken feelings of threat and insecurity and manifest themselves through forms of phobias toward what is perceived to be "other" and "different". This then leads to a loss of trust in other and in the community of belonging, perpetuating the already present individualism that characterizes the human being and today's society. Add then to this the methods of building spaces that more architects, sociologists and urban planners identify come to define as "*hostile architecture*". These structures that are inspired by decorum and security, becoming "furnishings with a disciplinary vocation" aimed at regulating access to urban spaces and the behaviors of people. Examples are the single-seat or backless benches installed to prevent people from lying down on them. These structures strike at the vulnerability and fragility of those who are homeless and who are forced to sleep on a bench without offering them real and alternative assistance and support. Other examples are the methods of "decorating" the ground of public space with studs, metal tips or stone pebbles, in order to prevent the general public from stopping near house or shops. The signs that tell children not to play or loiter in the city streets, parks or squares without offering them alternatives. The "*Control architecture*" and the "*architecture of cruelty*" rejects the undesirables in the name of decorum and security, and apply what jurists call *ius excludendi alias*. They transmit clear messages that are at the basis of the modes of *reproduction of space* (Lefebvre, 1978) and knowledge and influencing *formae mentis*, *habitus* already in the

children. This is because there is a very strong link between space and education and the formation of people, between space and social relationships, spaces and worlds of life and between material space and symbolic space (Lefebvre, 1978). These architectures convey and transmit messages and silently educate through invisible and implicit processes. These processes are so integrated into the landscape that they are camouflaged, forgetting that «camouflage is what characterizes the power of conditioning» (Virilio, 2004, p. 80), and "conditioning power" means pervasiveness. It means creeping into minds and behaviors, giving shape to people. It means educating oneself. Cities are thus educational because they can potentially educate and bring out potential and unique and singular forms of expressions. They can lead to positive experiences (when they allow to flourish exchange, cooperation, solidarity and the development of critical, reflective, autonomous, divergent, plural and utopian thought). However, they can also serve undemocratic and non-educational rhetoric and can impoverish rather than enrich; fill rather than empty. In other words, they can be *uneducational* cities and convey messages of hatred, violence and discrimination. If education is to allow everyone to reach their full potential, then to miseducate is the prevention of this potential, the colonization of minds, to facilitate the prevention of the development of the reflexive capacity. It destroys every moment of emptiness, it obstructs critical, creative and imaginative thinking and puts minds and bodies to sleep, dampening their specificity and homologating them. If education is made up of favorable moments and growth occasions, miseducation is made up of indoctrination and alienation.

## 5. To avoid concluding

Awareness becomes a weapon beacuse we became aware that there is «an ever-wider universe of symbolic and material determination that operates inside and outside the formally institutionalized educational power» (Massa, 1975, cit. in Chello, 2019, p. 295). We become aware of the fact that education can free itself from servility,

to become a weapon of awareness (Freire, 2018) that «puts a strain on the conceptual armament of pedagogy, forcing it to renew itself» (Massa, 1975, cit. in Chello, 2019, p. 295). This is because in the face of silent power, a pedagogy as resistance is necessary. This pedagogy knows how to identify those faults inherent in the mechanisms of domination and power within which then give birth to the seeds of critical, reflective, divergent thinking. This pedagogy looks at the subject as his *telos* and frees him from being the product of a power that subject him. An *authentic* pedagogy, that as a *science of dissent* opens up to both *possibility* and *anti-dogmatism* (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2001) and that on the basis of the problematic theoretical model, can concretely form individuals oriented to *dissent*, *commitment*, *choice* and *utopia*. A pedagogy capable of undermining absolute points of view which know how to open up to complexity and plurality. In this manner human being can acquire the tools needed to recognize anti-educational and anti-democratic pedagogies to hypothesize different ways of being and acting in one's own life contexts. This with a view to forming *competent citizens* (Sennett, 2018), thinking and conscious citizens who resist that hidden power through the constant exercise of understanding and negligence. This instrument becomes a weapon of resistance, deconstruction and reconstruction, to embody *possible and utopian thinking*. This is a posture of thought, a school of thinking, in order to fight the power that limit us.

The places of formal and intentional education must become spaces for unmasking and understanding, but also for intentional reflection inside and outside of oneself (Deluigi, 2019; Morin, 1999; Morin, 2015). They must become places for educating, to question the structures of thought that comes from culture. Pedagogy can become a bridge between subjects and all the spaces of their existence. Not only through the school, because every space, every place is potentially educational (Annacontini & Dato, 2020; Borgogni 2020; Frabboni, 2006; Gherardi, 2019) or miseducational. A pedagogy that helps individuals to acquire «the power of self-determination, of assuming self-government [...] and that makes the demands

of power clear, visible and identifiable» (Chello, 2019, p. 303) to recognize, identify and deconstruct them in a critical and conscious way.

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