DOSSIER

Childhood(s), social movements and the city: curriculum(s) and teacher training

Children's participation in the public space: proposals for thinking about children's right to the territory

A participação infantil no espaço público: propostas para pensar o direito da criança ao território

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ABSTRACT

This paper results from a participatory research with children in public spaces. The research, guided by a framework based on the Sociology of Childhood and the Urban Studies, offers an interdisciplinary dialogue that considers childhood as a generational category of its own worth, constituted by children as social actors with the 'right to a voice', recognizing that they have particular modes of communication, relationship and cultures (Dornelles; Fernandes, 2015; Sarmento, 2003; 2008). From the Sociology of Childhood's perspective, the concept of 'city' is widely used when discussing children's participation, even if such actions do not always take place in the context of the city. It is the case of the space where our research took place, as it seemed to us that the word "city" did not took into consideration the characteristics of the space under analysis. There are several authors in the field of Urbanism who have been questioning the concept of 'city', proposing some reflections about it and bringing to the discussion alternative definitions. Likewise, we advocate the importance of using the concept of 'territory' instead of 'city', in order to be more accurate and to safeguard the participation of all children, regardless of the context in which they live, helping to overcome their geographical/social invisibility.

Keywords: Children. Public Space. Childhood. Participation. Territory.

RESUMO

Este artigo resulta das interrogações levantadas a partir de uma pesquisa participativa com crianças em espaços públicos. A investigação, orientada pela Sociologia da Infância e pelos Estudos Urbanos, oferece um diálogo interdisciplinar entre as duas abordagens teóricas, considerando a infância como uma categoria geracional de valor próprio, constituída por crianças como atores sociais com "direito a uma voz", reconhecendo que elas têm modos de comunicação e relacionamento e também culturas particulares (Dornelles; Fernandes, 2015; Sarmento, 2003; 2008). Da Análise do Estado da Arte sobre o que tem sido produzido na Sociologia da

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Infância, quando se fala das questões de participação das crianças, pode-se ver que o conceito de "cidade" é amplamente utilizado quando se discute este tema, mesmo que tais ações nem sempre se realizem no contexto da cidade. Esta perplexidade assumiu contornos mais desafiantes quando olhamos para o espaço no qual decorreu a nossa investigação, pois nos pareceu que a palavra "cidade" não tomava em consideração as características do espaço em análise. Notando que há vários autores no campo do urbanismo e da sociologia, que têm questionado o conceito de "cidade", propondo algumas reflexões sobre ele e trazendo à discussão outros conceitos como "território", discutiremos a importância de utilizar o conceito de território em vez de "cidade" para sermos mais precisos, salvaguardando a participação de todas as crianças, independentemente do contexto em que vivem, ajudando a ultrapassar a sua invisibilidade geográfica/social.

Palavras-chave: Crianças. Espaço público. Infância. Participação. Território.

Children's participation in public spaces

This research stems from a participatory research with children developed in a district in the northern region of Portugal, which main goal was to promote collective processes of knowledge construction between children and adults about the public spaces in which children move.

The area of Childhood studies discusses children's participation rights in public spaces, and acknowledges that this theme has been "(...) one of the most important objects in recent research in the field of social studies of childhood" (Sarmento, 2019, p. 1). It also allowed us to identify four aspects that have been widely debated among authors who work on the topic: a) the underlying reasons for the interest in the relationship between children and public spaces; b) the constraints affecting children's appropriation of public spaces; c) the advantages identified in the use of these spaces; and, finally, d) what needs to be done.[1]

We also observe that the approach to children's participation rights in public spaces is mostly linked to the concept of 'city'. This aspect is immediately visible in the very common designation used by authors in the title of their texts[2], even if it is not clear whether those investigations were actually conducted in cities[3].

Since the beginning of the current investigation, we have been questioning the adequacy of this designation to our research context, which is geographically located six kilometers from the

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[1] We recommend further reading of the following texts: Araújo (2019); Araújo *et al.* (2018); Arruda; Müller (2010); Bartlett (2002); Farias; Müller (2017); Lopes; Fernandes (2018); Müller (2012); Müller; Nunes (2014); Pérez; Silva; Coelho (2019); Santos; Silva (2015); Sarmento (2018); Sarmento (2019); Schonardie; Tondo (2018).

[2] Several references discuss "It seems that much changes or can change when children (...) are heard (...) about what needs to be done in city spaces..." (Amado; Almeida, 2017, p. 108); "(...) children's rights to the city." (Araújo, 2019, p. 137); "(...) the city does not belong to children (...)" (Araújo *et al*, 2018, p. 213); "(...) the adult-centric model still prevails in cities, with places made by and for adults in which children need to adapt." (Arruda; Müller, 2010, p. 12); "(...) children's perceptions of the city (...)" (Farias; Müller, 2017, p. 270); "Children are in cities." (Lopes; Fernandes, 2018, p. 210); "(...) children's relationship with the city (...)" (Müller, 2012, p. 296); children "have much to contribute both to and for the city (...)" (Santos; Silva, 2015, p. 181); or "(...) children continue to exist in cities (...)" (Shonardie; Tondo, 2018, p. 52).

[3] We note the existence of studies where research took place, for example: in two contexts, one rural and one urban, with it not being entirely clear to us if the urban context is indeed a city (Araújo *et al*., 2018); in the state of Paraíba, without specifying the place(s) (Santos; Silva, 2015); or even in neighborhoods of different cities (Arruda; Müller, 2010; Müller, 2012; and Pérez; Silva; Coelho *et al*., 2019).

city — the municipality's seat. The region is a part of a broader zone called the Vale do Ave Territory, which is heavily industrialized, with textiles being the main productive sector.

The Vale do Ave Territory has been a subject of study since the 1980s by various authors, including Manuel Fernandes de Sá, architect and urban planner, "(...) and one of the responsible for advancing knowledge in this disciplinary field in our country." (Silva; Pereira, 2017, p. 14); Álvaro Domingues, geographer, Ph.D. in Human Geography; Cidália Silva and Marta Labastida architects, professors, and researchers; and Nuno Travasso, architect, and researcher.

According to Silva; Pereira (2017, p. 10) in this territory "(...) the dichotomies of city/countryside do not apply," persisting a model of pluractivity where industry, agriculture, and complementary activities associated with housing coexist, implanted in a network of proximity. This model carries its own ways of life, with deep historical and cultural roots, "(...) where a potato field coexists with a large international company (...)" (Silva; Pereira, 2017, p. 10.). Being an urban territory, the Vale do Ave is constituted by two models of occupation: the compact model, associated with the county seats, and the diffuse model, which characterizes the "between cities" (Silva, 2008, p. 38):

> (...) in the conventional sense of the concept, they do not play a strong role as an economic and demographic 'center of gravity' of the region. The majority of the population lives 'between cities.' (...) in a dense urban fabric, traversed by a fine network of road structures and where the majority of the dominant industrial activity is also located (Quaternaire, 1995, a*pud* Silva, 2008, p. 38).

In the context under study, the diffuse territory continues to be seen through the lens of a compact model, leading to a discourse of constant negativity about this territory because "(...) the diffuse territory has no public spaces, no structure, no identity (...), and should get the opportunity to have a system of public spaces, should be restructured, should have roads transformed into urban streets (...)" (Silva, 2008, p. 39). While twice the population of the county seats resides in the diffuse territory; and while this territory is composed of an extensive road network with prevalence of the plurality triangle, on the other hand, very little is known about its physical and social conformation, and "(...) this lack of knowledge leads to the absence of a mental representation to serve as a reference" (Silva, 2008, p. 39).

This may be the main reason why, for ordinary citizens, it is difficult to typify and name spaces with these characteristics, as they do not have urban features nor entirely rural characteristics.

Focusing on cities

Given these ambiguities, it seems important to advance in seeking elements that allow us to use the concept in a more appropriate way, considering that the interdisciplinary dialogue between the Sociology of Childhood, Urban studies, and Urban sociology is indispensable for multiple reasons. At first, it will help us understand which aspects are invoked by authors in these areas to define the city, in the pursuit of a concept that includes the diversity of spaces inhabited by children, and the ways and possibilities of their participation in the projection and planning of public spaces. Secondly, it is essential to think of more effective ways to address the generational invisibility that

largely marks the children's lifeworlds, an aspect that may be strengthened by confronting their geographical invisibility.

From the lens of the Sociology of Childhood, the comprehension of the concept of 'city' is varied. For Farias and Müller (2017, p. 262), the city is "(...) a human creation composed of a plurality of squares, streets, avenues (...) corners, alleys, and nooks." It can also be a space that shelters people and that is composed by a wide variety of people, as well as cultures, things, spaces, and ideas (Müller; Nunes, 2014, Santos; Silva, 2015); it can turn into a heterogeneous space of collective action (Tomás; Müller, 2009, Müller; Nunes, 2014), of social and affective relationships (Müller, 2012, Santos; Silva, 2015), where the connections established by the collective have a symbolic valorization (Müller; Nunes, 2014). The city is also considered as "(...) a non-formal space of education that provides different learning opportunities when inhabitants relate to its structure" (Farias; Müller, 2017, p. 262). Finally, there are other authors who argue that the city is not a static concept, as the current city is not the former city—it has experienced, and continues to undergo, transformations (Schonardie; Tondo, 2018). Araújo *et al*. (2018, p. 213) even add that "(...) the actual city has lost its former stable and reassuring references (...)."

Given these diverse senses attributed to the concept of city, we asked ourselves whether these authors are specifically qualifying the territory circumscribed to the city or the territory as a whole. What do we mean when we use the concept of city? Is it a human creation composed of a set of streets, squares with urban characteristics? Is it a place for sheltering people? A space of collective action? Of social and affective relationships? A non-formal space of education? A place that has undergone changes over time?

We sustain that the use of the concept in many studies in the field of the Sociology of Childhood lacks the mobilization of more critical and detailed approaches: although they advocate for children's right to participate in the city — which is socially and politically very relevant —, the regular, uncritical, and indiscriminate use of this concept may be helping to promote a geographical invisibility of the children who do *not* live in the city.

We consider it essential to discuss this concept in an interdisciplinary approach, bringing authors from Urbanism and Sociology into the debate, in order to surpass the geographical invisibility of children, which can contribute to accentuating the ontological invisibility of these subjects, who tend to inhabit cities in greater numbers.

In this sense, and based on the studies of authors as distinct as Choay (1999), Corboz (1994), Domingues and Travasso (2015), Meira and Alencar (2019), And Silva (2008), we now present the concept of city from the perspective of Urbanism. According to Domingues and Travasso (2015, p. 165), the city is the city is "(...) one of those words that, seems to have a clear meaning and, at the same time, a tangle of meanings as vague as they are unstable and even contradictory." This reality is related to the fact that, in the past, the city was perfectly delineated by its walls, whereas today those same walls — and the definition of its limits — were extinct, so that "(...) we do not known what sense can be applied to the word city (...)" (Domingues; Travasso, 2015, p. 165). Choay (1999, p. 69), defines the city as "(...) the object of a convention, variable according to the countries (...) and which constitutes an administrative, legal, and fiscal instrument," as an "(...) inseparable union of what the Romans called urbs (physical territory of the city) and civitas (community of citizens who inhabit

it) (...)". The author states that this word has turned inadequate to classify the current territory. Other authors, agreeing with this statement, present multiple reasons to justify it. This is the case of Meira and Alencar (2019), who declare that scientific, technological, and information progress favored a modernization and technicization of agriculture, bringing the countryside closer to the city and complicating the differentiation between rural and urban, so it is no longer "(...) clear where one ends and the other begins" (Silva, 2008, p. 36). According to Corboz (1994), the dichotomies of countryside/city or rural/urban no longer make sense, since nowadays there are no longer cities, but rather urbanized regions, where the city center, as we imagine it, with old neighborhoods and a historic part, "(...) will probably occupy less than one percent of the total surface" (Corboz, 1994, p. 34). According to Domingues and Travasso (2015, p. 164), the city no longer holds the "(...) monopoly of urbanization. The *civitas*, *urbis*, or *polis* ceased to be a clearly confined "interior" within its limit — urbanization has long been an "exterior," a process that occurs in various contexts, forms, and extensions." For these authors, the urbanized space does not refers to constructions but rather about the appropriation of the concept of 'city' by its inhabitants. They also argue that the perfectly demarcated model of urbanization that continues to prevail only exists in geography textbooks, as the reality does not match that model, establishing "(...) a discrepancy between a record on paper, which is read, and another in the territory, which is traveled" (Domingues; Travasso, 2015, p. 18). The notion of city, as an *ideal type*, is the greatest barrier to understanding contemporary urbanization.

Thus, we understand that the concept of the city has been subjected to serious questioning by Urbanism authors, while authors from the Sociology of Childhood continue to use it regularly. It seems relevant, therefore, to reframe this discussion.

Considering that children do not live exclusively in cities, the main discussion is currently to understand the ways in which their participation in public space is safeguarded, so that they are not considered excluded from it in their condition of active subjects of rights.

With this statement, we do not put aside the fact that millions of children live in cities, hence we advocate that the right to the city is an inalienable right of children. The right to the city has been "(...) elevated as a right within the realm of human and fundamental rights, that is, it has become a right proclaimed in the documents of international bodies (...). It has thus emerged as a legally enforceable right" (Oliveira; Silva Neto, 2020, p. 2).

This development led to the emergence of programs such as "Child-Friendly Cities," which "... incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) at a local level, which in practice means that the rights of younger citizens are reflected in the policies, programs, and budgets of the municipality," (UNICEF, 2023) aa program that has twelve recognized municipalities in Portugal. Other examples is the International Association of "Educating Cities," which, in the Charter of Educating Cities, proposes that "The guarantee of the rights of children, adolescents, and youth in the city must, first of all, fully ensures their condition as protagonists of their own lives with the development of their civil and political rights; they must also be able to participate in community life through quality representative and participatory mechanisms, alongside adults and seniors, promoting intergenerational coexistence" (AICE, 2023).

We also bring into this reflection the fact that many millions of other children who, although not occupying urban space, have the same legitimacy to see their rights respected. If we homogenize

the presence of children in public space to a single concept — the right to the city —, we may be promoting once again exclusions, by not considering the diversity of spaces in which children move, or can and should move. We believe it is important to bring all these possibilities to the debate, in order to respect the diversity that characterizes the generational category of childhood and its ways of life, the places it occupies, and the challenges that result for children.

We continue our reflection presenting a proposal that we consider to be more respectful of the diversity of contexts in which children move.

Childhood and the Right to Territory

The term "Territory" "(...) comes from the Latin 'territorium', which is derived from 'terra' and which in land surveying appeared with the meaning of a piece of appropriated land" (Costa, 1997, *apud* Meira; Alencar, 2019, p. 30). Territory, which has always existed, however, is "(...) impossible to define initially in an absolute way (...)" (Domingues; Travasso, 2015, p. 34), Territory, which has always existed, however, is "(...) impossible to define initially in an absolute way (...)" (Domingues; Travasso, 2015, p. 34), since it is not something established, fixed, or precise. It is rather something constructed not only socially — as it emerges from the action of society, of the actors who inhabit it —, but also politically since "(...) it requires evaluation, decision, and legitimation about how to think territorially, about what the relevant issues and priorities are" (Domingues; Travasso, 2015, p. 182).

Territories are also representations, and "it is these representations that establish the protocols that allow us to live together peacefully and mediate ever-present conflicts" (Domingues; Travasso, 2015, p.185). On that, Corrêa adds "(...) the meaning of belonging, that the land belongs to someone, not necessarily as ownership, property, but due to the character of sentimental appropriation, identification with the space." (Corrêa, 1996, apud Meira; Alencar, 2019, p. 30).

Therefore, for the Urbanism authors, each territory is the object of a construction, is a product, is unique, and in order to understand the territory we inhabit, we must understand the conditions that define it, as a social process in continuous transformation (Corboz, 1983; Domingues; Travasso, 2015).

In this interdisciplinary dialogue, which seeks to consolidate the importance of discussing the right of the child to be and to participate in the public space, there are other authors whose contribution is valuable to question this importance. Marques (2020, p. 81) considers the concept of territory as "(...) a socially constructed space, possessing natural resources and holding a history built by the men who inhabit it, through conventions of values and rules, institutional arrangements that give them expression, and social forms of production organization." Milton Santos defends that "The territory is the place where all actions, all passions, all powers, all forces, all weaknesses converge, that is, where the history of man is fully realized from the manifestations of their existence (Santos, 2002, p. 13), which brings invaluable contributions to underline the importance of the social action of individuals in general, and of children in particular, for the importance of the lived experience and for the way individuals engage in such dynamics.

The concept of territory allows us to bring in a more comprehensive way the importance of social and political actions of individuals. Thus, it is essential to understand it as a space where all its inhabitants and in particular children, have a place of speech and action, as well as appropriation of it.

The participation of children in the construction of the territory may favor the optimization of their rights (Sarmento, 2018), and allow the structuring of "social ties guided by shared values" (Sarmento, 2019, p. 4), thus fostering the political condition of children, emphasizing their voices (Sarmento, 2019), and helping to affirm them as citizens and active members of society (Sarmento, 2018).

The territory can also be understood, lived, and experienced as a "common home," as Álvaro Domingues and Nuno Travasso (2015) propose. The concept of home recovers the idea of a space that represents a significant personal investment, and that is more than the sum of its materials, being a place of refuge, protection, rest, security, a "space for constructing the representation of family identity (...)" (Domingues; Travasso, 2015, p. 120), It is "our space, our domain (...), the domain of the family, the group of people who live there together. And it is the series of rules and protocols that allow this group to coexist without major conflicts (...)" (Domingues; Travasso, 2015, p. 184) in a common sense, since the collective corresponds to the group of people who occupy a certain territory and feel themselves to be an integral part of it. Their common representations of this territory define "a shared future project capable of guiding and giving coherence to the action of all those who, on a daily basis, participate in its construction" (Domingues; Travasso, 2015, p. 185). By negotiating the representations of the space they inhabit, the collective is also negotiating its own identity as a collective. This conception of "territory - common home" presupposes a true understanding of the relationship between the territory and the collective that inhabits it; presupposes acceptance and respect for difference; presupposes common action that includes all inhabitants and not just some adults and/or representatives of political power; and presupposes a shared understanding of what territory is and what is aspired to become:

> Starting from the principle and conviction that the territory we inhabit can be understood and lived as a common home - as a space of life and relationship of a social group inscribed therein - then this home should be the result of the collective construction of an imaginary and of common projects about who we are as a society and about the things and places we can and should share. A house under construction (Domingues; Travasso, 2015, p. 26).

The construction of this common home cannot leave children aside. The consideration for how these social actors "inhabit" this common home, with their singularities and children's cultures that give the home distinct modes of configuration, must be valued in promoting a planning of public spaces that is more adjusted and suitable for children, since they may express "an original position, often unexpected and extraneous to the more common sense of adult concerns, but which does not loses relevance (Sarmento, 2018, p. 238).

Involving children in the processes of identifying problems, analysis, proposal development, and planning of public spaces in their territory allows spaces to be built with them, and not just spaces built for them (Arruda; Müller, 2010). It enables the recognition and legitimization of the existence of "children's spaces," that is, spaces that depend on the experiences, identification, connection, or

even the discussion that children have and feel about them (Sarmento, 2018; Trevisan, 2014). These spaces go far beyond schools or playgrounds, where children are expected to be, and which are easily recognized by everyone as spaces intended for the younger ones, the "spaces for children" (Sarmento, 2018; Trevisan, 2014). They can be squares, streets, gardens, natural spaces, free spaces, where they can socialize, play, run, and feel free (Arruda; Müller, 2010; Sarmento, 2018).

It also helps to combat markedly adultist decisions (Liebel, 2014) hat continue to prevail today, which leads to children always having to make efforts to adapt themselves to designed creating barriers that prevent a true relationship of children with the environment around them. We consider it therefore indispensable that the "common home territory" is built with children, that their participation is truly recognized through "Policies oriented towards the well-being of children and children's citizenship (...)" (Sarmento, 2018, p. 236), through participatory public policies that understand children as "spatialists", that is, that accept the way they "appropriate and transform places, where play, risk, and adventure play a predominant role, making them 'experts' of the spaces they occupy" (Barbosa *et al.*, 2020).

Territories for children or territories of children?

If we want children to be able to enjoy the right to territory, to experience it as a common home, it is up to us, adults, to promote their real and effective participation in the design and construction of public spaces that constitute their territory. We understand public spaces as places whose main objective is to foster the social life of the populations where they are located (Ramos, 2020). Their main characteristics are their "public nature, that is, open to all (...)" (Andrade; Baptista, 2015, p. 130) and the fact that all citizens who occupy them enjoy the same rights "with regard to the use and appropriation of space" (Andrade; Baptista, 2015, p. 133).

Therefore, it is a fact that children have exactly the same rights as adults in the occupation and enjoyment of these spaces. However, the existence of public spaces in a territory does not by itself promote the presence of children in those same spaces. For this to happen, for the interaction and relationship that children have with the territory to go beyond the "islands of the urban archipelago" — home, schools, playgrounds, or even malls (Sarmento, 2019, p. 3) —, it is essential to truly ensure and consider simultaneously the issues of safety, mobility, autonomy, and participation of children.

In this sense, it is not enough to have a large investment in terms of public spaces, as has been observed through the increasing "construction of urban parks near watercourses, pedestrian trails, or even bike paths" (Oliveira, 2020, p. 3). The projection of these spaces should always ensure easy access for the entire population, avoiding them remaining "fragments, points, distant from our homes" (Oliveira, 2020, p. 3). It may be centered on an idea that connects, harmonizes the various places that make up the territory, making it an extension of the homes of its inhabitants, that is, "An extension less focused on man aboard his machine (...). An extension that allows for escape, wandering, informality, discovery, that gives us back the freedom to leave home, on foot, simply to wander" (Oliveira, 2020, p. 3), that promotes autonomy and free movement for all citizens, including children.

We do not mean to imply that children should have complete autonomy in using public spaces because, as Müller and Nunes (2014, p. 671) indicate, "it would be naive to abstract the difficulties and risks that this would entail." However, we believe it is important for them not to be completely dependent on the schedules, lives, and availability of adults to access or play in public places. For this to be feasible, we can never neglect safety, but without running the risk of exacerbating concern and obsession with ensuring the safety, protection of children, as well as the comfort of those who accompany them, aspects that have led adults to seek private spaces, keeping children away from public spaces (Farias; Müller, 2017; Müller; Nunes, 2014; Schonardie; Tondo, 2018). Despite the recognition of the importance of public spaces, "little has been done to encourage the use of these spaces by children again" (Pinto; Bichara, 2017, p. 29).

In our view, and agreeing with Gonçalves (2015), a joint planning, a discussion involving all inhabitants of a given territory — including children — will result in more realistic policies based on the actual needs of citizens; a better understanding of the choices made and an increase in public trust; an approach between those who govern and those who are governed; and also an increase in the quality and consistency of decisions made.

Safeguarding the concerns, needs, and common desires of a community may promote not only the use and effective utilization of created spaces but also a true relationship and ownership of these by its inhabitants. Thus, there would no longer be "no man's land" but instead "everyone's spaces" (Schonardie; Tondo, 2018, p. 53).

We admit the importance to address all these issues and promote policies that effectively consider all the benefits that can result from children's interaction with their territory. Among these benefits are: creating opportunities for socializing with people they don't normally interact with, or even the fact that these spaces offer various learning opportunities to citizens, favoring interaction, communication, and encounters, experimentation, exploration, and learning about and with the environment (Farias; Müller, 2017).

It is also essential to reconsider paternalistic feelings and protection towards children, which end up portraying them as mere beneficiaries of adult actions, weakening the view of children as autonomous beings, responsible agents for their own well-being and that of their community (Gaitán, 2018), and ensuring conditions so that, from the territories they live in, they can assume themselves as social actors, promoting participatory and inclusive strategies, in the diversity that makes up the world of children.

Thus, it is crucial to set aside skepticism about the capacities and competencies that children have to intervene, since they have shown us that they are "prepared to lead, to fight, to claim the future of adults and imagine it differently" (Spyrou, 2020, p. 3). Their interventions in debates on climate, gun control or war, for example, are a proof that they are social actors and can be agents of change (Mcmellon; Tisdall, 2020; Spyrou, 2020), The rise of these new "emerging actors" demands adaptations in political institutions, changes in adults' mentality, and in the sense of power they use to restrict children's action, because participating includes having a voice, having influence on economic and political decision-making "that affect the present and future of humanity, which belongs more to children than to the adult generations who are deciding for them now" (Gaitán, 2018, p. 35).

Conclusion

In this dialogue between the Sociology of Childhood and other scientific fields, including Urbanism, we were able to observe discrepancies between the discourses of each regarding territory. When addressing the concept of territory, urbanists commonly discuss concepts for characterizing it, but the role that children should play is not addressed. On the other hand, in the field of the Sociology of Childhood, and more broadly in childhood studies, it is argued that children have rights to participate in the spaces they inhabit. However, these references primarily focus on participation in the city, leaving unquestioned this concept and the geographical invisibility it may bring by not considering other contexts in which children may live.

Therefore, in our view, there is a true need to initiate a transdisciplinary dialogue between these two areas: for urbanists to recognize the importance of citizen participation and include children in planning processes when thinking, outlining, and projecting their work, and for various authors focusing on children's participation in public spaces to find concepts capable of addressing the real territories in which children live. This is because not only do children have rights beyond the city, but there is also a current need to understand children's experiences from "socio-spatial productions," as being in one place or another on the planet makes a big difference when considering the production of difference and childhood diversity (Lopes; Fernandes, 2018, p. 205).

Based on our considerations, it seems to us that authors in the field of childhood studies focusing on child participation, as well as non-governmental organizations and holders of political power, should reflect and reconsider the use of the term "city" when discussing children's participation and consider using the concept of "territory." This would lead to a discourse on "children's participation in the territory," resulting in municipalities claiming to be "Child-Friendly Territories" or "Educational Territories." In our view, this substitution could safeguard the participation of all children, regardless of the context in which they live, helping to overcome the geographical invisibility of children who do not reside in cities.

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